

**DHARMA NOISE:
PARERGONALITY IN ZEN BUDDHISM AND NON-IDIOMATIC
IMPROVISATION**

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The objective of this dissertation is to explore philosophical and practical approaches to the study of improvisation in relation to Japanese Zen Buddhist doctrine and aesthetics. It specifically asks whether free form (non-idiomatic) improvisation can be practiced, and Zen Buddhism's efficacy in establishing a structured regimen for technical study on a musical instrument. In order to complete this research objective, the historical development of Zen Buddhist doctrine and aesthetics is investigated and shown to be a non-unified rubric. Using the concept of the *parergon*, it is then demonstrated that practicing is an appropriate activity for improvisation when supplemented by the *kata* forms of Zen-influenced Japanese arts. The result of such supplementation in this case takes the form of a series of original chromatic exercises developed as a paradigm that itself acts as a supplement to improvisation. The establishment of such a regimen also suggests further research into the topic of pedagogy and Shintoism as an aesthetic or theological supplement, as well as gender issues in creative performance.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. 0. Dharma Noise

The art of improvisation is a fascinating field of study. Many kinds of improvisation occur in our daily life and some, as in the case of music, can serve as the subject of analytical study. In the process of studying jazz improvisation for example, a student considers the many ways melodic, harmonic and rhythmic forms can be combined to create improvised solos over standard songs. As a result, the student finds practical methods of expressing their newfound knowledge, which act as a supplement to their creative works.

In the case of more experimental or abstract styles of improvised music, principles and concepts of freedom, chance, and immediacy are studied as much as practical methods. These concepts can be, and often are, discovered in other fine arts and sciences, and the improviser will attempt to find ways to apply them in their own creative work. These principles serve as a *referent*, a “set of cognitive, perceptual, or emotional structures (constraints) that guide and aide in the production of musical materials” (Pressing 1998, 52). The referent(s), once chosen, might well require the act of practicing and preparing technique for a successful engagement with other musicians, and presentation before an audience.

Japanese Zen Buddhism, in particular, has historically been a rich source of referential artistic and intellectual inspiration for many generations of fine artists. From the aesthetics of ink painting to the concept of evanescence in Noh Theatre, Zen

Buddhism has provided artists everywhere with conceptual and practical information of significant value. But how does one “practice” evanescence? Can what is indeterminate be studied? It would seem counterintuitive. And in light of certain philosophical views contained within Zen Buddhism particularly, practice or repetition might, upon first reflection, seem contrary to spontaneity.

For example, saxophonist Ornette Coleman, arguably the founder of freely improvised jazz, performs in a very spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness style. Yet, I personally witnessed Mr. Coleman practice solo instrumental pieces by J.S Bach at length during our lessons together. If freedom is a referent for free jazz, then it may be argued that the avoidance of practice is freedom from the rote repetition of scales and forms studied in the practice room, as well as any accompanying music theory (rules of counterpoint, orchestration, composition, etc.).

Zen Buddhism, in its emphasis on non-discrimination and seeing the ‘suchness’ of things-as-they-are, emphasizes purity of cognition through meditation and wisdom training. As Zen master Shunryu Suzuki states in the prologue to his book *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, Chinese Zen (from which Japanese Zen originated) became impure and that “mental self-sufficiency is the manner of retaining original purity” (Suzuki 2005, 21). But, Suzuki does not suggest that purity is necessarily a result of cloistering; rather that an open mind is more receptive to myriad possibilities. If one were open in this Suzukian manner, then it would seem that practicing would be a viable option. Such a receptive philosophy could also suggest the highest realm of free improvisation is beyond

intellectualization, and cannot be fully practiced, articulated, explained, or conceptualized without musical technique as a possible choice. Could we then suppose “not-practiced” music is a true gesture of Zen philosophy in an all-inclusive sound-scape?

1. 1. Statement of the Central Problem

An approach to improvisation that would problematize practicing—which idealizes a "Zen" expression of iconoclasm over intellection and erudition—seems to be exclusionary. If this approach is a central ideology of free form improvisatory practices, do we not risk intellectual and creative decline? This would also devalue difference, and negate gradients or subtleties of degree. And, as I will demonstrate, appropriating Zen Buddhism in support of improvisation is suspect if not accompanied by an understanding of Buddhist history. If this history is left unexplored we risk losing multiple sites for the study of Zen Buddhism's relationship with the arts, improvisational pedagogy, and future innovation. As Michele Marra states, “the displacement of reality into the aesthetic realm exonerates the worshiper of art from feelings of self-blame to which rational thoughts would inevitably expose him, while providing pleasure in the possibility of aesthetic evasion” (Marra 1999, 14). Does this type of evasion not also exonerate that ‘worshiper’ of improvisation from the disciplined, critical understanding of the Buddhist aesthetic realm?

Historically, Zen influence on the modern art of the West has been through contact with Japanese fine arts leading to the consumption of various philosophical texts written by Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki, which led to the widespread study of classic Zen

texts such as the *Gateless Gate*, *Blue Cliff Records*, Dōgen Zenji's *True Dharma-Eye Treasury* and *True Dharma-Eye 300 Kōan Collection*, the *Platform Sutra of Hui-neng*, and others. Creative innovators from Claude Monet (1840 – 1926 CE) and Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890 CE) to Yoko Ono (1933 CE) and Laurie Anderson (1947 CE), represent both the “subtle and overt influence of Buddhist thought on the West” (Baas 2005, xiii). Having access to both popular and academic writing on Zen, an artist of the late Fifties and early Sixties would have also been influenced by prevailing aesthetic theories of painting and popular art music. By expressing personal experience, the artist would be expressing “what is universal within us all” (Westgeest 1996, 7).

Establishing the exact relationship between Zen philosophy and specific artists, though, is a highly complex activity, with too many possible pitfalls to be coherently achieved. As Jacelynn Baas states, Zen or Zen-influenced arts “cannot be described as influential or causal” (Baas 1996, 224). Zen Buddhism has been an element existing alongside other elements, and between which there prove to have been many connections (224). Therefore, my dissertation explores the relationship between Zen Buddhism, non-idiomatic improvisation, and the nature of practicing: specifically, whether Zen Buddhist philosophy is antithetical to the idea of practicing scales, phrasing, articulation, and such in improvisation. Can non-idiomatically improvised music be practiced? Can Zen Buddhism supplement this practice in some form?

In answering these questions I will focus on four particular areas of investigation:

1. Zen Buddhist aesthetic philosophy

2. Defining improvisation
3. The term *parerga* in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida.
4. Technical development in improvisation.

These areas will also be shown to have relevance to additional questions: what is it that non-idiomatic improvisation can offer that other musical practices do not, which aesthetic qualities make such improvisation unique, as well as establish critical tools for insightful analysis of improvisational pedagogy, and so on.

1.2. Literature Review

The theoretical foundation to my dissertation is tripartite, involving Immanuel Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction, and relevant literature on Zen Buddhism. Though Kant discusses the empirical certainty of concepts and phenomena, Pierre Bourdieu (1987) reveals that the act of aesthetic judgment in particular is not pure or 'disinterested' in its formalism, as this approach is a socio-cultural marker of the bourgeoisie (in Bourdieu's case, the upper classes of late twentieth-century France), suggesting that taste is reflexive. Jacques Derrida as well reveals inherent contradictions in Kant's aesthetics, via the definition of what Kant describes as secondary or supplemental in art (*parerga*). It is through this discussion that Zen Buddhism and non-idiomatic improvisation can be analyzed for their similarities and differences; exploring actual and assumed relationships between the two.

Olson (2000) states that Zen and Derrida favor “spontaneity over rationalism,” though Derrida himself views deconstruction as “neither method nor free play” (Olson 2000, 84). Deconstruction also shares with the Japanese aesthetic term *ma*, “a place at the margins of culture,” where “all boundaries are deconstructed and concepts function experientially” (84). But as I will point out later, *ma* is (a) a significant part of Japanese aesthetic philosophy and praxis, and (b) more central than marginal. Here Olson is incorrect to categorize *ma* as culturally marginal.

In surveying the relevant literature then, I chose works based on the following criteria; (a) evidence of existing historical relationships between creative artists (including musicians) and Zen Buddhism that can be formally critiqued; (b) clear definitions of what Zen is and to whom; (c) how the relationship between various improvising musicians and Zen occurred.

In East Asian and Buddhist studies there exists an extensive body of Zen literature to be considered and synthesized, and work on traditional Japanese aesthetic theory and terminology relevant to my dissertation has been done by Richie (2007), Cox (2003), Davey (2007), Hume (1995), and Izutsu (1981). Marra (1999, 2001), Rambelli (2007), and Van der Braembussche (2009) have also done such work, as well as analyses of modern Japanese aesthetic history, Buddhism’s influence on Japanese material culture, and the compatibility of East-West intercultural aesthetics. Westgeest (1996) and Baas (2005) discuss the relationship between Zen and art in the 1950s, as well as the influence of Eastern philosophy on Western art. As Japanese art culture is heavily influenced by

Buddhist ideas on impermanence and evanescence, I have included work by Chance (1997), Pinnington (1998), Inouye (2008), Ramirez-Christensen (2008), and Juniper (2003) into consideration. Other works establish Zen influences on traditional Nōh theatre (Coaldrake 1997; Komparu 2005; O'Neill 1974; Rimer and Yamazaki 1984), as well as research into indeterminism and metaphysics in Nōh philosophy (Tamba 1981).

I have also included Yanagi's work *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* (1989) as an example of the kind of writing that is both a view of Japanese aesthetics and an example of one of the more controversial aspects of Japanese nationalism and art. Yanagi's analysis and praise of folk crafts (*mingei*) came at a time when Japan occupied the Korean peninsula and social theories about the Koreans were influenced by the Japanese perception of their own history. Brandt (2007) and Kikuchi (1994) show that Japanese Imperialism played a significant part in the acquisition and analysis of Korean folk crafts, and had significant links to fascist ideology, though Tansman (2009) shows that this was more of a particular Japanese ideological longing than a call to direct political action. Thus, I have included Scharf (1993; 1994), Abe (1997), Olson (2000) on Zen and Postmodern philosophy, as well Victoria (1997) on Zen's relationship with Imperial Japan in WWII.

Works on theorists such as Yanagi also reveal how the dialectic between Japanese thinkers and Western hermeneutics came to form national views on Japanese art (Marra 1999). As I will point out, a secular "Beauty" grounded in Zen mysticism (as posited by Buddhist historian D.T Suzuki and others) was politically relevant in both Japan and

America as exemplified by the members of the Kyoto School of philosophy, as well as Zen exegeses written by a variety of artists and critics. Works that demonstrate a secular bias towards Zen as a gesture of common intercultural spirituality include works by Franck (1973), Loori (2007), Sudo (1997), and Terayama (2003), as well as similar gestures in both fiction and non-fiction in America (Pirsig 1974; Watts 1958a; Kerouac 1997, 2006; Winokur 1989). This also raises the question of how knowledge of Japan or knowledge in general can be “judged” aesthetically, and who in Japan or America established or assumed that kind of authority. As I will show, D.T Suzuki became such an authority in America, while his ideas were contested in his home country.

Day (2000), Litweiler (1992), and Jost’s (1994) analysis of the work of my saxophone teacher, Ornette Coleman, provide the main source of context in discussing both historical and modern trends in freely improvised music in relationship to Zen philosophy. Weiss (2006) specifically focuses on Steve Lacy’s views of both free and semi-structured improvisation, and he discusses his relationship with Taoist philosophy (which has a direct, ongoing relationship with Zen). Also relevant to my thesis are Peters’ study of the philosophy of improvisation (2009), and Ramshaw’s work on Derrida, deconstruction, and improvisation (2006), and these are further supported by Umberto Eco’s theory of the ‘open’ work (Eco 1989; Caesar 1999) and issues of post-disciplinary performance (Case/Brett/Foster 2000).

Eddie Prévost, in his work *minuteparticulars: meanings in music-making in the wake of hierarchical realignments and other essays* (2004), discusses the political

ramifications of collectivity and free improvisation as a mode of music appreciation and cultural critique. He argues that if such considerations command our musical lives, "then the power of those who wish to do things to others is challenged by the determination of those who choose to do things with others" (back cover), even though he also states that art as anger and political activity are often revealed to be fraudulent at worst and self-delusional at best (106). This kind of resistant political activity may have been an underlying force in Japanese aesthetician Sōetsu Yanagi's desire to create a quasi-socialist liberation from capitalist modernity, a "Kingdom of Beauty" (*bi no okōku*), though Brandt (2007) reveals that this urge was more in line with Imperialist ideology. Prévost goes on to say that anger, for example, leads consumers to vicariously empathize with it on a kind of "perverted joyride" (106). He also warns against the analysis of experts, who can often be guilty of taking away meaning from artists and replacing it with their own (106). Though Prévost is critical of capitalistic and consumptive trends in music, Prévost is critical of saxophonist John Zorn's involvement in radical Jewish mysticism and klezmer music, calling it representative of "a Jewish fear that the moral high ground they have sought to maintain by ensuring that other peoples do not forget the Holocaust is slipping" (142). This would seem to conflict with Prévost's writing in *Cornelius Cardew: A Reader* (2006, 293-96) where he states that "no long term creative relationship is likely to be sustained upon a negative basis" (294).

Guitarist Derek Bailey, in *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (1992), states that idiomatic improvisers use the name of the idiom (such as jazz, Persian

classical music, and such) to describe their work, while free improvisers tend to avoid the word 'improvisation' because it suggests the non-existence of depth and complexity in an artist's work, a lack of training, something without preparation, frivolous and inconsequential. Moreover, Bailey argues that there is no musical activity that requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training, and commitment (xii). Bailey also discusses the ephemerality of a 'final' say on what improvisation is, while stating that speculation about the future of free improvisation – its popularity or extinction – is to misunderstand the function of the activity, like “presuming the course of the sun is affected by the popularity of sun-bathing” (142). Also, Bailey's idea of improvisation's lack of a need for justification or argument due to its being a part of the natural creative appetite is referenced by his description of the difference between the musical climate of the mid-1970s (when the book was first written) and the present of the 1991 edition, stating that:

Most surveys of the intervening decade and a half tend to be lamentations on the galloping artistic cowardice, shriveled imaginations and self-congratulatory philistinism, which typified the period. Other assessors, applauding the strenuous efforts evident in all areas of music to be more 'accessible', speak of a Golden Age. Either way, and (sic) as significant as they are, the changes that have taken place seem to have made very little difference to improvisation. Transient musical fashion, of course, is unlikely to have any effect on something as fundamental as the nature of improvisation (xiii).

Though his work deals with the Western tradition of free improvisation, David Borgo's *Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age* (2005) reveals a number of interesting ideas about the shared inter-cultural heritage of improvisatory traditions of

many sorts. Uncertainty is considered by Borgo to be a shared cultural moment of reverence rather than fear, and that musicians traditionally have been trained to reduce uncertainty through score reproduction. Improvisation can also be seen as personally liberating through the acceptance of uncertainty or change, which would seem to be analogous to Zen impermanence and *nirvanic* transcendence.

Though not as descriptive of jazz ideology as other works, John Litweiler's *The Freedom Principle: Jazz after 1958* (1984) raises at least one important point on the experience of freely improvised music (in this case, free jazz), which is that the experience of free jazz and art in general can lead to a new consciousness of things. Certainly, it requires us to explore such consciousness and its social or aesthetic ramifications in non-idiomatic improvisation, and the idea of always having a new sense of things seems to be of a type comparable to writings on Zen and non-discriminatory thinking, such as Shunryu Suzuki's aforementioned *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*.

There do exist lacunae, though, in establishing the ontological and epistemological nature of the relationship between Zen and non-idiomatic improvisation. The preceding texts deal with the historicity and cultural impact of Zen Buddhism on Western culture, but they fail to discuss the nature of interpretive 'frames' utilized by creative artists to assign aesthetic or philosophical value to Zen. How did the artists get to know Zen? How did they know they 'knew'? What were the ontological and epistemological results of their knowledge?

To answer these questions, I chose to begin with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, since it was notions of nationalism (as represented in part by the critique of what is ‘Japanese’ in art) that were of central importance to Meiji Era politicians “as they grappled with the question of Japanese national modernism” (Marra 1993, 3). The most comprehensive discussion of taste in Kant’s aesthetics occurs in his *Critique of Judgment*, and I chose to focus on the question of what is intrinsic to a work of art and what is supplemental to that work. But since the question of the supplement is dealt with only briefly in the *Critique*, it is necessary to include Jacques Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* (1987) as a significant analysis of Kant’s ‘supplement’, since the main body of the work discusses the significance of the supplement, and how Derrida perceives Kant’s “failure” to deal with it philosophically. In the chapter entitled "Parergon" Derrida argues that what is outside, inside, or framing a work of art are all ideas that work to define each other, and are not emblematic of definite or definable limits.

The language of the *Truth in Painting* is difficult, and filled with French and German aesthetic terminology that presupposes a significant education in Western philosophy. Indeed, it would be easy to accuse Derrida of obfuscation, and denounce his work as a type of complex philosophical prose. As well, Derrida, in deconstructing Kant’s views, tends toward semiological reductionism to dualities of mere signs, rather than positing them as “stations in a continuum of meanings” (Dillon 1995). And since this is a philosophical work, Derrida works from interpretative frames, and does not attempt to imply that his work acts as a type of empirical data. Indeed, he himself

repeatedly states how he himself cannot define what is supplemental as easily as Kant's discussion of clothing on statues for example.

This difficulty of definition is precisely what I address in my search for an appropriate interpretative framework within which to investigate the relationship between Zen and non-idiomatic improvisation. To this end I divide research done on Derrida and Kant into two streams: work done on the 'frame' (Sayedoff 1999, 2001; Cohen 2001), and work on the 'supplement' (Kant's *parergon*: Owens 1979; Kiilerich 2001; Barzilai 1990; Bernstein 1992).

Barbara E. Sayedoff (1999) analyzes presentational contexts of visual art in professional galleries and the photographic reproduction of such works. Context can often influence perception (345), as in the case of photography, which doesn't show the painting's frame in its reproduction. The frames themselves too are almost exclusively designed or chosen by someone other than the artist (348). Traditionally the frame isolated the painting from the colors of the wall, until modern paintings, being frameless, required the white gallery wall as their 'frame' to isolate all color within the canvas (350). Psychologically we also see a frame as a window onto a scene. Without a frame we see the painting as "a three dimensional object with paint on it" (350). This is in reference to the very idea of a frame though, and does not deal with unique frames created for specific works of art. Thus Sayedoff (2001) takes up this issue in light of the diverse cases where a frame is intrinsic to the art, and how the ontological degree of 'irreplaceability' in a frame is debatable.

Kiilerich (2001) responds to Savedoff by suggesting that most frames are constituent of the work, and that Kant's 'supplement' is not at variance with true beauty (320). As Lawrence Kater states, frames are not geared to match the aesthetic of the painting, but to "match the aesthetic of the audience" (320). The border acts to separate the work from the 'real' world. This is problematic when considering ethnographic objects placed in museums, as they are un-framed and thus could potentially be called 'non-art.' In this case, the Western conception of the frame conditions our viewing of the "world" and of all margins and borders epistemologically (323). A border, to Kater, implies an existing order, and the unframed is the uncontained or unrestrained. Our understanding of restraint and order would then take on a rather colonial or imperialist onto-theological tone. In terms of the relationship between non-idiomatic improvisation and Zen Buddhism, this onto-theism may be where Zen and improvisation have their most significant relationship. But as Savedoff dealt with the frame in the visual arts, Shuli Barzilai, deals with Derrida and the 'frame' in philosophical aesthetic theory.

Barzilai (1990), in reviewing *The Truth in Painting*, deconstructs and challenges founding assumptions that govern philosophical aesthetic discourse (2). What Kant deems external or supplemental (parergon) to a work of art (ergon) is to Derrida problematic in and of itself. Footnotes to a text are both text and not text, and the surplus, adjunct, supplemental, and/or frame of a work is no more "against" the ergon than *beside* it. As Barzilai explains, Derrida's reading of Kant through footnotes, appendices, metaphors, analogies and examples (in Greek, Latin, German and French) "bring such

'margins' to the center of the text" (6). This hierarchical disruption dismantles the very idea of margin and 'center', and is at once both "order and disorder" (9). Using the parergon as a frame for the discourse on 'frames' reveals what Barzilai calls a certain 'lacunary' quality within a work, showing that framing is not only conceptual, but also material to art, an "extrinsic condition of practice" (10).

Bernstein (1992) reveals that Derrida uses this 'frame logic' to question art having an essence in virtue of which it is art and nothing else (168). If parerga "add," "then how can the original be 'complete' to begin with?" (169) The difference here between the necessary and the contingent then is undermined by a parergon, revealing a constitutive lack (possibly Barzilai's "lacunary quality") in the ergon itself. This makes knowing what is inside and outside of a work seem epistemologically impossible. Is this then the place for judgment, that judgment can fill the void and complete the 'knowing'? Owens (1979), and Krell (2000) deal with 'knowing' as a critical issue with interpretation itself, which has made itself parergonal to art. Critique comes to occupy art (which is non-verbal) with conceptual force (Owens: 43) and carries with it the influence of ethnocentrism (Krell: 26). 'Framed accordingly', we can see the pernicious effect of believing formal aesthetic judgments are "pure" judgments, suggestive of a kind of theology. Kantian aesthetic philosophy is an apt supplement to the study of Japanese Zen culture and its relationship with Meiji and post-Meiji Era modernism. And it is also important to include Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of Kant's work as a supplement to Kant.

Seen through Savedoff, Kiilerich, Barzilai, Owens, and Krell then, the nature of interpretation, perception, and context in terms of an art work's theoretical 'lack' leads me to question whether a work must be "lacking" (or possibly *incomplete?*) to be a work of art, and how this lack may be relevant to a discussion of the 'parergonality' of Zen Buddhism and non-idiomatic improvisation. For in researching the topic, I have discovered neither work done on the musical parergon, nor 'parergonal study' of Zen and non-idiomatic improvisation's mutual influence, especially the influence of Zen philosophy and its exegesis in creative music philosophy and praxis. Marriner (2007) reveals that references to Derrida's work in the world of visual arts, for example, are rare and mostly found in journals peripheral to art making itself (349). So it may be expected that if the primary literature on the parergon in art is lacking, parergon themed literature in performance studies, jazz, improvisation, and Zen would be in short supply.

In defining what is supplemental, Kant and Derrida both discuss the parergon in general. But they do not raise the issue of parergonal 'multiplicity,' or simultaneity. Art, thusly categorized, is adjunctive to life in that it is not necessary to basic survival; it is already an act of parergonality to create 'works' alongside babies, sufficient shelter, and/or breakfast. Even Kant's aesthetic project of 'disinterested contemplation' itself can be seen as a parergon to the art object, a psychic supplement to the artistic work proper. Life can be merely incomplete without art, but consciousness is essential to defining 'art.' An aesthetic form itself can be seen as parergonal to creativity too, but this reveals an a priori conclusion that we deal with frames and ornamentation grammatically as a definite

article, i.e., *the* drapery on statues, or *the* frame. This conceptual generalization can include many draperies for example, but implies that drapery is the relevant rubric under which to categorize various textiles. Is color also not parergonal to the draperies themselves, as a color conflict between two accessories may be an issue? The aesthetic form itself can be a 'double', a parergon to two things simultaneously, parergonal to both the "real" world and imagination (Tansman 2009, 278).

We take it as fact that Japanese aesthetics are universal to Japan when we focus on parergonal particulars. But, as André Malraux points out, this assumes that the form of a civilization shapes its individuals to such an extent that "a Gothic plowman must have been more like St. Bernard than a modern plowman" (Malraux 1978, 274). And we humans may also assume that the ideal of 'perfection' in Buddhist thought is a parergon to imperfection and impermanence, especially in light of Zen aesthetics (Wicks 2005, 96). Thus the Japanese aesthetic term *mitate*, "to cite," to reveal what is hidden through accenting visible characteristics (Cox 2008, 257), may be a parergon to this inner essence, acting like a kind of spiritual bibliography or footnotes to 'beauty.'

Trying to unify parergonal "vectors" may then be improvisation at best and futile at worst. But Zen had already revealed this paradox of concepts and definitions hundreds of years before, so maybe this is in itself the key to parerga, the fact that they infinitely express and regress, and, as I am suggesting, the acceptance of and transcendence over the parergonal conundrum is key to both non-idiomatic improvisation and Zen itself.

Is non-idiomatic improvisation incomplete then, necessitating Zen-styled exegesis to support or supplement it? This may explain why one might adopt the negation of practicing as a philosophical stance, and may also be a clue to finding the appropriate context for a discussion of Zen Buddhism and non-idiomatic improvisation. I will then frame my discussion of the topic with the parergon concept, and show that using this rubric is relevant and epistemologically sound. To begin to do so, it is important to understand the basic features of what is called Buddhism.

1.3. A Brief Overview of Buddhism and Zen

There are no entirely reliable sources for the life and teachings of the Buddha, though there are many accounts of him by his followers (Collinson et al 2000, 74). But the following biography is generally believed to be factual.

A prince of the Shakya tribe of Lumbini, India, Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE) grew up in the region of Kapilavastu, close to the Nepalese border (St. Ruth 2008, 14). A *kshatriya* (member of the warrior caste) like his father Suddhodana, Siddhartha was wealthy and privileged. According to legend, he became disillusioned with status and wealth, and left his princely life behind at 29 years of age (15) to study the various religious ascetic traditions of the day, mastering all yet being satisfied with none. Earlier schools of thought (Brahmanism, Materialism, Jainism, and others) were dominated by a search for ultimate objectivity in philosophical explanation (Kalupahana 1992, 30). But Siddhartha thought that their efforts were dominated by faith, preferences, tradition, reflection on form, and a certain delight in the contemplation of views, and as such were

not necessarily capable of discerning truth (31). Ultimately Siddhartha renounced pure objectivity, as well as any mysterious substance (*kiñci*) as the explanation of phenomena, in favor of the doctrine of *dependant arising* (57). Phenomena are in a constant state of arising and ceasing, and people's attachment to views, mystery and the 'hidden' is a/the cause of their perceptual and epistemological difficulties. Thus one who does not look for mystery and perceives things as they are enjoys peace of mind and is elevated morally, intellectually, and spiritually (59).

Thus, at age 35, while meditating in the shade of a bodhi tree, Siddhartha had the sudden realization of what he believed is the essential understanding of Reality, what he called the *Four Noble Truths*. These truths were Siddhartha's expression of the realization that (1) Life is filled with suffering, (2) the origin of all suffering is desire, (3) there can be a cessation of suffering, and (4) practicing an eightfold path of living provides the opportunity to achieve such cessation (17). If one practices the proper manner of viewing the world; intention, speech, livelihood, action, effort, concentration, and mindfulness of the world and other beings, then one can experience and recognise the normal pains of living without suffering from them.

After this "awakening" Siddhartha referred to himself as the *Tathagata*, one who has "thus come," and in scripture he is referred to as Shakyamuni, the "sage of the Shakya clan" (18). He is also known as a spiritually "awakened" person (Skt: *buddha*). After Siddhartha's death, his followers compiled a collection of what they believed were authentic sayings of his, the *Dhammapada* (roughly 200 years after his death), and

"Buddhism" branched into several schools, categorized under two main branches:

Theravada (which some Mahāyānists pejoratively referred to as "Hinayana," the lesser of the two "vehicles" of Buddhism) and *Mahāyāna* (the "greater" vehicle), under which the esoteric *Vajrayana* schools are also categorized) (19). The spread of Buddhism throughout India and beyond was greatly assisted by the conversion of the ruler (Ashoka) of the first Indian empire during the 3rd century BCE in which the great Theravada/Mahāyāna schism took place (Faure 2009, 7).

Mahāyāna and Theravadan Buddhism differ primarily in their conception of the Buddha. For Theravadans (at least initially) Siddhartha was a man living on the earth with all the accompanying frailties and affective vicissitudes, a mortal being devoid of transcendental or theistic elements (Goyal 2003, 51). The deification of the Buddha not only gave the masses an opportunity to satisfy their emotional urges but also supported the Mahāyānist move towards the doctrine of the Buddha not being born of this world, rather making a show of existence for his followers (52).

Zen (literally "meditation") is an abbreviation of the word *Zenna*, the translation of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* (Ch: ch'anna). Dhyana refers to the state of collectedness of mind and/or deep contemplation where dualities such as truth/falseness or you/I do not exist. Zen originated in China as a meditation school of Mahāyāna Buddhism and, like many other schools of Chinese Buddhism, was shaped by Mahāyāna teachings and scripture (Dumoulin 1994, 27). Though some scholars consider Mahāyāna a later

development, Heinrich Dumoulin suggests that it gradually developed within the tradition of the oldest scriptural study and exegeses, hardly noticed by people at the time (28).

Specific to Mahāyāna though was the concept of the *Bodhisattva*, a Buddhist saint who, having reached enlightenment, foregoes it in favor of helping all other beings reach this state before they themselves finally enter into perfection. They were and are also subjects of veneration, especially the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, (Japan: *Kannon*), the Saint of Compassion. As opposed to the Theravadan stage of development accorded to a bodhisattva, the Mahāyāna bodhisattva is the embodiment of perfected wisdom, both aware of the illusion of Reality, and not attached to judgment of that illusion. Their salvific power though became revered by many, rather than the enlightened wisdom that was the source of their actions (Dumoulin 1994, 31). Also, the tenets of Zen that distinguish it from the various schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism from which it partially evolved were a special transmission of knowledge outside of exegesis (*kyōge-betsuden*), non-dependence on scripture (*furyū-monji*), direct pointing to one's essential nature (*jikishi-ninshin*), and realization of one's own nature as the same as the nature of the original Buddha Siddhartha (*kenshō-jobutsu*).

Zen began to develop in China with the advent of translations of Indian Buddhist texts by Chinese monks, with local and national traditions of shamanism and Taoism providing the conceptual basis for the more abstract concepts expressed in the original Sanskrit texts (Olson 2005, 226). And though an Indian Buddhist saint named Bodhidharma is almost universally credited as being the "founder" of Zen (Ch: *Ch'an*),

this is fiction, as I will demonstrate later. During the 8th century Ch'an masters began arriving in Japan but did not have any significant influence there until the monk Myōan Eisai (1141-1215 CE) went to China and was exposed to and transformed by Ch'an teachings (228). He was later credited for establishing Ch'an in Japan, founding the Japanese branch of the Ch'an teachings of the monk Lin Chi (Japan: *Rinzai*), presumably when he became the abbot of Kennin-ji Temple in Kyoto in 1204.

The following 200 year formative period of Japanese Zen Buddhism lasted from the late 12th century through the middle of the 14th century, as monks from both Japan and China emigrated back and forth across the Sea of Japan. The first Japanese monk to actually meet with a Ch'an master in China, Kakua (1142-1182 CE), came back home in 1175. The last Japanese monk in this period transmitting Ch'an teachings, Daisetsu Sonō (1313-1377 CE), completed his travels in 1358 (Kraft 1992, 3), roughly equivalent to Japan's Kamakura Era (1185-1333 CE). This transplanting of Ch'an in Japan is considered by Kenneth Kraft to have been fully realized in the life and teachings of the monk Myōchō (1282-1337 CE), better known by his honorific title Daitō, though his teachings are not widely read in either Japan or the West (3). Daitō's lineage eventually became the dominant branch of Rinzai Zen.

Much of the Chinese Buddhist literature became the foundational source for Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan, and Japanese Buddhist schools, both in its original Chinese and in translation or commentary, including earlier works preceding the Chinese Buddhist eras. Nāgārjuna, the second century CE South Indian Buddhist

philosopher/saint who founded the Mādhyamika (Middle Path) school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, is the author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (the *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*). This text has often been the source of sectarian divergence, playing a part in the dialectic between the epistemological and metaphysical philosophies of competing schools, the Svātrikā-Mādhyamika and Prāsangika-Mādhyamika being two examples (Garfield 1995, 87).

The work itself is a treatise on emptiness, which Nāgārjuna posits as the lack of independent or inherent existence (dependant arising) though phenomena are conventionally real. It is this doctrine of ‘two truths’ (conventional and ultimate) as the basis for understanding Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology that was, and continues to be, Nāgārjuna’s great contribution to Buddhism and Zen (88), having arrived in Japan via its Chinese translation.

Works such as the *Precious Lessons from the Chan Schools* (also known as *Zen Lessons*) were written by early Song Dynasty Zen masters who believed Zen had been corrupted by dilettantism and artifice (Cleary 2001a, 3), while *Zen Essence* is a collection of random Zen sayings by various Chan masters from the 8th to the 14th century including Linji, Dahui, Wuzu, Yangshan, and others.

The writings known as *The Five Houses of Zen* are works on classical Buddhism in China which adhered more strictly to the Mahayana axiom that particular systems cannot be fixed as universal prescriptions for everyone’s enlightenment (248-49). The Five Houses were not sects or schools but later became known as such (250), and were

categorized as the Kuei-Yang House named after the masters Kuei-shan Ling-yu (771-854 CE) and Yang-shan Hui-chi (813-890 CE); the Linchi House, named after Lin-chi I-hsuan (d.866 CE); the Ts'ao-Tung House, named after Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807-869 CE) and Ts'ao-shan Pen-chi (840-901 CE); the Yun-men House, named after the master Yun-men Wen-yen (d.949 CE); and the Fa-yen House named after the master Fa-yen Wen-I (885-958 CE) (250). This collection has been used extensively in part or whole for centuries, including the famous critique of Zen cultic deviations by master Yen-shou of the Fa-yen House (254).

The compendium of instruction manuals dealing with attaining the state of 'being-as-is' known as *Minding Mind* includes several famous works including Korean Zen master Chinul's (1158-1210 CE) *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, and master Dōgen's *A Generally Recommended Mode of Sitting Meditation* (395). A major concern of these manuals was that altered mental and physical states could be mistaken by the unprepared or unwary as authentic spiritual experiences without the prerequisite knowledge, experience, and understanding (397). And in recent times one might add a certain superficial Orientalism that contrasts the Zen axiom that "a good craftsman leaves no traces" (Cleary 2001a, 499), a true Zennist showing no outer signs of enlightenment, claiming no expertise, or not pursuing spiritual authority over the lives of others.

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, a highly influential scripture with its origins in the Ch'an and Hua-yen Buddhist traditions, is believed to be composed around the eighth century (Muller 1999, 3). First studied in the context of Ch'an Buddhism, it later

became a significant part of the official monastic curriculum of the Chogye, the main school of Korean Sōn (Zen) due to its highly organized structure and the practicality of its discussion of meditation (3). An accompanying commentary by the monk Kihwa (1376-1433 CE) is also useful in understanding not only the text, but its reception in Kihwa's time as well.

Korean Buddhist Wonhyo (617–686 CE) synthesized various Buddhist schools and doctrines, and read every religious text he came across (De Bary 2008, 517). Though he had no formal training, he read Buddhist literature voraciously, and became known in the Silla Kingdom both as a wise teacher, and eventually a national figure of great renown. He established a unique universalist/syncretic philosophy, harmonizing various methods and modes of doctrine (518), making them easily understood to both monks and lay practitioners alike. What Wonhyo preached, most notably in his work *Taesung Kishinnon So* (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith), was that the religious aims of Mahāyāna are Body (essence), Aspect (phenomenon), and Use (function). Each and all are interpenetrated, so there are no obstacles to anyone achieving a spiritual unity with all things ('being' and 'non-being')(Chun 1974, 22/23).

But it was his work the *Adamantine Absorption Scripture* that stands out in Buddhist history, having been elevated during his lifetime to the status of 'treatise' (Silla Korean: *non*), which meant that Wonhyo was considered a bodhisattva. According to Wonhyo, "adamantine absorption" (Skt: *vajrasamādhi*) is a special type of meditative concentration that he believed catalyzed the final experience of enlightenment. Like

adamant (diamond) shatters all other minerals, the adamantine absorption shatters all forms of attachment that prevent one from experiencing Buddhahood (De Bary 2008, 519).

The Platform Sutra, centered on life and teachings of Master Hui-neng (638-713 C.E), has continued to play a major role in Zen Buddhism, and is the only work of its kind in Zen history to be classified as scripture, an honor reserved exclusively for the teachings of a Buddha (Cleary 2001c, 5). It is a history of the life and sermons given by Hui-neng, an uneducated woodcutter who achieved enlightenment outside of the Zen schools, was ordained a Grand Master, and subsequently fled into the hills to escape the persecution of jealous monks to later emerge as a legendary teacher. A source of insight and inspiration to both secular and ordained Zen acolytes, it is an oft quoted resource for both teaching and exegesis of Zen writings.

This sutra was also a significant influence on Zen master Dōgen Zenji (1200 – 1253 C.E), who was the founder and First Patriarch of the Sōto sect of Zen Buddhism in Japan, though some Sōto practitioners place more emphasis on the work and teachings of Fourth Patriarch Keizan Jōkin (1286–1325 C.E). A key theme in Dōgen’s early studies was his investigation into the question of why Buddhas and Bodhisattvas long for enlightenment and engage in ascetic practice, when both esoteric and exoteric Buddhist doctrines teach primal Buddha nature is inherent in all sentient beings (Dumolin 1963, 153). Dōgen is also author of the *Shōbōgenzō*, *Treasury of the Eye of the True Law*. The *Shōbōgenzō* was also the first major Buddhist text to be written in Japanese, and is a

prime example of how Zen masters draw freely from older literature in full or in partial quotation (Cleary 2001b, 248) (a process which is described by Dōgen as “presenting sideways, and upside-down,” 249). Dōgen also continually made the effort to express the inexpressible by perfecting seemingly imperfect speech through the creative use of wordplay, neologism, and lyricism, as well as the recasting of traditional expressions (Heine 1997, 67). Since Dōgen’s time, Sōtō and Rinzai Zen have been and are still the two dominant branches of Zen Buddhism in Japan.

It is important to remember when translating Buddhist works (the Mahāyāna scriptures especially) that scripture is not free standing and self-explanatory, but rather both a product of, and guide to, spiritual experience embedded in practices neither clearly defined nor meant to be read privately in silence. These were verses to be chanted out loud and memorized as a referent in meditation and scholarship (Williams 1989, 37). It must also be pointed out that many scriptures and terms that Zen Buddhism inherited have been translated from the original Pali into Sanskrit, Mandarin, and eventually into medieval Japanese. Translating the Taoist terms and subsidiary concepts influencing Ch'an Buddhism has also been fraught with many difficulties and mistakes. The Jesuit missionaries who undertook the initial translations of the *Tao Te Ching* in China for example, considered the Tao to be equivalent to the 'Supreme Reason of the Divine Being' (Collinson 2000, 241). Modern translations as well tend to be as poetic as literal, and this may partially explain how East Asian religion and philosophy can be misread.

For example, the well known and widely read Fronsdal translation of the *Sayings of the Buddha* (Skt: *Dhammapada*) for example, translates the 49th Sutra "as a bee gathers nectar and moves on without harming the flower, its color and fragrance, just so should a sage walk through a village" (Fronsdal 2006, 3). But another translation, the Maguire/Müller *Dhammapada*, presents the same verse as "the bee collects nectar, so should a wise person go among the people and things of this life" (Maguire/Müller 2002, 17). Like the bee taking honey but harming not the flower, the Lal translation has the wise man living similarly "in the flower of his village" (Lal 1967, 54). The "Ox Cutter" verses of the *Chuang Tzu* too raise translation issues. Graham (2001); Watson (2003); Hinton (1997); Legge (1962); Murton (1965); and Ames (1998) all mention a generally uniform ceasing of sight and free movement of the spirit. However, the Giles translation states, "when my senses bid me stop, but my mind urges me on, I fall back on eternal principles" (Giles 2001, 27). This reference to eternal principles seems to suggest some much more practical method or spiritual law lacking some sense of extra sensory agency. In yet another case, the Addis-Lombardo translation of the Chinese philosophical classic, the *Tao Te Ching*, does not include the literal phrase "the whole world," but instead informs the individual reader in the present tense. When the world knows the beautiful, both translations also say to "recognize" it (Lau 2001, 5), or "become conscious of it" (Medhurst 1972, 23). When everyone in the world became conscious of the beauty of the beautiful it turned to evil (23). If D.C. Lau states that 'the whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful yet this is only the ugly' (Lau 2001, 5), Ellen Chen might argue

that ‘when all under heaven *know* beauty as beauty, there is then ugliness’ (Chen 1989, 55). Upon scanning further texts, (Ryan 2008; Feng/English 1989; Legge 1962; Star 2001; LaFargue 1992; Hendricks 1989; Wihelm 1985; Wagner 2003; Hamill 2007; Mitchell 1988; Cleary 1991; and Bynner 1944), we find several modes of recognition or cognition at play; to know, recognize, become conscious of, can see X as X, acknowledge X, knows that it is nothing but X that makes Y, etc.

But considering all these variations, we still may conclude that Japanese literature contains the essential meanings necessary to a correct and practical interpretation of each text on its own terms, for many have been handed down unaltered (or at least hardly altered) for centuries, and it is usually commentary on such volumes that contain divergent theories and ideas promoted by differing artistic schools and sects.

Having established a general frame of reference for the comparative discussion of Buddhist philosophy and non-idiomatic improvisation, we now must focus on defining improvisation, and its significance to the study of Zen. What do we mean when we say “improvisation?” What defines it, and do we find such a concept (philosophically or musically) in Zen Buddhism?

CHAPTER TWO

IMPROVISATION

1. 0. Introduction

In the previous chapter I stated that the term ‘parergon’ is essential to my analysis of improvisation and Zen Buddhism.

In this chapter, I will be investigating the presence of improvisation in a traditional Japanese art form influenced by Zen Buddhism, and whether this kind of creative expression of Zen is compatible with similar creative expressions in contemporary improvisational music. Specifically, I will discuss Nōh theatre in terms of its musical construction, aesthetic theory, and instrumental design, and whether or not such a stereotypically Japanese Zen art form can form a relevant parergonal relationship with non-idiomatic improvisation.

1. 1. Defining Improvisation

The word "improvisation," as a heuristic, could be defined as anything or everything between the creation of a musical work as it is being performed ("free" improvisation) to the elaboration, ornamentation, or “extemporization of an existing form” (www.oxfordmusiconline.com) as found in Persian classical music, Baroque harpsichord, traditional Arab music, big band jazz, etc. According to my own practical understanding, improvisation is essentially the musical realization of what has been previously established in music (style, rules, canon) in conjunction with momentary individual musical desires (to lead, follow, reject, accept, create, conform, etc). Due to its

spontaneous arising, improvisation has evanescent qualities, which make it difficult to define or analyze. David Borgo describes the problem of learning how to improvise as a result of belief in two possible ideologies, stating that:

Improvisation in general, and its more open forms in particular, has suffered in the academy for at least two broad reasons. Many instructors still hold the view that improvisation is purely intuitive, therefore it either does not require instruction, or it simply cannot be taught. According to this argument, improvisers are best left to develop “on their own,” since they won’t benefit from, and might even be harmed by, a “formal” music education. A different, though no less damaging view, imagines that all student improvisers are “blank slates” onto which must be poured the amassed total of jazz theory and tradition, an approach that the reader should, by now, recognize as both impossible and fundamentally misguided (especially if our goal is to produce creative artists rather than musicians skilled at regurgitation) (2007, 27).

Legendary British free improvisation guitarist Derek Bailey too states in his book, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, that:

Improvisation is always changing and adjusting, never fixed, too elusive to analysis and precise description: essentially non-academic. And, more than that, any attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation (Bailey 1993, ix).

As I will reveal later in this dissertation, I believe that it can be practiced without overly abstracting its conceptualization, or demanding the improviser conforms to an ideology; thus I disagree with Bailey.

