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## Leaving a Little Heaven Behind with Coltrane, or: The Performance is the Archive

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

LEAVING A LITTLE HEAVEN BEHIND WITH COLTRANE, OR: THE  
PERFORMANCE IS THE ARCHIVE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH

by

Ismael Santos

2019

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Ismael Santos, and entitled Leaving A Little Heaven Behind with Coltrane, or: The Performance is the Archive, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Martha Schoolman, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 26, 2019

The thesis of Ismael Santos is approved.

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Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2019

## DEDICATION

I have to dedicate this to my mom, Rosa Santos, who has been through so much these past few years, and has saved me more often than I can count, and many late nights of hearing me grumble from my room because of some formatting issue or computer problem. Here's to you, Mami.

To my friends, both at FIU, from Danny Fernandez to Rodney Castillo, Amanda Estevez to Jean Paul, Matt Gonzalez, Crystal Veber, Sherri Ahern, and outside, Andy and Randy Rodriguez, Laura Garcia Meulener, Guillermo Rodriguez, Tyler Paddyfoot, Jorge Farinas, David and Daniel Correa, Rene Silva, and many more.

I dedicate this also to my aunt Elsa Morales-Fernandez, my aunt Aura Revoredo, my cousins Victor Otero and Nathaniel Revoredo, and my extended family.

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To my abuelas, Zenaida and Rosa Amador, I wish you could be here and celebrate with me. To my grandfather, also named Ismael: I hope to visit, one day.

To my dad, Ismael: I know you'd be proud of me, and I hope to make you proud.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

### LEAVING A LITTLE HEAVEN BEHIND WITH COLTRANE, OR: THE PERFORMANCE IS THE ARCHIVE

by

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Florida International University, 2019

Miami, Florida

Professor Martha Schoolman, Major Professor

This thesis examines what an audience-centered archive could look like, and the advantages of opening up the spaces of archival scholarship in connection with studies focused on Jazz. This thesis will explore how inherently self-limiting are traditional structures of the Archive, with the contradictory nature of Jazz Archives brought to the forefront. To archive a music like Jazz necessarily entails losing what makes it so special, losing the improvisational facet of Jazz. This thesis draws from sound studies and performance studies, along with a focus on the recording technologies that entail differences in interpretation. This thesis focus on interdisciplinary, intertextual manners were integral to informing different steps of confronting the contradictions of Jazz Archives. I focused on the lack of traditional, institutionally legitimate Jazz Archives of John Coltrane, and where the audience-centered archive can create a more open-ended space of archival scholarship.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	1
SOUND IN THE ARCHIVE: THE SORROW SONGS, BLUES, AND JAZZ.....	4
THE PROBLEM WITH THE JAZZ ARCHIVE.....	13
THE SELF-CURATED JAZZ ARCHIVE OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG .....	29
THE AUDIENCE-CENTERED ARCHIVE, OR: THE JOHN COLTRANE ARCHIVE.....	35
REFERENCES .....	69

## INTRODUCTION

When the term “Archive” is brought up by scholars and institutions, two things come to the forefront: 1) the archive is only legitimized by an institutional power, or 2) archivists make a claim that there is more to archives than state-sponsored exhibitions and collections. To speak of “Archives,” as a theoretical concept, is to usually speak of a theoretically digestible, documentation-obsessed mass of text. It seems to be the accumulation of material knowledge, of materiality, itself, of a variety of papers ready and waiting for classification, for perusal. “Archives” are self-limiting, and yet obsessive: it is both the death drive and the drive to preservation. From literature to film to histories, the archive can seemingly contain all, rein in all, and provide for both future scholars and intrepid document searchers. But what about the spaces that escape easy documentation, that do not fit so easily in the space of the “Archive?”

There is no room in the official, state-sponsored archive for fluidity, as a fluid Archive would be a contradiction: how can something be considered both fluid enough as art and static enough to be housed for scholarship? For the “Archive” as traditionally structured, there must be a kind of arrested state to house these documents. As Jacques Derrida notes: “It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place”( *Archive Fever* 2). In this status of “domiciliation”, in this state of “house arrest”, archives begin: something to be studied and housed for the future cannot exist in different states. For archives to take place, due to both the limits of scholarship and the materiality of collections of text, are by necessity, traditionally in a boxed-in state. How can a scholar, or the general public, dealing

with so much historical material be able to study it if it keeps changing? It seems impossible. Since this domesticated nature is a feature of the Archive, there is always a limit to what can be collected, to what can be “appropriately” studied and researched. This “domesticated nature” allows for the collection of documents, but also strangles any kind of redemptive promise that an archival history could provide, in giving “access” to voices and histories. It can be argued that archives do not need to “give” over access of its materials to the general public. Historically, archives are literally placed in an institution of higher education or a prestigious museum, and are only accessible through special requests and scholarly connections. I see this as a detriment to the spaces that hold these collections. To have all of this history, all of these different voices, and to keep it locked away under lock and key seems highly irresponsible.

This build-up of collections, of a mass of documentation, is used to prop up and show-off to the public, and then give access to scholars for research purposes. While they are still substantial collections, the collections are usually seen once, and then placed back into the storage preservation of the museum or institution. However, even though they may depend on the official authorization of state-sponsored institutions, museums, universities, and so on, to house their archives, the work of organizing a Jazz Archive is carefully self-directed, for the most part. But before we delve into “Jazz Archive,” the need for the “Archive” must be examined, interrogated, and diagnosed. The desire for the “Archive” is not an innocent interest in masses of documentation: it becomes an insane desire for more documentation, a Fever for the “Archive.”