1.2. Improvisation in Western Musical Culture

Discussion of improvisation can be seen as early, in Western culture, as the writings of Aristotle in his work on the origin of Greek drama (Poetics 1448b7, 1449a14):

Given then, that mimetic activity comes naturally to us—together with melody and rhythm (for it is evident that metres are species of rhythms)—it was originally those with a special natural capacity who, through a slow and gradual process, brought poetry into being with their improvisations [*autoschediasmāton*].

Having come into being from an improvisational origin [*arches autoschediastike*] (which is true of both tragedy and comedy; the former starting from the leaders of the phallic songs which are still customary in many cities), tragedy was gradually enhanced as poets made progress with the potential they could see in the genre. And when it had gone through many changes, tragedy ceased to evolve, since it had “attained its natural fulfillment” (Nettl 1998, 35).

Aristotle’s view of improvisatory activities directed toward the perfected form of tragedy can be interpreted through the lens of what is considered ‘natural’ to one’s conception, and what is ‘missing’ from the improvised events. Boethius, in his highly influential early sixth century book on music and theory, *De insitutione musica*, set out principles for what a musician ‘is.’ In Boethius’ view Reason is more honorable than skill, in the same way that the mind is superior to the body. Therefore, a musician is “one who has gained knowledge of making music by weighing with the reason, not through the servitude of work, but through the sovereignty of speculation” (Nettl 1998, 34). If manual labor and the labor of the intellect are the polar opposites, then ‘those who are engaged in the musical art’ can be categorized according to their position between these two opposites. Musicians of the lower class are ‘dependent upon instruments’ and ‘totally lacking in thought.’ Those in the highest class, who are ‘totally grounded in reason and

thought', have the ability to meticulously consider rhythms and melodies, and the composition as a complete whole. In the middle of this continuum are 'those who compose songs', the poets who are 'led to song not so much by thought and reason as by a certain natural instinct' (34).

In the actual practice of improvisation in music, Ernest Ferand states that the spontaneous invention and shaping of music while it is being performed is as old as music itself, and that the beginnings of musical practice "can scarcely be imagined in any form other than that of improvisation," which is "instantaneous musical expression" (Ferand 1961, 5). The rites of the early Christians were marked by a religious ecstasy that manifested itself in unhampered, purely emotional spontaneous expression: songs of praise of the Lord born in the impulse of the moment, as reported by Tertullian (155-222 CE) (6). The presence of "Oriental influence" and element of improvisation is evident in Ambrosian and Gregorian chant in their elaborate melismas, which were the goal of the performance of these works; the melody being pretext as such. (6). As well, a common 12th century technique from two-part *organum* was the performance of an equally measured sequence of notes in the foundation lower part (*cantus firmus*) with a varied set of rhythms in the upper part. Writings by author Anonymous 2, and French cleric Elias Salomon (1274) in the 13th century as well, discuss the act of *super librum cantare* (Latin: singing over the book): four-part improvising on a chant melody (8).

Improvisation by a single player on a keyboard instrument became increasingly important in the course of its development (9), while principles of keyboard

improvisation eventually came to apply to solo extemporization on other instruments, especially on the lute, but also on the viol (10). These, along with the art of ornamentation and variation became highly developed by the time of the Renaissance, as seen in the practical and theoretical sources of the day, as well as in the various diminution formulas, examples for study, and instructions for the employment of such formulas appearing in increasing number from the second third of the 16th century onwards (10).

The transition from the art of diminution and passage work in polyphony to the application of this ornamentation practice to monodic forms of music is exemplified by the *falsibordoni passeggiati* of the early 17th century (14), a century in which the violin gradually came to the fore in instrumental music (15). The *cadenza* in the 17th and 18th century concerto form in can also be considered a kind of transition from ensemble to solo improvisation (19). The art of 'independent' improvisation blossomed in 17th and 18th century organ performance in the performances and writing of J. S Bach, G. Handel and others, as great Baroque organists were required to be able to write down their improvisations afterwards, which shows that many of their great works came out of improvisation (19-20) (such as J. S Bach's *Goldberg Variations*).

Before its gradual decline in Classical music however, the art of solo improvisation flourished in the clavier 'fantasies', and popular practice of improvising variations on popular opera themes, which both W. A. Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven were known for (21). By the 19th century, a kind of "shallowness" had

become noticeable in improvisational doctrine as “technical ability started to take precedence over creative, spur-of-the-moment inventions” (21).

But this does not mean that improvisation died out entirely, as various types of popular music near the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century began to include extemporization and improvisation, which in turn had an influence on styles of syncopated music which would inform or influence the creation of jazz, e.g. ragtime or New Orleans second-line marches. The early forms of extemporization were mostly collective, that is until the arrival of trumpeter Louis Armstrong, whose playing would eventually revolutionize the role of the musician as a creator of the extended solo (as exemplified by the opening improvised cadenza on *West End Blues*, recorded in 1928). Improvisation laden with what became known as a jazz “swing” feeling became the signature of jazz music from the late-twenties onward as it progressed and fragmented into various schools such as swing, jump blues, bebop, Latin jazz, cool, third stream, modal, hard bop, free jazz, free improvisation, fusion, and electric (a term usually only applied to a certain period of recording and performing in the career of trumpeter Miles Davis).

Free improvisation, though resembling free jazz in title, is usually applied to either (or both) the second wave of African American free jazz players after Ornette Coleman (Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp, Alice Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, and others) as well as the 1960's British free improvisation scene revolving around guitarist Derek Bailey, percussionists Eddie Prevost and Tony Oxley, saxophonist Evan Parker, and

composer/pianist Cornelius Cardew, as well as German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, Dutch percussionist Han Bennick, and others either participating in the scene or influenced by its constituents. The two scenes are also sometimes differentiated by their politics, as the American branch is usually concerned with civil rights issues, while members of the British/European scene are usually engaged with issues concerning collectivity (Bailey, John Stevens, Eddie Prévost, Gavin Bryars), and anti-intellectual/anti-capitalist ideology, which is most notable in Prévost, (2004), and Cardew (2004). Some contemporary free jazz players such as Charles Gayle have also continued in the Judeo-Christian “Holy Ghost” tradition exemplified by Albert Ayler in the mid-sixties, though Gayle's occasional onstage sermonizing has been controversial, costing him repeat bookings at certain clubs (Freeman 2001, 104-105).

Although fusion and smooth jazz are also styles within the rubric of jazz, some do not consider them ‘true’ jazz, as they are hybrids incorporating rock music. The eclectic European “chamber jazz” sound of recordings made by the German label ECM has also been considered a kind of jazz category unto itself, as the artists are recorded and mixed mostly at Oslo's Rainbow Studios by label founder and producer Manfred Eicher, and almost invariably use the same type of reverb and sound design for each recording (which has been described both positively and pejoratively as having a cold or “Nordic” sounding). And since these hybrid styles have occurred in overlapping periods alongside heavy metal, reggae, bossa nova, and myriad other twentieth century styles, defining

what is or is not jazz improvisation can be quite complex, and has been the subject of many aesthetic battles between jazz purists and iconoclasts.

1. 3. Free Jazz

Though non-idiomatic improvisers can draw inspiration and material from any musical source, the historical style that has provided the "original" impetus for such assemblages is free jazz. Though it is debatable who was the first freely improvising musician, saxophonist Ornette Coleman's playing in the late fifties is considered by most to be the definitive articulation of the essential style. Though he recorded earlier, the album *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959) is also still considered by many to be the definitive free jazz album (demonstrating a radically new, freer relationship with harmony and melody), though pianist Cecil Taylor had recorded important free-form works earlier. Much of this has to do with Coleman's legendary appearance at New York's Five Spot Café, where most New Yorkers first heard Coleman's music, expressed their rather extreme views of his music (both positive and negative¹), and eventually formulated the cult of personality built around him. As the style developed, the term 'free jazz' (also the title of another of Coleman's legendary albums) became synonymous with non-metered sonic exploration, most often with musics of extreme complexity and volume such as the work of saxophonists Albert Ayler, John Coltrane (early sixties on), Archie Shepp, and Pharoah Sanders, though saxophonists such as Eric Dolphy, Dewey

¹ Barry McRae (1988, 46) suggests that Coleman's April/May 1966 appearances at Ronnie Scott's jazz club in London were attended by at least two future members of the British free improvisation scene, who ridiculed Coleman and passed noisy commentary on the music.

Redman, Anthony Braxton, Joseph Jarman, and, to a certain extent, Wayne Shorter (in his performances with Miles Davis in the mid-sixties) were creating a type of free music with more abstract structures, lyrical qualities, and a wide variety of dynamics. The stereotype of the free jazz musician as an iconoclast also became prevalent in some circles, leading to the further stereotyping of free jazz as "against" rules, restrictions of jazz melody, rhythm, and harmony, thus making the free jazz musician a kind of revolutionary.

But Ekkehard Jost suggests that the term "Free Jazz" is only valuable when the titular "freedom" is understood as a freedom of choice among an infinite number of alternatives and not merely a rebellion against tradition. Thusly, free jazz cannot be understood as a compact style of jazz with definite characteristics and sharply drawn borders, but rather as a "stylistic conglomerate whose most essential feature would be its potential diversity" (Kernfeld 1991, 386). Jost states that the essential changes that free jazz brought to jazz in general were:

1. The questioning (not abolition) of any kinds of rules.
2. The growing importance of spontaneous interaction among players (a diminishing attachment to the dichotomies of soloist/accompanist, individual/collective, etc).
3. The "emancipation" of sound color, which becomes an independent means of creation that creates the chance to improvise a-melodically.
4. The importance of energy and intensity as communicative elements and sources for collective ecstasy.
5. A turn towards musical cultures of the Third World and thereby the integration of diverse 'exotic' elements into jazz.

6. A growing consciousness of social, political, and economic problems among musicians and the consequent development of a new form of self-understanding (386).

These points mark tendencies and, taken together, are not related exclusively to a musician or group.

The definitive “opening statement” of free jazz historically, as titled, is Ornette Coleman’s album *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation by the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet* (Dec. 21, 1960, Atlantic Masters 81227 3609-2). This recording distinctly documents Coleman's attempt to create music of equality between "soloists" and "accompanists,” creating an emotionally even space for both to interact, even though there are a small amount of ensemble themes and scored directions for the ensemble, such as the ensemble unison (9:54). The first take of this piece, included as a bonus track on the re-mastered CD also demonstrates that even though the tracks are of significantly different lengths, the overall form is the same on each, revealing structure and order. There clearly is composed tonal material, but it is almost always unfixed in chronological time, a technique considered by Ekkehard Jost as an important compositional technique utilized in this style of music, “especially in later developments” (Kernfeld 1991, 388). With minimal amounts of material and direction, it is understood that the performers are expected to rise to the level of art and use their skills to create a unified, logical ensemble statement, if the work is to succeed as a work of art and exemplar of Coleman's ideas about freedom and improvisation. Marty Williams states in the original liner notes that:

Comparisons to contemporary non-objective painting, and certainly to contemporary Western music², surely spring to mind. So do comparisons to several analogous, time honored practices in Eastern musics, which are improvised according to the relative pitches and rhythms of the players, arrived at as they begin to play.

Having said that, there is no mention of the album's cover art, which includes a small reproduction of Jackson Pollock's last large scale work *White Light*. Without any documented evidence to the contrary, the inclusion of *White Light* on the cover could be interpreted as a tacit attempt by Atlantic to have proven or supported Williams' claim. Alternately, it could be suggested that the painting is a kind of visual gestalt overture to the sonic events occurring on the album. Various 'zips' and pourings of black, white, and crimson paint intersect and overlap each other at random, giving an overall sense of energetic chaos with order and intention informing the work to some degree. But without the specifics on which contemporary musical works, and which time honored Eastern practices Williams is referring to, we are left to assume that such things exist and that these comparisons would indeed spring to mind if we had such knowledge.

It is also interesting to note that this recording, like German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann's classic free improvisation *Machine Gun* (FMP CD24) for example, contains a single or multiple takes of the piece. One might assume that if freely improvised music is as sonically or ideologically free as the name suggests, what aesthetic standard is in play if/when a second or alternate take of a freely improvised piece, barring technical or acoustic flaws, is considered desirable or necessary? It is possible in either case that extra

² I am assuming Williams is referring to Western classical music, and not Elvis Presley.

takes were done out of curiosity or a desire to document different approaches to the music or the moment while a particular set of musicians is gathered in the studio. But if the first take of a piece is considered unsatisfactory, on what grounds is it so? Therein may lay keys to critical analysis, or the keys to a renewed evaluation of aesthetic analysis itself. What we do know about the recording however, is that the titular *Free Jazz* is made up of multiple sections marked by the statement of a theme consisting of either a unison line, fanfare, or a sustained chromatic chorale. The players as well are all stylistically recognizable, each with a particular aesthetic and technical standpoint in jazz. So if Coleman initiated a second take for any reason, the decision might have been based on these two points in particular. Other representative albums of free jazz include *Conquistador!* (Cecil Taylor), *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (Ornette Coleman), *Out to Lunch* (Eric Dolphy), and *Complete Communion* by trumpeter Don Cherry.

1. 4. Free Improvisation

As mentioned earlier, free improvisation grew out of free jazz, yet differed in the fact that even melody and self imposed structure were replaced by the performance of what can be called 'energy' or 'fire' music; high intensity, complex, un-metered moans, shrieks, and growls on any given instrument. Though many decried this direction, others saw it as a further evolution in the jazz/free jazz lineage, an exploration of the extremes of emotive gestures in music, moving the music to a place of sheer emotion and raw power similar in kind to volcanoes, cracking glaciers, and thunderstorms. David Keenan calls this music a "freely improvised, spiritualized, resolutely militant jazz of wall-

destroying force" (Keenan 2009, 137), as well as calling Albert Ayler's music one of the "most challenging and spiritually rewarding bodies of work of the twentieth century" (140). Keenan then goes on to describe as "hilarious," a performance wherein bassist Milford Graves plays in standard 4/4; Graves' meta-concepts of time being so advanced that such "caveman demands made little sense" (142). The use of such seemingly negative words to positively describe this music may be partially to blame for its rejection by certain fans and critics of more standard forms to jazz. Though Keenan uses the term positively, it is hard to imagine the average listener would be attracted to music described as "paint peeling squall" (in reference to the saxophone playing of David S. Ware; 2009, 145).

The free improvisation scene in Britain, though their music was mainly unmetered and multi-faceted, was and is by contrast lower in volume and more nuanced, focusing on techniques involving the entire collective. The collective known as AMM, originally consisting of guitarist Keith Rowe, drummer Eddie Prévoist, tenor saxophonist Lou Gare, and later, composers Gavin Bryars and Christopher Hobbs, is representative of this scene and highly iconic, developing a manner of spontaneous structure that subsumed all personality into an ensemble "ethos" (Clark 2009, 113). Philip Clark states that political infighting has been a part of the AMM's development, with the group being reduced to a duo at times due to the Maoist beliefs of Cornelius Cardew, and Keith Rowe's taking exception to Eddie Prévoist's criticism of Rowe in Prévoist's 2009 book *minuteparticulars* (113). Though saxophonist Evan Parker has been a subsidiary

contributor to the group, Prévost has stated that he has best understood and internalized the AMM's aesthetic (114).

An excellent recorded example of free improvisation is *Interstellar Space* by saxophonist John Coltrane (Impulse 314 543 415-2). This recording, a saxophone/drum set duo by John Coltrane and Rashied Ali, according to Francis Davis' liner notes for the reissue, ranks with the finest work from any of Coltrane's various periods due to its consummate musicianship, the clarity of the logic utilized in improvising by both Coltrane and Ali, and the ardency of the passion exhibited by each musician. It is also unique in Coltrane's output as it is his one and only duet album, though Coltrane did create long duet "moments" in his other works when the piano and bass dropped out of a song momentarily and Elvin Jones or Philly Joe Jones (with the Miles Davis group) would sustain the rhythm behind Coltrane's soloing e.g., in *Oleo* on the album *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*. It is also unique in that it doesn't build like many or most recordings of so-called "energy" music, starting at low dynamic level and moving to high energy, ecstatic honking and screaming sounds. On this particular recording, Coltrane enters immediately with the kind of intense energy one might expect from another artist already some 10 to 20 minutes into an engaging performance. Though there are many other saxophone/drum duet recordings available, such as Dewey Redman's duets with Ed Blackwell and John Surman's work with Jack DeJohnette, this particular recording is purchased and admired worldwide, and is usually found in the record or CD collections

of a wide variety of jazz and non-idiomatic improvisers, making it not only a classic free improvisation album, but arguably a classic of improvised music in general.

An important fact to note about John Coltrane's contribution to free improvisation is in his involvement with this music at a time when its musical merits were being hotly debated. With the recording of Coltrane's album *Ascension*, he revealed his interest in both free forms and the musical ideas of upcoming free musicians of the day including Pharaoh Sanders, Archie Shepp, and John Tchicai. By John Coltrane's sponsorship and advocacy of this group on his own recordings, free improvisation had both the support and approval of an established artist, helping raise awareness of what at that time were mostly socially underprivileged young black musicians in the New York scene. It is also worth noting that Coltrane's second wife Alice released a sophisticated album of free and semi-structured improvisation entitled *Universal Consciousness* (Impulse AS-9210) a few short years after *Interstellar Space*.

The music itself is unique; utilizing harmonically radical string arrangements like Ornette Coleman's *Skies of America* (Coleman himself transcribed the string parts on Coltrane's recording), and containing two harp or organ/drum duets between Alice and Rashied Ali. It also contains a pan-religious conceptual motif much like her (then late) husband's album *A Love Supreme*, containing simple, religiously evocative music; the track *Hare Krishna* or the beginning of *The Ankh of Amen-Ra* being comparable to *Acknowledgement* from *A Love Supreme*. Yet for all its innovation, sophistication, and sonic beauty, Alice's recording is neither as well known nor has it sold anywhere near as

many copies as any one of a number of husband John's recordings. One reason may be that, whereas *A Love Supreme* is dedicated to a featureless God that may or may not be the Abrahamic God the Father (track four is titled *Psalm*), Alice's album is a pantheistic tribute to pretty much every one of the major gods in the history of world religion. Jesus Christ, Zoroaster, Baha'u' llah, the Way (*Tao*), and even Coltrane's late husband John himself (given the spiritual name "Ohnedaruth") are all "Manifestations" who are worthy of genuflection. It is perhaps this fact that makes *A Love Supreme* easier to relate to for the average jazz aficionado, assuming a primarily Judeo-Christian audience. Also, *Universal Consciousness* was released a number of years after *A Love Supreme*, thus possibly being subjected to dismissal as a posthumous imitation. It also may have been dismissed by the jazz critics as being cut from the same "anti-jazz" cloth as John Coltrane's late period recordings such as *InterStellar Space* and *Ascension*, works that turned a significant number of critics and audience members, some with great hostility, against Coltrane and the new music of the period. The issue of gender may have played a significant role in the reception of *Universal Consciousness* as well, but currently there is a lacuna in that subject.

1. 5. Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

Guerino Mazzola and Paul H. Cherlin (2009) discuss free jazz in terms of closed and open collaborative spaces. Closed spaces include: tonality, consonances and dissonances, 12 to 32 bar forms/schemes, sonata forms (theme, variation, and recapitulation), and metric time, usually 4/4. Open spaces include: variations of pitch,

timbre, and tonality(s), extension of perceptual space into noise and complex harmonics, negation of limits of consonance and dissonance, negation of “instrumental limits” and inclusion of extreme registers or sound 'effects', temporary or final suspensions of structure, and silence/silent spaces as improvisational gestures (Mazzola/Cherlin 2009, 43-44).

Common in both criticism and advocacy of such music includes terms and phrases such as negation of limits, suspension of structure, extremes of register (44), “controlled chaos” (Jenkins 2004a, xxvii), an “up-yours, anti-traditionalist attitude of free jazz” which is “plainly akin to the anarchistic punk aesthetic” (lxi), freedom from established norms and priorities and “circumvention” of musical expectation (xxviii), and lack the "restraint" of chordal forms of jazz (xxx).

But defining music in terms of negation, suspension of form, chaos, anarchy, being against tradition, freedom *from* structure, circumvention and such, is to frame the music rather negatively. It is not surprising that some critics of the music would react to these types of gestures as a type of nihilistic iconoclasm and inherently anti-musical. Not every artist, critic, or consumer of creative works sees freedom as inherently revolutionary or structure as inherently negative, even in the most radical of works. After playing music with no structure for an entire year, free jazz saxophonist Steve Lacy began to feel this music started to sound exactly the same time after time. Lacy then began to add various types of structure back into the music, eventually calling this type of music "post-free" or "poly free," deciding that limits are “vital to true freedom” (Weiss

2006, 171). Thus, the search for a viable freedom in music led Lacy to a re-formulation of the notion of structure.

The freedom to formulate structural elements is the conceptual or philosophical basis of "non-idiomatic improvisation," a term Derek Bailey defines as "not representing an idiom or the ideals of an idiom while being stylized itself" (Bailey 1993, xii). It must be noted that the term "non-idiomatic" could also be appropriately described as "trans-idiomatic, or possibly "idiomatically free" in terms of being a genre of all performance genres. But as the term "non-idiomatic" has been used more often, I will continue to refer to that term exclusively, and in exclusive reference to performance idioms, not technical practice or pre-performance exercises. I personally describe non-idiomaticism as "an addition of limits" or the creative addition of structure to sound; a kind of aural genesis, an art of origins; the building of new relations, not the destruction of their precedents. In this manner of categorization, non-idiomatic improvisation bears a passing resemblance to aleatory music, whose composition and/or performance is to a greater or lesser extent, undetermined by the composer (Sadie 1980, 237). But whereas aleatory music uses random procedures in the generation of fixed compositions, non-idiomatic improvisation uses specific procedures to create a determined yet unrepeatable work, resulting in structure and indeterminacy unified. As Sōto Zen master Shitō Xiqian (b. 700 CE) stated, different things do not unite to become one thing, but that different things are identical with unity itself; the many and the one are the same (King 2009, 179). This kind of unity would give non-idiomatic improvising a quality of the *trans-idiomatic*, an idiom

of focused multiplicity continuously in flux, which is implicit in the practice of non-idiomatic improvisation, if not in the name.

An excellent example of this is the album *Naked City* by John Zorn and his eponymous *Naked City* group (Elektra Nonesuch 979238-2). This recording, a virtual primer on non-idiomatic improvising, could also arguably be called the sonic equivalent of the spirit of Postmodernism (though saxophonist/band leader Zorn himself bristles at the term and shuns such labels) with its myriad compositions and styles, fragmented and reconsidered in rapid sequence. The recording features highly idiosyncratic versions of the music of Ornette Coleman, the film scores of Ennio Morricone, Henry Mancini, and others, as well as original free improvisations by his ensemble (made up of elite downtown New York avant-gardists, centered at the time around The Knitting Factory club). Tracks such as the cartoonishly violent *Blood Duster* or *Hammerhead* feature the growling, screaming, or (creatively) incoherent babbling of the album's special guest, Japanese avant garde DJ/vocalist Tetsurō Yamatsuka, also known to the world as Yamatsuka Eye, Yamantaka Eye, EYE, or DJ Pica Pica Pica. He is most well known for being the lead "singer" of the legendary punk/noise band *The Boredoms*, and is associated with the esoteric Ōmoto religion. Many of the *Naked City* tracks are also only 8 to 13 seconds long, lengths not usually associated with free jazz or avant-garde works, especially after the era of John Coltrane's legendary 30 to 50 minute modal improvisations two decades earlier. Although this particular *Naked City* disc contains as many covers as original songs, it is aurally typical of any *Naked City* recording in that it

consists of highly intense music with violent or erotic titles (*Perfume of a Critic's Burning Flesh*, *S&M Sniper*, *Igneous Ejaculation*, etc) interspersed with sound sculpture/music concrete (*Catacombs*). Graphic photographs and images of sadistic sexual grotesquery appear within the packaging of Naked City discs, a visual counterpoint to the thematic eroticism of this ensemble's work. Though some might see it as art, these images prompted picketing of Zorn's concerts in Los Angeles in the early 1990's by Asian-American women, who were offended by the depiction of a Japanese love slave (*Forbidden Fruit*) and Asian women being sexually abused (*Torture Garden*) (Taruskin 2010, 507).

Though this or any other Naked City recording is not categorically or exclusively free jazz or free improvisation, it does contain both free jazz and free improvisation-styled bursts of energy and sound from the various performers at any given moment during the highly orthodox styling that define Mancini's and Morricone's compositional signatures. Evocative of the best non-idiomatic improvisation as well is the album's unpredictability or sense of surprise when the ensemble collectively plays single styles in rapid succession. At any given moment in the tracks longer than a minute, the ensemble moves from perfectly rendered traditional Latin styles to bluegrass to extreme heavy metal, often within the space of a few seconds. Extraordinary is the ensemble's ability to play each style convincingly, as demonstrated by the song *Latin Quarter*, which contains moment-to-moment shifts between New Orleans styled boogie piano, swing, country rock, 1950s rock saxophone, and a jazz waltz within the first 43 seconds alone. This

would also suggest that structure is not antithetical to the creation of open, non-idiomatic forms, in terms of an overarching form of ‘genre-blending.’

Other representative albums of such non-idiomatic improvisation include *A Sounding of Sources* (Malcolm Goldstein), and *Improvised Music from Japan* (produced and curated by Yoshiyuki Suzuki).

1. 6. Improvisation in Traditional Music of the Far East

Non-idiomatic improvisation could be said to have several agnates in pre-modern China. Up until the modern period, musical pieces in China were re-compositions, songs created from folk, oral, and written musical sources. The idea of an “original” composition in China “only arrived with Westernization,” yet it was this assemblage that created and “maintained continuity of musical ideas with each passing era” (Mingyue 1985, 13). And, like in many kinds of pre-modern music, Chinese music had no strict monochromatic sense of time. Tempo was a personal preference, as well as a product of the social and cultural environment as well (22). Theories of just or equal temperament tuning were considered intellectual exercises. In the practical, daily use of music there were many tunings more closely related to descriptive stylistic foundations. This “poly-temperamental” situation is an important trait in Chinese music, providing its so-called “out-of-tune” quality (possibly to Western ears, Mingyue does not make that clear), a quality “considered essential to the national sound” (22). Timbre, as well, identified the “soul or living quality of an instrument” and its proper correspondence in the macrocosm was given serious consideration (24).

But there are also aspects of the same music and culture that would defy such agnates. Chinese music “values economy and simplicity; the single brush stroke and the achievement of economy characterized essentialness” (26). In light of a wide variety of recordings by both idiomatic and non-idiomatic improvisers (Evan Parker, John Zorn, multiple Japanese noise artists, Ornette Coleman, and others) these are characteristics seemingly applicable to few freely improvised styles. Taoist doctrines as well advocated simplicity in music. Laozi supposedly said: “great music has fewer notes” while Zhuangzi is credited as saying “soundless music is the highest” (32). The doctrine of simplicity then could be a way to view music as part of natural phenomena, that the object of music has intrinsic value. The state of soundlessness is then recognizing that the “mental/spiritual impression arising in one’s mind through listening to music” is the ultimate goal (33).

Improvisation also occurs in South Korean folk music (Ko: *minsog'ak*) as well in *sanjo* and *sinawi* music, both descendants of ritual shamanistic music (Ko: *muak*) from the Cholla province (Chung 1992, liner notes), which are examples of structurally unpredictable music based on improvisation to a degree not found elsewhere in East Asia. When the *sanjo* or *sinawi* musician begins an extensive extemporization, “rules of composition are destroyed,” and the performance becomes an “exercise in unpredictability and change” (Lee 1980, 142). The style of *sinawi* performance resembles the fixed motif style of composing popularized by Terry Riley's composition *In C*, in that it is a unique form of improvisatory music that is more easily compared to modern jazz.

But a “simultaneous jam by all players does not occur in such jazz to the extent it does in *sinawi*” (138).

Sanjo ("scattered melodies") is also an improvised instrumental solo music whose structure and performance practice are somewhat similar to those of the Indian *raga* (Ta: *ragam*), Arab *maqamaat*, and Persian *dastgah* systems, except that *sanjo* “lacks the support of a drone” (Lee 1980, 142). And, as in Nōh theater music, the drummer serves as a main source of direction or inspiration for the pace and feel of the *sanjo*, in this case by interjecting exclamations such as '*choch'i!*' or '*cho't'a!*' at appropriate moments (141), much like the cries of encouragement (*ch'uimsae*) from the knowledgeable audience or drummer in Korean epic song (Ko: *p'ansori*), or the cries of '*Hau!*' in encouragement and appreciation of a singer/actor in Chinese Peking Opera. Every presentation of *sanjo* also consists of several passages of differing rhythms and structures, which flow and merge with one another. There are three passages; *chinyang* (slow), *chungmori* (medium), and *chajinmori* (fast) (Chung 1992, liner notes), which loosely resembles Nōh theater music's usage of the *jo – ha – kyu* idea in performance and theory.

1. 7. Nōh Theater Music and Improvisation.

The music from Nōh theatre provides an interesting case study of fixed style and the impulsive inclusion of pitch varieties when considering the possibility of improvisation in Japanese music. The word “Nōh” (also spelled *Nō*) is an abbreviation of Sarugaku Nōh, a performance of plays, songs and dances by *sarugaku* players. In the Kamakura (1192–1336 CE) and Muromachi (1337–1602 CE) eras performances of Nōh

occurred in various styles, but the *sarugaku* players became the overwhelming majority in the Muromachi Era; thus it became unnecessary to describe Nōh as the Sarugaku style. With a few stylistic elements developed since this time, Nōh still has kept the same form that it was given by the father and son known as Kanami and Zeami. Zeami was the eldest son, and became the father of the Nōh theatre with his written systemization of Nōh artistic theory (O'Neill 1974, 1). Though the writings were primarily concerned with acting, the aesthetic principles were considered to be the same for the drummers and flautist in the ensemble as well. Though there were other dance, song, and theatre types existent during this time, Nōh developed unique theoretical approaches to sound and performance, which were the focus of the formal nohkan flute lessons I undertook for one year (2000) at the Ōtsuki Nōh Theatre School in Osaka with Master Denosuke Noguchi.

A description of the note/beat structures reveals how deeply embedded the Japanese concept of significant space or silence (Japan: *ma*) is present in Nōh theatre in particular. As all students of Nōh are taught, eight beats constitute a unit of rhythm in Nōh. This is called a *kusari* (chain). It can also be divided correctly in Western music notation as two measures with one beat per quarter note, or 4/4. The rhythm that makes up the Nōh rhythm cells is punctuated intermittently by the nohkan. This means that there are moments where there is no sound; not even an implied rest. Here what is interesting to notice is that every quarter-note beat of time is considered as made up of an eighth-note of *ma* (*ura-byōshi*). The terms *omote* and *ura* stand for 'front' and 'back' of the note, but in more common terms, symbolize the bright or dark side of something or someone's

opinions. The essence of the rhythm lies in the syncopation, the *ura-byōshi*, a reverse of the average concept of rhythm moving from strong to weak. The accent moves from weak to strong in this case. So while each kusari extends from beat one to beat eight and a half, each unit of rhythm begins on the final *ura-byōshi* (8.5) of the preceding measure. The rhythmic units are not joined per se, but are “connected in the form of a chain” (Komparu 2005, 189).

The *kakegoe* shouts used in Nōh theatre present an interesting perspective on improvisation. This type of conducting is exclusive to Nōh and gives Nōh its unique sound. *Kakegoe* are the syllables shouted out by the drummers before or as certain beats are played. These startling growls and shouts are designed to shape and direct the rhythm of the piece and they also signal who is playing on which beat in the current measure of music. It is the drummers using *kakegoe* that establish the appropriate mood for the play, and create a ‘sense’ of the rhythm through their vocal or rhythmic style. The appropriate shape of the cries are decided in the moment, and have a spontaneous quality to them, even though they are written down on the manuscript for performance. This *kakegoe* functions as a conducting process of sorts, since there is no conductor in a Nōh accompaniment ensemble. The cries themselves are placed on the upbeat that precedes the next percussive sound on a downbeat. Disregarding stylistic variations of the practices of different school, there are four basic types of *kakegoe*. *Ya*, which arrive on the upbeat preceding beat 1 or 5, marks the beginning of each half-measure. It can also be pronounced with a long vowel sound (*Ya-a*). *Ha* comes on the upbeat preceding beats 2,

3, 6, 7, or 8, and can be pronounced with a long vowel. Although *ya* and *ha* are phonetically spelled as such, it is more common to hear them pronounced as *yo* and *ho*. *Iya*, the most shrill and immediate of the syllables, is found mainly on the upbeat before an odd-numbered beat, and marks the end of a rhythmic subsection. *Yoi*, a lengthy shout that starts on the upbeat of 2 and lasts until the upbeat of 3, signals the drummer's decision to finish the series of patterns currently being played. It is not uncommon though to find *yoi* on beat 5, and it may also be pronounced "yooii." It is vital to note for this paper that *kakegoe* serves to give shape to the rhythm, a decision not far removed from other types of improvisation. The placement of the cries on the upbeat is significant not only stylistically, but theoretically as well. Nōh music is mostly rhythmic in nature, the striking *nohkan* flute being used more like an effect than a traditional flute like the *ryuteki*. Without a constantly flowing melody structure, Nōh music is 'filled' with space. These spaces are where the *ma* of the music is considered to reside, "ma" in this case being the enigmatic deeper 'meaning' of the piece. In simple terms, *ma* means 'interval' or 'space', but in aesthetic terms derived from Buddhism, it implies an absolute timing or spatial meaning, the idea that the space between the notes makes the work profound, not the notes. It is a/the place where the meaning of the notes and acting arises.

The inclusion of *kakegoe* in this music has some very interesting implications. The idea of the "cry" itself has been described by Albert Bazaillas in the following manner:

The world of sounds...possess an immediate intelligibility: for the elements which compose it which go from a cry to a plaint, subdued by

the song and by the infinitely tender modulation of desire, also happen to be the fundamental elements of the manifestations of the human sensibility and cause us to enter instantly in commerce with the reality of the universe where all is desire and pain. It is in virtue of this immediate intelligibility that the sounds coincide with the very essence of being as it is revealed to our sensitivity or as it tends to condense it. Without having to recourse to any concepts, we understand immediately the implication of a cry of distress, of suffering, or of joy, and we respond to it at once by an appropriate attitude³.

Even though the cries in Nōh are stylized and do not have the spontaneity of the cry of distress, or joy, they still touch the listener's aesthetic sensibilities without being filtered through intellectual/visual frameworks. The Nōh cry transmits directly to the listener the emotional state of the character(s) on stage. To accomplish this, the form and intensity of the kakegoe are changed, and the tension/duration of an interval are spontaneously created and terminated, usually in the beat of accompanying drum. It is clear that no kakegoe syllables are ever improvised, the drum beats and kakegoe being combined into clear rhythmic units. So what could be the improvisational character of the music then? I would argue that it is a spontaneous statement of emotion and intuition of deep meaning in Nōh. In *Le théâtre japonais* Paul Arnold states:

When the Noh is really effective, it puts the spectator in a state bordering on mystical ecstasy; this would be the state of myōfū which is 'beyond all possibility of enunciating or explaining', domain of the ineffable and this of this nirvanic vacuity which Zen Buddhism proposes as the supreme victory of introspection. Here, the art of Noh becomes one with the highest liturgical exercises and the actor attaining these mystical altitudes makes the theatre a perfect act of initiation⁴.

³ Cf. de la signification metaphysique de la musique, d'après Schopenhauer. A. Bazailles. Paris, 1904. Felix Alcan, p. 16.

⁴ Arnold, Paul. 1957. *Le théâtre japonais*. Paris: L'Arche, p. 86

Here, we see a decidedly religious interpretation of Nōh. Hans Eckhardt states that:

Synthesis of diverse expressions of Japanese art, the Nō (sic), which is the most refined expression of Japanese culture, can only be explained in the light of Zen Buddhism. Zen denies the importance of the exterior world and rejects its illusory appearances. It encourages the discipline imposed by an extreme simplicity in living...everything in the Nō reflect(s) the influence of Zen⁵.

It is known to practitioners and students that Nōh music is not written with a religious objective. But the Muromachi Era, in which Nōh theatre was constituted into its definitive form, was dominated by a military class brand of Zen, in which “personal effort, asceticism and domination of the Self were primary” (Tamba 1981, 227). In Zen Buddhism in general, the neophyte gradually arrives by asceticism, meditation and Buddhist logic at the state of Sunyata where the constructed false self is set aside. In this state, there is neither aversion nor attachment to desire. One comes to identify with the Absolute or the Eternal. This state is the Nirvana mentioned in most forms of pre- and post-Mahāyānic Buddhist sects. In our world, it is taught that Subject and Object are opposed and separated. Someone sees a separate thing apart from himself. This relative opposition keeps us from seeing the unity and interdependence of all things, the unified state that is known as *Sunyata*. To attain this understanding, one must rise out of the subject/object duality. The process (with which I am familiar at least) is the advancement from *Shiki* (discriminating consciousness) to *Hanya* (intuitive transcendental wisdom). *Shiki* is identification with a constructed Self from sense data and reflection on that data. The transcendence of this construction to Nirvana is the divestment of the *Shiki*, the

⁵ Commentary with the record “A Musical Anthology of the Orient.” BM 30L, 2017.

hindrance to understanding the true nature of Reality. Intelligence is transcended towards a state of *intuition*. Buddhist teachers and sects have debated the character of this intuition: whether it is achieved through long years of study (Hinayana), achieved by anyone through meditation (Mahāyāna), or achieved through meditation suddenly in a flash (Zen). This sudden understanding is not a verbal explanation of an answer, but a simple cry that is understood to be the complete expression of understanding—much like the word ‘Eureka!’ has become associated with the notion of understanding the solution to a problem present to the speaker. But Eureka is followed by an explanation of what has been discovered, whereas the Zen expression of the ultimate realization is expressed by a so-called ‘irrational mode of expression which is primitive and naïve’ (228). These cries of Zen intuition are called *katsu*, and according to Zen patriarch Rinzai (Lin Chi), there are four distinguishable types:

The first is the sacred sword of Vajrarāja (an allusion to the sword cutting away the illusions of this world; the cry of enlightenment); the second is like a goldenmaned (sic) lion at rest; the third is like the plumb or the blade of grass used as bait; and the fourth is the one which has no longer become a cry (Tamba 1981, 228).

The first is a familiar description of the moment of attainment. The rest possibly refer to the various *katsu* of temple life, such as when the senior monk in a debate reproaches a junior monk with a loud shout. The intuitive *katsu* then is the immediate, most direct means for expressing intuitive understanding. But can we compare these religious cries the aesthetic setting of the *kakegoe*? The Nōh theatre has been described as “one of the greatest expressions of Ashikaga Zen art...a secular Zen mass, in which some of man’s

deepest aesthetic responses are explored” (Hoover 1977, 158). The subjects which the spectators hear on stage such as love, jealousy, and Buddhist exegeses are the subjects of this reality, but the cries of joy and pain seem to reach into a different realm of intuitive understanding, the quality of jealousy as evidenced in the voice and shape of the uttering for example – a Jungian intuition of a prime reality of feeling or ultimate meaning.

The nohkan, similar in size and shape to the *ryuteki* used in *gagaku*, is a transverse flute with a unique construction and role in Japanese music. Its role in Nōh especially is worth considering in light of the topic, as the nohkan represents to me personally an integration point of ideas on improvisation in Nōh. Its physical nature and the method of its use are related to key concepts of Nōh aesthetics, for especially in its fabrication do we see a distinct feature of the nohkan, the insertion of the *nodo* (‘throat’) into the instrument. This metal tube changes the pitch relationship between finger holes, so that fixed intervals according to some kind of temperament do not occur. Plus, on instruments made of bamboo, the actual tube lengths and distances between finger holes vary due to the quality and nature of the wood. The lack of fixed pitch means that are no two flutes that do or can play the same pitch though the intervals may be similar. On the *ryuteki*, melodies must be homophonic with the *hichiriki* in most pieces, and in tune with the harmonic accompaniment provided by the *shō*. Since there is no harmony in which the nohkan plays a role, fixed pitch is not demanded or considered necessary. The idea of fixed pitch in relation to a series of notes or scale is non-existent in Nōh music, nor is there a perfect fifth or octave, and this would seem to be consciously avoided by the

insertion of the nodo. So the pitch fluctuates endlessly, and I consider this is a vital feature of the music. Japanese musicologist Akira Tamba, however, points out that the nodo affects the power of the first partial (Tamba 1981, 150). This would be important for projecting the sound in the outdoor, firelight performances of Nōh (*takigi*) in Buddhist temples or Shinto shrine courts that were customary of the distant and recent past. He also suggests that this development explains the forceful and sharp timbre of the instrument, “developed empirically to meet the need for this power” (150). In this case, Tamba sees a special role devolving from the dramatic intensity, and the production of the nohkan is conditioned by this objective of a need for a special forcefulness. The nohkan is easily recognized by its fundamental sound, which is very different from other Japanese flutes. Its fundamental sound is intense (80 db), there is a distinct lack of a second harmonic, and the third harmonic is weak in comparison (20 to 30 db below the level of the fundamental) (151). The physiologically impacting intensity of the nohkan is greater than the Western flute for example, with a harmonic dispersion in the 70-75db range. This intense sound is used to colour the emotional tone of the work of the actors creating the scene visually. Also by design, the field of pitch is highly varied by the use of semi-stops on the finger holes and angling the mouthpiece. In this manner, the nohkan player is able to play all the pitches allowed by the range of the instrument, giving the flautist the ability to add extremely subtle tonal shadings to the pitches required by the performance. In this manner, the nohkan presents the opportunity to create a kind of tonal

and/or timbral “colour” improvisation that makes every performance unique and unrepeatable, like non-idiomatic improvisation.

The music written out for the *nohkan* is unique in two important aspects as well. In the traditional method of writing notation, there are no indications of rhythm. In *Nōh*, we find melodic and rhythmic cells that function together or independently of each other as the play progresses. But mathematical, measured rhythm as such is non-existent. Of the (two) types of rhythm encountered in *Nōh*, it is *ashirai* we will discuss as part of my thesis. *Ashirai* is ‘non-controlled rhythm’ used to accompany a song or instrumental piece such as a prelude, interlude, or an exit piece. A distant connection might be made to the *netori* intro of *gagaku*, but the purpose of the *ashirai* is different. The key feature of *ashirai* lies on its free rhythm. The melody cell of the flute is not connected to, but superimposed over the associated rhythm cell. This is not a mathematical unity, but a layering that can create the effect of an uncounted polyrhythm. The beginning and the end of the superimposition are defined, but the cell content is left to the free interpretation of the flautist. Even the Japanese word *ashirai* comes from the Japanese verb *ashiruru* (to answer), implying some sort of call and response within the music, though there is no interplay of drum and flute. The second unique aspect of *nohkan* music is the melodic notation. Since we are dealing with a decidedly unfixed pitch instrument, the objective of the notation then, is to transcribe a sonorous melodic contour constituted by specific elements that were previously determined. This is accomplished through the system of fingering notation and solmisation based on onomatopoeia. The table of fingerings does

not indicate fixed pitches (through the 'correct' pitch of the fingering can constantly be achieved with correct blowing and fingering technique). Therefore, using the onomatopoeic syllables to shape each pitch in a sequence of solmized notes, the shape of the pitch will change if the syllable 'ha' for example, is at the beginning or end of a sequence of fingerings. This method of playing is an efficient way of apprenticing (*chōka*) on the *nōkan*, for the student learns the melodic theme and content of the cell simultaneously. The key point here is that due to flute design and the system of solmisation, the melody is primarily a set of fingerings with no strict note attached. The phrases played by the *nōkan* player are determined by the nature of the flute and the nature of the syllabic interpretation of the artist, leaving a lot of room for spontaneous pitch adjustment and emotional colouring within a strictly defined musical border of cell structure.

At this point, the tempo of *Nōh* theatre pieces must be mentioned. The idea of tempo in *Nōh* is more concerned with the psychological and temporal implications of a play. Rather than metronomic measurement, the temporal organization and psychological tension created by silence, un-pitched sound, gesture, and even actor's mask angle is a more accurate measurement of the tempo of a play. The aesthetic principle of *jo-ha-kyū* is a major factor in the decisions made by all involved in the presentation of *Nōh*. Usually translated as 'intro-development-finale', it can also be translated as 'slow-medium-fast.' But it is not meant to be translated as a linear process but rather, an evolving idea wherein there can be smaller increases or decreases of tension and speed as the play progresses

towards the greater jo-ha-kyu of the plot. The increase and abatement of the tempo of the play and the music is an interaction between the musicians and the actor on the stage.

While the nohkan may be in a jo phase, the *shite* actor may be in a kyu phase, and it is the responsibility of each to be creating the proper atmosphere for the plot.

1.8. The *Hana* Concept

It is here that the greater aesthetic principle of *Hana* in Nōh has a direct impact on the ideas presented thus far. The areas wherein acts of spontaneous creation take place are guided by an overarching principle set out by Zeami on the art of Nōh.

A common Zeami aphorism heard in Nōh lessons is “what the actor (or flautist) does not do is of great interest” (Japan: *seni tokoro ga omoshioki*). I interpret this as the use of *ma* to create that emotional state where nothing is being done, but the “immense presence” of emotion is felt. For in my studies of Nōh theatre under Sensei Noguchi, I was constantly reminded to ‘play’ the *ura-byōshi* as consistently as the *omoto-byōshi*. Zeami himself states “the inner tension of the actor in his prescribed emotional state is the thing that audiences sense in the silence of the actor” (Rimer/Yamasaki 1984, 97).

Various terms can be used to distinguish this state from other Zen arts or Zen Buddhism itself. *An-i*, the state of perfect versatility and ease, is neither inner state nor outer action exclusively. One can grasp the actor's genuine understanding of the role and the art of Nōh (*fūga-no-makoto*), which may resemble the original purity of enlightenment (Japan: *hongaku*, Kor: *Tae-a*), or the essential nature of phenomena (*hon'i*). An actor, through mastering or creating *hana* can create in the audience an awareness

of the beauty and sacredness inherent in everything (*hosomi*, *kanjaku*, and/or *ka*) most commonly created in haiku, (Ch: *ch'i-yun*) the 'spirit' resonance of an artwork; how alive with *chi* (Japan: *ki*) it is (not to be confused with the Western notion of *chi* as a catch-all term referring to 'energy'). This beauty usually has a relationship with impermanence or aging (Japan: *kokō*), while the profound activity itself is *mui-no-i* (Ch: *wu-wei*), something being done by nothing being done, containing no trace of deliberation, the sense of 'no-sense' (Japan: *mukan-no-kan*, in Chinese painting *hsi-pi*: "playing with the brush"; spontaneous *wu-wei* painting after mastery of technique). Best of all is the term *mushotoku* (Ch: *Shêng ì*), "without a fixed salary," meaning doing without thought of action or end, result, or reward leading to *myōfu*, mystical experience that which is beyond all understanding and enunciation, usually created by the mature actor with *ran-i*, the fully matured state of artistic sense that comes from an intense cultivation of skill. This is the profound, unfathomable Japanese beauty of *yūgen*, achieved at the "sō" level of performance expressed in the term *shin-gyō-sō*.

The *shin-gyō-sō* system of describing levels of visual and musical composition in Nōh is similar to the idea of gestalt in visual/aural perception. We see the actor and the background, hear the notes and the rests, and organize them accordingly in our minds. This is the *shin* level of Nōh. The next level, *gyō*, makes the general organization of the work less clear (in an artistic manner) through the use of narrative, chronological reversal, and sparse instrumentation. The *sō* level of composition consists of the expressive part serving to support the 'blank' part, only existing to give 'shape' to this

void. This blankness is the core of a *sō* composition, and the highest attainable level of acting, narrating, or musical performance in Nōh. How one deals with the nature of a *sō* level performance involves a high degree of training, to the point where training is forgotten and the actor or flautist ‘instinctively’ uses the practiced elements to frame the *ma*. Unlike a boundary, *ma* can be created with a single note or gesture, like the single post sticking out of a shrine foundation at the Isse Grand Shrine symbolizes an “area of reverence and quiet” (Komparu 2005, 72). This idea from Zeami (*senū tokoro*: the site of undoing, unspeaking) speaks of the ‘silences’ (*ura-byōshi*) in the nohkan music that are all alluded to by *notes*. So what is in the artist? What is the meaning of the silence that one can spontaneously create or express, for the individual musician is not displaying his own unique style like one would in a more solo-oriented form like jazz improvisation. *Ma* becomes one’s own feeling: feeling, appropriately expressed in light of the mood of that particular performance, is the thus ground of this *ma*. Zeami discusses this in his aesthetic theories of *hana*.

The plays of Nōh are concerned with the impermanence of life and how various beings, both natural and supernatural, deal with reality and fate. The deep emotional nuances of Nōh come from the explanation and personification of various truths and their consequences in a person’s existence. Thus, the art of Nōh is an art of expression through aesthetic principles of the mysteries and profundities of life. The expression of the *quality* of being sad, the inner *qualities* of sorrow, is sought in the acting and musical art of the Nōh theatre as the ground for all gesture and sound. And the concept of *hana* as a

flowering of these qualities at the appropriate time in a play is paramount. The flowering is the domain of those that create the piece and successful performance is a personification in the artistic ritual of the quality of existence. In the void of *ma*, this emotional awareness is grasped internally by the audience member as the actor and the *nohkan* player create what they feel is the proper space for this realization. This spontaneous shifting of pitch, tempo, and rhythm within the cells of music is for an emotion, psychological effect and is improvised in the process of finding the suitable gesture for the specific audience, time and location of the piece. This, as a spontaneous shifting of elements, is an improvisation within traditional boundaries, but more specifically, could be considered an emotional improvisation of notes, timing, *kakegoe* pitch and shape, and pacing (though my own teacher himself did not have an opinion on this matter).

1. 9. I-guse as Stillness/Silence

Another excellent description of this kind of Nōh theater *ma* is the *i-guse*, a seated form of the Nōh dance set to a narrative song-poem known as a *kuse* (Komparu 2005, 73). When performing an *i-guse* the actor (known as a *shite*) sits center stage, completely still, while the chorus chants. In this state of complete stillness the *shite* "dances" with their spirit, revealing the dance through subtleties of mask angle, temporal length of stillness, posture, position stage, and physical tension. Superfluity is avoided strenuously, because as it is believed 'elegance is created when the ordinary is abbreviated,

concentrated, and reduced to essentials' (74). This idea of *i-guse* as an expressive medium also has an agnate in Kabuki theatre through the use of the *mie* posture.

In Kabuki, the term *kakegoe* is used to describe not the rhythmic chanting of the ensemble, but rather the shouts of encouragement and *family names* in Kabuki, such as Danjūro IX. If an actor did a part well, the audience yells out "The Ninth!" in reference to his work being as good as the work of the Ninth Patriarch of the Danjuro family lineage. In Kabuki certain families perform certain roles exclusively. Kabuki also contains raw, abstract sounds made in the performance of the vigorous *aragoto* vocal style. In this style one distinguishes oneself in the powerful cries made at the actor's highest emotional peaks, as exemplified in the nonsensical phrase "Yattoko tottcha, untoko da!" shouted out by the *aragoto* actor at the end of the play *Shibaraku* (Wait a Moment) (Brandon 1978, 71).

But it too has an *i-guse* type of *ma* infused zone, a frozen body/facial posture wherein "all physical and psychic energies are concentrated in a single instant" (Leiter 1997, 403). This pose, known as *mie*, accentuates the emotional tension of a scene, the timing and presentation of which reveal the artistry of the actor, accompanied by a rolling and snapping of the head into a pose in which one eye is angled, or both eyes are crossed. *Mie* come in various forms, such as: (1) the *Fudō* *mie*, which resembles the facial and bodily features of Buddhist warrior-guardian *Fudō-Myō* statuary seen at the gates of certain temples, (2) the *Genroku* *mie* – affected by the character of *Shibaraku*, in which he enters the stage shouting "Just a minute!" identifies himself, and then strikes a

threatening mie in front of an assembly of villains (Kawatake 2003, 114-15), and (3) the *Hippari no mie*, which expresses the psychological tension between characters, sometimes several at a time. Unlike the (non-diegetic) sound effects that convey the psychological effects of the action onstage in both Nōh and kabuki, the mie is a silent posture, and it is the mie especially that reveals the quality of the actor.

2. 0. Conclusion

It can be said that the demonstration of skill in spontaneous emotive shaping is not possible, for who is quantifiably “better” at such an art when the conditions for testing such a claim are subjective? Also, performers are not responding to the unforeseen; most everything they need to create an emotional statement is mapped out in the score. This is not comparable to non-idiomatic improvisation in that sense, so the term “improvisation” is problematic. Nōh improvising (as I have presented it) also is not the creation of new music or “new” emotions, for we are dealing with conventional resources, and not adaptation of Nōh in hybrid theatre formats (Shakespearean Nōh, Christian Nōh, or even Nōh by Yukio Mishima), which are not the subject of my argument. But we do see a sense in the participants and audience of an exceptional Nōh performance that something special and unrepeatable is occurring. A professional Nōh performance does adapt to the situation of a performance, and can go deep into the psyche of both performer and audience member when the *shite* or *waki* actor is presented in an interesting emotional perspective since the performers cannot and do not know how a particular audience will feel about what is occurring on stage. The direct emotional

utterance of the kakegoe, combined with the moment-to-moment shadings of the nohkan within the music both presents a unique area from within to express one's feelings as an aesthetic reflection of the mysteries of life. This spontaneous flow of emotional elements (dynamics, pitch and timbre variation, acoustic energy, etc) within traditional art is a type of improvisational act, and presents an opportunity to understand further the role of improvisation in the art music of Asia. But as an improvisational art comparable to non-idiomatic improvisation, it shares no kinship.

But is such an art comparable with non-idiomatic improvisation in another manner? If one is inspired by Nōh practices, can they be adapted to non-idiomatic improvisation, which would seem to reject formula or standardized technique?

CHAPTER THREE: PARERGA

1. 0. Introduction

Since improvisational types in Zen Buddhist-influenced Japanese traditional music are not comparable to non-idiomatic improvisation, we must look at Zen Buddhism itself as a site for making significant practical connections. But, as previously mentioned, first, we must investigate the “between” of this relationship. To connect ideas is to use metaphors of territory or proximity, of nearness, and thus we must look at how we can draw Zen Buddhism and improvisation “near” to each other within the “between.” More specifically, we must define such a ‘between’ before we can discuss it. Do Zen Buddhism and improvisation conceptually “border” each other? How can two concepts be “close?” The physical connotations of our adjectives and metaphors become significant, especially when discussing two inherently abstract systems. By examining a particular Greek term used by philosopher Immanuel Kant, I will demonstrate that, if defined properly, we can find a suitable conceptual “between-space” for Zen and improvisation that works as a practical supplement to practicing non-idiomatic improvisation.

1. 1. Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724 –1804 CE) was born in Kaliningrad, the fourth of nine children (Kul-Want 2005, 4). Though raised in a strict Pietist family and educational system, Kant eventually became opposed in principle to religious ceremony, and later, as the Rector of the University of Königsberg, was decidedly “indisposed” when official participation in religious practices was required (8).

Among his major innovations was his focused attention on philosophical aesthetics, which he established as an independent subject for the first time in history by “subjectivising the aesthetic experience” (Hammermeister 2002, 39/40). By taking note of the aesthetic components of knowledge, truth, and reality, he made the study of aesthetics “epistemologically fundamental” in relation to each (Welsch 1997, 39). The value of a work of art depended on its beauty, relating to its ability to be a vehicle for aesthetic ideas (Whewell 2009, 388). This gave sensory embodiment to virtue, God, infinity, etc, without giving us any direct knowledge of them, thus these ideas are “without *truth*” (388). Though his *Critique of Judgment* formally dealt with aesthetics, it was the *Critique of Pure Reason* that began his shift away from the scrutiny of Being to the experience of Being. In doing so, Kant essentially created a “new critical epistemological Idealism:” the cognizing subject shapes his experience to such a degree that he will never be able differentiate what he brings to an experience from what is ‘other’ to him (Lusthaus 2002, 5); thus the truth of something “is always outside of itself.”

Kant’s fundamental aesthetic belief was that a proper apprehension of aesthetic beauty is one that is limited to an appreciation of an object's pure form—that is, one that is not tainted by any interest other than the purely aesthetic—“which would lead to the odd conclusion that a man is not thinking primarily of a woman's beauty when he finds her sexually attractive” (Fearn 2001, 107). In the chapter “Analytic of the Beautiful” (*Critique of Judgment*), Kant states that “beauty is not a property of an artwork or natural

phenomenon, but is instead a consciousness of the pleasure which attends the 'free play' of the imagination and the understanding" (Kul-Want 2005, 124). Even though it appears that we are using reason to decide that which is beautiful, the judgment is not a cognitive judgment and is consequently not logical, but aesthetic. What is beautiful is what puts us into "pleasurable contemplation" (124). And for Kant, morality is necessary for the cultivation of artistic taste. This puts Kantian aesthetics within a comparative realm with Chinese Confucianism for example, where art is "necessary for the cultivation of morality" (Chang 1976, 400).

Kant's main concern in aesthetics was the nature of aesthetic claims, and the validity or authority of such claims. At the time of his writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he believed that statements about an object's beauty were completely subjective, and had no philosophical validity. Such statements were either "empirical generalizations concerning usage, or did not even apply to aesthetic claims specifically" (Kemal 1992, 2). In a footnote to the first *Critique* he states:

The Germans are the only people who currently make use of the word "aesthetic" in order to signify what others call the critique of taste. This usage originated in the abortive attempt by Baumgarten, that admirably analytic thinker, to bring the critical treatment of the beautiful under rational principles, and so to raise its rules to the rank of a science. But such endeavors are fruitless. The said rules are, as regards their sources, merely empirical, and consequently can never serve as a priori laws by which our judgment of taste may be directed (2 – 3).

If such efforts are fruitless, then is beauty always subjective, or is it still somehow an objective fact? To answer this question Kant investigated varieties of aesthetic claims and objects, as well as questioned the socio-political, cultural, or moral nature of such claims

and objects: "What makes for creativity?" "What is genius in art?" and especially, "What is the *value* of beauty?" (Kemal 1992, 1) In essence, Kant interpreted aesthetic experience as both "its own unique form of autonomy as well as support for our efforts as both sensual and rational creatures to achieve moral autonomy. And in the process of the free play of imagination, our ability to imagine and reason supports the free will necessary for moral autonomy" (Guyer 2006, 332). The section "Analytic of the Beautiful" also contains the following statement:

Even what is called ornamentation (*parerga*), i.e. what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with frames of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form – if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm – then it is called *finery* and takes away from the genuine beauty" (Kant 2007, 57).

But what does this mean? Kant's use of the Greek word *parerga* (πάρεργον) is particularly interesting, considering its multiple interpretations.

The Greek meaning of *parergon* (pl: *parerga*) is "subordination," or "of secondary importance." In early Greek philosophy, τό πάρεργον is anything that has nothing to do with philosophy proper, things that are "not subject to rigorous philosophical investigation" (Krell 2000, 27). Socrates, for example, states in the second book of the *Republic* that an art or skill that one pursues should be done in an orderly manner, and "not merely as an avocation" [μή ἐν πάρεργου μέρει] (370c 1). In *Theaetetus* as well, Socrates states that the doctrine of Father Parmenides will not be grasped if one understands it "merely superficially" [εἴτε τις ἐν πάρεργου σκέπεται] (184a 6-7). In *Laws*

it is stated that children's education must never be treated as a subordinate matter [οὐ δεύτερον οὐδέ πάρεργου] (766a 4). Aristotle as well states in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that “one must make certain that ‘subordinate’ matters do not exceed the scope of the main work itself” [οπῶς μὴ τὰ πάρεργα τῶν ἔργων πλείω γίγνηται] (1098a 32) (26).

Kant states that the frame of a painting, the clothing on a statue, and the columns supporting a building of classical architecture are all accessories to what gives them their aesthetic power. Each was created for the purpose of increasing the aesthetic appeal of the "actual" work to which it was a *parerga*. It is not conceived to be an integral part of the work but a subsidiary or supplementary element. As far as a *parergon* does not partake in the beautiful form itself, it is “at variance with true beauty” (Kiilerich 2001, 320). In addition to this, Barbara Savedoff states that it is not a particular frame, but the existence of a frame, that makes the difference.⁶ It would also seem necessary to hold the word 'frame' to a workable definition for the purpose of understanding the difference it makes in a discussion of art, as there are a number of semantic stances one could take on such a word.

The frame around a work of art can enclose or contextualize it. Thus, framing as ‘enclosure’ implies a certain view. A closing off, or separation from what is not art. Thus this enclosure could be seen as a defining gesture. This could also be seen as an act of limitation; cutting off, controlling, reducing, curbing, a culling of the best 'stuff', a restriction, the creation of a defensible perimeter, a margin, a periphery, what is adjacent

⁶ From Barbara E. Savedoff. 1999. "Frames" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57, pp.145.

to the “common,” what is civilized and not 'frontier', what is 'in bounds.' A limit can also be a kind of safe zone in which things are safe to consume: what is within an expiry date or a safe “zone” before what is outside begins to cause harm. Kant's translation of supplementary into 'ornamentation' as well raises semantic issues in English if not in the German of his era. The implication that a parergon is decorative, or that it functions as adornment, is openly stated in Kant's writing. But as 'embellishment' and 'enhancement' would suggest, there is more to this word than Kant has revealed, that a parergon being situated within a single or several relationships with the work of art is a more complex entity than Kant reveals it to be for his explanation. For if what is embellishment enhances what is truly beautiful to the painting, then is not that which is secondary to beauty necessary for beauty to reach its highest potential, thus being intrinsic to the work's aesthetic value, for if beauty can be enhanced, then was its original beauty not somehow *less* beautiful then? The ergon also does not necessarily have to be material, though one might argue that, as in the Greek word *paralogos* (παράλογος), parerga are what is “beside” reason (irrational, illogical) thus not logical to be considered significant to the aesthetic integrity of an artwork, Kant does not present the supplement as unreasonable, but rather as unimportant. Kant's aesthetic philosophy also “fails to synthesize knowledge and morality through aesthetic mediation” (Yoo 2002, abstract). As aesthetics are the medium in which this mediation takes place, knowledge is parergonal to aesthetics, or vice versa.

As Yoo also points out, Kant also “does not address aesthetics' dialectical relation with non-aesthetic realms” (Yoo 2002, abstract). Also, ἔργον (in Classical Greek) can also be translated as ‘deed’ or ‘task’ (Beetham 2007, 31/34), thus the parergon can be conceptual as much as material; extra-intellectual and/or creative impetus to work (ἔργον: “unit of energy”) in one manner as opposed to another, or what supplements your understanding of the task, ergo Plato to St. Augustine’s writings, or Dionysus to Nietzsche, and, as we shall see, Indian folklore to the stories of the Buddha’s previous lives as well. Indeed, the Neo-Platonic idea that the ergon is the material manifestation of the *demiurge*, an intermediary archetype/force between the material world and the transcendent source of all Being (the One) that is outside of space and time, may be found in the writings of St. Augustine, as well as in the ancient Greek arts. Thus, the ergon represents both the energy and the principle behind the energy, as Arthur Schopenhauer evidences by Plotinus’ statement in his *Enneads* (iii, lib. Vii, c10), “The soul has made the world by stepping from eternity into time” (Schopenhauer 2001, 59). The Kantian parergon, by this reasoning, could contain Platonic principles, considering what Kant considers parergonal are the drapery on statues and colonnades, two forms of Classical creativity at the foundation of Western culture (the colonnades of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome, or the Doric colonnades on the exterior of the Athenian Parthenon, for example).

Could we then see Zen Buddhism as a “supplement” to practicing for improvisation that adds intrinsic conceptual or philosophical value and is, to paraphrase

Yoo, part of the “dialectic of music with non-musical realms?” French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his analysis of art and literature, takes up the issue of what can or does supplement a work.

1. 2. Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was a French philosopher known as the founder of Deconstruction, a process of analysing literature. As David Mikics states, the interest in Derrida’s work for many readers lies in his “grappling with differing impulses, even when he could not reconcile them” (2009, 6). So it is interesting to note that Derrida’s work is often used to analyze literature and philosophy, despite the fact that Derrida’s writing is often contradictory. For example, Derrida claims in his lecture on “Structure, Sign, and Play” (published in *Writing and Difference*) that the lack of a ‘determining center’ and Nietzschean irresponsibility were required by the highest human aspirations, that “only through randomness hypostasized as free invention would we liberate ourselves” (Mikics 2009, 5). Yet Derrida counters these ideas with Hebraic scriptures advocating attendance to the sufferings of one’s fellow man rather than evasion (6).

Derrida was concerned with the “necessary contamination of insides and outsides,” and deconstruction worked at the margins of a subject, on the limits of such organizational opposites. It is what is going on, happening, coming to pass, or coming about: “all intransitive locutions that dislocate the predicate’s tie to any stable present” (Kamuf 1991, xviii). The periphery, or what is marginal, is of vital interest to Derrida and crucial to any attempt at interpretation of art, representation, or aesthetics (Wolfreys

2004, 84). Derrida's work dealt with the both the demarcation and erasure of borders, boundaries, and limits – marks that determine representation while becoming invisible in the process of making the work appear (84). Important themes in his aesthetic writing included the *subjectile*, the *trait*, and *parerga*.

The *subjectile*, for example, is the material or support on which a painting, writing, or engraving is made, the underlying 'support' of canvas, paper, text.' It hovers in the background, neither there nor there, neither completely inside (or outside) any text, yet occupying the border between the work and the 'world.' The term marks and remarks a “crossing and 're-crossing'” of borders, instituting the very borders that it crosses, “while having no consistency apart from that of the between” (1991, 85).

The *trait*, meaning “what is drawn” or the brushstroke, is a mark that is “transmissible” or “available to reading,” indicating that it is always and already remarkable, even though abstract art for example is usually taken as un-re-markable, unless framed by content and 'form.' A trait is therefore always a re-trait, “never appearing for the first time, always a repetition, and its graphic conditions attest to identity as writing” (1991, 87). The trait, as a line of “demarcation,” a marking that works as a boundary or double boundary (*passé-partout*), describes the function of the *parergon* in Derrida's philosophy, a shibboleth to its secrets, and a signifier of both trait and *subjectile* (1991, 89). If we can see any “truth” in painting, we are now no longer able to discern its limits (1991, 91).

1. 4. Derrida and Parerga

Amongst Derrida's major writings on art (*The Truth in Painting* 1987, *Memoirs of the Blind* 1993, *Right of Inspection* 1998, and *The Retrait of Metaphor* 1998), *The Truth in Painting* is an excellent example of Deconstruction at work, the author pointing out what he considers the a priori rigidity of limits and borders that philosophical discourse assumes when applied to art and history (Cheetham 2001, 105).

There cannot be a work without “not-work,” or “sort-of” work, or even in the case of *parerga*, any “parts-of” work, as the frame itself is problematic. Derrida does not attempt to define the frame in *The Truth in Painting*. Rather, he points out the difficulty in defining the term, and thus points out the problem of Kant's *parerga*:

The Critique presents itself as a work (*ergon*) with several sides, and as such it ought to allow itself to be centered and framed, to have its ground delimited by being marked out, with a frame, against a general background. But this frame is problematical. I do not know what is essential and what is accessory in a work. And above all I do not know what this thing is, that is neither essential nor accessory, neither proper or improper, and that Kant calls *parergon*, for example the frame. Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit. And its surface between the two limits. I do not know whether the passage in the third *Critique* where the *parergon* is defined is itself a *parergon*. Before deciding what is *parergonal* in a text which poses the question of the *parergon*, one has to know what a *parergon* is – at least, if there is any such thing (Derrida 1987, 63).

As mentioned before in reference to Kant, the frame can be in various states of being “inside” or “outside” a painting, a part of its beauty, a supplement to its beauty, or irrelevant to the painting. In between are many grey areas of semi-establishment of a framing relationship, and Derrida deals with the difficulty of deciding exactly where and how a frame “works.” Frames can “intransitively verb” a painting: border, edge,

surround, enclose, and outline a painting. They can also mark a territory or put the painting in light of some philosophy or concept that enhances the aesthetic value or beauty of the painting. The frame can also be a noun: an edge, limit, boundary, margin, rim, frame, perimeter, circumference, frontier, maximum, or threshold.

Parerga, in their augmentation of a work, reveal a lack or absence in the work that is intrinsic to it. The link between the parerga and the lacking of the interior (*ergon*) reveals this lack as “constitutive of the very unity of the ergon” (Derrida 1987, 59). Once this parergonal logic is recognized, the task of knowing what belongs to the inside of a work of art and what belongs to the outside becomes “incompletable, epistemically impossible” (Bernstein 1992, 169). In this manner Derrida believes that philosophical discourse will always be “against” parerga (Derrida 1987, 54). This would seem to imply a type of kinship between Derrida and Mahāyāna Buddhist epistemology of the knower and the known “being independent events within an ever-changing matrix of other transitory events” (Huntington Jr. 1989, 18), or that, to both Derrida and Mahāyāna Buddhism, language is “ontologically empty” (Coward 1990, 127).

But neither Kant nor Derrida was a painter or a musician. The complexity of the philosophical application of the parergon concept does not mean that the practical creative realm, unknown to either philosopher, is also devoid of a suitable supplement. Carl Olson states that Derrida shares characteristics with Zen Buddhism because: (1) both subordinate rationality to spontaneity, (2) both are critical of a subjectively based philosophy since both are convinced of the impermanence of the subject, (3) both agree

that conceptual categories are impossible due to their lack of permanence, (Olson 2000, 84). This being the case, it would then seem possible (or possibly even necessary) to find a practical solution to the conceptual vagueness of the parergon to be found. What would then be a practical parergon to practicing improvisation, one to which Zen Buddhism could contribute?

It would seem that a similar activity practiced in each domain would be a starting point for finding an appropriate parergon, an activity in each that would share suitable traits to be brought into relationship with each other, an activity appropriately “parergonal.” This would also suggest that a practitioner of improvisation would find it of sufficient interest to be parergonal to their creative work, that he or she would have enough of an affinity for it to explore its possibilities. I call this artistic affinity “agnate gnosis”: the feeling of kinship or desire to enter into kinship with another conceptual or philosophical system, my definition being patterned after Harold Bloom’s work on literary influence.

1. 4. Agnate Gnosis

Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* states that:

Criticism is not a science, not even a 'human science', and it is not a branch of philosophy. The theory of poetry need not meet the tests by which science and philosophy rate theory, or by which they decide what is or is not theory. The theory of poetry, like all criticism, is an art, a teachable and useful art, and its true criteria are poetic...facts and arguments alike have little to do with poetry, or with poetic criticism (de Bolla 1988, 58).

To read actively is to make a fiction as well as to receive such a fiction, and the kind of active reading we call “criticism” or the attempt to decide meaning, or perhaps to see

whether meaning *can* be decided, “always has a very large fictive element in it” (58).

Bloom continues by saying:

I continue to be surprised that so many literary scholars refuse to see that every stance in regard to texts, however professedly humble or literal or prosaic or 'scientific' or 'historical' or 'linguistic', is always a poetic stance (59).

Bloom sees these swerves, mis-readings, and critical fictions as antithetical to the works preceding them. But in the realm of music and art, such mis-readings have no semantic or syntactical error, as such works do not have a mis-readable “grammar” or syntax in common. As there are no musical “verbs” or “nouns,” there is no note or song that can transmit faulty “information.” But we can misconstrue the historical and social context a work has been created in, and this is where such a mis-reading of Zen primarily lays.

Though one may not be at all culturally or historically connected to certain creative activities, one can potentially see similarities among them. These similarities often inspire a feeling of kinship between the musician and this “other,” a kinship based on a particularly positive Bloomian mis-reading, but a mis-reading nevertheless. This artistic “kinship” one feels, this assumed “similarity” of intention and motive can manifest as a feeling that they want or imagine things much like another person or group does thousands of miles away or did hundreds of years ago. The artist then often appropriates concepts or materials that suit the nature of their kinship, and proceed to create anew, now assuming that this kinship gives them some kind of agnate authority in a genre, particularly profound inspiration, or special insight into the appropriated material that others do not have. But this has often been the case in Buddhism itself, as much as it

can be ascribed to creative practices in the fine arts. For if the appropriation of Zen Buddhism as a supplement to improvisation and practicing is worthy of consideration, then its practice in Buddhism as well must be investigated.

1. 5. Exegetic Improvisation

As Tyler (1990); Khanna (1999); Nakamura (1973); Kim Hogarth (2002); Baruah (2000); and Warder (2000) have shown, significant syncretic extemporization on common Buddhist and folk themes has taken place in Japanese popular Buddhism, Indian stories of the Buddha's previous lives (*jataka*), and Korean shamanistic ritual. Also, this improvised exegesis (what I term "exegetic improvisation") has taken place often.

Zen Buddhist monks, for example, have been familiar with improvisation and doctrine, since they were expected to excel at *rinki ōhen*, a type of on-the-spot improvisation demonstrating a monk's ability to spontaneously use his wit and understanding of Zen to respond to the teacher in private *kōan* studies (*dokusan*) or in various question/answer sessions. Khanna (1999) reveals that the *Jataka* stories of early Buddhism have influenced the transmission of Buddhist doctrine in Japan across several eras, and I would suggest that exegetic improvisation is found most significantly in *Jataka* adaptation.

The formal Theravadan Buddhist scriptures were divided into 6 general types: prose discourses (*sutta*), allegories (*avadan*), historical narratives (*nidana*), special pronouncements (*udana*), 'thus spake the Buddha' scriptures (*itivuttakas*), and stories of the Buddha's previous lives (*jataka*) (Khanna 1999, 29). The *jataka* were structured in

three parts: the Buddha discoursing to his disciples, a ‘previous life’ story illustrating the point, and summary discoursing (30). But the interesting thing is that scholars estimate that around half of them are folk stories, animal fables, fairy tales, epics and such, that have no relationship with Buddhism, and that they were randomly appropriated for convenience. Since monks were from all classes of society, they brought their stories with them and used them whenever it was convenient to please and instruct their audiences (1999, 31). The Mahāsāṃghika Caitika sects took the jataka as canonical truth and rejected some of the Theravada, based on the belief that their jataka represented the “original set (of stories)” (Warder 2000, 286-287). According to the Theravadan tradition, the Buddha was once a master seven-string *vina* player named Guttila (Carter 1983, 128).

There is also the story (possibly a *nidana*) of the Six Heretics, representing the main doctrines that Buddhism argued against (Thomas 2002, 71). The *Sāmāññaphala-sutta*, “Discourse on the Fruit of Asceticism,” told from the standpoint of a Buddhist monk, concerns a certain King Ajātasattu who, having questioned the Six Heretics on their practices, asks the Buddha to comment upon their responses. First, Pūrana Kassapa espouses the view that karma has no results (*akiriyavāda*, “non-action”) to which the monk ascribes the denial of moral action. Next, Makkalin Gosāla states that there are actions, rebirths, karma, and such, but all is predetermined and there remains no responsibility for one’s actions. Akita Kesakambalin advocates belief in *ucchedavāda* (“cutting off”); no karma or afterlife, and existence ends in annihilation, which the monk

critiques as materialist. The next heretic, Pakūda Kaccāyana, believes that there is no soul or “body” as such, rather an aggregation of seven indestructible elements: water, earth, air, fire, happiness, pain, and “life” (Thomas 2002, 72–73) which, like Heretic Kassapa, the monk criticizes for denying moral action. Next, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (a Jain) espouses a doctrine of action (*kiriyavāda*) concerning the Jain ‘Fourfold Vow’, but, as it is historically misrepresented and misunderstood by the monk, Buddhist scholar Edward J. Thomas suggests it is not worth discussion (73). Sanjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, as well, is ascribed a shallow, irresolute attitude towards doctrine, making neither positive nor negative statements. Though Brahmaism and Yoga were also present at this time, the story does not include reference to them as such, and it is not known what form each had in the region that the Buddha lived and taught (2002, 81). Since the doctrines of the Six Heretics are summarized and the heretics are not actual people, it would be interesting to compare versions of this sutta to see what, if any, extemporization took place.

The *Alambusa Jataka* as well, tells the story of Rsyasringa (“saint with a horn”), the male offspring of Indian saint Vibhandaka and a deer. As recounted in the *Mahabharatha*, Vibhandaka is washing his face one morning in a pond when he spies the celestial nymph Urvashi bathing. He ejaculates and a deer inadvertently laps up his semen, becoming pregnant and giving birth to a male child with a horn (Khanna 1999, 87). In the *Alambusa Jataka* the story states that the deer eats grass wet with Vibhandaka’s semen. Rsyasringa is also known as Isisinga, which would seem to be the source for the story of the Japanese hermit Ikkakusenin, a hermit who had a horn on his forehead (91-

92). This incident appears in the *Konjaku Mongatari* (Vol. 5, No. 4), which may be the collection from which the story of Buddhist hermit Risshu Senin is sourced (the Konjaku's tripartite structure itself being suggestive of Indian influence: 1999, 35). A deer becomes pregnant from lapping grass on which Risshu has urinated and gives birth to a girl, who is said to be Komyo Kogo (701-760 CE) the wife of Emperor Shomu, an ardent Buddhist himself (1999, 93). The story also appears in the Thai *Jinakalamali* chronicles of the 16th century as the story of Vasudeva, an ascetic with superpowers who is not only responsible for the founding of the city kingdom Haripunjaya in Northern Thailand, but impregnates a doe (who drinks his semen-laced urine) which gives birth to two children who eventually marry (Baruah 2000, 407). Later Shinto/Buddhist syncretic story/texts show a similar style of appropriation and improvisation.

The *Nihonkoku Genpo Zenaku ryōiki* text of Kyōkai was a Japanese myth collection (Japan: *setsuwa*) used by monks to illustrate and reinforce their teachings (the truth of the actual stories themselves being questionable). But it is worth wondering whether these stories were (a) used in the manner of a parable, or (b) considered to be historically accurate.

The *Kasuga Gongen-genki* ("Miracles of the Kasuga Deity") compiled by Kakuen (1277–1340 CE), is a *setsuwa*-like set of Kamakura Era hand painted scrolls with text (*emakimono*). These depict temple/shrine origin stories (*engi*) and miracle stories (*reigenki*), particularly the main deity (and all of his manifestations) of the Shintoist Kasuga Shrine who was considered a part of the popular lay religious movements (*honji-*

suijaku) of the time. It was contemporary to the *Sannō reigenki*— an earlier set of emakimono celebrating the deity of Mt. Heiei, the *Kasuga go-ruki*, a “proto-genki” source of the Kasuga scroll—and the record of shrine miracles known as the *Miyashiro no genki* by Gedatsu Shōnin. At one time there also existed a text entitled *Zennyu Butsudōshu* (“Collection on Gradual Entry into the Buddha’s Way”), but some scholars believe that it is a version of the *Kasuga go-ruki* adapted to Buddhism (Tyler 1990; 13 – 16). There also existed *kikigaki* based on these collections, compilations of commentaries and teaching notes on the text of these scrolls. Surveying the vast, complex, and highly paradoxical interrelationships between the various schools, scrolls, theories, rituals, and historiographies of medieval Buddhist and Shinto theology that informed the *Kasuga Gongen-genki*, it is easy to see why the newly developing Zen Buddhism of Rinzai and Dōgen would be attractive to those confused by Buddhist/Shinto syncretic systems.

1. 6. Exegetic Improvisation in Zen Creativity Literature

Having discussed the improvised appropriation of outside material into Buddhism, we now can investigate the same process involving Zen Buddhist aesthetic thought into Western creative and pedagogical literature. These examples illustrate specific instances of drawing, playing the guitar, improvising, etc., being seen by the authors as positively supplemented by what they consider to be Zen Buddhism and its aesthetic philosophy. And though such works can be uplifting and creatively stimulating to the reader, they occasionally contain statements that may unintentionally obfuscate a

historically accurate or factual understanding of Zen Buddhism and its aesthetics, as well as create unintended logical fallacies, or leave Orientalism unchallenged.

On page 52 of *Free Play* (1990), author Stephen Nachmanovitch states:

The Sufis call this state (Samadhi) *fanà*, the annihilation of the individual selfhood. In *fanà*, the characteristics of the little self dissolve so that the big Self can show through. Because of this transpersonal grounding, artists, though they use the idioms of their own place and time, are able to speak personally to each one of us even across considerable gaps of time, space, and culture.

Though Nachmanovitch posits a reasonable generalization about Sufi culture, he then, on the same page, states that "Buddhists" call the dissolution of the self "samadhi," creating what may be misread as a type of false equivalence in Islam and Buddhism. There is much disagreement among Buddhist sects as to what samadhi is and how one realizes it. To "compare" Buddhist Samadhi to Sufi *fanà* may not have been the author's intention, but as written may be another potential site of misreading; as Nachmanovitch then states that "'transpersonal grounding" amongst artists is similar to "samadhi/fanà" (53). Richard Burnett Carter as well, in his book *The Language of Zen: Heart Speaking to Heart*, makes statements that may also be misleading.

A PhD holder in Philosophy, Carter studied Zen at the International Research Institute for Zen Buddhism, connected to Hanazono University in Kyoto; a setting in which Carter was surrounded by certified Zen masters, though there is no mention or record of his having undertaken formal monastic training. His expertise, as described in the cover sleeve of the book, is stated as the philosophy of Descartes, and the connection

between Cartesian logic and Western medicine. And though admittedly not an expert on Zen Buddhism, he states that his book is an attempt to help others in their reading of Zen texts (Carter 2010, xiv). This attempt though may be problematic; considering his statements (*italics of the author*) that: (1) Zen isn't a religion, (2) "the word Master in both Sōto and Rinzai Zen has *no* meaning except in the context of *Self-mastery*" (28), (3) One of the great teachings of Zen is that "*Symmetry is DEATH*" (153), (4) that Zen demands that its practitioners purge themselves of anything that is not noble and generous (an opinion stated first by Professor Eshin Nishimura) (xv), and (5) Carter's enjoyment of a particular day, as immortalized in a poem by Carter himself, *is* Zen Emptiness (xiv). The author does not provide scriptural support for these claims, and could potentially be criticized for ascribing Zen Buddhist qualities to the gratification of his own emotions (Self).

Borrowing from or aligning oneself with Japanese Zen through improvisational parallels is an act of creativity, a creative imagining, a resonant sympathy or feeling of kinship with another system, a creative "entering into," or creative kinship assumed through affinity and desire. This seems permissible in light of Donald Richie's (possibly Orientalist essentialist) suggestion that Eastern aesthetics suggest structure is a contrivance; that logical exposition is "falsifying," and that "linear arguments are limiting" (Richie 2007, 11). Such terms also seem "inter-parergonal" in light of Richie's following statements:

Most likely to succeed in defining Japanese aesthetics is a net of associations composed of listings or jottings, connected intuitively, that

fill in a background and renders the subject visible. Hence the Japanese uses for juxtaposition, for assembling, for bricolage.

We thus should not strive for logical conclusions. Rather, we ought to define those perceptions and variances of aesthetic appreciation through a style that conveys something of the very uncertainty of their description (12).

This uncertainty or vagueness may be due to the influence and function of the grammatical negative in Japanese language. As it is most polite to be indirect in one's speech, the sentence "Are you going to Tokyo?" is better expressed as "Will you *not be* going to Tokyo?" A guest in a Japanese household is more likely to hear the phrase "Are your feet not cold?" than what the sentence is meant to convey, "Please put your socks on, as it is not polite to wear no slippers or go barefoot in a Japanese house."

Jacquelynn Baas describes art as coming from and being realized in a place before language, outside of the discursive mind. She states that art:

...shares this place, the place of emptiness, with Buddhist meditation practice. This is one reason why a consideration of the relationship between art and Buddhism turns out to be so rewarding. This is, perhaps, what the American painter Ad Reinhardt meant when he wrote "the fine artist need not sit cross-legged" (Baas 2005, 10-11).

This uncertainty seems to support the idea that an affinity for Zen, or a desire for a Zen quality in one's improvisation is acceptable, or that Bloomian mis-readings may well be at the core of progress or innovation in art. But the actual veracity of what Zen is or can be described as may also contribute to a variety of mis-readings, based on the history of its interpretation and transmission in various cultures throughout time—a mis-reading of earlier mis-readings. Thus, the between-space of Zen and non-idiomatic improvisation

cannot be a stable supplement, if what we call Zen itself is not suitably definable or stable.

CHAPTER FOUR: ZEN BUDDHISM AND PARERGA

1. 0. Zen and Historical Veracity

There is much debate on what constitutes Zen or Zen Buddhism: who gets to explicate it, traditionalism vs. historical/cultural criticism and reform, as well as debate between what Steve Heine describes as “traditional Zen narratives (“TZN”) versus historical and cultural criticism (“HCC”)” (Heine 2008, 6). TZN argues that Zen is an idealistic, Utopian vision of non-dual experience that, by its very nature, stands beyond contestation due to its indefinable nature and the impossibility of its explication. Its means of expression are merely heuristics (“skillful means”) that are “part of its indirect communication through paradox and other literary techniques that point the way to silence as the ultimate truth” (6). The HCC standpoint argues that exponents of TZN are apologists deliberately cloaking Zen in a shield of opaqueness for the sake of avoiding or claiming immunity from the scrutiny of historical examination, which would disclose inconsistencies, contradictions, and a number of basic flaws in the character of Zen as a social institution. Heine then states that for them there must be a war of ideas “that challenges what is often the cynical obfuscation and hypocrisy inherent in traditional Zen” (8).

Zen philosopher and historian D. T. Suzuki stated that the teachings of any Buddhist school, center on the question “What is the “I?”” or rather “what is the true self?” apart from the “psychological or empirical” ego (Suzuki 1982b, 32), also stating that the essential discipline of Zen consists in “emptying the Self of all its psychological

contents” (Suzuki 1982a, 15). But the Buddhism set forth by Siddhartha is essentially a practical doctrine, dedicated primarily to the negation of suffering, and “the elucidation of philosophical issues is secondary to such concerns” (Collinson *et al* 2000, 74). And as there are no entirely reliable sources for the facts of the Buddha's life and teachings, we are left with accounts compiled by his followers (74), marked by the statement, “Thus I have heard...” to distinguish them as such. Written records began to be put together approximately 400 years after his death, and these were taken largely from the recitation of monks and oral pronouncements passed down from the Buddha's original disciples: “unverifiable and often conflicting” (74). Even *The Four Noble Truths* do not center on Suzuki's “I,” but rather the cause and cessation of earthly suffering and release from craving. This central, all-important doctrine does not posit the Self as illusion, or an “I” separate from the ego, but the transcendence that removes *primacy* from the ego.

Siddhartha does not summarily dismiss all pleasure, happiness, and sensation, but rather “points out the transience of such things” (Prebish 1975, 29). Things are impermanent in this transient state, but not an “illusion” as Suzuki states. And since craving is firmly rooted in the senses, Suzuki's transcendence would seem to gain no quarter in the doctrine of the original enlightenment of release from “sensing” alone. Indeed, Suzuki's positing of the ego as false also seems to negate both the wisdom of the Buddha, as well as the possibility for Siddhartha having come to a realization of the Four Noble Truths through reasoning during meditation rather than mystical illumination.

John McRae as well, in his discussion of genealogy in the Chinese Chan Buddhism that eventually followed Siddhartha's insights centuries later (McRae 2003) states that: 1. The contents of Zen texts should not be evaluated using a simple-minded criterion of journalistic accuracy, that is, "Did it really happen?" For any event or saying to have occurred would be a trivial reality involving a mere handful of people at one imagined point in time, which would be overwhelmed by the thousands of people over the centuries who were involved in the creation of Zen legends. The mythopoeic creation of Zen literature "implies the religious imagination of the Chinese people" (xix).

2. Statements of lineage identity and "history" were "polemical tools of self-assertion, not critical evaluations of chronological fact according to some modern concept of historical accuracy" (xix).

3. Numbers, dates, and other details lend an air of verisimilitude to a story, but the more they accumulate, the more we should recognize them as "literary tropes" (xix).

4. Romanticism breeds cynicism. Storytellers inevitably create heroes and villains, and the depiction of Zen's early patriarchs and icons cripples our understanding of both the Tang "Golden Age" and the supposedly stagnant formalism of the Song Dynasty (xx).

Considering that the Chan schools are the foundation of Japanese Zen, and the source of its early texts, already we see potential for many misunderstandings, mis-reading, appropriation of scripture, and a variety of creative interpretations.

None of the various details of the considered founder (First Patriarch) of Chan, for example, are true in the sense of being "journalistically accurate" (McRae 2003, 26).

Rather, it is the overall fabric of creativity within which the Bodhidharma hagiography developed that is most impressive. If we could analyze cross-sections at different points in time, we would see that the members of the Chan schools were “reformulating Bodhidharma's identity to fit their own conceptions of religious sainthood in each particular age” (27).

The fundamental expression of Zen ideology, long attributed to Bodhidharma in countless Buddhist tracts, histories, and hagiographies, is the statement that Zen is:

A special transmission outside the Scriptures; not to depend upon books or letters; to point direct to the heart of man; to see (one's own) nature and become Buddha (Pachow 1980, 8).

This statement, previously unquestioned as attributable to Bodhidharma, was actually stated first in the Tang Dynasty tract *Tsu-t'ing shih-yüan* (Japan: *Sōtei jion*) in 1108 CE, and a faint paraphrase of the first two lines of the *Lankavatara Sutra* (Dumolin 1994, 85/102).

1. 1. D. T. Suzuki and Zen

David Waterhouse stated in the early 1980s that the history of Japanese Buddhism has included “a rather notoriously corrupt priestly class, and unless modern Buddhism in Japan bears visible fruits, will dwindle from a great religion into a merely ingenuous school of philosophy” (Waterhouse 1984, 256 – 7). And, as I will show, there have been some that have argued that this had already occurred with the spread of D. T. Suzuki's writings on Zen, beginning in the 1920s.

Suzuki had a significant impact on creative culture, especially in America. His view—that the Zen man or woman was “at one” with nature and unhindered by the excessively intellectual, was spontaneous, and that this spontaneity “is the source state of creativity in the arts which all merged into Zen” (Suzuki 1959, 94)—was widely disseminated and well known. This idea of the Japanese or others having a living relationship with both Zen and the arts is considered, by Japanese art critic/writer Donald Richie, “just as much a modern invention as the idea of the West having lost touch with its own traditions” (Richie 2007, 58).

Suzuki critic Robert Sharf, in *Whose Zen? Zen Nationalism Revisited*, states that the heart of the Zen of influential writers like D. T. Suzuki and other Kyoto School philosophers lies not in ethical principle, communal/ritual practice, or doctrinal teaching, but rather in a “private, usually momentary, state of consciousness” (Sharf 1994, 45). This image of Zen, notably the notion that Zen refers not to a specific type of Buddhism but rather to a mystic, spiritual gnosis that transcends sectarian boundaries, is considered by Sharf to be a “twentieth century Suzukian construct” (44). Bernard Faure too describes this phenomenon as taking what is essentially one of many aspects of doctrine and regards it as dogma, “falsely assuming that it forms a long-standing part of Buddhist tradition” (Faure 2009, 4). But Suzuki’s idea of an underlying, inherent enlightenment consciousness or enlightened nature (Japan: *hongaku shisō*), is in actuality antithetical to Siddhartha’s exegesis of *anātman* (“no-self”), while simultaneously excluding the possibility of the *icchantika*, a sentient being “with no potential or hope of ever attaining

Buddhahood” (Swanson 1993, 115). Nowhere do the Four Noble Truths mention an “original” enlightenment. Rather, they posit an end to the type(s) of desire that lead to suffering through the instigation of a regimen of right living. By contrast, in privileging a Zen experiential source of all wisdom within an individual, these Japanese intellectuals sought to naturalize the category "religion" (if religious traditions were predicated upon an ineffable, mystical state of consciousness, they could not then be “rejected as superstition or infantile wish fulfillment,” 45). Once removed from its institutional or ethical context, this *free form* Zen could be used to lend spiritual legitimacy to a host of contemporary (possibly unethical) social, philosophical, and political movements,⁷ from Dadaism to Kyoto philosophy to new-age hedonism (43 – 44). Suzuki states in *Zen and Japanese Culture* that:

Zen is discipline in enlightenment. Enlightenment means emancipation. And emancipation is no less than freedom. We talk very much these days about all kinds of freedom, political, economic, and otherwise, but these freedoms are not at all real (Suzuki 1959, 5).

Calling such freedoms not "real" seems to support Sharf's critique. Suzuki also goes on to say that enlightenment (Japan: *satori*) is "emancipation, moral, spiritual, as well as intellectual. When I am in my isness, thoroughly purged of all intellectual sediments, I have my freedom in its primary sense" (17). He later adds that Zen has no taste for complexities that lie on the surface of Life (23). It is also important to note that Suzuki and his Kyoto School peers were marginalized, non-influential figures to the established

⁷ Suzuki supported the Japanese Imperial war effort, absolving the Japanese soldiers from their duties (Victoria 1997, 110), and blaming Shintoist influence for Imperial war crimes (ibid. 150).

schools of orthodox Zen Buddhism (Sharf 1993, 40). They were essentially “outsiders, lacking the proper training and credentials of a recognized Zen teacher” (Japan: *roshi*) (41), though it must be remembered that it was and is common in East Asia for such statements to be made about *competing* ideas and schools.

This non-sectarian gnosis may be what Suzuki is referring to when he states in *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* that:

(Zen) has nothing to do with any sectarian spirit. Christians as well as Buddhists can practice Zen just as big fish and small fish are both contentedly living in the same ocean (Suzuki 1964, 14).

Suzuki also states in *Living By Zen* that:

As long as God is content with himself he is nonexistent; he must be awakened to something which is not himself, when he is God (12).

In Zen there is no subject that experiences, nor is there any object that is experienced (33) (Suzuki 1950, 12).

How Christians and Zen Buddhists can share "Zen" would seem to be very difficult for any traditional understanding of either. Certainly, Zen meditation practice in a non-sectarian setting is possible, but it is hard to conceive of how anyone could practice *Mumonkan*-based kōan in context of Christianity any more than a Soto Zen Buddhist can embody the teachings of Dōgen by accepting Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior. But Suzuki states:

Yet it is a *fact* that the religious genius does not need so much help from knowledge and intellection as from the richness of the inner life (Suzuki 1969, 14: italics mine).

This "fact,"—that inner richness is a source of spiritual wisdom—seems to imply that such richness, being *spiritual* or *wise*, is incorruptible or faultless, and could be a potentially dangerous assumption if left unchallenged. This may be the thinking behind a statement attributed to Suzuki by John Cage critic Kyle Gann that any position one may have, or any idea one may cherish, "Zen wants to destroy it" (Gann 2010, 106). Gann also states that Suzuki had actually achieved enlightenment under the tutelage of Shaku Soen (102). And by insisting that Zen is a way of experiencing the world or "reality," rather than a complex form of Buddhist monastic practice, these writers seem to circumvent the question of their own authority to speak on behalf of Zen (43). Rinzai Zen founder Lin-ji (Japan: *Rinzai*), and many other Chan masters taught that there is no teaching, nothing to obtain, and that Zen points to an empty place of the Absolute. In such strategies, the master is sufficiently assured of his position in a hierarchy so as to deny the hierarchy and "cumulate any profits tied to the hierarchy and its symbolic denial" (Faure 1991, 20). This hierarchical iconoclasm/gnosis universalizes the "Zen experience" by denying that Zen is a school or sect of Buddhism per se, or even a "religion." Rather, in Suzuki's case, it denotes the universal experiential core of all authentic religious traditions, both Eastern and Western. In short, Zen is truth itself, allowing those with Zen insight to claim a privileged perspective on all the great faiths (1991, 46), which also "justifies" the claim that the universal religious experience of Zen "is the ground of Japanese aesthetic and ethical sensibilities" (1991, 46). This newly reconstructed Zen offered an intellectually reputable escape from the "epistemological

anxiety evoked by historicism and pluralism” (1991, 50). Suzuki states in *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (first series) that:

...Zen never explains but indicates, it does not appeal to circumlocution, nor does it generalize. It *always* deals with facts, *concrete and tangible* (Suzuki 1949, 20: italics mine)

That the complexities that lie on the surface of life are irrelevant, and by some implied transitive property, are not "facts" would seem to create an interpretation of Zen susceptible to Sharf's "reputable escapism." Suzuki also states that:

For freedom does not mean lawlessness, which is the destruction and annihilation of itself, but creating out of its inner-life force all that is good and beautiful... This creation, however, ceases to be a creation in its perfect sense when the creator grows conscious of its teleological implications; for here then is a split in his consciousness which will check the spontaneous flowing-out of spirit, and then freedom will be lost at its source (78).

Author Arthur Koestler even went so far as to lambaste anyone who would uncritically accept Suzuki's Zen wisdom, calling it "an intellectual hoax" (Koestler 1960, 255).

Chinese Ch'an Master Chüeh-fan Hui-hung (1071–1128) accused fellow monks of such "degeneracy," stating that:

Their teaching of the Dharma has fallen to utter ruin; everywhere Ch'an is taken to be the mere disregarding of written words and letters, and the 'subtle particularity' is thought to consist only in oral transmission (Kraft 1992, 151).

Author Christopher Hitchens too states that such a faith that despises the mind is ill-equipped for self-criticism, and such "contempt" for the intellect "has a strange way of not being passive" (Hitchens 2007, 204). He also states that, thanks to scientific advances such as the telescope and the microscope, religion in general "no longer offers an

explanation of anything important” (282). Certainly, the seeming absurdity of contradictory statements (as cited below and written by another lay Zen philosopher, also lacking formal recognition) makes a case for Koestler’s assessment:

Absolute emptiness is a state of consciousness about which we cannot make any logical statement. This state then must be realized before we can have any intelligent talk about it (Roy 2003, 131/139).

These statements would also seem to disagree with Suzuki's statement about Zen dealing with fact, which is now impossible even when we are sufficiently enlightened, for we cannot make any logical statements even when we can talk intelligently. Indeed, Clemens Caraboolad in *Mysticism and Zen, An Introduction* even goes so far to claim that words and concepts “cannot be truth” (Caraboolad 1978, 2). Kenneth Kraft though states that taking any overly literal anti-language stance in Zen not only obscures the complex role that language and texts played in the lives of monks; it also “overlooks the tradition's sophisticated hermeneutical awareness” (Kraft 1992, 7).

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk known for his Christian-themed writings on Zen, thought that Suzuki was the most authoritative and accomplished interpreter of the Rinzai tradition (Keenan 2007, 122). Merton also interpreted Zen as beyond the intellect, “avoiding the demands of intelligent insight and rational adjudication,” and that “Zen is not theology, and it makes no claim to deal with theological truth in any form whatsoever” (122).

It is important to note too that Suzuki didn't discuss the Zen of his day. The subjects of his lecturing dealt with historical aspects of Zen, and not the current

orthodoxy of Rinzai and Soto. This would also suggest that Suzuki's Zen was idiosyncratic, and potentially self-serving (2007, 124). Suzuki's "ridding" Zen of scripture, history, doctrine, monastic regulation, ethics, and sectarian debate "in favor of spiritual affirmation of unmediated experience" (2007, 125) would also seem to support this idea. As John P. Keenan writes, "no pure experience by its ineffability and unmediated nature can ever serve as a source of an insight or judgment about anything" (Keenan 2007, 129), and in fact "it is also debatable whether there is such a thing as a *pure* experience" (130). For Suzuki to discuss such experience as fact, though, is not a-historical to Rinzai or Soto teaching, both of which have posited intuiting this base, pure experience of Reality as the "goal" of monastic and doctrinal training. That Suzuki focuses exclusively on this aspect does not necessarily mean that he is deviating from Zen orthodoxy entirely. Sharf states that this Suzukian Zen is not Zen (and possibly not even Buddhism) at all. Those with a monastery to run, disciples to train, and gods and emperors to appease, could not, when confronted with difficult moral and political questions, afford to shroud themselves in the cloak of "absolute nothingness" (51). Buddhist scholars Noriaki Hakamaya, and Shirō Matsumoto at Komazawa University (affiliated with the Sōto Zen sect) agree with Sharf's statement, arguing from the standpoint that Zen indeed is not Buddhism at all, due to its failure to recognize the *anātman* "no-soul" concept (Swanson 1993, 115), and because any religion that favors the self to the neglect of others contradicts the original Buddhist ideal/moral imperative (act selflessly to benefit others) (127).

Suzuki had a huge influence on creative artists through their exposure to his lectures, writings, and such. That being the case, what mis-reading of Suzuki's (or anyone else's) mis-reading of Zen could occur in Western creative literature—another source of material for the improvising musician to supplement his or her artistic practices?

1. 2. Western Creative Zen Literature.

Heinrich Dumolin's assessment of the Beat Zen, Zen psychotherapy, and Zen-based esoterica of the American 1950s – 60s is that each was robbing Zen of its soul, creating “faddish pseudo-Zen mysticism in service to blatant opposition to conventions and rational thought” (Dumolin 1979, 8). It would seem then, based on this assessment, that a Zen Buddhism severed from historical Zen orthodoxy is an abstracted, potentially personally self-serving Zen.

Zen Buddhism seemed to describe the trap of time-consciousness that the Beat Poets (Jack Kerouac, Allan Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and others) thought society was in, and thus “such Asian modes of thought were appealing to them” (Holmes 1981, 10). They were concerned with spiritual matters, but their conceptual frameworks for these matters differed. Gary Snyder spent many years in Japan in a Zen monastery as well as studied Native American spirituality, while Kerouac was a loyal Catholic who was interested in Zen, devoting countless hours at Desolation Peak in the study of the Diamond Sutra. William Everson converted to Catholicism and over the course of the next eighteen years developed a philosophy of erotic mysticism. Allan Ginsberg was

interested in Tantric yoga, Hinduism, and Zen, while William S. Burroughs sought truth in the form of linguistics (Bartlett 1981, 3). There was also no Beat political party line. Gary Snyder was a communist for a time, Allan Ginsberg a quasi-anarchist, and both decried the Vietnam War. Jack Kerouac was a staunch Republican, and supported America's involvement in Vietnam. Gregory Corso, a supporter of the Vietnam War like Kerouac, even wrote to Ginsberg in 1965 and stated "me I'm all for the Marines now by god – fuck all you pacifist abusers" (3). Thomas Parkinson points out that Gary Snyder's poetry in particular doesn't answer to the tensions of modern life and depends on a life no longer accessible or even desirable for men, stating that a “mystique of the wilderness based on the humane naturalism of Zen Buddhism sect and the insights of American Indians can't satisfy the existential angst of modern man” (Parkinson 1981, 145).

Lee Bartlett also states that “most knowledge that is worth its cost must be earned rather than learned,” and some of the behavior of the Beats and their followers “smacked of rote” (Holmes 1981, 12). There were “dirty needles, conversational impoverishment, a romanticizing of the world of drug users and petty thieves” (Theado 2001, 37), minds destroyed by careless psychic and chemical overkill, and “the kind of violence that grows out of impatience and disappointment; the parent-hatred, system-putdown, and square-baiting that were so often a pointless and debilitating irrelevance” (12). Michael Grieg, in the *San Francisco Examiner* (September 28, 1958, pg. 18), calls the Beats a "generation of rag pickers looking for mystery, magic, and God in a bottle, a needle, a horn,” while Gene Baro states in *The Nation* that:

While their rejection of society is accomplished by traditional means – by sex, drinks, drugs and the arts of self expression – the rationale of their behavior is exotic, and sophisticated, a manner of mysticism, philosophical solipsism and natural religion. The beatnik apologists have raided all cultures for tags in support of not very precise attitudes; sensations, after all are hard to intellectualize...they talk too much to be Zen philosophers (Sept. 5, 1959, pp. 117).

This would also seem to apply to the Beat poets appropriation of and fascination with bebop jazz, redefining it as a type of protest as it supposedly “adapts itself to every situation through modal variety and flexibility” (Christian 1981, 110). Jazz thus “exists as it protests, develops as it rejects, and becomes fuller as it strips away the debris of rot” (111).

Though poet Jack Kerouac's works are fictional and not exegesis of any particular sutra or doctrine, Allen Watts, himself a popular Zen interpreter, stated that Kerouac had confused Zen's “anything goes attitude” at the existential level with ‘anything goes’ on the artistic and social levels” (Kerouac 2006, Ann Douglas' introduction: xviii). In a letter to poet Philip Whalen (who later went on to become a Zen Buddhist priest in San Francisco), Kerouac reacts to this assessment by stating that if he founded some kind of monastery in the Mexican desert, the ideology of his that would conform most to any kind of pure Buddhism would be no rules at all:

Pure Essence Buddhism is what I think I want...lay aside all the arbitrary rest of it, Hinayana, Shinayana, etc. Mahayana, Zen, Shmen...(Kerouac 1997, xi).

This dismissive view of Zen monastic rules or overarching orthodoxy does not bode well for a fair and impartial Kerouackian view of the history, scriptures, hagiographies and such of Zen Buddhism, leaving out the fact that Suzuki's take on Zen was decidedly

Rinzai, and any mention of the Sōtō Zen faith is markedly absent. Jack Kerouac's novel *The Dharma Bums* as well played an important part in the growth of Buddhism in America (Kerouac 1997, David Stanford introduction: x), and this work in particular was based on the ideas Kerouac put down in his complex, work of personal philosophy entitled, *Some of the Dharma*, in which he writes:

Buddhism is a system of Mind control
Taoism is a philosophy without disciplinary rules
But because of this Tao can become Mao (Tse Tung) (Kerouac 1997, 95).

Though not meant as an authoritative comment on Zen, these kinds of statements do nothing to dispel the notion that Kerouac and other casual interpreters of Zen have somehow found a creative expression of profound Zen truths, an expression easily distorted into the solipsism decried by Sharf in Suzuki and by Baro in Beat Zen in general. Their adoring readership would undoubtedly take to heart what they had to say, and in doing so possibly formulate their own arguments for a Suzukian or Kerouackian Zen, when this pure, rule-less, or indefinable Zen could be no more than a type of self-serving opinion designed to profit the holder in ways that are antithetical to Zen Buddhist ethics, morality, etc.

Kerouac also “invoked dreams and visions that are used to reconstruct racial identity in the lives of bebop musicians” while his narrative “undermined their motives for doing so” (McCann 2008,149). Kerouac was working within an existing jazz discourse and, despite his attempt to break free of the literary establishment, he is “very much confined by the popular conceptions of jazz as they appeared on the radio,

television, journalism, and popular fiction” (162). And if narrative fiction is at all representative of wider public opinion, then much of the early fascination with jazz among the intellectual community was simply wrongheaded and based on a “set of assumptions about African American performers that was subtly informed by popular prejudice” (170).

Add to this the fact that jazz was in a cultural position loaded with contradictions: it was a folk art inhabited by schooled musicians (McCann 2008, 163) such as Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Dewey Redman, and others. It was an African American art whose most avid audiences were often disillusioned white youths. It was also music ostensibly rebellious to middle-class values and, at the same time, a constant representative of American ideals (2008, 163). Writers in the late fifties though began to view "primitivism" as a mental process inherent more in jazz's improvisatory nature—a process that was transferable from one artistic tradition to another, and Kerouac's narrative is perhaps “the boldest attempt to capture some of the music's form in prose” (2008, 162).

To author and Zen enthusiast Alan Watts, Beat Zen was a complex phenomenon that often utilized Zen Buddhism for justifying caprice. The proverbial "cat is out of the bag" for Watts is revealed when he quotes Kerouac's statement "I don't know. I don't care. And it doesn't make any difference." Such a statement seems to embody a possible hostility and self-defense behind the Beat interpretation. Since Zen “surpasses convention and its values there is no need to say ‘the hell with it’” (Watts 1958a, 8). One reason for

the extraordinary growth of Western interest in Zen during the 1930s to 1950s was “the attraction of this kind of non-conceptual, experiential philosophy in the climate of scientific relativism” (5). Yet to Watts, the spirit of these words is remote from a Beat Zen interpretation, which would employ this philosophy to justify a very “self-defensive Bohemianism” (5). But the Westerner who is attracted to Zen who would understand it deeply must have one indispensable qualification:

He must understand his own culture so thoroughly that he is no longer swayed by its premises unconsciously. He must really have come to terms with the Lord God Jehovah and with his Hebrew Christian consciousness so that he can take it or leave it. He must be free of the itch to justify himself (6 – 7).

This Zen will avoid the polarities of "Beat" Zen — rebellion against convention, or the "Square Zen" of appropriating foreign conventions.

But Watts himself states in the *Chicago Review* (1958a) that he sees no real quarrel with either extreme, as Zen is too timeless and universal to be "injured" and, quoting Blake, states that the fool who persists in his folly will become wise (9). He then states that:

I have known followers of both extremes to come up with perfectly clear satori experiences, for since there is no real "Way" to satori the way you are following makes very little difference (9).

Once again, Watts is making claims from a position that could be resisted by orthodox practitioners of Sōtō or Rinzai Buddhism proper, as Watts has not received formal authority to teach, and does not have the scriptural or religious training in Zen that could support such a claim. How would he know what a perfectly clear satori experience is? If

there is no real "Way" how does one explain the centuries old lineages of Buddhism that persist in believing the veracity of their own unique scriptural exegesis? And the immateriality of one's own Way would seem to suggest that Watts is also somewhat guilty of Beat Zen tendencies. These types of contradictory statements appear often in Watts' writings, such as his statement that judō (a martial sport based on the Japanese art of samurai hand-to-hand combat *jujitsu*) "is an expression of Chinese Taoism" (Watts 1951: 95), a statement that a Taoist would generally make, but a Japanese citizen would most certainly not. As well, Watts' interpretation of Theravadan Buddhism is more often than not poetic, which in itself is not problematic unless his somewhat romantic exegesis risks disruption of what is considered by orthodox Theravadan Buddhists as proper reading of the more serious scriptural issues.

In his explanation of the First Noble Truth, for example, he misleadingly translates *duhkha* (Skt. Suffering) in the phrase, "life is frustration" (Gann 2010, 141): considering the extremes of sickness, poverty, and war occurring during Siddhartha's time, his translation of the word seems to be a rather euphemistic interpretation.

John Cage critic Kyle Gann also utilizes this same type of poetic interpretation, when, in describing John Cage's work *4'33"* he states that, "from a Zen standpoint there is no difference between playing a note and *not* playing a note" (Gann 2010, 144). This kind of metaphysicality would seem then to negate the idea of art, or even music, thus rendering everything the same seemingly on all levels of Reality. It is doubtful that Gann or indeed any professional fine artist would take such an idea seriously beyond the realm

of metaphysical or philosophical musing. Yet blanket statements such as these do not serve to clearly articulate Zen philosophy in any sphere of influence. For if this kind of Zen logic is sound, then theoretically one can imagine that not creating a sculpture is "the same" as creating a sculpture.

Watts also states in *The Spirit of Zen* that Zen dispenses with *all* forms of theorization, doctrinal instruction and lifeless formality; these are treated as "mere symbols" (Watts 1958b, 17). If Watts had spent any significant time in either a Sōtō or Rinzai temple in Japan during any decade of his life, he would not be able to make such a statement without making a significant attempt to ignore the truth of the rigors of a Japanese Zen temple. Either that or he was particularly unaware of orthodox Zen practice, and held a Romantic notion of Zen as *philosophy* alone, and thus he is guilty of the same (alleged) self-serving tactics D. T. Suzuki has been accused of. Dōgen himself rejected scripture-free Zen as a fallacy, stating that an enlightened person "always masters sutras to full advantage" (Kraft 1992, 155).

Watts states in *Buddhism: The Religion of No Religion* that "we do know what Zen is, because we do all sorts of things every day of our lives in the spirit of Zen" because we master such things as horse riding and driving, eventually being able to do either with enough skill to lose our sense of self in each activity. In that sensory state of "oneness" where the horse and rider move as one, "there lies Zen" (Watts 1999, 51). This would imply that expert coordination and muscle memory and Zen are somehow the same. Carrying that logic further, we could similarly theorize a violent murder if one has

enough training with a weapon to become "at one" with it. Once again, having a "spirit of Zen" and Zen Buddhism proper is seemingly one and the same with Watts.

Watts does state though that the artistic ideals of Zen can degenerate into sentimentalism, especially when "the quietistic aspect of Zen is accepted without the dynamic aspect" (Watts 1958b, 114). But this "dynamic" aspect is exemplified by the military arts of the samurai, which were used to justify not only ancient and medieval hegemony, but the activities of World War Two kamikaze (English: "God's wind") bomber pilots as well. It must also be remembered that even though *kendo* and *judo* are sports, they are versions of *kenjutsu* and *jujutsu*, killing arts of the samurai, and any link between Zen and these martial activities is not separate from the history of the military rulers (Japan: shōgun), the *kōmuso* warrior-monks, and others.

Despite the fact that that his widely read novel, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, is based on actual events, Robert Persig suggest that the book should not be associated with that great body of factual information relating to orthodox Zen Buddhist practice" (Persig 1974, intro). But the titular *Zen*, and its relationship to motorcycle maintenance suggests Zen Buddhism in one form or another is a vital part of the actual events described in the book. In actual fact, Persig scarcely mentions Zen or Buddhism throughout. The word Zen isn't even mentioned once in the first 100 pages of the novel, and the word "Buddha" itself appears only once. One of Pirsig's characters states that the Chinese and Japanese translations of the word *dhyana* are "mispronunciations." This is followed by the logical fallacy that "truth is indefinable and this is the basis of Zen

practice” (Pirsig 1974, 230). Though it is a work of fiction, Pirsig quotes actual statements from Einstein, Plato, and others, leading one to potentially assume that any statements regarding Zen must also be from that same body of "common" knowledge. Thus, the novel being an exploration of rationality and Romanticism, Zen becomes ‘fantastic,’ and “irrational,” a fiction amongst “real” Platonic and scientific thoughts. And as the novel was a bestseller, Pirsig’s “fictional” Zen would have had a wider reading audience than orthodox works on Zen Buddhism at that time. As such, Pirsig’s work merits at least some mention as a possible source of creative misreading.

Artist Frederick Franck's book *The Zen of Seeing: Seeing/Drawing as Meditation* is another example of a strong misreading of Zen creativity within the arts, and a potentially mis-readable supplement to improvised music practice and philosophy. Franck titles his book the “Zen of Seeing” while stating that his understanding of Zen is expressed through a paraphrased quote from D. T. Suzuki (Franck 1973, iv). Franck also happens to be the administrator of a “trans-religious place of inwardness dedicated to Pope John XXIII” (back cover). A prime example of Franck's approach to Zen is in his statement that he knows artists “whose medium is Life itself, who express the inexpressible outside of art, music, dance, theater, etc. Their medium is “being,” and they are artists of ‘being alive’” (129). This would seem to render the word "art" meaningless, as now eating a hotdog, going for a swim, and doing the laundry with a certain sense of awareness is of the same order as Jackson Pollock's painting, Twyla Tharp's choreography, or Ravi Shankar's improvisations on Rāga Bhairav. Thus, this kind of

subjective talk would seem to demean the unique, and possibly mutually exclusive, aspects of both art and the art of living, rather than exemplify them.

Philip Toshio Sudo's book *Zen Guitar* is based largely on the principles of Zen philosophy as a commonsense approach to all things. Sudo, a self-taught amateur musician, advocates this Zen through a generalized study of the guitar based on self-honesty, conviction, and deemphasizing of musical skill (Sudo 1997, 36), all through an aesthetic lens advocating an "if it feels right, it is right" (51) aesthetic. For example, in reference to rhythm, states that:

All things have an underlying pulse, and their source is the same. There is nothing deeper than this on the path of Zen Guitar (48).

He also contradicts himself, stating that one should play decisively, knowing what to play and when (109), then going on to say that "the moment that discrimination and calculation enter the mind, the truth of the moment is lost," adding that, "to play the truth, you must already have the correct attitude" (111), an attitude he does not actually define.

Sudo also states:

After all, Zen Guitar is not a style of playing. Rock, jazz, blues, country & western, classical, avant-garde – it doesn't matter. They are all rivers that lead to the same ocean (35).

It would seem odd to speak of music universally while ignoring the socio-philosophical issues surrounding styles and genres of music. By stating that the particulars of these styles don't matter, it is much easier to make claims such as that these styles all lead to "the same ocean," leaving issues of gender, sexuality, and politics aside.

Yet another example of such creative interpretations of Zen is Jon Winokur's *Zen to Go*, a random collection of aphorisms that, according to the front cover flap, "conveys (Zen's) essence through an eclectic mix of short passages..." and is designed to "enlighten the mind and nourish the soul." The back cover flap states that the author "fearlessly" juxtaposes the Buddha and alcoholic poet Charles Bukowski, Lao Tzu and convicted murderer O. J. Simpson, creating a Zen "open to anyone—as valid from the lips of athletes and artists as in the writings of sages and holy men." This rather casual approach to the wisdom of Zen Buddhism is further revealed in the choice of non-contextualized statements that in many cases contradict each other, such as Stephen Jay Gould's statement that "nature is what she is—amoral and persistent" followed by Lao Tzu's statement that "nature is not anthropomorphic" (Winokur 1989, 89). Robert Persig's statement as well would seem to contradict every single quote in the book, stating that "any intellectually conceived object is *always* in the past and therefore *unreal*. Reality is always the moment of vision before the intellectualization takes place. *There is no other reality*." (82) Taken at face value, Buddhism, the English language, musical notation, poetry, the book *Zen to Go* and such, are only real for a split second before becoming part of the past. This and indeed any idea is negated by D. T. Suzuki's statement on page 26 that "Zen has no business with ideas," further negated by Alan Watts' statement on the same page that "in life as well as in art Zen never wastes energy in stopping to explain; it only indicates." Charles Bukowski is quoted on page 103 as saying that "knowledge is knowing as little as possible," while on the same page Spanish Jesuit monk Gracian,

(whom the 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica called "misled by his systematic misanthropy" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltasar_Gracián), states that "sometimes it proves the highest understanding not to understand." Jack Kerouac states that "I don't know. I don't care. And it doesn't make any difference" (104), and Tom Robbins states that "There's a certain Buddhistic calm that comes from having...money in the bank" (133). These last two statements especially would seem to challenge the idea that this book is "Zen" in any logical manner other than whichever the author deems.

Brad Warner's *Sex, Sin, and Zen* is possibly the most radical of the Zen-based publications. The cover depicts a fat "Hotei" style Buddha with a Rickenbacker bass guitar hanging off his back, with tattooed lesbians eating fruit and an assortment of semi-naked women posing in the foreground. The back cover reveals that the author is not only an ordained Zen priest, but a punk bassist, filmmaker, Japanese *daikaiju* ("large monster") movie marketer, and writer for the erotic Suicidegirls.com website. Both ex-porn star Nina Hartley and sex columnist Violet Blue praise the book on the back cover, with Blue calling Warner a Zen master "horndog" (promiscuous male).

Warner himself seems rather blasé about his position and status as a priest as evidenced by his views on pornography, stating that not only does he not know if his view is "right": that women posing for erotic pictures isn't really any of his business" (Warner 2010, 81), that porn is "merely fantasy" (80), and that the erotic pictures on the Suicidegirls website are "expressions of truth because they are beautiful" (81). He then goes on to say that Zen Master Dogen "opposed pornography, but since we all don't live

in monasteries and live in different times Dogen's words as such are irrelevant, and although that fact civilization is more accepting of pornography now is a sign of movement towards a more balanced state" (83); he would still not want to try and "universally mandate his or indeed any attitude for or against it" (82). This seems removed from the moral and ethical standards that myriad Buddhist schools have demanded of their practitioners, and especially, from priests such as Warner for over 2300 years. It would also then seem that, even in the twenty-first century, the self-justifying manner previously ascribed to the Beat Zen generation could be levied against Warner as a component of his work as well.

John Stevens, author of "Zen in the Art of Archery," states:

Right from the beginning of the Zen tradition, Zen has never been strictly a matter of formal seated meditation or certification from an "official" organization. Zen history is replete with examples of eccentric monks, zany laymen and women, Zen grannies, vagabonds, and other outsiders who had an intuitive understanding of Zen completely independent of formal meditation practice or study at a Zen institution. It is ridiculous to contend that Kenzo did not understand Zen (or even archery itself) simply because he was not associated with any Zen teacher or organization (Stevens 2007, 90-91).

Initially this statement contains a logical, if not historical error, as at no time in Japan's history to the present has there ever been recorded or described someone categorized under the rubric "monk" who has been "completely" independent of formal meditation practice when experiencing Zen awakening; just as there is no record of a Catholic *seminary* student disassociated from any "formal" study of Catholicism. In either case the

idea of a person with the formal rank of monk or nun without influence from formal meditation training in Zen Buddhism is seemingly oxymoronic.

The earliest possible archetype of Stevens' claim of thinking in Buddhism may be the example of the Indian monk Subhadra who remarked that he was delighted the Buddha was gone, as now he and his fellow monks could do as they wished without being chastised by the Buddha himself. This is considered to be the act that instigated the First Buddhist Council (Baruah 2000, 37). Chinese Zen master Zibo Zhenke (1543–1604) himself was killed for criticizing the corruption of Ming Dynasty authorities, and was highly critical of false practitioners of Zen, who claimed it as an inspiration while only understanding its most superficial aspects. This group included pure subjectivists, libertines, nihilists, antinomians, believers in personal expression and spontaneity, and advocates of freedom from social convention. Opponents, like Zibo, of these intellectual trends branded them *kuang-chan*, "Crazy Zen" (Cleary 1989, 51). The crazy Zennists of Stevens' statement may indeed be Zibo's much-despised *kuang-chan*. Even the more "radical" Japanese Zen masters "were confirmed before they committed their radical acts, in such cases as Bassui secluding himself in a tree house, Hakuin championed and interceding for the peasant class in feudal affairs, and Nyogen Senzaki's being ostracized for his antimilitarism" (Besserman and Steger 2011, 7–8).

Stevens may also be referring to legendary monks and lay practitioners mentioned in the *Nihon ryōiki* ("miracle stories of Japan"), a collection of karmic retribution tales compiled by the monk Kyōkai which, like the *jataka* scriptures of Theravada or the

Kasuga Gongen genki stories of Kamakura Era *honji-suijaku* sects, were folk tales, epics, and fairytales from outside the religion that the Buddhist monks would use as “true” stories used in order to illustrate Buddhist doctrines. It is possible that the monks who used these stories most frequently may have been lay practitioners masquerading as ordained monks in order to avoid taxation and the rule of local authorities, an act that in the Nara Era was punished by the *Genbaryō*, a central administrative body run by the government that issued preaching permits and kept a registry of monks and nuns (Nakamura 1973, 21). So it may be the case that Stevens’ unnamed Zen crazies could turn out to be these very same lay Buddhist-criminals. It is also interesting to note that the *Genbaryō* allowed the various monks of the Kinai Region (Kyoto/Osaka/Kobe) relative autonomy, the Kinai region being both the area where the majority of the more radical or iconoclastic monks in Zen history were born, taught, or resided, as well as the region where the innovative GUTAI Art Association (1954–72) was formed and based.

According to the *Nihon ryōiki* itself, the discourses of the original Buddha Siddhartha reveal three periods of Buddhist belief and praxis: the True Dharma (*shōbō*) period from his enlightenment (*satori*) on for approx. 500 years, the Counterfeit Dharma (*zōbō*) period lasting for the next 1000 years, and eventually the Degenerate Dharma (*mappō*) lasting for the next 10,000 years (Nakamura 1973, 6). The famous Zen iconoclasts appear at the beginning of the *Mappō* period, which may further the argument that these same monks are proof of such degeneration, although a counter-argument

could be forwarded that that these same Zen masters were trying to correct and reform such a Buddhist state of spiritual entropy.

Certainly Wonhyo, the aforementioned Korean wise man who unified the various teachings of Silla Buddhism, could be categorized as an archetype of such manic-Zen *kuang-chan*. Legend has it that Wonhyo wandered the streets one day chanting a mysterious song, “Who dares lend me an axe without a handle? I’ll hew down the pillars supporting the heaven,” which was interpreted by then reigning King Muryol that Wonhyo was looking for a noble woman with which to have a child. The King let Wonhyo live at Yosok Palace and his daughter the princess became pregnant with a son Sol Ch’ong, who became one of the great intellectuals of Silla (Chun 1974, 27). Wonhyo also decided to leave the priesthood later in life to wander the secular world. Renaming himself Sosung Kosa and, borrowing a phrase from the *Huayen Sutra* (“those who have no obstacles can transcend life and death with the truth”), he then proceeded to name his pants “No Obstacle,” and went from village to village singing, drinking, visiting brothels, using coarse language, and even going to battle when it struck his fancy (Chun 1974, 28 – 29).

Another possible Zen crazy may be the Japanese Zen monk Ippen (1239–1289 C.E). Considered the founder of Jishū Buddhism, a form of Pure Land Amidaism, Ippen was a proponent of *odori-nembutsu*, the chanting of the Buddha Amida's name while dancing ecstatically. He was also a *hijiri*, a holy man who renounced secular life, and lived apart from the authorized religious orders, like Stevens' Zen vagabonds. Ippen

taught that if one chanted the phrase "Namu Amida Butsu" only once, he would be born into Paradise upon his death, no matter how much he sinned or continued to sin, thus was Amida Buddha's holy saving power. As much as this would seem to prove that one could be a Zen master or even start a new theology without formal Zen training, Ippen's enlightenment and rank of Master was verified by a Zen Master Kakushin after many years of formal study in a number of temples with a number of Zen masters (Hirota 1997, xxi), thus removing Ippen from Stevens' list of intuitive masters. Much closer to Stevens' example is the real life of D.T Suzuki who, although never receiving formal certification to teach or establish his own Zen temple, had both academic and practical training in the formal techniques of Zen and, as previously mentioned, spoke widely about Zen and its influence on Japanese culture.

Also, Stevens does not actually list any of these independent monks and grannies with which history is supposedly "replete." So one can only assume that the "grannies" are for example: the enlightened, powerful Ch'an exemplars, the lower-class women of Sung Dynasty Buddhist lore. These women, "as symbols or literary creations, function more to illustrate Ch'an doctrine than reflect any socio-spiritual reality" (Gregory 2002, 167). By honoring the spiritual achievement of these women, Ch'an masters could emphasize the universality of Enlightenment, found even in the words and deeds of "women without intellectual or social pretense" (168). It would seem that zaniness and eccentricity in this setting were good pedagogical paradigms, but not prized in the actual praxis of orthodox Zen Buddhism. The German music aesthetician Wilhelm

Wackenroder himself (in 1799) may have also been referring to such zany Ch'an monks when he described the ascetic hermits of the "Orient" as strange, naked beings in the wilderness "whom we would call insane" (Lippman 1988, 6). Thomas Cleary states, though, that a certain Ch'an master once wrote that the wise enshrine the miraculous bones of the ancients within themselves, that is:

They do not regard teachings of ways to enlightenment as an external body of knowledge or information to be possessed as an acquisition or believed or revered as inflexible dogma, but rather apply it as far as possible to themselves and their situations, vivifying the way of enlightenment with their own bodies and lives, not just in their thoughts (Cleary 1977, xiv).

Considered in this light, Stevens' statement may be a reference to the behavior of the (historically documented) monk-poet Ryōkan, an eccentric Sōtō Zen hermit of the late 18th and early 19th century Japan.

Ryōkan entered Zen training at a local temple in 1775 at age 17, before eventually moving on to Entsū-ji Temple in what is now Okayama Prefecture, where he eventually received sanction as a Zen master from his predecessor Kokusen (Watson 1977, 2). This puts Stevens' statement in some doubt, as Ryōkan is a very viable or obvious candidate for the title of Zen iconoclast. After receiving Dharma Transmission he eventually moved into the Gogō-an ("Five Measures of Rice" Retreat) of another local temple in 1804. He himself never established a temple or became the head master of one, as would be expected of a recognized Zen master. He spent his days writing, meditating, and alternately engaging in *takuhatsu* (begging for alms), engaging in literary conversations in person and via mail with the Buddhist nun Teishin, and playing with the children in

local villages, engaging in such games as pretending to be dead while the children gleefully piled leaves upon him (4). It was at this time that he adopted the name Taigu or the "Great Fool," which may be in reference to the fact that in his youth he was referred to as a *hiru-andon*, a pointless, ineffectual person (5).

Ryōkan was a revered writer of both Japanese *waka* and Chinese *kanshi* poetic genres. As was the style of the day (Edō Era), "modern writers were rejecting the formal constraints and rules of *waka*" (Yuasa 1981, 3), so Ryōkan's poetic and philosophical iconoclasm was not without precedent or reference in his time, even though he was not affiliated with or recognized by any particular artistic lineage (11). This "non-affiliativeness" may be the source of Stevens' belief that Ryōkan stood alone as a Buddhist, if not a writer. Ryōkan was also significantly influenced by the anthology of ancient poetry compiled in the 8th century, the *Man'yōshū*. Due to its antiquity and the odd notation system in which it was recorded, it was "difficult to interpret (and to some extent still difficult to interpret currently)" (3). Because Ryōkan studied it on his own, without any expert tutoring, he "read the text *imperfectly*, and believed that even an imperfect reading constituted the surest guide to the art of Japanese poetry" (1981, 7). This also resonates with Bloom's "swerves, misreadings, and critical fictions" although Ryōkan's work was not antithetical to the Buddhist philosophy (Sōtō Zen founder Dōgen's "just sitting," for example) and poetry that preceded his own.

One such example is Ryōkan's love of the writings of T'ang Dynasty poet Hanshan, a lay Ch'an Buddhist who lived in a hut in the T'ien-t'ai Mountains of Chekiang.

Han-shan's work satirized human folly, sermonized on Buddhist practice and belief, as well as accounted his daily activities and musings. Like Han-shan, Ryōkan wrote about folly and hypocrisy, but specifically focused on the world of Zen monastic life, philosophy, and praxis (anecdotally, to the delight of the ordinary Japanese who preferred Ryōkan's easy-going, simple manner of Buddhist praxis). Thus, Stevens may be concluding that Ryōkan, being a popular Zen eccentric and innovator of poetry, was an "outsider," a dissident rather than an orthodox believer. One particular oft quoted poem of Ryōkan's may shed further light on his relationship with Zen aesthetics, wherein he asks:

Who says my poems are poems?
 My poems are not poems at all!
 Only when you understand that my poems are not poems
 Can we begin to talk about poems (Tōgō 1962, 134).

Indeed, the poem seems to have a Zen "neither is nor is not" quality to it. But since his works consistently avoided following the strict rules of both Chinese and Japanese poetry, his critics dismissed his work, euphemistically saying that it was in a "class by itself" (Watson 1977, 10–11). This though may have provoked Ryōkan to write this particular poem as a pre-emptive gesture, or "as a response to such criticism" (11). He also states in one of his poems that form, color, name, and design are things of the world, impermanent, and thus should be "abandoned" (Stevens 1977, 76). In light of this idea, it is also possible that his poems "not being poems" merely reflects his artistic manner of expressing Buddhist thought and nothing more.

Ryōkan and Han-shan's musings on daily life are reminiscent of hereditary Shinto priest-turned-Buddhist-monk Kenkō Yoshida (c.1283 – c.1352 CE) and his classic work, the *Tsurezuregusa*, loosely translated as “Essays in Idleness.” Kenkō’s work too is highly personal, and has been regarded as a noteworthy example of a style of writing known as *zuihitsu*, or ‘following the brush.’ *Zuihitsu* is writing without regard for form, though one’s calligraphy and academic training will inevitably inform the form of one’s ‘formlessness.’ It is a kind of allowance of the brush to skip from one topic to another seemingly randomly, yet with a naturally occurring order. Japanese aesthetic critic Donald Keene calls this a type of *free association* (Ueda 1976, 28), while Luciana Galliano referred to this kind of work as part of the Japanese artist’s concern with ‘testifying’ fragments of isolated moments (Galliano 2002, 13). As much as the aesthetics of sequence were highly developed in Japan (Pinnington 1998, xiv) the art of linked or chained verse (*renga*) established a tradition of associative sequencing, a minor element in one verse becomes the seed for a linked idea or verse. As well, a sustained linear progression in any direction over several verses was to be avoided, a rule that brings to mind Donald Richie's comment on the conveying uncertainty within style. This principle is not only at work in the *Tsurezuregusa*, but in a similar freely associative manner active in the music of my saxophone teacher, Randolph Denardo Ornette Coleman (1930-), whom with I studied at various times between 1997 and 2009.

1. 3. Zen Qualities in the Work of Ornette Coleman

According to Ekkehard Jost, Coleman improvises motives independent of the theme and continues to develop them. Thus:

In this way—independently of the chord progressions, let it be noted—an inner cohesion is created that is comparable to the stream of consciousness writing in Joyce or the "automatic writing" of the surrealists (sic); one idea grows from another, is reformulated, and leads to yet another new idea (Jost 1994, 50).

This process, even more so than Joycean free association, would suggest a viable kinship with Kenkō's essays and to some extent the idea of poetic chains in renga. But is this particular Zen conceptual supplement to the analysis of Coleman's work yet another misreading? For as much as we have seen that calling indeterminacy in Noh is not improvisation, motivic chaining in Coleman's music is also likely to be a false equivalence and another inappropriate parergonal supplement. But both motivic chaining and Kenkō's writing are indeed intentional, so exploring the nature of Coleman's melodic continuity may reveal an appropriate parergon, the reader is reminded of the earlier reference to Coleman as an example of a free improvising musician who has a documented history of concentrated practice by his own admission, and as I have witnessed in person.

Although pianist Cecil Taylor was creating a type of free improvisation (*Looking Ahead*) shortly before jazz audiences publicly knew of Coleman's innovations, he (Coleman) is arguably the father of Free Jazz. Characteristics of his improvisational style include a voice-like tone quality, simple rhythmic structures, lack of prearranged or set harmonies: tonal association with specific motives and temporary shifts to several "secondary tonal

centers” (Jost 1994, 48) are used by Coleman as ways to avoid potential monotony when improvising over a single tonal center.

Ornette Coleman's theories and idiosyncratic musical motifs are unique in that they are highly personal and come from a history of being self-taught. Ornette remembered reading in a book that the first seven letters of the alphabet were the "first" seven notes of music, ABCDEFG. But in music, the standard concert scale is the same series of notes beginning and ending on B. Thus, he began his (self-taught) music career believing that the alto saxophone was a non-transposing (C concert) instrument. Later, he discovered that C natural on the alto saxophone is concert 'A' transposed, but by this time he began to consider what that meant in his own musical world. What were misinterpretations of scale and tuning in the standard system were objects of contemplation and beauty within his idiosyncratic system of ideas that “became their own laws” (Litweiler 1992, 10). Ornette did take some lessons with composer Gunther Schuller, but those seemed to merely reinforce what Ornette believed at that time. Gunther Schuller states that at one point, when Ornette seemed to be seeing the difference between standard music and what he was doing, and how those who taught the standard system might find his unique theories "wrong,” Ornette promptly left the room, vomited, and ceased taking lessons with Schuller. But as Schuller later stated in his transcriptions of Ornette's music that it is precisely because Mr. Coleman was not 'handicapped' by conventional music education that he has been able to make his unique contribution to contemporary music (79).

Another possible Zen parergon is the similarity of Coleman's axioms to the enigmatic sayings of Zen masters. A good many of Coleman's statements during our lessons came in a manner of proverb or aphorism that seemed more abstruse than ordinary. In our first conversation as student and teacher I asked Mr. Coleman I asked him what exactly his Harmolodic system, his personal philosophy of improvisation, is, as I had read several conflicting accounts of what Mr. Coleman had said about it versus interpretations of what others thought he had meant. He responded by smiling, leaning in towards me and simply saying "If it will work for me, it will work for you." Similarly enigmatic sayings commonly occur in Zen Buddhism.

The Zen *kōan* (Ch: *kung-an*) literally translates as "public record/case/inquiry," and is what can be best described as a seemingly illogical phrase or question designed to help the Zen practitioner move beyond the conceptual thinking and eventually see into their own original nature. Questions such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or the story of the original Buddha silently holding out a single flower as one of his sermons make up the bulk of the two most famous collections of Zen *kōans*, the "Blue Cliff Record" (Japan: *Mumonkan*) and the "Gateless Gate" (Japan: *Hekiganroku*). Although Soto Zen Master Dōgen rarely used *kōan* in his faith system, he compiled a collection of three hundred *kōan* in his early travels to China, which informed his collection of sermons entitled "The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye" (*Shōbōgenzō*). The earlier collection was rarely transcribed and was only revived in its complete form in 1934, eventually being translated into English with new commentaries and widely

available by only as recently as 2005 (Loori 2005 edition). This collection is known either as the *Mana Shōbōgenzō*, the "Chinese Treasury," or the *Three Hundred Cases of the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye (Shōbōgenzō Sambyakusoku) of Dōgen*. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the various cases from the three collections with abbreviated titles followed by case numbers.

Many kōan involve a monk asking a master some sort of 'what' question and getting what may at first seem like a meaningless answer. In Case 13 of the *Hekiganroku* (H-Case 13) a monk asks Master Haryō what the Daibe (Deva) sect of Buddhism is, to which he is given the response "snow in the silver bowl." A common interpretation of this is that snow and the silver of the inside of the bowl illuminate each other, and it is hard to tell one from the other. This illustrates the meaning of the scripture that "emptiness and form are interpenetrated and essentially one" (Sekida 1995, 183, MacInnes 2007, 6, 155). This same sentiment is expressed in a description in SS-Case 132, "Sound Itself is No Sound," where Master Boshui responds to the question "what is sound that is not sound?" By responding with the question "Can you call it 'form'?" and vice versa, the monk is said to be pointing out that sound and form are contained within each other and that both are equal in precognitive awareness, that is, Boshui's "place" where expression without sound is already understood (Loori 2005, 180). Another case set demonstrates the attempt of a teacher to reveal the non-duality of original enlightenment. In M-Case 30 Daibai asks Baso what the Buddha is and he replies "This very mind is Buddha." Yet, in M-Case 33 he responds to the same inquiry from a

different monk by saying "No mind, no Buddha" as if to say original enlightenment is beyond mind and no-mind.

Both M-Case 18 and H-Case 12 (Sekida 1995, 71/179) concern Tozan's "three pounds of flax." In each case an unidentified monk asks Zen master Tōzan, "What is Buddha?" to which Tōzan replies "Masagin!" (three pounds of flax). According to Case 15, Tōzan himself was enlightened when he heard Master Ummon call him a rice bag, and thus his response may be seen as part of his lineage as well as part of his answer (Sekida 1995, 71). The commentary provided by Sekida on Case 18 states that people argue about such cases using conceptual understanding due to their not having "any direct experience of the true meaning of the words being offered by Tōzan" (72). In the commentary on the same case as presented twelfth in the H-Case series, Sekida states that "scholars give us erudite explanations of things but they cannot give us what we want—true peace and freedom of mind—since mere erudition cannot lead one to realize their own true nature. This way of thinking is then compared to the classic Japanese or Chinese proverbial trope of monkeys trying to catch the reflection of the moon in a pond" (1995, 180).

In a similar kōan (M-Case 21) another unidentified monk asks Tōzan's master Ummon what the Buddha is and Ummon replies 'Kanshiketsu!' literally "dried shit stick" (1995, 77). In this instance, the question can be as revealing as the answer. The question "What is Buddha?" can be answered in context of a beginning Zen student's simple inquiry, or the advanced student of Zen readying for a potential "dharma battle" over

scriptural exegesis and such with his teacher, and is testing the Master for any weaknesses over which he can argue. With multiple strategies at hand, the Master instantly assesses both the question and the student, and responds with either a soft or violent interruption of the student's thought process. Thus some students are physically beaten for seemingly no reason or are physically injured like Gutei losing his finger in M-Case 3, or they are given a much less direct reminder that all incorrect thought and speech is movement away from original Oneness, such as in M-Case 22, or M-Cases 6 and 7.

M-Case No. 43 states that Shuzan Oshō once held up a bamboo baton (*shippei*) before his disciples and said, "If you call it a shippei, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a shippei, you ignore the fact. Tell me, you monks, what will you call it? Words are not available, and silence is not available, what is it? Call it what you like" (Sekida 1995, 124-125). Whatever answer you make up is all right if you truly realize it (1995, 275). Ornette stressed several times during our lessons that notes are sounds, that emotions are sound ideas, the sound ideas that dictate the real emotive gestures of our human condition. He also stressed that by rethinking, or rather *unthinking*, my accumulated knowledge of harmony, pitch, scale, and such, I would be allowing emotive sound logics to work, seemingly implying that, like Oshō stated, it would be alright if I "truly realized" them. Ornette did seem sincere, and rather unmythical when stressing the naturalness of his ideas and intentions in his own Harmolodic expression. However he did discuss one device in more enigmatic terms than I was used to up until that point in our studies (July

1997). This particular example could possibly be seen as having a certain kōan-like “logic,” and thus a parergonal relationship with Zen.

Another one of Ornette's more famous descriptions of his Harmolodic music theory appears in John Litweiler's book *Ornette Coleman: The Harmolodic Life*. On page 132 Litweiler shows a written example of the theoretical idea Ornette described to me in one of our later lessons. If you play C major 7, then Eb minor 7, then D diminished triad with ‘A’ added on top to make it a four-note chord, you have played all the notes in the chromatic scale. In Litweiler's book, though, there are a couple of what seem to be transcription errors, as Litweiler's example doesn't spell out all the notes of the chromatic scale the way it should, and it is not clear whether the fault lay with Litweiler, with Art Lange from whom Litweiler borrowed the transcription, or with Ornette's original jottings for Lange. Both Lange and I received the advice from Ornette to play through it a few times and then we will know everything we need to know about Harmolodic theory. In my case, I was told not only this, but that if I played through it once I would then be free to play anything I wanted, as if this musical heuristic had some kind of sublime properties that would automatically grant me musical understanding I didn't have before that particular moment. I did what he said and played through it, but felt no special understanding or musical growth afterwards, so I didn't raise the issue again. But like the Zen kōan, in which one must have faith in or trust in its promise of usefulness as a spiritual tool, I trusted that this small theoretical framework Ornette gave me will bear musical fruit in my improvising, and because of my continued contemplation of it, I trust

that, in one form or another, that it already has. Zen discourse, though, could be described as deliberately vague, opaque and mysterious, elusive and enigmatic. Ambiguity, incongruity, and contradiction are mixed with tautologies and assertions of the obvious for the purpose of catching disciples off guard in order to overturn their idle assumptions and preoccupations. This raises the question of what any of this actually means or whether there is “any meaning there at all” (Heine 2008, 48). In traditional Zen narratives this kind of irrational discourse is a positive negation of unenlightened, intellectual reasoning. From the perspective of historical and cultural criticism, this endless wordplay in Zen literature represents an “infantile stammering” and the “willful abandonment of meaning, a dubious rhetoric that avoids commitment to any particular view or decision” (49). In this light, the kōan may actually be lacking in philosophical or religious value, and a discussion of kōan in relation to Coleman's enigmatic language may be just as lacking in meaning or value.

But according to Zen priest and artist John Daido Looi, kōan can be art kōans or “life kōans” *within* art. Through art we can “take up our artistic and personal barriers as kōans to be solved” (Looi 2007, 124), as kōans can't be solved intellectually (126). In the process of using art kōans, Looi believes the intuitive aspect of our consciousness must be engaged in order to reach a deeper insight into the problem we are facing (124). The kōan though is first and foremost not a method for solving a riddle or perfecting the spontaneous performance of skill, but rather a religious tool for awakening wisdom and selfless compassion (Hori 2003, 6). The kōan genre, far from serving as a means to

obviate reason, is a highly sophisticated form of scriptural exegesis. This would require an encyclopedic knowledge of canonical Buddhist doctrine and classical Zen literature (Sharf 1993, 2), both of Soto and Rinzai origin.

Kōan and the ancient Chinese literary game of *capping verses* also share many resemblances, “too many to not be considered close relatives” (Hori 2003, 53). In Chinese poetry and literary game-competitions, contestants were judged and their future careers determined by their wit and ability to improvise on the spot. These qualities are also highly valued in the Zen kōan tradition, which is expressed in the everyday vocabulary of a Zen monastery as *rinki ōhen*, “on-the-spot improvisation” (54). These games and kōan also share the necessary skill of being able to allude to something without directly naming it, in a manner exemplified by the statements “What is amnesia?” “I forgot!” Like kōan, the answer, taken descriptively, is a kind of refusal to answer as historical culture critics might assert. But taken *performatively* the answer is “an example of what the question actually asks” (55). In light of this information, Ornette's answering my question “What is the Harmolodic Theory?” with “if it will work for me it will work for you” takes on yet another kinship aspect with kōan practice that could be explored much further. But as kōan are religious and primarily intellectual in nature, they bear no real relationship with the practical aspects of Zen that would suggest practical adaptation by the non-idiomatic improviser.

1. 4. Conclusion

As we have seen, Zen Buddhism is not a static singular system, and as a conceptual foundation for improvisation praxis, cannot be satisfactorily reified. But Zen Buddhism can be reified through its own praxis, thus a parergon is more likely possible in the practical realm particularly. This practical “between” could then supplement non-idiomatic improvisation, if such a possibility exists.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE KATA CONCEPT

1. 0 Introduction

Hazel Smith states that improvisation is not a singular concept; it adapts and “necessarily changes with the times” (Smith/Dean 1997, 3). But on the subject of Japanese and Western aesthetics Henk Oosterling states that “full integration of Japanese *geido* ("artistic ways") with Western aesthetics is impossible, and, “given the humanistic presuppositions of the latter and the spiritual background of the former,” only an intercultural aesthetics that respects differences is a viable option” (Oosterling 2009, 35).

Anton Van der Braembussche though states that Japanese aesthetics can provide categories that enable a more accurate understanding of the aesthetic stylization of a life (Van der Braembussche 2009, 22). Aesthetics is a philosophical discipline that aims at “strict formulation of criteria under which artistic creativity can be acknowledged and aesthetic quality of works can be judged, communicated, and debated.” (23). Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, though, says that the forms of Buddhism must change so that the essence of Buddhism remains unchanged, this essence consisting of living principles that “cannot bear any specific formulation” (Baas 2005, 1). If that is so, can we say that the forms of Buddhist aesthetics can or must change as *parerga*, or for *parerga* to be possible? In response to the question of the relationship between Zen and the arts, Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn stated that:

When you are painting or writing or doing any action, you become totally absorbed in that action. You are only painting; you are only writing. No thinking gets between you and the action. There is only not-thinking action. This is freedom.

Basho went to Matsushima, one of the most beautiful places in Japan, where a poetry contest was being held. Poets from all over the country were there. Everyone wrote in praise of the loveliness of the countryside, the majestic snow-capped peak of Mount Fuji, the brilliant mirror surface of the lake, the sailboats flying across the water like great white birds, etc., etc. Basho only wrote three lines:

Matsushima—
ah Matsushima,
Matsushima!

His poem won the contest. This is a true Zen poem. It does not use poetic language or images. There is no thinking in it. I am Matsushima, Matsushima is me. So in Zen there is no inside or outside. There is only the one mind, which is just like this. This is the life of all the arts, it is the life of Zen (Mitchell 1976, 120-121).

There isn't a universally agreed upon standard in Japan for Japanese aesthetics (Davey 2007, 12), and as Donald Richie stated earlier (2007,12), aesthetic terms contain a quality of their own uncertainty and intuition; thus, striving for logical conclusions is not useful. If we are to find or create functional parergonal orientations of Zen and non-idiomatic improvisation, where do we look, if not Zen Buddhist texts? A clue may lie in Zen terminology, one that might lead us to a practical application of that term or principle.

1. 1. Taoist and Zen Aesthetic Terminology

In South Korean art, for example, an object that has *ko-jol* has a simple naiveté, a kind of "archaic unskilled-ness" (Kah 1978, 84). In addition, the term *yangja-habil* ("two things together create one") used to describe the interrelationship between an object's essence (through which we can relate by "entering' into the spirit of the work": *mōi*), and the quality of intuitive understanding (*mat*) "engendered by the entry of an art object into

our consciousness” (Hwang 1978, 84). If a work has a high level of *mōt*, tinged with a knowledge of loneliness and tribulation, it is said to have *songmōt* (31). If *mōt* is considered to lack honesty or integrity, it is referred to as *kōnmōt*, a superficial form of *mōt* (30). A musical work with great *mōt* is said to be *mōttūrōjida*, full of beauty or grace (Song 1975, 256).

Western aesthetics do deal with themes of simplicity, asymmetry, and suggestion. But the idea that beauty lies in its own vanishing is not a common trope. “Perishability” however continues to be what Donald Keene called “the most distinctly Japanese aesthetic ideal” (Richie 2007, 18): an ‘ideals as aesthetic’, as opposed to adjectives such as “beautiful,” “good,” “true,” or “bad.” And this quality is appreciated across all the fine and folk artistic traditions in Japan, as the same aesthetic terms are equally applied to each art. The majority of Japanese aesthetic terms can be and are applied to music, drama, art, flower arranging, writing, and dance. With impermanence as the national ideal, the arts are all aspects of that ideal.

Japanese art is considered *ato o todome*: it neither interferes with nor impedes, but rather “reveals experiential paradox and significance” (Heine 1989, 64). This is created by an artist with *an-i*, a state of perfect versatility and ease, neither inner state nor outer action exclusively (Izutsu 1981, 34). For the waka poet, this state of serene subjectivity is known as *an-shō* (Heine 1989, 6), or *buji* (“no work”), being anxiety-free. What is then produced is poetry that has *fukake kokoro* (“deep mind”), profound wisdom and feeling, as well as *kanjaku*, a profound state of solitude and silence which one may sense

“especially when reading haiku” (Qiu 2005, 21). Such poetry or art can also have a sense of aesthetic creativity (*fūga-no-makoto*), as well as of something universal (*zōka-no-makoto*) (Izutsu 1981, 69).

Impermanence is a basis for aesthetic evaluation, but not in the sense of the art's identity as an object. Its presence is revealed in how the object objectifies its own decay or demise. Great Japanese art is said to have "wind and water" (*furyu*), the suggestion of the impermanence of nature that animates a work; wind and water being the "creative" forces behind many beautiful forms and moments in nature, e.g., a bubble floating down a stream, leaves swirling in a vortex, beautiful erosion patterns, the sound of rain, etc. There is even in Japan (and China) an "art" of appreciating rocks for their naturally formed qualities (*suiseki*). The aspects of a work that increase ephemeral awareness in an individual are known as *aware*, and if that awareness stirs profound feelings within an individual, the work has *mono no aware*.

These “aspects of profundity” usually are described as a variety of states of being, personified by the object. A painting can have *gempitsu-tai*, an intensity of line that captures *hon'i*, the “essential nature of things” (Brinker 1987, 152, and Ramirez-Christensen 2008, 87), which is *hakanashi*, the “fleeting quality of all things” (Heine 1989, 8), or *ka* ("ordinariness"), as well as the perception of the deep spirituality/sacredness in ordinary things, much like the Taoist aesthetic of *she-ch'i*, the intangible life force containing spirit of the work. *Ka* also happens to be term used to describe the second of three levels of mature spirituality in Tendai Buddhism. A work

can also be said to be *kokō*, austere and withered, or have *sabi*, a quality that suggests age, austerity, deterioration, and temporality. Usually occurring along with *sabi* is the word *wabi*, which means a suggestion of being spiritually impoverished: simple, humble, and without vanity, which can also be described as having *shibusa*. The artist who creates such a work usually has undergone a severe, disciplined apprenticeship and can create works with that same quality of *wabi*. They have done it *mumon*, "without pattern or design," meaning utilizing one's training without hesitancy or thought. This would suggest that the outer form is a manifestation of an inner state unobstructed by ego or a lack of training. Indeed, Japanese 'arts' are not arts in the Western sense of mastery over materials, but a kind of mastery of non-mastery; a revelation of and integration with what is *without* form, as demonstrated by outer forms, which are not "good/bad," or "beautiful/ugly," but rather beyond such things. The creator has stepped aside and, in a manner of speaking, let the materials be 'themselves' without adding anything extra of himself. This kind of creative consciousness not only identifies with the object, but becomes a part of its overall *process* as well. To Chinese Taoists, such consciousness naturally occurred in the work of the artist who manifests *ying ning*, tranquility in the action of non-action, a kind of natural grace unhindered by egotism (*ssū yu*). At this point the artist could 'play' with the brush, spontaneously utilizing their technique (*hsi-pi*), and create masterly, non-contrived "ink-play" works (*mo-hsi*) (Goepper 1963, 16). This type of free play is symbolized by the term *wu-wei*.

Wu-wei literally means “in the absence of exertion.” Properly, it refers to the state of mind of the actor, or the “phenomenological state of the doer” (Slingerland 2003, 7). I would describe it as a spontaneous intuition/act in the present that both ascertains and answers to the reality of the moment. But whereas in the West we may see “spontaneity” as subjectivity, *wu-wei* represents the opposite: a high degree of objectivity, natural conformity to the larger flow of Nature, the great Way and its order. This is why *wu-wei* is properly a religious ideal in Taoism, a method of finding and maintaining one’s proper place in the Cosmos. As much as it is illuminating and useful to use *wu-wei* as a metaphor of skill/action, it is “misleading without its proper religious context” (8). In light of this, it may be better to utilize a Japanese Zen term that encompasses this idea without the connotation of inactivity, *mushotoku*.

Mushotoku, literally translated, is to work “without receiving a fixed salary.” Its Buddhist meaning though is “doing without desire for fame or profit,” and/or “doing without thought of reward.” Our daily life is filled with incitements towards attainment, finance, possession, et cetera, without consideration for the social/ecological impact of our consumption. We are taught to evaluate things in terms of gain. But the attitude of *mushotoku* takes away judgment, not evaluation. It creates expertise, but not rank. It is also a kind of liberation from method, described in Chinese aesthetics as *liao fa*, the end of all method being seen to have “no method at all” (Ch: *wu-fa*) (Sze 1959, 130, Coleman 1978, 24). In this state of liberation, one’s actions have Taoist *tzū-jan*, a naturalness that suggests that the act “did itself” (Rowley 1959, 34, Goepper 1963, 10). In

Taoism this idea is expressed in the metaphor of *wu-wei* ("action-less activity"), which can be described as the *action of no action*, effortless action, doing without doing, or obeying the Way of the Universe/Life (*Tao*) (Sze 1956, 17).

It might seem to the 'new arrived' in Japan that Japanese processes of creating aesthetic objects can be invariably turned into some form of aesthetic "Way" (Japan: *dō*) that creates such Zen aesthetic objects, with a certain sense of Master Sahn's directed awareness or total absorption in the activity: anywhere from Zen Master Dōgen's instruction to a monastic head chef to the art of "listening" to incense (Japan: *kōdo*). The various Zen arts involve a technical training, which "follow the essential principles as training in Zen" (Watts 1957, 195). In such Ways the "means of nature are imitated, not the results" (Richie 2007, 19).

1. 2. Conceptual Issues in Zen Terminology

In the process of examining Zen aesthetic philosophy and praxis, we also discover two particular difficulties, or possibly antithetical issues in supplementing non-idiomatic improvisation with Zen Buddhism. First is the nature of sound, and second is the issue of quietism in Zen Buddhist thought.

According to D. T. Suzuki, when egolessness is obtained, a man thinks like the showers coming down from the sky, waves rolling on the ocean, and green foliage shooting forth in the relaxing spring breeze. Indeed he *is* "the showers, the ocean, and the foliage" (Loori 2007, 169). As much as this statement affirms Zen philosophy, it also reveals a possible metaphorical selectivity that might cause conceptual difficulties in its

application to improvised music. Zen Buddhist art focuses almost exclusively on iconography, calligraphy and paintings of inanimate objects. Stones, rivers, plants, clouds, and mountains are used in reference to Zen ideals; monkeys attempting to grab the moon reflected in a pond for example represent unenlightened activity or thought. In a similar example, Bashō's famous poem "frog jumping in an old pond – the sound of water" represents an ideal Zen poem in that the sound of water is the illumination of Reality. But if all of Reality is contained in Zen or is Zen, then one can assume that the screaming of a rat being eviscerated by a hawk, the pained birthing grunts of a musk ox, and the howling of a cat in heat is Zen. But why is it then that these sounds (or images) are not widely utilized in the Zen arts? Would these sounds somehow disrupt any aestheticization necessary to create a link between Zen and the arts? It would seem that this idea of 'all sounds are Zen' then would justify second wave free jazz, particularly the "noise" music of John Coltrane that critics pejoratively labeled 'anti-jazz.' We would then not have "noise art" any more, as we could arguably now have a Coltrane – Zen non-dualistic expression of the various noises in the world – "dharma noise." A possible alternate answer may be that a stone or a plant represents not only Nature, but a kind of quiescence of Nature as well that is reflected in the silence of Zen meditation, or the silence of the luminous quality of Being that Zen seeks to awaken or uncover within humanity: a rather selective metaphor considering all sonic options available, including the aforementioned rat screaming or cat howling.

But as Garret Keizer states, the idea that the world can be made more beautiful by silence simply by reducing its “noise” is a lie, and merely “the flipside of the idea that noise is a revolutionary act, rather than like in rock and roll music, which could be seen as a glorification of sheer volume and a quasi-fascist exultation of those that can overpower every voice but their own” (Keizer 2010, 123). That a quiet or silent world might be more humane is “conceivable, but not guaranteed” (121). Conceptually, silence also bears a certain semantic suggestion that, even in the 21st century, humanity still struggles with.

We can approach an understanding of silence as literal, the silence or *space* (*ma*) between/behind words (*kanjaku*) which can be artistic, threatening, or beautiful. It can function as a gesture of language (the silent treatment, concern, intimacy, condemnation, a shared understanding of something). It can also be an epistemological conceptualization: a kind of tacit knowledge. We can know things without being able to explain ‘what’ they are. Indeed, it seems that great artists are considered to be able to express what the untrained cannot. It could also be that such inexpressibility is only temporary, that we would understand such expressions after gaining further experience with them.

In Western traditions, where aesthetic appreciation is concerned, silence is often neither viewed as positive, nor even a communicative gesture. This view is summarized in George Steiner’s essay *The Retreat from the Word*, in which the author discussed aspects of 20th-century developments in academia and the arts. According Steiner, the

forms and theories that he finds lacking, or contacting no messages, are instances of humans “falling into silence” — what he calls “retreating from the Word” (Steiner 1967, 43). In his interpretation, the only meaningful communicative forms are forms of speech and writing and the only meaningful experience is one that can be *verbalized*. Examples of this idea can be seen in Steiner’s discussion of abstract art and music especially:

The abstract design conveys only the rudimentary pleasures of decoration. Much of Jackson Pollock is vivid wallpaper. And in the majority of cases, abstract expressionism and non-objective art communicate nothing whatever. The work stands mute or attempts to shout as us in a kind of inhuman gibberish. I wonder whether future artists and critics will not look back with puzzled contempt upon the mass of pretentious trivia that now fills our galleries (ibid: 43).

Steiner states that abstract art is meaningless and this meaninglessness is a function of silence. He has chosen a theoretical framework that demands understanding of the concept and attempts to provide further analytical tools for making relevant generalizations. This kind of framing or frame analysis can be used to explain different kinds of silence used for different purposes. Silence can take on different forms depending on the framing process used in interpretation, and the formal properties of the work in question. Steiner’s interpretation of the painting as meaningful within the frame though does not account for the flexibility of transforming and reinterpreting the framing process, that is, the discussion of parergonality.

Sōetsu Yanagi states that one of the objects of Buddhist aesthetics is the clarification of the following truth: that the division of things into two is merely a later event and is unnatural, that the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly is based on

human delusion and is “wholly artificial.” “Worshipping the beautiful and hating the ugly are immature; Zen admonishes us to seek the world where no such antagonism exists” (Yanagi 1989, 138 –139). The aesthetics of Zen simplicity, austerity, silence, and such in this light are then problematic, because they point to a one sided view of “true” reality. If Zen or Buddhism in general is about *wabi-sabi*, *kanjaku*, or *ma* (i.e., water, stones, bamboo) then what is the Reality of the loud, the bright, or the experimental i.e., screaming, extreme volume, and amplified cockroaches crawling on bodies, as music? It is important to note, “few high intensity or continuous sounds existed in the pre-industrialized world” (Keizer 2010, 102). Twentieth century styles of avant-gardism in art and music also did not exist, thus the early Zen masters would have had no reason to discuss them.

As stated earlier, Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi is credited with the phrase “soundless music is the highest:” that simple, quiescent music is a type or part of ‘natural’ phenomena. This would seem to imply that a parergon with non-idiomatic improvisation would be impossible, considering that it, and its pre-cursor free jazz especially, have been decried as pure noise, non-music, and “anti-jazz.” In fact, this would seem to suggest that non-idiomatic improvisation, if it is indeed “noise,” would negate Zen Buddhist aesthetics, due to the fact that the various sounds of Zen are what Garret Keizer would call “small” sounds which, being eradicated, are too a dismissal of the lifestyle that created them (Keizer 2010, 8). Zen Buddhism indeed is a “small sound lifestyle,” as anyone who has meditated or lived in a Zen temple can attest to. Meditation

and shakuhachi flute playing, as well, are not dynamic systems in outer form in the same manner as waterskiing or karate.

Acoustic biologist Bernie Krause uses the term *biophany* to denote the different aural niches that different species on the planet have assumed in order to be heard in the overall sound-scape of a given ecosystem (64). If we then consider music itself as part of this *biophanic* process, then non-idiomatic improvisation might be labeled useless or noise for its perceived disruption of human aural niche (the niche of jazz; what is 'unwanted' sound, etc.). Further, placing music in its biophanic niche might make it antithetical to Zen aesthetics, which favor sounds that mimic "nature," sounds not made by constructed things, or the kinds of organic things that Zen chooses to have as a paragon. In that case then, the sound of a frog jumping into a pond is more natural than a "perfect" single note on the shakuhachi (which in itself, comparatively, would be more "natural" than large chromatic leaps at extreme tempos on the tenor saxophone for example). Also, what if these naturally non-biophanic qualities are not only present, but present in the Zen philosophy and creative activity of *women*, who have been underrepresented in the history of Buddhism, Buddhist art, Zen, and modern art?

1. 3. Women and Zen

Zen Buddhism historically has been a male dominated religion for centuries. Though artists in general do not consider gender in the moment of inspiration, the subject of gender in art is significant. Zen Buddhism has either been silent on women, sermonized against the evils of women, or underrepresented women in its doctrines,

literature, and fine arts. This “silence” regarding women in Zen is potentially an issue within Zen Buddhist parergonality to non-idiomatic improvisation, and merits discussion.

Christine Kuramitsu describes Zen as an alternative lifestyle merged with avant-garde artists' (mostly Western) conceptions of Japanese culture and Japanese people. Japan and the Japanese, then, assumed the role of muse in this dynamic, the ‘Other’ by which an artist (read: Caucasian male) might achieve pure creative genius. In fact it is “not even the real country or its people that sustain this dynamic, but the idea of ‘Japaneseness’” (Kuramitsu 2000, 65). Much of what is called “Zen” in Zen aesthetics is a Japanese ideal for the proper understanding and praxis of existence. As the specificity of this cultural practice Zen and cultural location are both obscured, this Japaneseness becomes “a means, a muse, and a methodology.” (65)

But the presence of the ‘Other’ within the arts disrupts the dynamic of creator and muse. (66). An imagined pure space of Zen and artist leaves out parerga of another idea of Japaneseness, a space that includes Japanese artists who, though growing up in Japan, exemplify qualities that are not representative of terms such as *wabi*, *sabi*, or *mushotoku*. As Kuramitsu states, this ruptured framework demarcates a space (a possible parergon?) for understanding the position of such artists as Yayoi Kusama – part of the New York avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s (66). I would add that it is also possible to include the work of conceptual artist Shōzō Shimamoto, Atsuko Tanaka, Mieko Shiomi, Yoko Ono, or Miya Masaoka within such a rupture. Since much of the appropriation of Zen ideology in the plastic and aural arts began from the 1950s onward, it would make sense to present

the contemporary Other that would have to have been, and may currently still be, left out of the Zen creator/muse dynamic in order for the integrity of a possible patriarchal fantasy to be maintained.

Shōzō Shimamoto, along with Jirō Yoshihara, co-founded the *Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai* ("concrete arts association"), an arts group whose collective ideas/works preceded and informed the eventual creation of performance, conceptual, installation, and action art. Though the group disbanded in the early 70s, Shimamoto and fellow GUTAI artists Yasuo Sumi are still active today, continuing to create work in the GUTAI spirit. Shimamoto also participates in the genre of Mail Art, and leads an association for handicapped artists though he himself is not. Much GUTAI art could be characterized by gestural and bodily abstraction in the leaving of various types of traces, including the use of nude female assistants covered in ink directed across the canvas (Japan: *nyōtaku*). Shimamoto created a number of important GUTAI works that would become the inspiration for such renowned international artists as Allen Kaprow, Yoko Ono, Jackson Pollock, Lucio Fontana, and many others. He has been called one of the four most important artists of the 20th century (along with Lucio Fontana, John Cage, and Jackson Pollock) by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Spain, and Tokyo, and his work is on permanent display at the Tate Modern (London), the National Museum of Modern Art (Rome), the Art Center of Milan, the Paris Gallery, the Ca'Pesaro International Gallery of Modern in Venice, and elsewhere.

Important as well to any discussion of the GUTAI are the ideas contained in the GUTAI Manifesto. A statement of the group's ideology and intentions published in the art journal *Geijutsu Shincho* in December 1956, discusses amongst other things: (1) the ideology of minimal alteration to art materials through collaboration of materials and the artist's spirit, and (2) the beauty of materials in natural decay. As much as the beauty of natural decay implies a Zen austerity or impermanence aesthetic such as *wabi-sabi*, the GUTAI engaged in works that did not utilize their extensive art training, but rather actions such as running through paper, "grappling" with mud, randomly dropping paint on canvases, and *nyōtaku*, which required neither discipline nor Zen aesthetic conceptualization. Over the three year period that I was actively engaged in various art projects instigated by Mr. Shimamoto, I provided musical accompaniment to films being shown on the back of his head, modeled several discs of felt cleverly linked into a multi-purpose outer garment, wandered the length and breadth of his then new gallery in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture, sporting a vision obscuring helmet made out of plastic cups, and other such activities. As much as Mr. Shimamoto was Japanese and well versed in Zen ideas and ideology, his personality and works spoke more of a highly intellectual yet rather lighthearted approach to art, with nothing of the stereotypical Zen-Japaneseness one might assume or expect from an artist of his pedigree and nationality. Another issue pertaining to the GUTAI was the presence of Atsuko Tanaka, a prominent member of the group hardly mentioned in art history. The GUTAI had no less than 13 women artists out of its fifty-nine members, including Tanaka, who herself prefigured participation art and

sound installation art with her work *Bell* in 1955 (Yoshimoto 2005, 20). Yet the female members of the group remain to this day under-researched and virtually unknown internationally.

Painter/installation artist Yayoi Kusama has appeared in group exhibitions around the world that place her on equal footing with long canonized artists such as Jackson Pollock, Marcel DuChamp, Andy Warhol, and Donald Judd. Yet she is both inside the mainstream New York avant-garde, and simultaneously outside, due to her status as a Japanese woman with severe psychological problems (62). She has regular hallucinations of polka dots appearing on everything within her field of vision, spreading like a virus over all that she sees. She also has a profound fear of sex and hostility towards men (63, 68). But the image of Kusama as a kind of lunatic sage is not necessarily victimization by the critical establishment. She herself places primary importance on her mental/psychic state, and envisions herself as a neurotic-obsessive compelled to “work for days at a time, eventually collapsing from mental and physical exhaustion” (2005, 63), this all occurring in the Japanese mental hospital she checked herself in to in 1973, wherein she has lived and worked ever since.

Yoko Ono, world renowned for both her art and music, and her famous marriage to musician John Lennon, is a conceptual artist who has also performed with such luminaries as John Cage, and Ornette Coleman. The product of private school education, she is well schooled in piano performance, music composition, philosophy, and literature (Yoshimoto 2005, 81). Much of her early work was meditative, and owed its spiritual

force to Buddhism. She said at the time, "I think of my music more as a Zen practice (*gyō*) than as music" (Ono 1996, 2). For Ono, the daughter of a Christian and a Buddhist, who learned both Western and Japanese culture and arts, merging the two was a natural process (84), especially in her combination of writing and music. This is exemplified by pieces published in her book *Grapefruit*:

SECRET PIECE (1953 summer)

Decide on one note that you want to play.
Play it with the following accompaniment:
The woods from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m.
in summer.

STONE PIECE (1963 autumn)

Tape the sound of the stone aging.

Ono's own statements about her work reveal some interesting possible parallels to Zen conceptualizing about phenomenology. She states that:

I think it is possible to see a chair as it is. But when you burn the chair, you suddenly realize that the chair in your mind did not burn. The world of construction seems to be the most tangible, and therefore final. This made me nervous. I started to wonder if it were really so.

Having various divisions in art, does not mean, (sic) for instance that one must use only sounds as means to create music. One may give instructions to watch the fire for 10 days in order to create a vision in one's head (Ono 1970, unnumbered).

But as conceptual as these statements are, Ono was still highly critical of over-intellectualizing, rebelling against the rejection of emotion, though she was both a contemporary and admirer of composers such as John Cage. Concerning Cage's approach she stated that mental "richness" (overemphasis on the intellect) should be worried about just like physical richness:

Didn't Christ say that it was like a camel trying to pass through a needle hole, for John Cage to go to Heaven? (Baas 2005, 162).

Ono was trying to reduce the value of an artwork and bring down the status of artistic creation to the level of everyday life:

The ultimate goal for me is a situation in this society, where ordinary housewives visit each other and waiting in the living room will say 'I was just adding some circles to your beautiful de Kooning painting' (Yoshimoto 2005, 83–84).

In addition, by turning "ordinary housewives" into potential avant-garde artists, Ono comically subverted, with a feminist spirit, the machismo associated with the avant-garde (82–83), and possibly the patriarchal implications of the Zen arts as they related to her life's work and beliefs.

Mieko Shiomi was a member of the Japanese art collective Group Ongaku and the Fluxus movement in the 1960s (Yoshimoto 2005, 139), as well as a composer of "event music." Like the pieces contained in Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit*, Shiomi created pieces through the (seemingly Zen) act of deconstructing music, and "releasing the elements back into everyday life" (Yoshimoto 2005, 139). Her *Event for the Late Afternoon* (1963) consists of a violin suspended from a building, highlighting the descent of a violin within space (140). *Disappearing Music For Face* (1964) as well, visualizes a musical diminuendo in human action where performers start smiling and gradually shift their expressions to neutral ones upon receiving a signal from Shiomi (154).

A silent violin and the expression of music through silent facial gestures would also seem to be an excellent example of Zen as expressed in an avant-garde art. In the

second issue of the *Gutai* magazine (Oct. 1955) Yozo Ukita states “art is how well the individual can reflect the results of their conception of the very life they lead” (Westgeest 1996, 187). Westgeest states that this kind of observation “bears a resemblance to the aims of the Zen master” (188). But Shiomi's name and work receive scant mention in art history, apart from being referenced in discussions of the genres Fluxus, or “mail art,” much like Atsuko Tanaka's scant mention (pg. 190 – 92), a small paragraph separated by two photos in Helen Westgeest's "Zen in the fifties" (sic), and is conspicuously absent from Jacquelyn Baas' work *The Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today*, which includes Yoko Ono.

One reason may be that while Ono has a history of living and working in America, Shiomi does not, and thus possibly does not "merit" mention. This raises the question of whether living in America or not dictates one's importance in the development of an artistic style, as the Fluxus movement, or abstract expressionism, which were not limited exclusively to America. Ono for example is Japanese, but representative of Fluxus. John Cage is not Japanese but representative of a type of indeterminism based on an ancient Chinese divination system (I-Ching). Improvisational innovations in art were occurring simultaneously in Japan and America yet Jackson Pollock's innovations are representative of action painting, while Yasuo Sumi or Shōzō Shimamoto's innovations are not. A study of the postwar relationship between Japan and the USA, and indeed the rest of the world, may contain the answer to such questions.

At 8:00pm on Friday, April 11th, 1997, koto player and free improviser Miya Masaoka walked onstage to perform at the Watkins Recital Hall on the campus of the University of California, Riverside to perform. The next day a certain Alta Armstrong wrote into the *Press-Enterprise* about Masaoka's concert, describing it as "sick, sick, sick" (Wong 2000, 29). What was it that had stirred up so much animosity or controversy, and bothered Mme. Armstrong? Masaoka had first performed a series of solo koto pieces enhanced by digital processing and computer interface. The second half of the performance featured Masaoka laying on a table, completely naked, with video projection showing the activities of several Madagascar hissing cockroaches that were being placed on her body by an Asian-American student-assistant, while yet another Asian-American student played Tibetan hand cymbals. Although the video projections were too closely captured to reveal any exact anatomical geography, the idea that Masaoka would be "performing" on stage naked at Watkins Recital Hall had prompted outrage from members of the Riverside community, as well as letters such as Armstrong's to the local paper. Her work with skin, the koto, insects and video uses image and metaphor to explore human and insect societal issues of race, herding, gender and sites of control, and explores empathy and the interconnectedness of inter-species activities. She has also invented a language, "Kosectese," which is derived from the sound of insects and Japanese and Hindustani phonemes (miyamasoka.com). Even though she is one of few women or Asian-American avant-garde jazz musicians, she sees her works under the rubric "Asian-American" and is actively engaged in creating her own "Asian-American

historicity” (21). And as a woman of Japanese descent, one might assume her to be a full or partial heir to the Japaneseness of Zen. Certainly, it is hard to ascribe *wabi-sabi-ness*, or austere tranquility to a work that involves nudity and cockroaches, considering the Japanese proclivity for purity and sanitation, or at least the idea of personal cleanliness ascribed to the people of Japan through the variety of cleaning and purifying rituals in both religious and every day events. There is also the issue of feminism, as her work could be dismissed by some as (pejoratively) feminist rather than “Zennist,” imagining that the two are mutually exclusive or that “feminist” is euphemistic for something that is lesser than Zen.

Though a more thorough examination of the issue of silence and silence on women is certainly merited, it is outside the scope of my topic, thus I will leave it for some much more qualified in such analysis.

1. 4. Non-Idiomatic Improvisation Practice as a Dō.

Defining non-idiomatic improvisation as a ‘Way’ then, can we find some kind of conceptualization of the Dō format that can serve (or function as) a paragon to practicing non-idiomatic improvisation? As a spiritual metaphor *wu-wei* stands apart from non-idiomatic improvisation, which itself has no standardized formal pedagogy, repeatable exercises, or organized socio-historical relationship to Zen, thus it is not like a Japanese *dō*. Every *dō* utilizes some small degree of chance or improvisation but does not prescribe it, as it is antithetical to organized formal practice. So how can non-idiomatic improvisation be, or benefit from, a *dō*?

First of all, practicing a *dō* is not the same as practicing Zen Buddhism, although Japanese Zen Buddhists either invented, refined, or practiced most of the mannerisms and approaches to art or sport that we would classify as a “Way.” There are no temples that practice shodo, ikebana, judō, archery and such dogmatically. The “Zen” of Zen Buddhism stems from the various spiritual practices of kōan study, meditation, scripture reading and chanting, periods of work, and various types of discussion. Practicing a Way usually involves practicing some form of sport or creative activity with a high level of directed awareness, with occasional reference to Zen or Taoism as a template for the highest level of awareness in that particular practice.

Secondly, for most of Japanese history *dō* were practiced by monks as expressions of Zen, not as Zen Buddhism proper. Enlightenment could come through *dō*, but the spiritual practices set the stage for that enlightenment, not *just* practicing *dō*. Essentially a *dō* was a way that a monk could potentially achieve Oneness. One can achieve this *while* playing the flute, not *because of* the flute. The mind, properly prepared through meditation, scripture, and directed awareness in all activities throughout the day, was the necessary groundwork for enlightenment. Through directed awareness everything was a way of expressing the Way, but *dō* were not guaranteed ways of achieving spiritual understanding or practicing directed awareness unless there was a structured, practical regimen in place. A *dō* is a certain way of practicing flower arrangement or a martial art. Judō is a way of creating harmony through the practice of throwing and being thrown, of creating mutual respect through training, social responsibility in and out of the judō dojo,

and such. There are no documented or anecdotal accounts of anyone achieving a deep spiritual Zen state through judō. But certainly one can express a type of spirituality through the practice of judō by practicing its more lofty social and spiritual ideals. In my own experience however, many of the more spiritually inclined judō athletes in my social circle (I hold a first degree black belt) were practitioners of Shingon, Jōdō Shinshū, or Nichiren Buddhism, and considered judō unrelated to Zen or their own personal beliefs. So as much as Zen has influenced the various *dō*, I would suggest that something akin to a meta-*Dō* is what non-idiomatic improvisation may have a practical relationship with, if not the Japanese practices that refer to such a Way. It is also through this agnate *Dō* that “all students or disciples of the various Ways have kinship” (Davey 2007, 31).

1. 5. The Kata Concept

The word *kata* is defined by H. E. Davey as “traditional, formal exercises designed to preserve and communicate the essential principles of an art” (Davey 2007, 78). Davey also states that:

Zen, Shintoism, Confucianism, and Taoism all aided in the transformation of everyday Japanese arts and activities into viable spiritual paths. Nonetheless, an intellectual study of these religions will not result in an understanding of the Japanese Do forms; only actual participation will succeed (30).

The *kata* of a *dō* almost invariably conform to the following steps: (1) the establishment and formalization of a pattern where (2) every action is governed by some form of rule, (3) the *kata* is repeated (*hampuku*) a seemingly infinite number of times, (4) mastery of *kata* is graded and one receives either a junior rank (*kyū*) or a master level rank (*dan*), (5)

the achievement of perfection, or the desire to perfect the *kata* (*kanzen shugi*) in the more serious students, and (6) the attainment of Oneness with the *kata* (*tōitsu, kata kara nukeru*), “going beyond its pattern or form” (Davies/Ikeno 2002, 75). Having gone through these processes, one is assumed to be able to act and create with a high level of intuition and perfected technique without recourse to the ego. And, as the ‘erg’ of the Greek word *ergon* is a “unit of work” (Black 2009, 31) or the amount of energy one uses in working, a quality of effort is already implied in *parerga*: what supplements the result of working, what we term creative “works,” or “works of art.”

But *kanzen shugi* ("perfectionism") or *dekisugisha* ("one who does too much") refers to the single-minded desire to reach the highest levels of refinement, the "pursuit of the beauty of complete perfection" (76). This, as well as the *ryu/dan* system in judō, can lead to overemphasis on the outer forms and rankings at the expense of creative thought in Japanese culture, a blind repetition of form “that leads to intellectual and artistic rigidity” (77). Likewise, a person who emphasizes outer forms at the expense of content is called "*kata ni hamatta hito*,” people who “can't go beyond form” (Davies/Ikeno 2002, 77).

The perfection of *kata* could also be a way of gaining status and authority over others striving within a *dō*, apart from the creation of advanced technique, aesthetic understanding, or artistic objects. Kimi Coaldrake states that:

Social standing or status in the context of traditional Japanese music has two aspects. Firstly, status has specific artistic and technical implications within Japanese performance-based traditions. Achieving status within a tradition grants performers authority over initiation and training as well as

over the actual practice of the required musical skills (Coldrake 1997, xxv-xxvi).

Japanese arts and traditional music are also rife with asymmetry, seemingly at odds with the idea of perfection through *kata*. Natural forms are asymmetrical and the reflection of this in art is seen as natural in Japanese culture. Many objects in the Japanese tea ceremony are actually prized for their rough glazing or cracks. These imperfections are not tolerated as flaws, but seen as integral to the naturalness of the work. In fact, their presence as gaps and 'space' in the work are in many ways considered the defining beauty. Sōetsu Yanagi gives an excellent perspective in his book *The Unknown Craftsman*, where he states:

Why should one reject the perfect in favor of the imperfect? The precise and perfect carries no overtones, admits of no freedom; the perfect is static regulated, cold and hard. We in our own human imperfections are repelled by the perfect, since everything is apparent from the start and there is no suggestion of the infinite. Beauty must have some room to be associated with freedom. Freedom, indeed, is beauty. The love of the irregular is a sign of the basic quest for freedom (Yanagi 1989, 120).

It may be possible to integrate *kata* and this "quest" for freedom if *mushotoku*, for example, is utilized in practice, which would seem to be favorable in terms of being applied to musical improvisation. So we must ask then whether *kata* can be applied to non-idiomatic improvisation.

A general overview of the benefits of an organized *kata* system reveal that they are no different from the benefits one would gain from standard musical technique practices; they organize one's practice routine and increase efficiency, reveal weaknesses to be remedied, and help chart progress towards a chosen goal. As with practicing standardized

forms as well, there are certain things that one can only learn over long periods of disciplined work. And for the serious student of non-idiomatic improvisation, anything less than such focused discipline might seem like the pursuit of a casual hobby rather than the creation of idiosyncratic art. In reference to the arts predating the formulation of Japanese culture we see an appreciation of practicing and *kata* structures. Even though Chinese art and music had improvisatory processes and qualities, Kenneth Dewoskin states that:

In the most general terms, art has become a potential not exclusively of man in society, not even primarily of man in society, but it is rather the potential of the individual's humanity in nature. Thus in the earliest sustained discussion of aesthetics in China, one finds attention to the need for talent, for *learning*, and the *technique* in the making of art, balanced with the understanding that its ultimate origin and ultimate end are in artlessness (DeWoskin 1983, 209: italics mine).

So historically, practicing was not considered antithetical to spontaneity or extemporization, but rather a part of it. And as Helen Westgeest states, the necessary physical component of Japanese arts “obviates the antithesis between mind and body” (Westgeest 1996, 13), thus also negating a “pure” ideology of iconoclasm applied to free jazz, or non-idiomatic improvisation. Just being totally free mentally does not have a clear physical correlate in creative activity, as having parameters or limits to what one learned at different phases of training was acceptable. Also, *kata* systems are not lengthy or multiple. Each Japanese *dō* has one or two foundational techniques to be mastered, with each practiced over a lifetime of study. *Ensō* painting for example is the practice of drawing a perfect (incomplete) circle as an expression of Zen wisdom. The practice of

suizen (discussed later) involves the spiritual contemplation of a single note blown on the shakuhachi flute.

Jim O'Rourke is quoted in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* as saying that:

I hate going to improvised music concerts [...] I just want to buy the record. I mean, you've got people who are playing for you who have years and years and years of thought and trial and error with this form of music. What they are giving you is information so dense that, unless you're fucking brilliant, you're not going to get all the possible trains of thought that are going on there (Cox 2006, 112).

Considering this, it is also possible to see *kata* type structures as a way of clarifying or simplifying the music conceptually without restraining one's creativity, which would benefit the artist as well as assist the audience in perceiving “trains of thought” in their work, all without limiting their creativity, or condescending – pandering to said audience.

Saxophonist Steve Lacy, an important figure in the early free jazz movement, also believed that structure not only was acceptable, but also actually preferable. He states:

It's the start of the poly-free, the freedom to choose a constraint, to do something written and improvised simultaneously, the *Free not Free* in a way (on the making of the 1975 album *Dreams* with Brion Gysin: Weiss 2006, 171).

The jazz I like is a mixture of prepared and unprepared. The unprepared is also prepared...improvisation is a tool, not an end in itself. It's a way of finding music that can't be found by composing. And composing is a way of finding music that you can't improvise (189).

"Free music" (god-child of jazz) is by nature spontaneous play, with no rules, except: keep the music alive and stop before it dies. Short takes are a good strategy, for making sure that the invention stay (sic) fresh and lively (in the 60's, we experimented with free pieces of 2 seconds) (258).

I think that the period of free jazz ended around 1967. We are now in the post-free, although some musicians continue to play what you call free jazz (44).

Free jazz, necessary in its time, was not varied enough; that's the reason why it ended: it gave rise to monotony. It's up to the musician to bring about the changes, to arrange for something to happen; what you get by limiting yourself is the real freedom (45).

This idea of arranging but not limiting work seems to be parergonal to Umberto Eco's idea of works as open fields of meaning. He suggests that a work of art can only be open insofar as it remains a work, and that beyond a certain boundary "such a work becomes merely noise. Only when a work has structure or some kind of form can its message be considered an act of communication" and not just "an absurd dialogue between a signal that is in fact mere noise, and a reception that is nothing more than solipsistic ranting" (Eco 1989, 100).

John T. Brinkman states that each (of the Japanese arts) illustrates a complex of aesthetic skills formulated with the aim of enhancing and refining a simple mode of perception (Brinkman 1996, 1): that the Japanese tend towards immediacy of experience and simplicity (6). This is complexity managed in a simple manner (20). *Kata*, as an organizational process for the complexities of improvising, also does not seem to restrain or limit creativity either. Open forms that have some kind of governing or *forming* structure would also seem to leave room for conceptual heuristics of structure too.

Paul Klee (1879–1940) was a Swiss painter of German nationality. His highly individual style was influenced by many different art trends, including expressionism, cubism, and surrealism. His works frequently allude to music and sometimes included

words or musical notation. In Klee's two-volume set of his own Bauhaus teaching notes, *The Thinking Eye* and *The Nature of Nature*, he makes several interesting points about the activities and thoughts of an artist engaging with nature:

The study of creation deals with the ways that *lead to* form. It is the study of form, but emphasizes the *paths to form* rather than the form itself... This freedom in nature's way of building form is a good school for the artist. It may produce in him the same profound freedom, and with it he can be relied on to develop freely his own paths to form (Spiller 1961, 17: italics mine).

Klee tended to see the world as a model demonstrating spiritual truth. Art, according to Klee, had moved from representing reality to revealing what is behind Reality (Chipp 1996, 185), an idea similar to Zen aesthetic gestures. The idea that natural growth and movement is not unregulated, rather un-articulated, would seem to have a powerful influence on those artists who make creation the prime activity in all areas of their life. Thus, the non-idiomatic improviser might see himself or herself symbolically as standing-in for such an artist in the realm of music. But, while organizing and guiding improvisational and its study, it is also possible that *kata* might interfere with or negate other aspects of non-idiomatic improvisation.

Kata would seem to eliminate most mistakes or their possibility if one practices technique rigorously. As much as mistakes are anathema to musical reproduction or recording, they are a positive factor in the performance of non-idiomatic improvisation, creating unexpected responses, and new, unforeseen directions in the music. Many times they can be much more emotive than anything the artist could have tried to express at that moment. These moments are valued in both contemporary jazz and free improvisation

alike. Mistakes, flaws, chance interruptions, uncontrolled elements, and meandering through knowledge forms and structures without necessarily engaging in them, etc., provide opportunities for growth; valuable "mistakes" that lead to new emotive extemporizations and insight. This would seem to be in opposition to the perfecting nature of *kata*, becoming control systems rather than technical exercises. Bernard Faure argues that the Japanese art of miniature gardens, rather than expressing natural harmony, reflects an attempt at controlling and domesticating nature. In all of the Zen arts, one remains in the realm of "domesticated, secondary nature" (Faure 1991, 78). *Kata*, as aesthetic control systems, could conceivably lead to a strict division of categories, and not the open parergonal forming that the term *non*-idiomatic improvising would imply. Which would also negate the Zen idea of rigorous attachment to outer form(s).

D.T. Suzuki states that:

Among the most remarkable features characterizing Zen we find these; spirituality, directness of expression, disregard of form or conventionalism, and frequently an almost wanton delight in going astray from respectability. For instance, when form requires a systematic treatment of the subject in question, a Zen painter may wipe out every trace of such and let an insignificant piece of rock occupy just one corner of the field (Suzuki 2000, 57).

Zen is unexpectedness itself, it is beyond logical or common sense calculation (57).

The main reason for Zen unexpectedness or incalculability comes from its transcending conceptualization. It expresses itself in the most impossible or irrational manner...the spirit of Zen is then the going beyond conceptualization, and this means to grasp the spirit of the most intimate manner. This in turn means the discarding of a certain extent of all technique (58).

Mastering musical technique then discarding or transcending it does not seem incompatible with *kata* until one considers that music is ethereal by nature in the first place. Out of all musical forms, what is freely improvised (or improvised outside of standard forms) would seem to represent the greatest expression of music's efficacy. In its most elemental form non-idiomatic improvisation is without pre-conceived formal structure, with neither a definitive beginning nor end. You don't *have to* do anything. The music is "free," and not marked, delineated, or contained, save what limits or forms one chooses. Non-idiomatic improvisation can "wander" away between and beyond zones. It leaves ample room for growth, the "decay" of failure, and change. It is often without title, its themes quickly transformed or forgotten. Many if not most of its performances are not recorded, and the material that is recorded is not planned, meaning that its very nature seems to point to its disappearance. It is spontaneous, asymmetrical, and as representative of transience as any fine art. In this manner it can be said to reflect what Zen Buddhism teaches about the state of our known reality, impermanence. Non-idiomatic improvisation could be said to include and acknowledge its own "mortality," impermanence, and mistakes. It is a gesture of ephemerality, and its potential beauty can be seen to lie in the affirmation of transience.

This type of affirmation is also a significant part of both early and modern Mahāyāna orthodoxy. The *Heart Sutra* for example, one of two early Indian Mahāyāna texts known as the *Perfection of Wisdom* (Skt: *Prajñā pāramitā*) collection, discusses spiritual and phenomenological emptiness in the following manner:

Here oh Sāriputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness (Conze 2001, 86).

Avalokiteshvara is speaking to the disciple Sāriputra, informing him that “all we experience can be described in terms of sense perception” without reference to “I” (84), our idea of Self and Being. Eating, hearing, doing, etc., are not ‘self’ and are inter-dependant with other beings. Thus, the illusion of the self disappears with this realization. Also, clinging to or denying emptiness and form is ignorance, while accepting the inter-dependence of each is transcendental wisdom. Sixth Zen Patriarch Hui-neng as well states in his *Platform Sutra* that “clinging to emptiness only increases your ignorance” (King 2009, 178). Third Zen Patriarch Seng Ts'an too states in his sutra *Hsin-hsin Ming*, “do not labor with complexities, nor dwell in the inner silence” (St. Ruth 2008,132), “denying neither form nor void” (133). Accepting “form and void” in non-idiomatic improvisation brings each concept together.

So if traditional Japanese-style *kata* systems could possibly impede an aesthetic of impermanence parergonal to an art such as non-idiomatic improvisation, could there be another type of *kata* or *kata*-like structural form that can function as non-idiomatic or non-controlling? What form of *kata* would work as a practical parergon to spontaneity and immediacy?

1. 6. Possibilities for Non-Idiomatic Improvisational Kata

In discussing the aural or oral nature of Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk's work, Richard Taruskin states that if one translated their performances into notes on a page, "everything that counts is lost" (Taruskin 2010, 494). If that is so, is it possible for another type of score, in this case a visual or "graphic" score to carry such essential musical information or, in context of this dissertation, work as a *kata* form in improvised musical performance?

Graphic scores or graphic notation is a form of musical notation which uses non-traditional symbols or text to convey information about the performance of a piece of music. It is often used for avant-garde, experimental, or structured non-idiomatic improvisation which is often difficult to notate using standard notation. These scores are also often intentionally ambiguous, leading to multiple interpretations of the score (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_notation). In many ways though, all musical scores are graphic scores. The small "dot" with a curved "stem" we see sitting on five "lines" with a "squiggle and some numbers" at the far left is known to musicians worldwide as the standard notated representation of the organized sounds we call "music." Where graphic scores differ though is the unique symbol set presented, and what values the individual performer assigns to each symbol. As Toronto-based pianist Casey Sokol pointed out to me in casual conversation, the symbol "C7" for example, when written as such on a jazz chart, is a symbol representing the tones C-E-G-B \flat , the C dominant seventh chord. It also suggests a certain chord/scale relationship to those trained in basic jazz theory; the C Mixolydian scale to be exact, as C7 is the dominant chord of the F

major scale. In this case C7 stands in for this information. In the case of improvisation, C7 suggests a particular harmonic “route” to the beginning improviser, or to the advanced improviser, a specific form for alteration. In the former case, C7 is usually linked with a harmonic progression leading to a tonic, the standard ii-V-I sequence. In the latter case, C7 most likely is contained in an altered sequence such as the tri-tone substitution (ii-IIb-I), or the minor third / perfect fourth sequence known as Coltrane changes (C#Δ – E7 – AΔ – C7 – FΔ – Ab7 – C# Δ). Similarly, Sokol stated that dynamic markings such as “ritardando” or “fermata” cannot be notated but rather conducted, and thus work as a kind of graphic “score.” For if, in the case of the ritardando, the composer had wanted a specific slowing of the tempo, she would have to write it in rather complex additive note combinations, which adds extra risk of interpretive failure. The dynamic slowing of a pre-composed musical line is what ritardando is “designed” for, and thus works as a kind of strict textural interpretation/improvisation.

The earliest known graphic score is an early Coptic song notation created somewhere in the 5th – 7th centuries CE (Sauer 2009, 064/291), demonstrating Ptolemy's theory of *Harmonia Mundi* (“Harmony of the World”), in which he coordinated the 12 signs of the Zodiac with a twelve-tone musical scale (Altman 2004, 153). It is believed to be the work of an amateur, as its text is uneven and the parchment itself was not properly prepared (154). On the score itself a series of colored circles represented chromatic tones while their circumference indicated duration and rhythm. The most well known graphic scores though were gathered in an anthology by John Cage (*Notations*, 1968) in the

1960s, over one hundred scores from composers around the world, with the amount of text accompanying each determined by consulting the Chinese I-Ching. The majority of these scores utilized either textual or graphic logic systems sketched out in pencil.

Theresa Sauer's 2009 sequel, *Notations 21*, contains a wide variety of scores submitted by graphic designers, painters, composers, illustrators, and others with an interdisciplinary interest in image and form. Ellen Burr's *Ink Bops* for example, are improvisation cards with linear ink drawings on them either ascending, descending, or on a neutral horizon. (Sauer 2009, 043), while Michael J. Schumacher's *Score 1991* is a piece of paper with the words "nothing" and "something" encased in squares and the word "repeat..." written near the bottom (222). Gaël Navard's *Hexagonie* is an abstract compositional strategy board game designed as musical research into score – musician interaction (158), while Makoto Nomura's *Shogi Composition* is a collaborative compositional process where each player in turn writes out a segment of composition in a different color, after which the score is played (167). *CHOLLOBHAT*, a series of nine cubes with structural figures within and without, appears on page 218. While the majority of the scores are structural in nature, two non-structural works are Randy Raine-Reusch's *Of Pine and Silk*, a rather beautiful smeared calligraphy brushstroke (183), and Robin Hoffman's *æhr für Hören solo*, which is a "silent" piece of sound manipulation by a variety of hand movements near or around the ears, changing the timbre of the sound as it strikes the human eardrum (107). Though they are not included in *Notations 21*, John Zorn's aforementioned *COBRA*, an improvisational performance system whose score takes the form of a

complicated game including cue cards and hand signals, between a conductor/prompter and selected musicians as signifiers of structural change, and Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Thought Unit system are worth mentioning as score systems.

The Tri-Centric thought units, occurring for example in *Composition 362* (one of several pieces in the *Ghost Trance* series), are a series of three shapes placed within the music to signify improvisational or compositional directions Braxton wishes the musician to take. The first "unit," a circle representing what Braxton calls "mutable logics" (as explained on the score), signifies a moment where the performer can improvise before carrying on with the notated composition. The second unit, a square, represents "stable logics," signifying a point in the music where the performer can perform segments of other Braxton compositions before carrying on with the notated composition. The final unit, triangle, representing 'correspondence logics' is a kind of parergon, a space between stable/mutable logics where one can improvise supplementary material out of other Braxton themes before carrying on with the notated composition. In the case of *Composition 362*, the symbols usually occur in immediate sequence, representing a kind of graphic system within a traditional score. Braxton has also formulated a series of "Language Types" he first used to form a music for solo saxophone, but which now comprise the foundation of his entire music system. These are: Long Sounds (static), accented long sounds (active), trills, staccato line formings, intervallic formings, multiphonics, short attacks, angular attacks, legato formings, diatonic formings, gradient formings, and sub-identity formings. In improvisation and composition these Language

Types are brought together – in a process Braxton calls “conceptual grafting”– to create a “given set of coordinates” within which the musician can “function” (Ford 1997, 54).

But as Sylvia Smith states, “to standardize notation is to standardize patterns of thought and the parameters of creativity” (Sauer 2009, 011). As much as this is meant to be a positive gesture towards the idea of graphic scores as a break from such standardization, it is also possible that the idea of putting an image down on paper to be “musicked,” no matter how radical or aesthetically profound, will become in itself a standard or an idiom, one that may conflict with the idea of non-idiomatic improvisation. Thus, the graphic score (once written – forever set) does not seem to serve the ‘non-idiomatic’ improviser particularly.

1. 7. The Chinese *I-Ching* as Kata

Composer John Cage's interest in Zen principles led him to eventually revolutionize the conventions of Western music by using chance and indeterminacy as types of “organizing” principles in his works. For Cage, chance was a basic law of nature; by using chance as a creative device he felt that he was working in accord with nature. Cage used chance to determine what would be “fixed” (Baas 2005, 168). But though he was interested in Zen and the writings of D. T. Suzuki, it was the Chinese *I-Ching* that he used conspicuously.

The *I-Ching* (Japan: *ekikyō*), a common source of wisdom for both Confucian and Taoist philosophers, was developed in ancient China as a set of linear signals used as oracles. What makes the *I-Ching* a book of wisdom rather than a fortune telling manual is

that each of the sixty-four signs or situations is linked with an appropriate course of action based on natural law. The fundamental question is: what is the right course of action in a given situation? The *I-Ching* foretells not fate, but what should be done to meet the requirements of the moment. Using chance helped Cage “escape his own preferences and opened him up to change” (168). Cage was attracted to the *I-Ching*'s foregrounding of questions, its grounding in the natural world, and its mathematical complexity, stating that he used this manner of chance not to give up making choices but to use chance as a discipline (169).

But Wai-ming Ng states that, up until the present, scholars in the West tend to think of the *I-Ching* as a “strange little book,” which was a response to the “aimless way the text has been used by non-specialist Westerners in the past” (Ng 2000, ix). If Cage was possibly using the *I-Ching* aimlessly and out of context in the arts, then Jack M. Balkin's statement that “it is not enough to encounter the *I-Ching* as a series of abstract principles – one must grapple directly with its symbols, images, and metaphors if one is to understand its wisdom and its power” (Balkin 2002, 7) would seem to be an appropriate criticism of Cage's parergonal usage of it. But in Cage's defense Balkin also states that any description of the book's philosophy in propositional form “must be general and abstract, far removed from the process of concrete problem solving that gives the book its practical power; that the best way to truly understand the *I-Ching* is to use it” (8). He also states that the very fact that so many different methods for choosing a hexagram exist, and that the different methods feature different probabilities and produce

different numbers of changing lines, is perhaps the strongest argument that "the real point to the *Book of Changes* (I-Ching) is not prediction of the future but self-understanding and the stimulation of creative thought" (55), and that "it is a tool for creative thinking, and should not become a crutch" (60). As much as the *I-Ching* can be a creative tool, in Cage's methodology it still lays down a final result, as all resultant spontaneity happens before the performer can interpret it idiosyncratically. It is a score, "determined" by indeterminacy, and Cage did not include improvisation in such works. Also, using the *I-Ching* for improvisational purposes would be too time consuming to use onstage, as the system of divination takes anywhere from 10 to 15 minutes minimum to effect and tabulate a basic reading. But if there were some kind of system of structure and indeterminacy that was more immediate, it is conceivable that it would be some kind of *I-Ching* hybrid.

Guerino Mazzola states that if an artist asserts that he or she will produce a "classical" album one day, a "jazz" album the next, and perhaps, a "folk" album after that, it is an insult to all of these art forms, and these pursuits "will in no way achieve great musical depth" (Mazzola 2009, 134). Is it possible then that, to assemble idiomatic materials pre-formed or wholesale into a music that is non-idiomatic, is problematic? The work of visual artist/turntablist Christian Marclay stands as a paragon between this dialectic of integration and its antithesis.

On the recording *More Encores*, for example, Marclay creates sound collages of Johann Strauss, John Cage, Jimi Hendrix, Frederic Chopin, Maria Callas, and Louis

Armstrong among others, each artist being collaged with other recordings from their own oeuvre by dividing vinyl records and gluing the pieces from different recording together on some recordings, while digitally creating the same effect on others. On the 'Strauss' track for example, Marclay overlays fragments of compositions, utilizes scratch techniques percussively in accompaniment to the rhythm of the music, and alters the key of the various pieces being played through increasing or decreasing the speed of the turntables. On the track *Chopin* for example, Marclay utilizes skipping and looping to create Steven Reich-like minimalist patterns which dissolve into cartoonishly fast speeds, before returning to "normal" with a flourishing cadenza at the very end. Though Marclay does not know what the sonic result will be beforehand, in essence he is composing through a type of organized "chance." Marclay's visual art as well is an interesting study in potential Zen parallels.

Lip Lock (2000) for example, is a tuba and a trumpet joined together at the mouthpiece thus making performance on either impossible; conjuring up and possibly commenting upon issues of breath, eroticism, and organology. *Breathless I* (2000) is a wood soprano recorder with over 100 holes drilled into its body, thus making its acoustic design irrelevant and the possibility of standard recorder performance upon it impossible. It does however seem to comment on either breath, hyperventilation, and some kind of supernatural technique that would have to be acquired in order for a human to perform "recorder" music upon it. Ironically, music still can be made with this instrument if one either (a) re-categorizes pitchless blowing noises as music, or (b) uses the instrument

percussively. Both works also function quite well as a visual kōan, asking the question “what is the sound of *Lip Lock* being played?” or “what is the song that only *Breathless I* can play?”

Marclay's music evokes (or invokes) the pleasure of the fragment and aleatoric spontaneity through his breaking and subsequent reforming of records and inclusion of pops, scratches, and skips in his sound collages, thus the fragment resists smoothness, defying the (commodified fetishistic) perfection of the audio LP's repetition (Ferguson 2003, 41/43). In essence, as opposed to improvising compositions, Marclay is improvising *with* composition, improvising a radical musicology of simultaneity. Marclay's work involves some rather complicated and dexterous turntablism, which makes his work technique-informed free improvisation. He says:

I want to disrupt our listening habits. When a record skips or pops or we hear the surface noise, we try very hard to make an abstraction of it so it doesn't disrupt the musical flow. I try to make people aware of these imperfections, and accept them as music; the recording is a sort of illusion while the scratch on the record is more real (41).

Flaws, as opposed to mistakes, are “real”; uncontrived “improvisations” of the chance meeting of record needle and dust resting on the surface of the record. But this is still a system of chance without *kata*, the structural elements being pre-formed in the music itself, and thus is not a model for non-idiomatic technical practice. Jerrold Levinson in *Hybrid Art Forms* (Journal of Aesthetic Education: 1984) describes this as a *gedanken* hybrid – one that has not arisen from a primary combination or interpenetration of earlier, historical forms. These forms need not be analyzed by their components (Levinson 1984,

6). A true hybrid art form is a form with a distinct past or past(s) (5), and mixing mediums does not automatically count as such. In this manner cartoons and music are a combination, while a synthesis of Italian opera with American government propaganda films is more of a hybrid, considering their distinct historical positions. But the combination of media might seem problematic because the resulting product leaves the music as wholly music, and the images wholly images. This type of hybrid might be better described as a juxtaposition of primary sources, and thus still remains a hybrid true to Levinson's standards.

Zen arts such as the tea ceremony, *ensō* paintings, flower arranging, and Zen *honkyoku* pieces for the shakuhachi flute are all distinct expressive practices of Zen monks and now the general public, unlike the chanting of various scriptures (Skt: *sutra*), Jōdo Shinshu hymns, or estoric Shingon Buddhist hymns (Japan: *goeika*) and mystical chant (*shomyō*), which are orthodox and part of organized liturgy. Thus, if a true hybrid of Zen Buddhism and non-idiomatic improvisation occurs, it must be based on Zen Buddhist *musical* practice. There are no traditional Zen hymns or songs that are currently practiced by monks or priests that can be adapted theoretically and compositionally with free jazz, since *honkyoku* are now practiced freely outside of their original religious context, and there is no formal Zen ceremony in which the shakuhachi plays a role. Thus, the musical practice that would apply to Zen Buddhist music would have to be a Zen sonic philosophy, a practice that involved improvisation or some form of musical indeterminacy.

Hsüeh-tou Ch'ung-hsien, a Chinese Zen master of the tenth century said an ancient "melody can move you to tears. Zen music though goes beyond what you can hear and grasp. Therefore, do not make music unless you have found the Great Tone of Lao-Tzu, the tone that goes beyond all usual imagination," which "to Indians is Om, the tone of being, which resonates through everything" (Berendt 1987, 171). Korean Zen Master Chinul described a Zen sound experience thusly:

If we hear the howl of a pig that is being slaughtered in the dead of night, this yell can become the object of our looking deeply. It is something that we can't forget. Whether we are walking, standing, lying down, or sitting, we hold onto that sound (Hanh 2001, 82).

Chinul preached that "the path is not related to knowing or not knowing" (Buswell 1983, 145), but a returning and reentering of one's own original enlightened state. In his work *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind* (Korean: *Susim Kyöl*, 1203–1205 CE), he describes one way one can return, by tracing back its radiance rather than searching for it outside in scriptures and kōan meditation:

Chinul: Do you hear the sounds of that crow cawing and that magpie calling?

Student: yes.

Chinul: Trace them back and listen to your hearing-nature. Do you hear any sounds?

Student: At that place, sounds and discrimination do not obtain.

Chinul: Marvelous! Marvelous! This is Avalokiteśvara's method for entering the noumenon. Let me ask you again. You said that sounds and discriminations do not obtain at that place. But since they do not obtain, isn't the hearing nature just empty space at such a time?

Student: Originally it is not empty. It is always bright and never obscured.

Chinul: What is this essence, which is not empty?

Student: As it has no former shape, words cannot describe it (Buswell 1983, 146).

Like Chinul's method, ikebana master H. E. Davey's body/mind unification meditation method (*anjo daza ho*) utilizes the sound of a bell to focus one's attention. Once the bell is rung, one allows the sound to fill their entire mind, the mind becoming "one thought" in its totality. When the mind embraces this single thought fully without trying close off the other senses, the ego "is forgotten, and mind/body unification is reached" (Davey 2007, 416). If the bell sound residing in your mind is considered as "one thought" (Japan: *ichi-nen*), then the fading bell sound eventually disappears and the mind gradually "evolves" with it into no sound or "no thought" (*mu-nen*) or a single "non-thinking." The calm, luminous non-thinking state that one arrives at is the prime condition.

This idea is similar to the experience of Zen student Lies Groening, who was given the task by her master to make the sounding of a bell stop while it was still ringing. She became one with the sound of the bell. She had to "hear so totally" that she herself became the ringing of the bell. Only at that point was she able to make it "stop" (Berendt 1987, 26). This is reflected as well in Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn's advice to a young meditator on dealing with noise distraction in meditation, stating that noisy and quiet are made by our thinking. If we listen to the traffic with a clear mind without any conceptualizing, the noise is only 'what is' (Mitchell 1976, 34). In another instance a

shakuhachi student asks Master Sahn how he can just practice and play without ego or the desire to play well, to which Sahn responds:

True emptiness is before thinking. Before thinking, everything does not appear and does not disappear...when you close all the holes of the shakuhachi, there is no sound; when the holes are open there is a high sound. Only like this. The shakuhachi is a very good teacher for you. If you don't understand, just ask the shakuhachi. Just enter the sound of the shakuhachi, and the shakuhachi will explain to you what enlightenment is (Mitchell 1976, 45).

It is interesting that master Sahn mentions entering the sound of the shakuhachi, considering that there is a particular Zen sect that focused on such an activity. In Tang Dynasty (9th century) China, the monk Pūhuà (Japan: *Fuke*) used a shakuhachi flute as a meditation tool, '*blowing Zen*' (suizen) as it was called. Fuke Zen is purported to derive from the teachings of the Chinese Zen teacher Linji Yixuan (Japan: *Rinzai Gigen* c. 800–866 AD). However, the Fuke school counts founder Pūhuà, one of Linji's contemporaries, as its *shihan* (founder). Fuke-style Zen was eventually brought to Japan by Shinchi Kakushin (1207–1298 CE), also known as Muhon Kakushin or Hotto Kokushi (posthumously), who had travelled to China for six years and studied with the famous Chan master Women of the Linji lineage. Kakushin became a disciple of Chōsan, a 17th generation teacher of the Fuke sect of China.

It was Fuke's goal to reach enlightenment through meditation on sound, and his particular sect (Rinzai) *Fuke-shu*, produced mendicant priests and lay persons known as *komuso*, literally 'monks of empty nothingness.' Through rigorous training and lifestyle they sought to develop *kisoku*, their "spiritual breath," to eventually blow a note that

would express all of reality and lead them to what they referred to as *Ich-on-jobutsu*, “becoming a Buddha in one note.” Although the sect did flourish in the Edo period (1610 – 1868 CE), it eventually disappeared and left behind a body of work known as honkyoku, songs of enlightenment, which are practiced and performed by shakuhachi flautists worldwide, regardless of religious affiliation.

This idea of “practicing” music for enlightenment, known as *suizen* (“blowing meditation”), has useful application beyond its religious implementation. Although becoming one with the instrument and entering the state of absolute sound (*tettei on*) where one achieves *ichi-on-jobutsu* is traditionally the path *suizen*, it has now become a regular part of common Japanese musical tradition, practiced and performed by shakuhachi flautists worldwide, regardless of religious affiliation. Indeed, my own exposure to and practice of *suizen* was in the context of studying Shintoist kagura and gagaku on the *hichiriki* (oboe-like woodwind) at Ikuta Shrine with Shoji Mori (1998-2001), *suizen* being a technique taught to me by Master Mori to develop a greater sensitivity to the sound of the instrument and its timbral relationship with the rest of the instruments in a gagaku orchestra.

The actual practice of *suizen* is a seven part non-sequential series of contemplations to be either guided through by a master, or used as a process of self-study for the more advanced student. Finding a quiet place and appropriate time to practice *suizen*, one clears one’s mind and relaxes, ready to perceive the qualities of a single note or the notes within a simple phrase. It is vital not to just improvise a long string of notes,

since the idea is to be completely aware of each note and its qualities. After allowing about 30 seconds of silence to clear one's mind, one carefully proceeds with each suggestion:

- 1) Listen to how the note begins and finishes.
- 2) Consider silence musically; it is a "note."
- 3) Listen for the texture of the note and the dynamic shape.
- 4) Listen to what happens to the sound.
- 5) Follow the breath as you begin/end the sound.
- 6) Listen to the quality and "shape" of the silence before/after sounding.
- 7) Listen to what arises out of any and all silence.
- 8) Breathe as if the breathing is part of the sound.
- 9) Let your breath slowly *become* the music.

One could also include embouchure and tone building exercises from the shakuhachi tradition such as "Sasabuki" or "Tsuzumi" to help focus and hone one's ability to hear and utilize the nuances of a single tone, even though they are not traditionally part of the *suizen* method. The Sasabuki (*Bamboo Leaf*) technique for example is beginning a note as quietly as possible, gradually getting louder, then trailing off to complete silence as a way of building embouchure control and breath control. The "Tsuzumi" (drum used in Nōh) technique is beginning a tone with a powerful, percussive air attack (*muraiki*), quieting down to almost silence, and repeating the *muraiki* to end (www.bamboo-in.com).

Suizen would seem to be then a suitable practice for a hybrid with non-idiomatic improvisation (and any kind of free jazz as well), although as a musical practice it is contemplative and functions more as a type of ear training. And although *suizen* would not be antithetical to non-idiomatic improvisation practice, it is not a technical exercise in the manner of *kata*, which are more dynamic and designed to be both physically and intellectually challenging. As a true hybrid, *suizen's* non-practical nature would not seem to make for a practical match with a systematic technique of non-idiomatic improvisation. But it certainly could be a *parergon* to the *parergon* we wish to establish for non-idiomatic improvisation, creating a “double *parergon*” of sorts. A *parergon* can contain its own flexibility and gestures, interrelated and interpenetrated. Like Howard (2008) in his discussion of Korean *kayagŭm sanjo* music, I will momentarily re-frame non-idiomatic improvisation in terms of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's discussion of process and context, of “negotiated territories” as *parerga*.

Deleuze's thought synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging, as opposed to analyzing the world into discreet components, reducing their potential multiplicity to a “singularity ordered by rank” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, xiii). The placement of concepts in different contexts denies their reduction to the “One” of Identity (Howard 2008, 75), which also implies a ground for such placement.

If, like Ian Buchanan does in his introduction to *Deleuze on Music* (Buchanan and Swiboda 2004, 9), we define the French word *milieu* as “medium” we can begin to see a

possible parergonal perspective emerge. A chemical medium is a substance through which a force or other influence is transmitted. In the case of non-idiomatic improvisation, the metaphor of transduction is especially useful in considering parergonal relationships. Deleuze states that:

Every milieu is coded, a code being defined by periodic repetition; but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction. Transcoding or transduction is the manner in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, or conversely, is established atop another milieu, dissipates in it or is constituted in it. The notion of the milieu is not unitary: not only does the living thing continually pass into one another; they are essentially communicating (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 313).

This also implies some kind of relationship with temporality or time. In contrast to metrically demarcated and measured time that situates a regulated succession of past, present, and future (Chronos), there is a free-floating time without meter, which Deleuze calls *Aeon*: “the indefinite time of the event, the floating line that knows only speeds” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262). In this case, speed becomes an affect that passes across events, a process in a continual state of becoming (Howard 2008, 78). This state does not produce forms, but produces relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or elements that are relatively unformed (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262).

The relations between, or the combination of meter, rhythm, articulation, mode, and melody draws attention to the notion of the “assemblage,” which by definition is a conglomerate or an aggregate. The term used here is a translation of the French *agencement*, which is not a static term like “arrangement,” but rather the *process* of

arranging, organizing, and fitting together (Howard 2008, 79), reminiscent of Klee's study of forming. In Deleuzian terms, expressive qualities or matters of expression enter shifting relations with one another that "express" the relation of the territory they draw to "the inner milieu of impulses and the exterior milieu of circumstances" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 317). The complexity of Deleuze's philosophy arises, not least, because of the way defined concepts are in a constant state of flux. Such concepts are not reducible to a singular identity, but, rather, are "contextual, allowing for the explication of multiple relationships" (Howard 2008, 88).

Various songs, modes, riffs, and such from many different Western and non-Western musical traditions are often included in performances of free jazz, and are "de-territorialized:" arranged, transformed, abandoned, and restated through variation in rhythm and meter. This, according to Deleuze and Guattari, has nothing to do with an evolutionary development of form. Rather, it is an "involution" in which form is constantly being dissolved, "freeing times and speeds" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 267). And since there are no standardized non-idiomatic improvisation principles in terms of a canon, rhythm, melody, and harmony are negotiated/interpenetrated territories in the music itself. These Deleuzian shifts and fluxes revealing relationships of territory and interpenetrated involutions can be described in terms of aesthetic cycles; both in relationship and milieus through which all cycles simultaneously pass.

In an aesthetic system, artistic intention is multi-layered and can be quite complex in its explanation. Beyond the general rubrics of organization, structure, pattern, shape,

temporality, and such, I will spell out a meta-system of seven interactive zones of aesthetic thought and activity, wherein a discussion and application of *agencement* may be described. They are:

- I. Spirit/Matter/Function
- II. Expression/Representation/Abstraction
- III. Self-Expression/Materials/*Jidai No Kokoro* (Zeitgeist)
- IV. Pattern/Asymmetry/Freedom
- V. Time/Silence (Space)/Sound (speech, voice)
- VI. Change/Manifestation/Potential
- VII. Result/Contemplation/Renewal

Though they are not hierarchical, each zone of aesthetic activity contains the essence of the others and may be expressed individually or interchangeably. The intent of the artist (spirit) finds its work and expression (function) in the materials (matter). The artistic Self (representation) is expressed in various levels of concrete language in sympathy or opposition to a state of abstraction. For example, a saxophonist with extensive formal training in Korean *sanjo* music, South Indian rhythmic principles, circular breathing techniques, and the Arabo-Persian improvisational systems for example has these as resources for non-idiomatic improvisation. To utilize any of the techniques in spontaneous music is not necessarily to "mix" one with the other, i.e., play *sanjo* modes within Indian rhythmic cycles. This *sanjo* can then be placed within the context of the rules of melodic progression (Ar: *seyir*) from the Arabic improvisational system (Ar: *taqasim*). If we describe this construction as being a relationship of time (*trikāla*), silence (*sanjo* pauses) and sound (Ar: *taqasim*), Zone 5, we can govern the relationships through Zone 3, what we believe is our personal expression of these materials, for or against the

spirit of the times. Zone Seven governs the result, which then may dictate that the activities of Zone 5 must be reestablished and re-thought for a result that is more reflective of the changes and moods of each moment or instance. The *trikāla* aspect may be accented or deemphasized in order for the *sanjo* modalities to be revealed, or the cadential sequences of the Arab *taqsim* to be utilized to a greater degree.

But, in the process of improvising non-idiomatically, this interpenetration happens so quickly that to describe an improvisation by our prototypical saxophonist as being improvisation mixed with *sanjo*, Carnatica, and Arab *taqsim* does not take into account the moment-by-moment accentuation and diminution of each. Our hypothetical saxophonist could theoretically go through a whole evening's improvisations without once utilizing any of these methods consciously or subconsciously, though they lay comfortably in hand. The *process* of subconsciously arranging, organizing, and fitting together of territories and relations in context without a singular identity may be explained by referring to non-idiomatically improvised "compositions." Mazzola/Guerin (2009), Roger Dean (1992), and David Borgo (2005) have used their own work to demonstrate collaboration theory and swarm logic processes. Similarly I will use tracks from my CD *Tales from the Samurai Laundry* to demonstrate such territorial arrangements.

Tales from the Samurai Laundry, recorded in April 2009 at drummer Barry Romberg's ROMHOG Studios, was completed a month before I began my comprehensive exams, and a year before I chose my dissertation topic. The work is a

selection of compositions and improvisations that document my aesthetic and technical development within my last decade of study and performance since my last recorded works in Japan and Edmonton (*The Day I Became the Sea*, *BuddhaFilter*, *Udumbara*, and others). *The Helicopter Verses* is a duet between myself and drummer Jack Vorvis, an alumnus of the Contemporary Creative Music Collective, a famous ensemble of creative artists in Canada including "Plunderphonics" creator John Oswald, pianist Casey Sokol, Vorvis, visual artist/vocalist Nobuo Kubota, and others. The main theme of the piece is based on a descending scale with both a minor and major third. Though I freely improvised after the statement of the main theme, certain aspects of my training and theoretical understanding came to the fore unconsciously. For example at 0:22, in the theme, I play an ornamentation of the main melody that could be described in terms of a rubato manner of playing solo ney flute, which I have studied in both the Persian (Iranian) and Arab traditions. At 0:28 I also play the second part of the main theme in the Arab ney manner of accenting a melody with rapid grace notes beneath each note (ascending a scale and above each note (descending), which also occurs in the descending figure at 1:23. The opening statement (0:32–0:48) and the brief two note figure at 3:27 as well contain an implication of Arab modality, in this case the scale (Ar: *maqam*) known as Hijaz (in concert C, with a natural seventh degree and a flatted sixth degree), though I do not descend the scale and play the half-flatted third that Hijaz also contains. I do though make reference to it at 3:17 – 3:18 as I play an E half-flat, the very usage of a quartertone itself also being an unconscious usage of Arabo-Persian microtonality.

Though the quartertone would suggest Hijaz, I was not consciously attempting any reference. One must take into account though that I have formally studied traditional Arab music improvisational techniques on the saxophone with both Dr. Ali Jihad Racy (UCLA) and Dr. Scott Marcus (UCSB), the former a world renowned Lebanese-American ethnomusicologist and master musician and the latter an eminent scholar and performer in both Arab and Indian classical music. I also have studied with oud masters Simon and Najeeb Shaheen, ney master Bassam Saba, and others at the yearly week-long Arab classical music retreat held at Mt. Holyoke College, Massachusetts. The possibility also exists that since I am a fan of the recordings of Iranian ney master Hassan Kassa'i, and studied from the same collection (Farsi: *radif*) of traditional Iranian songs and modal groupings (compiled by Mahmoud Karimi) as Ustad Kassa'i, these too are a source of ney based improvisational gestures in my saxophone playing.

The second example of *agencement* is the piece *God is a Waltz without Any Key*, a duet between me, and drummer Barry Romberg. It utilizes a Radel Maestro-S series electronic tambura drone (multi-tracked to enrich the timbre), Romberg playing hi-hats, ride cymbal, and bass drum only, and myself freely improvising on soprano saxophone. The drone was chosen to create a sound-scape that I could contrast with chromatic passages on the saxophone. Romberg's use of only three pieces of his drum kit was also an aesthetic choice that I made in terms of the sonic parameters within which I wished the piece to evolve. Leaving out the various tom-tom and floor tom drums and various splash or crash model cymbals would help me "date" the sound, which I wished to be in some

manner referential to older jazz drum styles – in this case the playing of drummer Warren "Baby" Dodds who worked with Louis Armstrong in the trumpeter's early years. My hope was that creating this sound would help me evoke a flavor of New Orleans syncopation⁸ that I wished to be the contrast to the tambura drone. In the opening statement of my improvisation (0:54 – 1:06) I partially quote the 1st stanza of *Royal Garden Blues*, a New Orleans early jazz classic written by Clarence and Spencer Williams. This particular idea also occurs at 1:09 – 1:12, and 2:50 as well. From 1:29 – 1:42 I quote the piece again, this time ending the phrase with a blues idea that uses the rhythm (two quarter notes) from the first half bar of the *Royal Garden Blues* melody. At 4:07 my improvisation starts off utilizing a kind of New Orleans style of syncopation but ends in manner more akin to the rubato ney-style playing in *The Helicopter Verses*.

The third example would be my re-conceptualizing of John Coltrane's complex classic song *Giant Steps*, commonly used in university jazz programs as a kind of test piece for advanced improvisers. Though I am capable of performing the work in the traditional manner after John Coltrane – improvising over the chord changes at a reasonably quick tempo – I felt compelled to record it at a medium tempo, more conducive to the expression of my personal aesthetic inclinations: varied timbre, chromatic tonality, and the expressive quality of non-jazz related rhythmic idioms taken from my study of Japanese Nōh theater music, South Indian *solkattu* and *trikāla*

⁸ I use the term 'New Orleans syncopation' in lieu of the title 'Dixieland', as it is (a) a more apt description of the music and (b) is separate from the racist implications of the word's connection to the social policies of the Southern United States during the music's genesis.

techniques, and Turkish *aqsaaq* meters. The opening theme (beginning at 0:29) utilizes a process I call "X-raying" a standard song. To X-ray a standard is to take the rhythmic structure of a song's melody and being able to play completely different notes and intervals over it (Schnee 2010b, 29: my manner of doing so being a chromatic variant of the Carnatic artform known as *nirival*). For example, if the melody of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" is a series of quarter notes followed by a quarter note rest [C C G G, A A G...], then the 'X-rayed' version would be the same series of notes and a rest *except* with random pitches such as [Eb B F Ab, D E C#, etc.] replacing the original ones. The new "melody" thus sounds absolutely nothing like the original, but the rhythm is the same. Thus, my work is something between an arrangement of Coltrane's work and my original chromatic rendering of it, as mere rhythmic quotation is not currently a violation of general copyright law. But, since the rhythmic format and structure of this song is an integral part of the work, I felt it best to make it clear that the essential aspects of *Giant Steps* are clearly Coltrane's intellectual property, and not my own. For example, the main melody (0:29 – 1:04) utilizes a single four bar rhythm twice and a single two bar rhythm four times, with a single "interlude" bar separating each, just like the original. After beginning my improvisation I play the song's rhythmic structure (1:10 – 1:13). I would call this particular statement a quote due to the fact that I, like the song's original melody, follow a descending pattern of intervals, thus rendering the line's phrasing too close to the original to comfortably call it non-idiomatically improvised. This also occurs at 1:33 –

1:36, 1:50 – 2:01, 2:20 – 2:34, and 3:04 – 3:13, wherein I inadvertently mimic both thematic rhythms in sequence.

This overall method, as useful as it is, is not a standardized technique that can be studied on one's own. But *Tales from the Samurai Laundry* does contain an unmentioned technique that does fulfill a practical application of the idea of *kata* within non-idiomatic improvisation. I call it the "Chromatic Axis Concept."

1. 8. The Chromatic Axis Concept

Chromaticism in jazz is often dealt with as something other than the main harmonic and melodic character in a piece of music. Many jazz manuals deal with chromaticism in terms of what is "inside" or "outside" of a key signature, and consider the use of chromaticism in terms of technique: a type of technical "trick." But I discovered that whenever I warmed up before a performance I would casually run some scales and freely improvise some random notes, and more often than not found myself playing more interesting ideas and melodies in that period than in the actual concert itself. There was an unrestrained quality and inner logic to these ideas that seemed to occur less frequently onstage. Upon further reflection I noticed that I was also dealing with much smaller intervallic sets in my warm ups. This is what led me to consider the postulation of a studied chromatic method as an effective *kata*-like foundation for non-idiomatic improvised music.

To perform most styles of Western music properly, one is required to study theory, harmony, ear training, and solfege as a foundation for music making. In the case

of non-idiomatic improvisation, most performers have an extensive pre-existing training in Western classical music, jazz, or a wide variety of non-Western music such as Hindustani, Iranian, Afro-Cuban, and others. All of these systems have a formal method as their base, whether one follows tradition or not. There is no method for non-idiomatic improvisation save what the artist decides to utilize or discard from other methods. Some might even suggest that the idea of a formal method or curriculum for non-idiomatic improvisation, parergonal to Zen or not, is still antithetical to the concept, and thus should not be pursued or established. But if all possibilities exist for the non-idiomatic improviser, then it stands to reason that one is free to pursue all options, and thus may be inclined to utilize a formal method either of one's own or one created by another artist. And since we would claim to be free of the aforementioned "tyranny of meaning" in creating non-idiomatic music, I feel safe in suggesting that an exercise that I call "Chromatic Metronome Training" can be a useful training regimen (*kata*), in part, for the non-idiomatic improviser, novice or advanced.

Chromatic Metronome Training is the fundamental exercise in a chromatic improvisational system I call the *Chromatic Axis Concept*. Its theoretical foundation is based on my investigations of chromaticism as a kind of "para-tonality." Formed using the Greek root *para* ("near to"), its meaning is "essentially tonal." In common usage it refers to those passages employing chromaticism, which by one means or another still project an impression of their having a tonal center. The paratonal passage includes elements (diatonic or chromatic) of indeterminate tonality that also contain some factor

that lends an aura of tonality to the whole. Paratonicity may be considered a middle ground between tonality and atonality. But it also encompasses cases of polytonality and *polymodality*, where one diatonic form or shape overshadows another, and imprints its tonality on the resulting combination. The basic idea is that, however equivocal or ambiguous the musical context, if a tonal center emerges (intended or not), the entire sound complex is heard in relationship to that axis point. Using the concept of polymodality as a beginning point, I investigated the use of modal inversion, and chose to explore polymodality as a kind of modal *interchangeability*. And if such polymodal exchange or interchange is possible within musical harmony, then I reasoned that the differences between musical consonance, dissonance, and "noise" must also reside in aspects of rhythm and intervallic relationships as well. At this point then I began to reexamine and utilize what I call "axial modes."

The use of an axis to create melodies is one of many serial techniques used in the early twentieth century, as well as in John Coltrane's use of the intervals of a perfect fourth and a minor third to create a harmonic axis system called the *Coltrane Matrix*. My particular usage consists of spontaneously creating modes from a strict set of two intervals while improvising, either over traditional jazz songs or when creating my own non-idiomatic improvisation (Schnee 2008b, 29). Most scales have a fixed interval set usually consisting of whole and half steps. In using such a scale, the form of the scale is fairly static melodically and intervallically in relation to the set harmony for a standard jazz piece. By applying this logic to scale formation, one can create semi-structured

intervallic modes involving a more open harmonic form. Instead of playing an intervallically fixed scale, one can decide on two intervals and make one's melodic inventions follow steps of only those intervals. For example, if one chose the intervals of a fourth and a half step, and started on the note 'C', they automatically have two options: move to the note F above, or move to the note G below. Moving to G then would create the option of moving a half step now to G# or F#. From either pitch they would move a fourth, and so on. There is no apparent tonal centre to these modes, but because they follow a repeating interval set, the modes contain an intriguing "inner" logic that makes the mode make paratonal "sense," no matter what kind of chord is present underneath. Taking this concept further, I decided to occasionally break the pattern and restart from another note, creating an intervallic irregularity that to me had a wonderfully musical logic to it. The system of creating axial modes can also be used as a practical performance method or a training device, depending on the needs of the musician studying it. In this way, free improvisation knowledge does not become genre-specific, but something everyone can use to expand their understanding of the variety of ways one can come to understand music. By focusing on the qualities of a single note or interval system, one is aware of more options for expression that can lead to individual statements without losing group cohesion.

The fundamental exercise behind these axial modes, though, is the aforementioned Chromatic Metronome Training (Schnee 2008a, 29). Though it is simple in theory, it can be a quite demanding exercise in praxis. Setting one's metronome

between 60 and 70 to the quarter note, one plays random pitches on the beat, and continues to do so for extended periods of time. As the exercise continues the idea is to avoid any repetition of note or scale types, including the chromatic scale. Though it is mathematically impossible to avoid eventually repeating oneself, the idea is to consciously avoid it as much as possible. Staying within an octave then moving to larger and larger intervallic leaps over time, the student can then practice such intellectual games as avoiding certain notes to alleviate any possible fatigue or boredom if it sets in. In my book I recommend practicing this exercise in two minute sessions only with a brief break in between each, working up to extended sessions of an hour or more so as not to risk a repetitive stress injury, or mental fatigue especially. A recorded example of this technique in the process of improvising can be heard on my recording of *Giant Steps* from 2:12 – 2:18 in a series of eighth notes, and at both 6:17 – 6:26 and 6:31 – 6:42 in quarter notes. The benefits of doing this exercise are: (1) one's sense of mode, harmony, and melody are shifted away from the standard diatonic training systems to a more acute sensitivity of chromatic tonality, thus expanding or deepening one's understanding of the relationship between the two, (2) it effectively breaks down old diatonic habits, clichéd patterns and phrases as the student becomes more familiar with the playing of linear non-diatonic pitches, (3) it helps the student develop a superior time feel as they spend hours with the metronome, (4) the exercise will help the student develop a harmonically advanced ear as they begin to hear comprehend the complex intervallic relationships occurring spontaneously, and (5) becoming more acutely aware of the intervallic or

micro-intervallic levels of music, rather than contemplating whole modes during improvisation. The improviser can thus create music that is more subtly constructed and expertly improvised, improvising note by note rather than modally or “motifically,” which I believe is a distinct advantage chromatic thinking has over diatonic or harmonic thinking. A more regimented form of this exercise is my Axial Motif exercise (Schnee 2010a, 29), if the student feels they need some form of guiding structure before dealing with the indeterminacy of Chromatic Metronome Training.

Like the Axial Mode system, this new exercise uses the same progression principle with an extra twist. Starting with a simple motif, e.g., the theme from *A Love Supreme* (G-Bb-G-C) to demonstrate the concept, one can play the motif starting on 'C.' Then, play the motif a $\frac{1}{2}$ step either up or down from 'C.' Then, play the motif a *whole* step up or down. Now play the motif a *minor third* up or down. Continue in this pattern using the interval of major 3rd, perfect 4, #4, 5, and b6, either up or down, and start all over from where you end up. Using this method we may get this root motion series [C B A F# Bb]. Starting on the same note using the same method we may also end up with the root motion series [C C# B D F#]. Doing this motif several times starting on different tonics during each practice session can give a student a feel for playing with both structure (ordered tonic motion) and indeterminacy (non pre-determined tonic motion). Then one returns to playing segments of random intervals like in the Chromatic Metronome Training system while utilizing the "root" movement method of the Axial Motif exercise. As an extra challenge I also use the following variation. The student plays

a motif up only starting on C, which would give you the tonic movement [C C# D# F# A#]. Now on each tonic, as one's *motif*, play a mode that uses the same intervallic structure as the root movement. So on C, one would play the mode [C C# D# F# A#]. On C# one would play [C# D E G B]. On D# one would play [D# E F# A C#], and so on. I believe that creating Axial Modes using the root movement of the Axial Motif exercise is a challenging but rewarding method of studying chromatic music making.

The Chromatic Axis system also includes various types of pivots or “note targeting” exercises that combine indeterminacy within structural parameters such as:

- a. Modal Scattering: Play the C major scale from low C to middle G (the first pentachord) before progressively chromaticizing the mode to the top of the saxophone's range. Return to the last pentachord in the same manner.
- b. Axial Zoning: Play the C major scale from low C to middle G, then play random chromatic notes between middle G and high G before playing the last four notes of the C major scale, thus creating a zone in the "middle" of the C major scale for random chromatics.
- c. Axial Pivot Exercise: Hit Note X then play random notes up / down back to it before going the other way and then back up to Note X.
- d. Axial Chromatic Exercise: start with a C major scale and begin playing it up and down between low and middle C. Then start randomly adding chromatic variations to the scale that differ between ascent and descent [C D E F# G Ab B C – C Bb A G# F E Db C] until

you are essentially playing the chromatic scale. Then slowly reverse the process until you end up back on the C major scale again.

e. Axial Targeting Exercise: At a slow metronome marking, play a six note cycle consisting of five random notes followed by a C. Repeat for five minutes, making sure to always be targeting the same sixth note every time. Then change the length of the cycle and choose a new sixth note.

This Chromatic Axis System, as a set of preparatory exercises for the performance of non-idiomatic improvisation, fulfills the requirements of a *kata* because Chromatic Axis style exercises demand a discipline comparable to *kata* systems. Such discipline and practice is not antithetical to creativity. As poet/jazz critic Amiri Baraka states in *Black Music*, “technique is inseparable from content” (Baraka 2010, 84). The Chromatic Axis exercises also contain both form and indeterminacy, making their application a highly flexible Zen-style improvising parergon within a continuum of composition and improvisation. They standardize practice to a degree, but do not standardize their creative application in performance. Such exercises help the improviser think in terms of using form instead of *articulating* form (Borgo 2007, 21), which would imply gestures of standardization by repeating a form as an unchanging system. Using Carnatic forms non-idiomatically is not to articulate such form with alterations and then claim one is performing some kind of “new” Carnatic music. Rather, it is (in context of freedom) to use Carnatic forms in context of *agencement*. Such exercises can also help the beginning non-idiomatic improviser adjust and thrive in a site of creative musical

“uncertainty,” which David Borgo describes as “a shared cultural moment of reverence rather than fear” (Borgo 2005, 12). Musicians traditionally are trained to reduce uncertainty through such activities as score reproduction, or scale practice. Improvisation then can be liberating through the “acceptance of uncertainty or change” (13), and the Chromatic Axis exercises could be seen as a way of adapting to non-idiomatic improvisation without the requirement to give up form entirely. *Agencement* as well can be facilitated by having a central organizational practice, as the Modal Scattering, X-raying, and Axial Zoning exercises can be applied to any scale, raga, maqam, *onkai* (Japan: scale) or mode-related melodic material. Chromatic Metronome Training, as a foundational exercise, also expands one's sense of intervallic relation, especially when one includes the study and performance of micro-tonality, as in the study of quartertones on the saxophone. This can also prepare the improviser to begin the study and performance of traditional and contemporary music that include quartertones. Organizing improvisational practice within a context of spontaneity and indeterminacy also clearly delineates which aspect of a parergon is informed by Zen, *kata*, or non-idiomatic improvisational philosophy. In this case, Zen is informing the philosophical level (openness, indeterminacy, asymmetry as expression of the nature of reality) while Chromatic Axis systems are applied to the practical level (the simultaneous application of both determinacy and indeterminacy). To practice the forms of an ideology in music is not to say one must follow the ideology itself, especially if one is searching for a personal expression among the territories of expression one chooses to contemplate. And since

one's style and technical capacities on a musical instrument change over time, a personal idiom of non-idiomatic improvising in particular also does not ideologically or conceptually conflict with adapted traditional styles.

Chromatic Axis exercises are also not ideologically biased towards 'purity' or avant-gardism as the highest expression of freely improvised music. Wynton Marsalis, for example, in his book *Moving to Higher Ground*, makes an excellent point about musical progress when he states, in reference to John Coltrane's late career turn from jazz to free improvisation, that in doing so "he followed the fashionable misreading of European art by critics and academics that affected many musicians and artists of his era: the belief that abstraction is the only progressive direction for a modern art" (Marsalis 2008, 125). He also states that:

The notion that you must obliterate the fundamentals of an art to have an important and powerful contemporary identity is almost impossible to fight. There are generations of academics dedicated to this misconception, and they're not just going to just go away. There are too many students left to ruin. But by the time you abstract the abstraction of an abstraction, you wonder what in the world you are doing. And once you lose sight of *what* you are doing, *why* is unimportant. The stuff that people still call *avant-garde* was worked out in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century (125)

The trajectory of (Picasso's) career raises questions about the direction of Western art in general. A king of the avant-garde, Picasso plunged into abstraction but came to realize that abstraction was just one part of his palette, no more or less sophisticated than any other style. One wonders why this so rarely happens among jazz musicians (126).

Having the Chromatic Axis System as part of improvisatory practice provides a structural *kata* element to non-idiomatic improvisation, which answers the central question of this dissertation – non-idiomatic musical improvisation can be practiced, and practicing

Chromatic Axis exercises is an appropriate, conceptually sound preparation for such improvisation; especially as a supplement informed by Zen Buddhism. Zen training does not culminate in my system, rather it provides context as a paragon to intervallic or pitch studies. Clearly my approach is lacking correlative harmonic and rhythmic aspects; the metronome in this case being a kind of pulse regulator. But, being representative of one way (out of many possibilities), others and myself can equally join in the ongoing process of defining and expanding it: sharing in the creative addition of structure to sound.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY

1. 0. General Summary

As I have explained in the preceding chapters, non-idiomatic improvisation is an additive process, the pursuit of meaningful structure as opposed to iconoclasm. And though elements of Japanese music e.g., the Nōh score, make improvisation conceptually possible, the expression of Nōh is not improvised in any significant manner. Establishing a direct aesthetic link between non-idiomatic improvisation and a traditional Far Eastern musical tradition such as Nōh then is laden with practical and conceptual difficulties. Through the concept of the parergon, a kinship relation from within the arts, Japanese aesthetics, and Zen Buddhism is aesthetically possible, but Zen itself also has parergonal elements that contradict orthodoxy, such as the writings and thought of D. T. Suzuki, and subsequent expressions of Zen by those he influenced, especially in the arts. Due to the fact that the conceptualization of Suzukian "Zen non-idiomatic improvisation" ideology is problematic, trying to find a possible connection in praxis was the focus of my work. The idea of *kata* provided a foundation for a possible link between non-idiomatic improvisation and Zen arts, for which I then offered a working model (still in the formative stages) in the form of a series of structured exercises for improvisation, the Chromatic Axis Concept. These exercises demand a discipline comparable to *kata* systems, yet are neither inimical nor antithetical to non-idiomatic forms of creativity. These exercises standardize both form and indeterminacy, making their application a highly flexible Zen-style improvising parergon within a continuum of composition and

improvisation. These exercises also standardize practice to a degree, but do not undermine creative action as they do not inherently standardize their creative application in performance.

1. 1. Implications for Further Research

The idea of conceptualizing improvisation via parerga has some interesting implications for further study. In *Flow, Gesture, and Spaces in Free Jazz*, Guerino Mazzola states that:

The classroom should not be discounted from the list of collaborative, creative sites for free jazz. There is no reason why a sophisticated art like free jazz should not be able to travel to an academic neighborhood, and shared by writers, philosophers, and artists of all kinds. If we reject the idea of free jazz being chaotic and irrational, then I see no reason why genuine scholars cannot make genuine contributions to the development and propagation of this art (Mazzola/Cherin 2009, 134).

As well, David Borgo states that:

By fostering more open forms of improvisation in our jazz classrooms, and by acknowledging the embodied, situated, and distributed aspects of learning in our institutions, we may be able to provide effective and efficient ways to handle complex organizational problems, to improve communication outside of traditional structures, and to inject local knowledge into the system—all qualities that are increasingly be viewed as desirable in the modern academy (Borgo 2007, 87).

Non-idiomatic improvisational parerga contextualizing Zen Buddhism, art theory, and other fields of creative inquiry can assist in this process, possibly expanding the possibilities of inter-aesthetic or intercultural aesthetic exchange, in this case facilitated by the classroom. The structural binary of information taught and learnt can be contextualized with the knowledge that, when viewed from an ecological perspective

such as Borgo's, improvisatory knowledge is "co-instituted; embodied, situated, and distributed" 88). Jacques Derrida was critical of linguistic Structuralism in that it set up binary opposites, black and white, north and south, male and female, etc., which Derrida saw as always favoring one position (Osbourne and Sturgis 2006, 163). If language is a system of signs (121) then signs fail to signify because to Derrida they are constantly evolving and not fixed (163). Thus, Derrida argues that "the truth in painting is the same as the truth in language, an impossibility based on binary opposites—meaning being determined not by the authority of a voice that constructs meaning, rather the missing cultural context that defines it" (164).

It would also be interesting to study the more improvisational aspects of Derrida's work with parergonal reference to aspects of Zen Buddhism. Carl Olson states that Derrida shares characteristics with Zen Buddhism because: (1) both subordinate rationality to spontaneity, (2) both are critical of a subjectively based philosophy because both are convinced of the impermanence of the subject, (3) both agree that conceptual categories are impossible due to their lack of permanence, and (4) Derrida explores gaps, frames, space, silence, while Dōgen himself used rather idiosyncratic, personal language laden with "the *yūgen* of pause, suggestiveness, and mysterious depth, attributes associated with the aesthetic term *ma*: a gap, empty space, silence, or pause in a creative work of profound depth" (Olson 2000, 84). Derrida's Deconstruction shares with *ma* a place at the margins of culture where they each deconstruct all boundaries and mental constructs, and function experientially "at the interstices of being" (84). It is this

philosophical spontaneity that would seem to favor the improvisational gesture in Derrida's work.

According to Kant, there are two kinds of beauty. The first is free of the presupposition of concept, containing no suggestion of what the object should be. The other kind is an object attached to some concept, which conditions the beauty of an object to an end of some sort (Kant 2007, 60). Kant states that:

To deem something good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be, i.e. I must have a concept of it. That is not necessary to enable me to see beauty in something. Flowers, *free* patterns, lines aimlessly intertwining – technically termed foliage, – have no signification, depend upon no *determinate* concept, and yet please. Delight in the beautiful must depend upon the reflection on an object leading *towards* some concept or other (whatever it may be) (Kant 2007, 39; *italics mine*).

This "free" beauty in art cuts off any adherence to concept or end, and thus objects "are no longer significations/signifiers, or representations/representers (sic)" (Derrida 1987, 97). Also ranked by Kant in this class are "what in music are called fantasias (without a theme), and "indeed all music that is not set to words" (Kant 2007, 60). Derrida quotes this same passage but adds the note "[improvisation, free variation]" (Derrida 1987, 97). Richard Kostelanetz describes Derrida's own work as improvisatory in his *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, saying that:

What separates Derrida from traditional theorists is this commitment to improvisatory thinking, with all of its possibilities and limitations...if you think improvisation is "no way to play music," you might judge that Derrida's example is no way to think (Kostelanetz 1993, 58).

But Derrida would seem to deny such a claim, stating that:

It is not easy to improvise, (sic) it's the most difficult thing to do. Even when one improvises in front of a camera or a microphone, one ventriloquizes or leaves another to speak in one's place. The schemas and languages are already there, there are already a great number of prescriptions that are prescribed in our memory and our culture. All the names are already programmed. It's already the names that inhibit our ability to ever really improvise. One can't say whatever one wants; one is obliged, more or less, to reproduce the stereotypical discourse. And so I believe in improvisation, and I fight for improvisation, but with the belief that it is impossible. But there, where there is improvisation, I am not able to see myself, I am blind to myself...the one who has improvised here, no I won't ever see him. (Peters 2009, 168)

Improvisation then is not that which is unforeseen (Latin: *improvisus*), but what is not seen at all. Derrida also states:

I do not know why I go off in this direction, while improvising, rather than others, so many other possible directions. What is important here is the improvisation – contrived like all so-called free association – well, anyway, what is called improvisation. It is never absolute, it never has the purity of what one thinks one can require of a forced improvisation: the surprise of the person interrogated, the absolutely spontaneous, instantaneous, almost simultaneous response (Peters 2009, 95). So, one has to, one fails to improvise (169)

But what possibly is at issue here is Derrida's model of improvisation: limited, and relying on some unique orthodox idea of pure instantaneity and creative novelty that could never stand up to the scrutiny of deconstruction (96). It is possibly here where Derrida also "suffers" from the aforementioned a priori rigidity of philosophy (Cheetham 2001, 105) in Kant's treatment of *parerga*. The job of the improviser is not speech but improvisation; improvisation has nothing to do with communication, it ensures (or possibly "insures") that the channels of communication are kept open and alive. It is the reverse of Derrida's thought; not the "battery of anticipatory and delaying devices" that

will "protect" us from improvisation but, rather, it is improvisation that "can and should protect us from them" (Peters 2009, 169).

It is interesting too to consider the relevance, concerning Derrida's rather negative views of improvisation, of the onstage meeting of Derrida and Ornette Coleman at the Paris La Villette Jazz Festival July, 1997 (a few days before I would personally meet Coleman in New York and become his student). Coleman invited Derrida onstage to collaborate in a text-improvisation setting. Accord to various reports the audience responded rather negatively and Derrida was booed offstage before he could finish what he was saying. This apparently "was a decidedly painful experience for the philosopher" (Ramshaw 2006, 1). Derrida had interviewed Coleman for the French magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* (No.115, 20 août-2 septembre 1997: 37-40, 43) before their performance, and the tone of the interview was one of camaraderie over sharing similar life experiences as ethnic outsiders within their own communities, which may have made the negative public reception feel rather personal.

But whether or not Derrida's jazz festival experience plays into his thoughts, the preceding statement would seem to have Derrida himself stripping away the expressionist and/or humanistic gestures or conceptualizations that are usually ascribed to improvisation. It would then be more akin to a kind of liberation from "the foibles and idiosyncrasies of individual practitioners and their self-legitimizing discourses" (169). In this state then, improvisation communicates nothing, and signifies nothing, much like both Kant's description of "free beauty" and Derrida's exposition on that description. Its

beauty is its "what it is-ness." If there is anything that is or can be communicated, it would seem to be to the order of what is in all of us, what is universal, or what is essential in a being or even Being itself (1) as it is discussed in Case no. 147 of Zen master Dōgen's kōan manual the *Shōbōgenzō Sanbyakusoku* (Loori 2005, 199) or (2) the actions of the Taoist who follows the principle of *wu-wei*.

Another positive aspect of reframing non-idiomatic improvisation in terms of Zen Buddhism is that it provides yet another context for the discussion of the role of women in improvised music, and the inclusion of women who may find this kind of Zen parergon more progressive than abstract. In this case the parergon, also definable as *margin*, can also be useful to the marginalized. As percussionist Susie Ibarra states:

Lots of people talk about how art reflects life. But if jazz is art, how can it reflect life if there are only men playing it? (Oliveros 2004, 64)

Women have always been socially free to actively participate in the making of all kinds of music, but a non-idiomatic improvisation that includes parergonal Buddhist influence may be more attractive to the female improviser who finds past styles patriarchal and ideologically distasteful. In this manner a woman can find a new and possibly more empowering way to make her own improvisation. As non-idiomatic improvisation expands and evolves, it offers an ever expanding array of choices of making as well as *being* in music. As veteran composer and improviser Pauline Oliveros states:

As the gift of improvisation enters into society, and the life of women, I believe that paradigms will shift. Those who have never experienced power in their being, can know and discover this, and have a voice to speak for themselves without hesitation or reserve. So, the next time you hand a woman a rattle, a drum, tambourine or just invite her to make a

sound, remember that you are enabling her to make choices and changes in her life by learning to being the moment. To be *who* she really is, instead of *what* someone else has demanded that she be (Oliveros 2004, 70).

This idea is also confirmed by musician Dana Reason when she states that improvisation teaches her about the importance of being ready to play exactly who, where, and what she is about at that moment (63). Through parergonal mimetic Zen activity, non-idiomatic improvisers are also provided with the same type of empowering ideal that Rupert A. Cox states that “Way practitioners are provided by a mimetic relationship with traditional Zen arts” (Cox 2003, 245). The imitation of aesthetic form allows the practitioner to explore such ideas and images, and “can even turn them into a lived reality” (245). This idea also may be applicable to the lives of women who seek more significant inclusion in the development and propagation of Zen as well as any other kind of Buddhism they may be lay or ordained members of.

Historically women have been marginalized in the practice and development of Buddhism, most notably exemplified in Japanese Zen Buddhism by the proverb “Women are the servants of hell; they stamp out the seeds of the Buddha” (Kimbrough 2001, 59), and the medieval practice of prohibiting women from visiting holy sites (Japan: *nyonin kinsei*); as women were considered impure and a threat to the monastic purity of male monks (60).

It is also important to note that free jazz, free improvisation, and non-idiomatic improvisation are usually labeled *avant-garde* music: “at the forefront” or figuratively

“leading the charge.” The idea of an artistic avant-garde is, according to Lawrence Kart, a modern phenomenon beginning in France in the 1880s, stating that:

The term itself was borrowed from radical politics, which had borrowed it from the military, so it should come as no surprise that ideology and attitudes can play a major role both in the making of an avant-garde work and in our ability to recognize that we are in the presence of such a thing (Kart 2000, 447).

This potential passionate, hyperbolically charged artistic "struggle" (Agonism), mixed with modes of alienation, and the sense of a work as a 'transcendental laboratory' or proving ground (447) may be distasteful and decidedly patriarchal to some, thus making a Zen site of change and renewal for non-idiomatic improvisation possibly more palatable for the more conservative participant. In non-idiomatic improvisation as in life, not everyone wants to be a "cunning saboteur of over-ground values" (Watson 2004, 2).

In *Ritual Practice in Modern Japan* Satsuki Kawano shows that, rather than being self-evident analytical categories, belief and action in Japan must be investigated as culturally constructed and socially created. Common ritual actions “can engage ritual actors in special contexts set apart from daily life” (Kawano 2005, 2). But in the context of improvisation can this be said to be so? Is participation in “free” forms of expression actually free in certain places? Or is participation regulated within some form of structural activity? Parerga of practice or “practicing” could also be useful in analyzing ritualistic form, axiom, and corollary in Shinto music in comparison with the free improvisation scene in Kyoto, parerga of authority establishing authority and ordering

participation within and without the musical event could possibly be proven to be vital in understanding the socio-situational nature of sites of music in Japan.

For example, the meaning of a ritual can be said to lay in the grammar of a rite, and, as A.W. Sadler showed in his work on Shintōism (1976), the form, axiom, and corollary all interconnect to create this meaning.⁹ Simply put, the *form* is what is done in a ritual, the *axiom* is some self-evident truth that is presupposed by the form of a rite, and the *corollary* is an account of the prototype of the form, how it was done in some kind of golden age or mythic dreamtime. This would suggest that the ritual embodies a worldview underlying the ritual, and the ritual helps reinforce or reenact that worldview. With a specific site of social or creative activity, ritualized acts can also do several things: establish ritual authority, create a social structure that creates social order, ease decision-making, and help organize people toward a common goal. These actions are not arbitrarily chosen, and are commonly prescribed by an external source to the performers, who may be a subset of ritual community in a specific place. The process of ritualizing an activity and giving meaning occurs in specific ways in each site. For each site is specific, and the functionality of the site is ordered by particular ways of doing or being. In comparing rehearsals for performances of Shintō religious music I participated in as a member of the Ikuta Shrine gagaku orchestra in Kobe, Japan between the years 1998–2001, I engaged in activities related to the free improvisation scene in Kyoto during that same time period. Within each I recognized similar organizational themes and social

9 Sadler, A. W. 1976. The Grammar of a Rite in Shintō. In *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 35, No.2, p.17-27.

gestures, which ordered and affected the outcome of activities in specific ways. What was done at Ikuta Jinja and at Parallax was ordered specifically in/for that site, and this order affected how performances occurred outside of the site (situational form). Both sites also established and maintained some kind of "self-evident" truth that was presupposed by the forms of the ritual. The enactors of the most highly regarded social gestures and philosophies were thus the embodiment and representatives of the scene itself, regardless of musical skill. Both sites contained particular social ritual, which eased negotiations of musical position and prominence (situational axiom). The mythic accounts and prototypical forms of each worldview had a direct relationship to social order and rank. One's sound was dictated by one's relationship to both a mythic and external world, very similar to the manner in which "Japaneseness" is acted out in society in time and space (situational corollary). Like rituals, these activities established an order, an unquestioned order that eased decision-making/problematic activity through a tradition. And like ritual, these activities gave meaning to specific places beyond their practical value.

In South West Asia, specifically South Indian music and dance, the desired state of creation and reception is *rasa*, a tripartite essence, flavor, and delight which is greater than the sum of its parts (Schwartz 2004, 8). And as Richard Schechner states, the 'rasic' goal of Indian performance is the genesis of a third entity between the performer and audience: the experience of the transcendental, archetypal emotion, "what is outside is transformed into what is inside" (97). This would assume a *rasika*, a connoisseur who is prepared to appreciate such an emotion, or *bindu*, both "a manifestation of creative

energy and a source of creativity, structure, and dimension” (99). Identification with this archetype also implies, for Sneh Pandit, an urge for a “with-ness” with the object, for a becoming one with it—an urge in the form of “a drive which (sic) seeks constantly to transcend the self to a plane of existence where the unhampered consciousness can dilate on and enjoy an uninterrupted delight” (Pandit 1977, 47). This urge towards a transcendent parergonal third entity/state may partially explain or contain apt correlates to the axiomatic ritualization found in at Ikuta Jinja and Parallax, since both are embodied in acts. These acts may be more than ideals to live up to in prototypical word and deed, but rather embodied states of being where participants not only communicate to each other, but also through each other simultaneously—an alignment in which parerga of presence and transcendence could also be studied.

As Le Feuve (2010) and Antebi (2008) have shown, failure, as an aesthetic concept embracing mistakes, is a productive space where paradox is unproblematic and dogmatic ideology is refused. And as such, a study of the aesthetics of failure could be a useful parergon to the study of practicing and/or Zen as well. But this aesthetic may be a site of dispute, because it can imply an improvisational “onto-theology” (religious reality) that is perceived as a threat against musical order and logic. As non-idiomatic improvisation is in constant flux and “becoming,” it would seem to privilege a foundational onto-theology of an Absolute of Becoming. This would suggest that to believe as such would be iconoclastic to an onto-theology that supports, or at least assumes, analytical formal order or ordering, one that might be ascribed to the influence

of Judeo-Christian theology (strict form as morality, the logical tautology of morality). As Daniel Dombrowski suggests, such a 'becoming' aesthetic may be seen as symptomatic of onto-theological "gignolatry," the "worship of Becoming" (Dombrowski 2005, 1), which then disrupts the limits of an Absolute of Perfection and Order. Non-idiomatic improvisation fails to stay put within reasonable onto-theological grounds, ergo this constant limitless flux foundationally fails for its opponents. Non-idiomatic improvisation fails to appreciate and confirm order, consonance, or beauty; thus, by a transitive property, fails to conform to what is good and true, traits of the divine, or an individual god such as the Judeo-Christian God of Abraham. "That which fails" is contrary, thus must be categorized as lesser, as failed or 'fallen' onto-theology can only be then ascribed to a Luciferian ideal. Such an ideal contains no self-criticism, and lacks the necessary "repentant" embrace of what is superior to it (metanoia). Mimetically, it is "chaotic" and "noisy," and creates aesthetic distance from the everyday world: not to a place of teleological beauty, but to a place that both celebrates and inculcates irrationality, a virtual Hell.

But it may also be said that an aesthetic of failure, the embrace of paradox, unintentionality, and such suggests an onto-theology of divine "dipolarity" suggested by process theology. If God can have both changing and unchanging aspects, then may non-idiomatic improvisation reflect such an assumption, and not contradict a primary Absolute? Whatever can be accurately ascertained of the aesthetics of failure and onto-

theology, it could be useful (to paraphrase Krauss 1985, 115), to see such a discussion as “yet another integer in the ‘calculus’ of meaning.”

1. 3. Conclusion

If an improviser believes that there are no rules or Zen principles necessary beyond seeing reality via a “beginner's mind,” then parerga might be of value in questioning, reevaluating, or expanding on that position. As artist Bob Ostertag states, a work of art seeks to illuminate some nexus in the dense web of physical and social relations, “illuminate it so brightly and clearly that we can see it as if from a new angle, can for at least a moment become unstuck from our unique spot in the grid and see things from a new perspective” (Ostertag 2009, 8). He also admonishes the artist to always be open to new ways of understanding what it is that one is doing, and always be open to reassessing whatever one has completed (1). Parergonality in art systems accomplishes this feat. Parerga are not exclusionary, but inclusionary; they add to intellectual and creative growth—not entropy or erasure; they are non polemical and “re-structive,” as opposed to destructive; they value difference; and, in the case of non-idiomatic improvisation, they can explore and add to the possibilities of improvisation by adding new techniques rather than new theories. Perhaps then it is fitting to conclude with a paraphrase of Shunryu Suzuki iconic statement: *In the beginner's mind there are many parerga, but in the expert's mind there are few...*

APPENDIX I: EAST ASIAN BUDDHIST AND AESTHETIC TERMINOLOGY

I. KOREA

- Amit'a-bul: The Buddha of Infinite Light (*Amitābha*) who resides over the Western Pure Land Paradise.
- Chesök: "Buddha Emperor": the Buddhist Dharma protecting deity (see: Śakra devānām Indra), also known as a shamanistic god responsible for harvests and long life.
- chinyang,
chungmori,
chajinmori : The slow, medium, and fast sections of a piece of sanjo music.
- choch'!/chot'a!: *ch'uimsae* used by the drummer in sanjo music (see: *kūrōch'i*).
- Ch'ōnsu-posal: "Bodhisattva with Eleven Arms": the shamanistic form of *Kwanseūm-posal* (Avalokiteshvara).
- Ch'uimsae: cries of appreciation or encouragement given by the drummer or knowledgeable members of the audience during a performance of traditional Korean opera (*p'ansori*).
- Heottun garak: "scattered melodies": the name given to *sanjo* by traditional society, as sanjo contains a lot of rhythmic freedom and improvisational flexibility.
- Hwanŏm-gyŏng*: "Flower Garden Sutras": a collection of sermons by various Bodhisattvas about the Buddha and supreme enlightenment. The 'flower garden' refers to the righteous activities of the Bodhisattvas being compared to various types of flowers. It is this collection that focuses on the idea of *porishim* (see: *Avatamsaka-sūtra*).
- Kamno

t'aenghwa:	Buddhist paintings portraying the Buddha <i>Amitābha</i> (King Kamno) giving <i>kamno</i> (nectar, in this case symbolizing the Buddha's teachings) to those thrown into Hell.
ke-yi:	Taoist terms used to explain Buddhist ideas.
Ko-jol:	"archaic unskilled-ness"; straight, full-bodied simplicity, naiveté; like an uncarved block.
Könmöt:	"superficial möt"; möt that lacks honesty or integrity.
Küröch'il:	"right on!"; an exhortative expression used to drummer in sanjo music.
Küngnak:	Buddhist Paradise.
Kut:	a shamanistic ritual.
Kwanseüm-posal:	The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara
Mat:	the quality of intuitive understanding when an art object enters our consciousness; the counterpart of <i>möt</i> .
Möt:	the quality of an object's essence, through which we can relate to by entering into the spirit of the work.
Möttüröjida:	to be full of beauty or grace.
Mubul süphap:	Korean Buddhist/shamanistic syncretism.
Mudang:	shaman.
Musok:	Korean shamanism.
Öp:	the result of one's actions (Sanskrit: <i>karma</i>).
Porishim:	'mind for supreme enlightenment': the ability/desire to pursue and achieve enlightenment and share it with others. In the <i>Hwanömg-yöng</i> porishim is metaphorically compared to a seed of Buddhahood, the Earth, clear water, clear eyes, and doors, etc, for its positive and affective qualities.

- <i>posal</i> :	Korean suffix meaning 'Bodhisattva.'
Pulshim:	the Buddha's mind/heart.
Samun:	an ascetic monk.
Sanjo:	a form of folk music containing elements reminiscent of minimalist phase music and free improvisation (see: <i>heottun garak</i>).
Suseok:	the Korean tradition of the art of appreciating aesthetically pleasing stones (see: <i>suseki, gonghi</i>). Evaluation of suseok stones involves classifications of beauty, geomorphic unity, symbolism, and scholastic-philosophical heuristics.
Shinjung t'aenghwa:	Buddhist paintings which also include indigenous Korean folk deities that protect the Buddhist Dharma.
Sinmöt:	"sour möt," same as könmöt.
Sön:	Korean Zen Buddhism.
Songmöt:	"deep, inner möt," a high level of möt tinged with knowledge of loneliness and tribulation.
Sosüng Pulgyo:	Theravada Buddhism.
Tae-a:	the Sön realization of the higher self: Oneness.
t'aenghwa:	Buddhist paintings, in which shamaistic deities often appear.
Taesüng Pulgyo:	Mahāyāna Buddhism.
Togyo:	Taoism.
Wön:	"all encompassing circle": metaphor for perfection of wisdom/enlightenment.
Yangja-habil:	"two things together create one": yin-yang; the interrelationship of möt and mat.

Yömbul: reciting Buddhist scripture.

Yömju: Buddhist rosary.

II. CHINA

Bao tou: "belly exploding"; contemporary term for speech and behavior that deviates from the staging instructions in Cantonese Opera. The term originally and is still considered by some to refer to comic improvisation that included foul language and innuendo.

Biji: trace of the brush: the brush mark quality and form represent the physical "presence" of the artist (elated to *ch'i-yun*).

Ch'an: "one" + "sun / stars," at one with the universe; Chinese Zen Buddhism.

Ch'i: "within shapes, instrument," material.

Ch'i-yun: the 'spirit resonance' of an artwork; how alive with *qi* it is

Ching: seasonal impact.

Ch'ü: "appealing quality."

Dau zy: to cover up or correct a mistake using improvisation (Cantonese Opera).

Fei-pai: "flying white"; the blank, parallel gaps in a brushstroke created by a drying brush, "filled in" by psychological anticipation of closure. Considered natural / part of the nature of a brush running out of ink, possibly containing *ch'i-yun*.

Ga-fa: to add ornaments (Cantonese).

Gongshi: "Chinese scholar stones," the Chinese tradition of the aesthetic contemplation of stones (see: *suseok, suiseki*). The four main aesthetic qualities desired in a stone are wrinkling (*zhou*) thinness (*shou*), perforations (*lou*), openness (*tou*). The highest ranked stones are named *lingbi* after the county in Anhui Province where they are found.

- Hau!: (pr: 'how!'); a cry of encouragement and appreciation from an audience member in the Peking Opera.
- Hsi-pi: "playing with the brush"; spontaneous wu-wei painting after mastery of technique.
- Hsü: "emptiness: the power of spiritual suggestion through emptiness
- Hun tun: the great cosmic chaos vs. sacred order state that all things spring from and return to, and that the Taoist master seeks to be at one with; the primitive life-order hidden by conventional language and culture.
- i: effortlessness.
- i-hua: "the painting of a single-stroke"; creating one essential idea-form and using it to create a myriad of things from that essential idea. A kind of "inductive" creative originality as opposed to studying classical forms for years and synthesizing an 'original' style from one's technical studies.
- Kaiyan: "eye-opening": a ceremony in which the pupils are painted on a Buddhist statue, thus changing the statue from a mere 'form-image' (*xingxiang*) to a fully consecrated sacred icon worthy of veneration (*benzun*). Until then it is merely an object, a 'shadow-image' (*yingxiang*).
- K'ai wu: "open awareness," non-judgmental state of reception (Ch'an Buddhism).
- Ku – ch'i: "bone spirit": the essence of structure.
- Ku-fa: "bone means," structural considerations.
- Li: "above shapes," principle, universal principles.
- Liao Fa: liberation from method: The end of all method is to seem to have no method (*wu-fa*).
- Ling: quality of being spiritually alive / engaged (Rowley 1959, 77).

Mei:	"beauty": what is beautiful in comparison to our moral / value/ aesthetic values; has overtones of what pertains to our conscience.
Mêng yang:	passive, dark, formative dimension of experience; counterpart to <i>shêng huo</i> , one of the two major fundamentals of Chinese aesthetics.
Miao:	post-enlightenment playful sense of wonder.
Miao-i:	"unnamable ideas," term used to describe aspects of the Tao.
Mo:	ink.
Mo-hsi:	"ink play," "ink play (works)"; the resulting works when one practices <i>hsi-pi</i> .
"mountain names":	The names given the Ch'an masters according to where they taught i.e. Guishan Lingyou (Mt. Gui).
Pasibutbut:	Semi-improvised harmonic songs sung by the Bunu tribe of Taiwan. Legend states that the sound of pasibutbut was originally inspired by the sounds of honeybees and the local trees.
Pi:	brush.
Pi Li:	skill, dexterity, and mental / spiritual motivation / power behind <i>shêng i</i> .
P'o:	"uncarved block"; original simplicity of the Tao; simple, plain, no color or markings.
P'o mo:	"breaking ink: splashed automatic ink painting with a few deliberate brush strokes (Japanese: <i>haboku</i>).
Qi:	life force, the living energy in things.
She-ch'i:	"deep, life force-containing spirit": intangible, impressive quality of a work.
Shen-hui:	spiritual response: how the spirit of the copist and artist are preserved together in copies of an earlier work

Shen-si:	spiritual likeness: by achieving shen-si a copyist or artist brings the earlier master "back to life."
Shên-ssu:	"unfathomable thoughts," term used to describe aspects of the Tao.
Shêng huo:	dynamic, active dimension of experience; liveliness and/or vitality; counterpart to <i>mêng yang</i> . Considered one of the two major fundamentals of Chinese aesthetics.
Shêng i:	"living brushstroke," direct expression of the mind in action with the brush.
Shêng-tung:	"Life movement."
Shih:	structural strength.
Ssü yu:	egotism, hindrance to wu-wei.
T'o Su:	"to escape from the common, non-conformity, abandonment of what is vulgar.
Tao:	The Way, the Ultimate Principle.
Tao-Chia:	Taoist philosophy.
Tao-Chiao:	Taoist superstitious religion (alchemy / immortality).
Tzū-jan:	naturalness; the performance of an activity while absorbed in spiritual effortlessness, like the act 'did itself.'
Wang-liang-hua:	'ghost painting'; painting with a watery ink solution that the object hardly appears, whatever appears seems formless and unreal.
Wen xiang:	"listening to incense": (Jap: <i>mon-koh</i>).
Wu-nien:	"no-thought": "To have thoughts as not having them"(Huineng).
Wu-shih:	"nothing special"; the 'ordinary yet deeply spiritual' aspect of the paintings and poetry of Chinese / Japanese Zen masters.
Wu-wei:	"action-less activity" the action of no action, effortless action, doing without doing, obeying the Tao.

- Ying ning: tranquility in the action of non-action: grace.
- Zik hing: "immediate impulse"; to create in terms of immediate feeling, creative embellishment and elaboration of script/movement in Cantonese opera.
- III. JAPAN
- An-i: state of perfect versatility and ease; neither inner state nor outer action exclusively.
- Ashirai: "non-controlled rhythm"; temporally unmeasured, nearly "free" rhythm used in Nōh theater musical accompaniment. Usually used for preludes, interludes, or an exit.
- Ato o todome: "leaves no trace"; art / calligraphy that neither interferes with nor impedes, but reveals the paradoxes and significance of experiences.
- Aware: the aspects of art / nature / life that increases ephemeral awareness in an individual.
- Bigaku: "the art of beauty"; the study of aesthetics in Japanese culture, which emphasizes specific teachings in each fine art discipline supported by the appropriate worldview and attitude required for mastery. Common themes are impermanence, intuition, austerity, seasonal affect, Zen Buddhist philosophy, simplicity, and the effects of time and decay. The Zen Buddhist expression of aesthetic intent may be described as the creative expression of the subtle interpenetration of sound/silence, symmetry/asymmetry; the aesthetic place where things are both differentiated and undifferentiated.
- Bi no okōku: "Kingdom of Beauty": an idealized state of quasi-socialist liberation from capitalist modernity desired by *mingei* collector and aesthetician Sōetsu Yanagi.
- Buji: "no work"; anxiety-free.
- Bompu: ordinary/deluded consciousness; a worldview that is egocentric.

- Chikan: "knowing and seeing"; the first of the three levels of spiritual maturity in Rinzai Zen Buddhism. See: *Kū-ka-chū*.
- Chū: "the selfless state of Buddhahood"; the third of the three levels of mature spirituality in Tendai Buddhism, reached after realizing and transcending the duality of the first two levels. See: *Kū-ka-chū*.
- Chusho-seki: the branch of *suiseki* that evaluates 'abstract' stones.
- Dainichi Nyorai: The Japanese name for the Mahavairocana Buddha, the "Truth Body" that pervades the universe. This esoteric belief of Shingon religion differs from early Buddhism where the Truth Body is one aspect of the original Buddha (see: *Dhammakāya*)
- Dainippon Kokkegenki*: a *setsuwa* written circa 1040-1043 C.E recording the merits of reading, listening to, and having faith in the Lotus Sutra.
- Datsuzoku: detachment, non-formalism.
- Edō Jidai: "Edo Period": the Japanese era lasting from 1615-1868 C. E.
- Emakimono: set of handpainted scrolls.
- Embai: "sour plum"; small semi-improvised ornaments used to color and embellish melodies in *gagaku/kagura*.
- Engi: temple or shrine origin legend (see: *Kasuga-Gongen-genki*).
- Esoragoto: a picture/pictures which contain inventions/abstractions in order to capture the essence of the subject.
- Fudaraku: The Paradise governed by the Bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteshvara).
- Fueki: 1. ontology: non-phenomenal timelessness (in haiku)
2. style: transient modishness
- Fūga-no-makoto: the genuineness of aesthetic creativity; counterpart to *zōka-no-makoto*.

- Fukake kokoro: "deep mind"; the profound wisdom and feeling in poetry.
- Fuke-shu: an archaic branch of Japanese Zen dedicated to the ideas and methods of 9th century (Tang Dynasty) Chinese monk Fuke.
- Fukinsei: Zen asymmetry.
- Fūkyō: "poetic eccentricity"; the aesthetic sense engendered by *shōyōyū*.
- Fūryū: Ch. *fengliu*, "good manners"): refined manners as reflected in things regarded as tasteful or elegant. An atmosphere composed of nothing but the most elegant simplicity.
- Furyu: "wind and water": the suggestion of impermanence of beauty of nature. (It is interesting to note that wind and water are the "creative" forces behind many beautiful forms and moments in nature, i.e. a single leaf floating down a stream, leaves swirling in a vortex, beautiful erosion patterns, the sound of rain, etc).
- Fuzei: words that describe artistic feelings/ways of seeing.
- Gagaku: "the art of elegance": the Imperial Court music of Japan, also played at the Ise and Ikuta Shinto shrines along with the sacred music/dance of Shintoism (*kagura*) which shares repertoire with the court. Gagaku scores are *event-based*, meaning that here is no strict pace and each section follows their leader as much as the overall tempo. They give the succession of events, not the events over time. The musicians are listening in real time and not merely mimicking the score. There is not one strict path through time, so the classical Japanese court musician has enough temporal space to play with a type of freedom not found in Western classical music.
- Gaiyō: external manifestation of the Buddhist ground of Being (see: *naishō*).
- Gempitsu – tai: "abbreviated brush": intensity/purity of a line that captures the essence of things.
- Goi jujukin kōan: two sets of kōan consisting of the study of both the ten grave and three pure precepts as kōan, including all that one has learned in the process of studying other categories of kōan.

- Gokoku: “five countries”: the name for the regions containing the ancient Imperial palaces. These were Yamashiro (Kyoto), Yamato (Nara), Kawachi (Osaka), Izumi (Osaka), and Settsu (Osaka/Hyogo border) (see: *Kinai*).
- Gonsen kōan: “explication of words”: the type of long kōan requiring memorization and recitation as well as discussion with a master.
- Goshintai: a Shinto ritualistic object containing the spirit of a god.
- Goshō: “knowing the nature of things”; the third of the three levels of spiritual maturity in Rinzai Zen Buddhism. See: *Kū-ka-chū*.
- Gusai (the): “silly wife/wives”: Hanshin performance art collective (1999 – 2001) founded by Daniel Schnee, loosely affiliated with Shōzō Shimamoto and Yasuo Sumi (formerly of the Gutai Art Association).
- GUTAI (the): “concrete”: The Gutai Art Association (1954 -72) was a Western Japanese art collective founded by Jirō Yoshihara based on the integration of art and life, usage of everyday materials for art (including *nengajō*), the inclusion of time and space in painting, and (Hanshinkan) social space as exhibition space (Tiampo 2011; 55,100). Famous affiliates of the group and their Gutai Pinacoteca center were John Cage, Yoko Ono, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Merce Cunningham, and Willem De Kooning.
- Haboku: “flung ink”: splashed / splattered ink painting with a few deliberate brushstrokes; genre of such paintings; a type of abstraction.
- Hacho: intentional unevenness.
- Hakanashi: the fleeting quality of things.
- Hai-i: the haiku *spirit*.
- Haikai: common comic verse (often vulgar): predecessor of haiku.
- Hana: rare “flowering” of artistic intuition; the flowering of profound naturalness in a great Noh actor.

- Hanshinkan: The Hanshin Area; more specifically the area between the cities of Osaka and Kobe consisting of cities such as Amagasaki, Rokko, Nishinomiya, Takarazuka, etc.
- Hanshinkan
Modernism: A period of rapid economic and cultural development in Western Japan in the early twentieth century as a result of both the development of private rail lines in the Hanshin area and the disruptive effects of the 1923 Kanto Earthquake on Tokyo's economic development.
- Harai: spiritually cleansing, renewing and balancing one's spirit (Shinto).
- Heian Jidai: "Heian Period": the Japanese era lasting from 794-1185 C. E.
- Hihaku: (Ch: fei-pai, "flying white"); the blank, parallel gaps in a brushstroke created by a drying or asymmetrical brush, "filled in" by psychological anticipation of closure. Considered natural/part of the nature of a brush running out of ink, possibly containing *ch'i-yun*.
- Hongaku: original purity / enlightenment.
- Hon' i: "essential nature" of phenomena.
- Honji-suijaku: "original ground of Buddhist enlightenment/traces manifested below": a religious doctrine that posited the Shinto deities as embodied traces of the Buddhist onto-theological consciousness, one of the many doctrines of popular Buddhism in the Heian Era (see: *kenmitsu bukkyō*).
- Hoshin kōan: "dharma-body": the type of kōan dealing with fundamental insights into Reality
- Hosomi: emotional delicacy; awareness of the beauty inherent in everything (haiku).
- Hossō: One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the Indian Yogācāra (*Yushiki ron*) texts, which posits that all worldly phenomena exist only in the mind.

Hyakuza Hodankiki

- Gakisho:* a setsuwa written in the manner of the *Dainippon Kokkegenki* containing Amida Sutra and Lotus Sutra stories as well as stories concerning the *Diamond* (or “Perfection of Wisdom”) Sutra, known in Japan as the *Hannyakyo*.
- Ichi-on-jobutsu: "one-note-Buddha," to become enlightened by playing a single note on the shakuhachi.
- i-guse: a motionless 'dance' by the Nōh *shite* actor which expresses an inner understanding of motion; an aesthetic dance of the spirit.
- Ikasu: “let live”; another way of expressing the concept of ‘obeying the request of an object’ as explained in the phrase “kowan ni shitagau.”
- Iki: 1. urbane, sense of refinement.
2. visual arts: chic beauty/tasteful sensuality.
- Ikkakusenin:* a legendary Japanese ascetic with a horn in his forehead: possibly a transliteration of Indian saint Rasyringa, also known as “Isisinga.”
- Ikuta Jinja: a Shinto shrine in Kobe thought by the resident priests to be the winter residence of the Japanese Sun Goddess Amaterasu O-Mikami.
- inmyō: Buddhist logic
- Isshiki-no-bendo: "single-color practice-way"; all consuming engagement with the Way; wholehearted, undivided practice.
- Ji/Ri: "thing-principle"; event /truth; form and formlessness; Ji – learned behavior / technique; ri — intuitive understanding/inner freedom.
- Jingū-ji Shinto shrines erected on Buddhist temple grounds or visa versa in order that Shinto gods could learn Buddhism and attain nirvana: a mixed temple/shrine complex.
- Jōdo: “Pure Land”: the name of the Paradise overseen by the Buddha Amida (see: *Sukhāvātī*).

- Jojitsu: One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the writings of Harivarman and his idea that there is both daily provisional and ultimate Truth of emptiness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*) making Jojitsu an adjunct of the Sanron school.
- Jōteki Bunka: culture based on the sense/feeling that sees reality as formless and voiceless
- Juhatsu: "that which contains just enough": the liturgical manner of eating in Soto Zen monasteries (the state of selfless thankfulness / act of eating).
- Ka: "ordinariness," the perception of the deep spirituality / sacredness in ordinary things; the second of the three levels of mature spirituality in Tendai Buddhism.
- Takegoe: rhythmic shouts used in the music of Nō theatre; also used to describe a Kabuki connoisseur's shouts of appreciation in the Kabuki theater audience. If one is moved by a particular actor's work, they can shout out the patrilineal number of the actor's predecessor, whose work their own is being favorably compared to i.e. "the Fourth!" as in the title of the great *aragoto* actor Danjurō the IV.
- Kamakura Jidai: "Kamakura Period": the Japanese era lasting from 1185-1333 C. E.
- Kanjaku: profound state of solitude and silence one feels when reading haiku.
- Kannagara: the acceptance of things as they come: a spiritual yielding to Amida Buddha through absolute passivity.
- Kannon: The Japanese transliteration of *Kwan-yin*, the Chinese transliteration of *Avalokiteṣvara*, the Buddhist saint (*Bodhisattva*) of Compassion.
- Kansai: Western Japan, specifically the area containing the major Japanese cities of Nara, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe.
- Kanso: Zen simplicity.
- Karumi: the unadorned expression of a profound truth.

Kasuga Gongen
-genki:

“The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity”: a set of emakimono depicting engi and reigenki stories, especially of the main Shinto Kasuga Deity who was considered a part of the honji-suijaku doctrines.

Kata:

"how to do": In both fine and martial arts, the choreographed practice of elemental actions in order to hone one's physical abilities as well as to stimulate contemplative engagement with such forms. Brings an intrinsic order and framework to the study of creative / spontaneous acts.

Kegon:

One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the *Flower Garland Sutra (Kegon-kyo)* teaching that all things are interrelated and/or interconnected.

Keihanshin:

the area between the cities of Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe sometimes referred to as ‘Kinai’, though Kinai historically encompassed a slightly different geography.

Keiki:

"aura/emanation": ideal of medieval poetic aesthetics.

Kenmitsu bukkyō:

“esoteric-exoteric Buddhism”: a popular form of Buddhism in the Heian period that contained both Shinto and Buddhist elements, decried by some as not Buddhist at all.

Kenshō:

"seeing the nature of things"; the second of the three levels of spiritual maturity in Rinzai Zen Buddhism. See: *Kū-ka-chū*.

Kigo:

the word in a haiku poem that situates the season and embodies the desired emotional essence of the poem.

Ki-in:

the nobility of soul, elevated character, or spiritual elevation of one who has attained a high degree of excellence in the fine arts, such as calligraphy, painting, Noh, etc. Note: this elevated character was attained in arts training available only to the nobility or high ranking Japanese citizen, thus pointing to an inherent elitism in certain aesthetic trends and philosophies.

Kikan kōan:

“dynamic action”: the type of kōan concerning the activity and nature of emptiness.

Kinai/Kidai:	the area between the cities of Nara, Kyoto, and Osaka as marked by the ancient Imperial Palaces of Kansai (see: <i>Gokoku</i>).
Kisekai/kiseken:	the "realm of objects"; the material ontology in which Zen Buddhists give shape/form to their beliefs, especially in the fine arts.
Kisoku:	"spiritual breath," developing one's body and mind simultaneously to be able to becoming enlightened through Suizen.
Kissakō:	"Drink up!" common phrase made metaphysical by the understanding of the syllable <i>kō</i> , 'to leave', which implies the drinking of tea in <i>wabicha</i> is a method of realizing enlightenment.
Kōan:	a word or phrase designed to help Zen Buddhists transcend thought and language to perceive the non-duality of Reality. The five commonly accepted kinds of kōan according to Master Hakuin are: <i>hoshin</i> , <i>kikan</i> , <i>nanto</i> , <i>gonsen</i> , and <i>goi jujukin</i> .
Koh-do:	the way of "listening" to incense, the connoisseurship of incense.
Kokō:	austerity and withered-ness.
Kokoro-mochi:	"living essence," the essence or "is-ness" of a thing.
Komuso:	"monks of empty nothingness," Buddhist monks who practiced the shakuhachi flute as a method of gaining enlightenment.
Kowan ni shitagau:	"obeying the request of the object"; allowing the artistic materials to dictate their final form through their own unique physical/aesthetic nature.
Kū:	"spirituality," understanding the deeper meaning behind common truth; the first of the three levels of mature spirituality in Tendai Buddhism
Kū-ka-chū:	"The Three Perceptions"; the three levels of spiritual maturity in Tendai Buddhism. See: <i>kū</i> , <i>ka</i> , <i>chū</i> , <i>chikan</i> , <i>kenshō</i> , <i>goshō</i> .
Kurai:	dignity, loftiness, quietly/coldly beautiful.

Kusha:	One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the writings of Vasubandhu that posits that things exist but there is no enduring self or soul.
Mon-koh:	"listening to incense": another name for koh-do (Ch: <i>wen xiang</i>).
Ma:	absolute timing or space, brimming with potential, pregnant with possibility, a space of profound latent potential. It is interesting to note that the ideogram for ma is a gate with the sun placed in the middle.
Mappō:	"Degenerate Dharma" Period: the Buddhist era lasting for 10,000 years after the Counterfeit Dharma (<i>zōbō</i>) period (approx. 1000 – 11,000 C.E).
Mie:	a dramatic Kabuki posture wherein all physical and psychic energies are concentrated in a single instant.
Mingei:	"folk art": the name given to folk arts and crafts by Japanese intellectuals in the early twentieth century which played a part in both national modernization and Korean colonization by the Japanese.
mitate	"citation": the practice (in the visual arts) of revealing the hidden aspects of an object through accenting its visible characteristics.
Miyabi:	Heian Era aesthetic term signifying subtleties only a connoisseur could appreciate.
Momyama Jidai:	"Momoyama Period": the Japanese era lasting from 1573-1615 C.E.
Mon koh:	"listening to incense": see <i>koh-do</i> .
Mono no aware:	the sense of aware in a profound aesthetic object.
Mōryōga:	"apparition painting" (Ch: <i>wang-liang-hua</i>): using such watered down ink so as to be nearly invisible, implying form/formlessness, a visual state of simultaneous being and non-being, something that seems to "hover" between form and formlessness.
Mui-no-i:	something being done by nothing being done (see: <i>wu-wei</i>).

Mujibō:	"line of emptiness: a single straight line, brushed with one's total spirit and concentration.
Mujo:	"impermanence": the Buddhist concept of impermanence.
Mujo wo kanzuru:	contemplating impermanence.
Mukan-no-kan:	the sense of 'no-sense', no trace of deliberation.
Mumon:	without pattern or design; accomplished without hesitancy.
Muromachi Jidai:	"Muromachi Period": the Japanese era lasting from 1392-1573 C. E.
Mu-shin:	"no mind": non-discriminating, egoless mindset.
Mushotoku:	"without a fixed salary": doing without thought of action or end result/reward (see: <i>nishkāma karma</i>).
Myō:	1. the mysterious singularity, the inner state which is beyond the reach of verbal expression. 2. post-enlightenment playful sense of wonder (Ch: <i>miao</i>).
Myōfu:	<i>mystical experience</i> : that which is beyond all understanding and enunciation.
Naishō:	inner realisation of the Buddhist ground of Being (see: <i>gaiyō</i>).
Nanto kōan:	"difficult to pass through": a single/set of kōan that the student finds difficult.
Nara Jidai:	"Nara Period": the Japanese era lasting from 645 to 794 C. E.
Nen:	an intensive mind; single all encompassing thought, or a single unit of such thought.
Nengajō:	Japanese New Year card.
<i>Nihon Kanreiroku</i> :	a setsuwa written circa. 847 C.E in the same manner as the <i>Nihon ryōiki</i> , accounting incidents associated with Ganjoji Temple.

- Nihon Ojogokurakuki*: a setsuwa written circa 985-987 C. E by Yoshishige Yasutane, the first record of Japanese saints born into the *jōdo* (Pure Land).
- Nihon ryōiki*: “miracle stories of Japan” (*Nihonkoku Genpo Zenaku ryōiki*): text compiled by the Buddhist monk Kyōkai during the Enryaku Era (782 – 805 C.E) of the effect of karma on both the good and evil. Like the *jataka* stories of Theravada Buddhism centuries earlier in India, monks used these “true” stories to illustrate their preaching.
- Ningen Kokuhō: “Living National Treasure”: a person in Japan who has attained mastery of a Japanese art or cultural tradition and embodies the tradition. Official term is *Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties* (*jūyō mukei bunkazai hojisha*). The three categories of the designation are *Kakko Nintei*: Individual Certification of high mastery, *Sōgō Nintei*: Collective Certification of two or more who attain mastery as said group, and *Hoji Dantai Nintei*: Preservation Certification for a large group or organization that have mastered a craft in which individual character is not emphasized.
- Nirai-kanai: the “world of roots,” or the “world of the source of all life,” the sacred dimension where Shinto gods dwell.
- Nokan: an indeterminate-pitch flute used in Nō theatre music.
Notan: “arrangement of dark and light masses”: equivalence of figure and ground in Zen shōdo and sumi-e, a similar feeling in Zen-influenced abstract art (see: *GUTAI*).
- Nyōtaku: paintings created by directing ink covered nude female assistants across a large canvas.
- Omoi kittaru: “cutting thought” (common Zen term); cutting off the root of delusion, throwing away deliberation without fear of consequence; similar to *mushotoku*.
- Otodama: Shinto: cleansing the spirit through sound or music, usually *kagura*.
- Otogizōshi: a genre similar to setsuwa, primarily for entertainment purposes, which preceded the formation of *ukiyozōshi*.

Ran-i:	fully matured state of artistic sense that comes from an intense cultivation of skill; the resultant mind / psychology of the artist.
Reigenki:	Buddhist or Shinto miracle story (see: <i>Kasuga-Gongen-genki</i>)
Reiheki	“steep cliff spirit”: stones that are appreciated for their eroded surfaces, sheer vertical lines, and asymmetry (see: <i>suiseki</i>)
Rinki ōhen:	"on-the-spot improvisation": a monk's ability to spontaneously use his wit and understanding of Zen to respond to the teacher in private <i>kōan</i> studies (<i>dokusan</i>) or in various question-and-answer situations.
Ritsu:	One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the observation of monastic discipline (Sanskrit: <i>vinaya</i>).
Ryōjusen:	The Paradise affiliated with Shaka (Siddartha) Buddha
Ryūkō:	1. ontological: phenomenal transience. 2. style: standardized aesthetic norm.
Sabi:	austere, desolate quality that suggests impermanence of the object and thus, of all things.
<i>Sanbo-E koto</i> :	a <i>setsuwa</i> written circa 984 C. E by Takaoka to promote the virtues of the Buddha and explain the basic tenets of Buddhism.
Sanron:	One of the six Nara Era schools of Buddhist thought, based on the writings of Nagarjuna and his idea of emptiness (Sanskrit: <i>śūnyatā</i>).
<i>Sasamegoto</i> :	“Whisperings” (1463): text on <i>renga</i> poetry by the Buddhist priest Shinkei (1407-75), who believed that pursuing excellence in poetry was spiritual due to <i>renga</i> 's possibility of expressing profound insight in the nature of the world.
Seido:	"living movement," the transfusion into a work of the subject's <i>kokoro-mochi</i> .
Seijaku:	tranquility.

- Seishin tō itsu: concentration of mind and spirit on one thing.
- Senu-hima: "interval of not acting": the empty region or void between the acts of being (*yū*) and not-being (*mu*); the mode of perfect ambivalence between being and not-being present in the expert Nō actor as explained by Zeami Motokyo in his work *Kyūi Shūdō Shidai*, the "Process of Training in the Nine Stages."
- Senu tokoro: the site of undoing, unspeaking: a zone of *ma*.
- Setsuwa: a type of Japanese literature consisting of myths and folk tales, many of which deal with Buddhist themes of karma, virtue, and rebirth, etc, eventually succeeded by the *otogizōshi* genre.
- Sha-i: artistic impression.
- Shichidaiji*
Junraishi Ki a setsuwa written circa 1140 C.E containing stories associated with seven different Buddhist temples, including the reconstruction of Kōfukuji after it burnt down.
- Shikan no
myōjōnaru koto: "the luminous tranquility of stillness and insight."
- Shinbutsu shugo: "the overlapping of Buddhism and Shinto": the various syncretic trends and doctrines in Japanese animistic religion after the arrival of Buddhism.
- Shingon: "true word": a form of esoteric Buddhism founded by Kukai (*Kobo Daishi*, 774-835) focusing on rituals, mystical syllables, and chants to unify the practitioner with the Mahavairocana Buddha (*Dainichi Nyorai*), whose "Truth Body" (Sanskrit: *dharmakaya*; essence, body, speech, and mind) pervades the universe.
- Shintai: "permanently occupied"; a ritual site where a god makes his presence felt, a sacred rock or tree used as a kind of spiritual antennae to attract the gods.
- Shizen: naturalness.
- Shokan: "first barrier": a 'beginning' koan for the Zen initiate to awaken the perception of non-duality.

Shōbō:	“True Dharma” Period: the Buddhist era from Siddartha’s enlightenment (<i>satori</i>) on for 500 years (aprox. 550 B.C.E – 10 C.E).
Shōdo:	the art of calligraphy.
Shōyōyū:	Daoist spirit of carefree wandering in the 'Tao Te Jing' and 'Chuang Tzu.'
Shugyō:	religious/aesthetic discipline.
Shū:	“seminar/school”: a class in a Buddhist temple (Nara Era) dedicated to the exegesis of a particular scripture. Nara Era temples were structured as Buddhist studies institutes before the naming and establishment of the separate and competing ‘schools’ that arose out of the seminars (particularly with the return arrival of the monk Kukai from China and his founding of esoteric Shingon Buddhism).
Soboku:	artless simplicity.
Sokkyō:	improvisation.
Sonae-koh:	incense for invoking the Buddha's presence and summoning forth his peaceful world.
Soradaki:	"empty burning"; burning incense for mere pleasure, not connoisseurship.
Sui:	to behave in a sophisticated manner (Edo era).
Suiseki:	the art of aesthetic appreciation of stones (see: <i>reiheki</i>)
Suizen:	"blowing Zen"; striving towards enlightenment through playing the shakuhachi.
Sumi-e:	ink paintings.
Teisho:	the vibrant, non-conceptual presentation of Buddhist law / thought by a Zen master, usually koan related or based.

Tettei-on:	the state of 'absolute sound' one must enter to become enlightened through <i>suizen</i> .
<i>Tsurezuregusa</i> :	"Essays in Idleness": a famous work of the <i>zuihitsu</i> genre by Kenkō.
Tsū:	connoisseurship: a person who is polished and has a sophisticated knowledge of Yoshiwara etiquette (Edo era).
Ukiyozōshi:	the Edo Era (1600-1868) "tales of the floating world," of which Japanese woodblock prints known as <i>ukiyo-e</i> draw their source material.
Ura-byōshi:	the 'silences' in the <i>nohkan</i> music that are alluded to by <i>notes</i> ; an eighth note of <i>ma</i> .
Wabi:	a quality of rustic simplicity.
Wabicha:	the Zen manner of practicing <i>chadō</i> as symbolic of the awakened mind.
Wabizumai:	"to live simply (without attachments)"; the life of <i>wabi</i> ; the simple life of a Zen acolyte or transcended master.
Yo-haku:	'blank space'; the non-expressed totality of Nature and human affairs in phenomenal time and space surrounding the positive region of the expressed within the poetic field of <i>haiku</i> poetry.
Yōrishiro:	an "occasionally occupied" <i>shintai</i> .
Yūgen:	deep, mysterious elegance.
Zazen:	sitting meditation
Zen:	the contemplative branch of Japanese Buddhism consisting primarily of the Soto and Rinzai faiths.
Zōbō:	"Counterfeit Dharma" Period: the Buddhist era lasting from 500 years after Siddartha's enlightenment (<i>shōbō</i>) on for the next 1000 years (aprox. 10 – 1000 C.E).
Zōka-no-makoto:	Genuineness of cosmic creativity; counterpart to <i>fūga-no-makoto</i> .

Zuihitsu: "following the brush": a genre of literature written in a stream-of-consciousness manner, an essay that ranges somewhat formlessly.

IV. VIET NAM

Âm nhạc music.

bài độc "killer song": a type of song used to surprise and defeat an opposing troupe-style *quan họ* team, usually composed in secret, and occasionally, with the help of a poet.

Bồ Tát: bodhisattva.

câu ra: "challenge phrase": a *quan họ* song/phrase sung by a woman which is then matched by a 'matching' song/phrase (*câu đối*) from a man, both traditionally incorporating improvised lyrics.

Đức Phật: the Buddha.

nảy "bouncing": a vital quality of *quan họ* singing (see: *vang, rền, nền*).

nền "restrained": a vital quality of *quan họ* singing (see: *vang, rền, nảy*).

ngẫu hứng improvisation.

ngôi đền
Phật giáo/chùa Buddhist temple.

Nhạc sĩ: musician.

Phật: a Buddha.

Phật giáo: Buddhism.

Quan họ: a style of singing between a man and a woman expressing romantic sentiment which, in traditional forms, included extensive textual improvisation revealing the skills of the performer.

rền "resonant": a vital quality of *quan họ* singing (see: *vang, nền, nảy*).

- Thiền Phật giáo: Zen Buddhism.
- “tinkling/
bouncing grains”:
an abstract aesthetic concept used in quan họ to describe a certain type of desired sound quality in the throat/voice of a singer, which few can adequately demonstrate or explain.
- Vang:
“ringing”: a vital quality of quan họ singing (see: *rền, nèn, náy*).
- V. INDIA
- Abhidharma:
the higher teachings of the Buddha with commentary, clarification and exegesis of such teachings.
- Ādi-Buddha
“First Buddha”: also known as Śambhū, this is the Nepalese Supreme God who is infinite, omniscient, self-existent (*svayambhū*), and wholly remote from worldly affairs, supplication, and worship.
- Akiryavāda:
“non-action”: the view that karma has no results.
- Alambusa Jataka:
the story of Rsyasringa, though in this case the deer eats grass wet with Vibhandaka’s semen (see: *jataka, Rsyasringa*).
- Ālamkāra:
mystic unification of the aesthetic and religious, especially in Buddhist statuary, through whose mysterious beauty one experiences the divine “presence” of a deity.
- Āraṇyakas:
The Vedic texts compiled by forest ascetics, which reflected on the nature of ritual practices and symbols.
- Arhat:
“worthy one”: an individual who has become enlightened through the teachings of the Buddha (see: *Pratyeka Buddha, Bodhisattva*).
- Ava-budh:
to recognize or understand.
- Avacanam-
Buddhavacanam*:
“not speaking is the Buddha’s speech.”

Avadan:	“allegories”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures (see <i>nidana</i> , <i>itivuttaka</i> , <i>udana</i> , <i>sutta</i> , and <i>jataka</i>).
<i>Avataṃsaka-sūtra</i> :	“Flower Garden Sutras”: sermons by the Bodhisattavas about the Buddha and enlightenment (see: <i>hwanōm-gyōng</i>).
Bindu:	point/drop: the manifestation of creative energy and a/the source of creativity, structure, and dimension.
Bodhisattva:	an arhat who chooses not to finalize his enlightenment until he has helped all other sentient beings achieve theirs, thus becoming a Buddhist saint such as Avalokiteṣvara (compassion) or Mañjūri (wisdom).
Bodhisattvayāna:	“The Bodhisattva Vehicle”: an alternate and possibly more accurate title for Mahāyāna Buddhism.
Buddhadhātu:	Buddha-nature, transcendent wisdom.
Buddhakṣetra:	“Buddha Field”: the Sanskrit term for the Pure Land where the Buddha exercises power, referred to in Japan as <i>jōdo</i> .
Buddhānusmṛti:	meditation on the Buddha, an important part of Mahāyāna Buddhism.
Chārutā:	an inherent quality of an art, which absorbs the sense into itself; one of two aspects of art considered constituent in Vedic aesthetic theory (see: <i>vāma</i>).
Chamatkāra:	charmed/surprised admiration (for a fascinatingly indirect phrase), to be delighted by fascinating indirectness.
Dhammakāya:	“Truth Body”: One of the three bodies of the Buddha, in this case his abiding presence in his teachings and source of Ultimate Reality (see: <i>Dainichi Nyorai</i> , <i>trikāya</i>).
Dharma:	the proper structure, order, behavior in/of the universe, and the proper maintenance/observance of that order.
Itivuttaka:	“thus spake the Buddha” scriptures”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures (see <i>avadan</i> , <i>nidana</i> , <i>udana</i> , <i>sutta</i> , and <i>jataka</i>).

Jataka:	“stories of the Buddha’s previous lives”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures, which close to half of were appropriated from folk stories, poems, and epics, etc (see <i>avadan</i> , <i>nidana</i> , <i>itivuttaka</i> , <i>udana</i> , and <i>sutta</i>).
<i>Lankāvatāra</i>	
- <i>sūtra</i> :	Collection of Mahāyāna teachings (esp. Yogācāra), focusing on the mind, consciousness, and emptiness (<i>śūnyatā</i>).
Mahāsaṃgha:	a school of Buddhist thought that distinguished between arhats and Buddhas, promoting the idea of a <i>buddha</i> from ‘enlightened human’ arhat (taking the easy way out) to a transcendental being (who worked for the benefit of others). This school may have been the ‘proto-Mahāyāna’ school.
Mahāsaṅghikas:	a group of monks who called for the relaxation of monastic rules for monks including the precept against carrying salt in a horn, and using mats with fringes; one of the two main groups involved in the schism of the Second Buddhist Council, the other being the more orthodox Theravadins.
Mahāyāna:	“The Great Vehicle”: one of the three main branches of Buddhism, focusing on Buddhist saints and transcendentalism in general.
Neyārtha:	sutras with an indefinite meaning grasped more fully through exegesis.
Nidana:	“historical narratives”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures (see <i>avadan</i> , <i>itivuttaka</i> , <i>udana</i> , <i>sutta</i> , and <i>jataka</i>).
Nirmāṇakāya:	the “Emanation Body” of the Buddha, his physical body (see: <i>trikāya</i>).
Nishkāma karma:	actions taken without expectation of reward (see: <i>mushotoku</i>).
Nītārtha:	sutras with direct meaning.
nivṛtti:	cessation (of thought, desire, etc) as opposed to eradication.

Pāramitās:	The “virtuous qualities/perfections” embodied by a Bodhisattva, including generosity, morality, patience, enthusiastic striving, meditation, and wisdom/insight.
Pratimā māna:	The science of measuring cult images.
Pratyeka Buddha:	a solitary Buddha who does not teach the Dharma to others.
ṛta:	term for the underlying structure/rhythm that organizes the energy and existence of all beings in the universe, as well as the regulation of the moral aspects of Being.
Rasa:	essence, flavor, juice, delight; the transcendent quality of the highest expression of South Indian music and dance.
Rasam:	The Tamil language equivalent of <i>rasa</i> .
Rasika:	enlightened connoisseur of the arts who is/has been prepared to appreciate <i>rasa</i> .
Rsyasringa:	“saint with a horn”: son of Indian saint Vibhandaka, conceived by a deer who lapped up semen floating on the water after the saint spotted celestial nymph Urvashi bathing and ejaculated. This story is originally contained in the <i>Mahabharatha</i> Epic.
<i>Saddhammapunarika</i>	
- <i>sūtra</i> :	the “Lotus” Sutra, which states that there is only one true method, and that the Buddha is ever present to assist those who call upon him.
Śakra Devānām Indra:	The Buddhist Dharma protecting deity.
<i>Sāmāññaphala</i>	
- <i>sutta</i> :	“Discourse on the Fruit of Asceticism”: an early Buddhist story arguing against the competing doctrines of the time as personified by the views of six “heretics.”
Sambhogakāya:	the “Enjoyment Body” of the Buddha, the spiritual form of the Buddha that is present to the Bodhisattvas and others (see: <i>trikāya</i>).

- Siddanta: The manner(s) in which the Buddha taught followers based on their state of spiritual understanding; easy, practical advice for the common man caught up in worldly affairs (*World Siddanta*), preaching relative to differing intellectual capacities (*Varying Siddanta*), preaching on the imperfections of the listeners in order to free them from their spiritual bondage (*Healing Siddanta*), and preaching the Ultimate Truth to followers of high intellectual prowess (*First-Principle Siddanta*).
- Śrāvakayāna: “The Pupil’s Vehicle”: a pejorative term used by Mahāyānists to refer to earlier schools of thought as if they were mere laymen.
- Subhadra: a monk who upon hearing of the passing of Siddartha proclaimed delight in the fact that the monks were now free to do as they wished without being chastised. It is thought that Subhadra’s remarks instigated the First Buddhist Council.
- Sukhāvātī: “Land of Bliss”: the Pure Land of the Infinite Light Buddha *Amitābha*, located in the West.
- Śūnyatā: “emptiness” the idea that all phenomena arise in cause/effect relationships with other phenomena.
- Sutta: “prose discourses of the Buddha”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures (see *avadan*, *nidana*, *itivuttaka*, *udana*, and *jataka*).
- Trikāya: the Mahāyāna doctrine of the “Three Bodies” of the Buddha (see: *Nirmāṇakāya*, *Dhammakāya*, *Sambhogakāya*).
- Ucchedavāda: “cutting off”: the doctrine that posits no karma or afterlife, with existence ending in annihilation.
- Udana: “special pronouncements”: one of the six general categories of original Buddhist scriptures (see *avadan*, *nidana*, *itivuttaka*, *sutta*, and *jataka*).
- Udh: “to know”: the past participle of *udh* being *Buddha*, “one who learned/came to know.”
- Ushnīsha: the cranial protuberance on a Buddhist statue.

Vajracchedika
-prajnaparamita
sutra:

The “Perfection of Wisdom” Sutra (also known as the Diamond Sutra) which concerns the perfection of wisdom and the nature of *śūnyatā*.

Vajrasamādhi:

“adamantine absorption”: a particular type of meditative concentration that catalyzes the final experience of enlightenment by shattering all remaining forms of attachment like a diamond (*adamant*) shatters other minerals

Vakrokti:

oblique speech, wherein *chamatkāra* and *chārutā* can especially be affected.

Vāma:

(Sanskrit) physical beauty; one of two aspects of art considered constituent in Vedic aesthetic theory. See: *chārutā*

Vastu:

New knowledge or discovery of a subject within or without which creates enjoyment.

Vedas (the):

The earliest known Indian religious texts. These include the *Rg Veda* (hymns to the gods), *Sama Veda* (songs and instructions based on the *Rg*), *Yajur Veda* (rituals and mantras), *Atharva Veda* (hymns and magic formulas for common life), *Brahmanas* (ritual rules), and the *Upanishads* (philosophical reflections on the nature of the self and reality).

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