Jacques Derrida defines this “Archive” Fever” as follows: “It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away” (*Archive Fever* 57). The need and desire for the archive, to “burn with a passion” for it, that can “never rest” is an underlying characteristic of the “Archive.” Yet, this “search” for more documentation, for more of the “Archive,” will always be for something that slips away, for something that can never actually be. The greater the desire for an Archive, and the more you document and preserve, the less fulfilling will it be to have “it” at hand. This desire for the archive is on trying to find the impossible, the item(s) that will never be found: it does not lessen the search, it only magnifies the desire, the “Archive Fever.” It’s a seemingly necessary, yet self-destructive manner of dealing with history, with voices and stories, and cannot sustain much interrogation of its conceptual limits, nor its precise ethical obligation: the same “Archive” that preserves voices and histories ends up silencing them. What does the “Archive,” in this case, having an institutionally-legitimized “Archive” do for scholarship, and where does Jazz and “Jazz Archives” fit into this well of uncertainty?

Before that analysis, however, this thesis wants to complicate what an “Archive” means, what a “Jazz Archive” seems to be, and what an “Audience-Centered Archive” could do to the theoretical framework of the “Archive.” To accomplish that, this thesis must deal with the music and culture that helped pave the way for Jazz. there must be a reckoning with “Sound. ”

By “Sound,” I mean the experiences dealing with music, with listening, with the non-textual, and with what scholar W.E.B. Du Bois called “The Sorrow Songs” of

the enslaved. It is an important distinction to note both here and throughout the rest of the thesis the importance of the “Sorrow Songs” that Du Bois signals out. They are not only the bedrock for the Blues and Jazz, but also a history that would otherwise be forgotten if it were not for scholars like Du Bois. In writing and interacting with the “Archive” of the time, W.E.B. Du Bois understand how important, and how endangered, a non-textual archive like the “Sorrow Songs” would end up being for scholarship. However, this does not mean that the “Archive” is a space that considers the “Sound” of black culture. It would mean grappling with a history that cannot be whitewashed, and an experience in listening that is antithetical to the focus of the “Archive.”

The Archive, operating as a space that is focused on the documentable, on the mass of texts and letters that can be read over and over, necessitates a focus on the visual.” Different material, like phonographs, audio reel recordings, audio tapes, transcripts, all of these things can and do go into the spaces of the “Archive.” But, does preserving the material mean respecting it or listening to it? What is the place of “Sound” in the Archive?

### **SOUND IN THE ARCHIVE: THE SORROW SONGS, BLUES, AND JAZZ**

Where does “Sound” come into play? How can it be preserved? Is it even possible? What is left out of discussions that concern the “Archive” of Sound? Jennifer Lynn Stoeber examines a key aspect that the “Archive” does not interact with, in her book “The Sonic Color Line”: the connections between Sound and Race. Specifically, she points out the underlying assumptions associated with “vision” versus “sound”: “While vision remains a powerfully defining element of race,

scholars have yet to account for how other senses experience racialization and enact race feeling, both alone and in concert with sight” (*Sonic Color Line* 4). The “Archive” is a space that seemingly offers a “colorblind” approach to preservation, allowing “all” voices into the sanctum of the institution, of the space to be “saved.” However, whose voice’s are being saved, and in what way? Is the way of preserving texts, written histories and literatures, an adequate process to save the “Sound” and oral black culture and histories of the past and the present for future generations? The “Sorrow Songs,” as written about by W.E.B. Du Bois, represent one of the first explorations of something that escapes easy archivization, of easy classification. They require a separate but connected understanding, and just having a space in the “Archive,” a time for the materials, is not enough to understand the history nor the development of American music or scholarship. It means a lack of understanding of the differences between the “Archive” and the repertoire: these “Sorrow Songs” require a different method of understanding. They require a different “listening”, especially with its connections to both the Blues and Jazz, a “listening” that does not try to simply “preserve” the music as documents and the musicians as simply more text to be examined. The music and the musicians must be listened to, and allowed to exist in a space that does not need to define and limit what they mean. The “Archive,” as traditionally structured, cannot accomplish this task. This inability of the “Archive” has to do with Black Music, because Black Music does not follow Western/European models of musical harmonies and rhythms. European music is developed along logical, clearly noted notes and harmonies, with no room for spontaneity. Black Music veers, sounds, and experiences differently.

Jazz, the Blues, and the Sorrow Songs all came from Africa, from the African people that were brought over to a foreign land in chains, to be enslaved and used as the economic bedrock of America, and that resisted the system of slavery. The “differences” in the music mentioned above, is not so much a difference in harmonies or tonalities, or even modalities: it is a difference in playing, in performance. All three different musical stylings have many similarities: different conceptions of harmonic structure, improvisational methods, group dynamics, and a music built on collaboration and active listening, in call-and-response. These musical forms cannot be so easily contained, otherwise their respective meanings are lost or destroyed.

It is imperative to understand just how powerful the Sorrow Songs of the Enslaved were in the creation of the Blues, along with Jazz, although it is not a strict one-to-one relation, nor a linear progression. This matters for questions of the “Archive” since the “Archive” would like to preserve and present this history in a linear, textual fashion. But, the experience and histories of Africans taken from their home, and enslaved in a whole different world, cannot so easily follow a structure of preservation that was never made to listen to them, specifically. In effect, the Sorrow Songs were the first American music, created and sung by the people, the enslaved, the African-Americans who made America through their forced labor, and their continued resistance. Scholar W.E.B. Dubois, in the last chapter of “The Souls of Black Folk”, characterizes the “Sorrow Songs” in the following way: “They that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days-Sorrow Songs-for they were weary at heart” (Souls of Black Folk 177). “...For they were weary at heart” is an important phrase to keep the Sorrow Songs grounded in a context, since to revise or whitewash

the history of America is to destroy the Sorrow Songs, the Blues, and Jazz. Even with the “preservation” of this material, all too often, the space of the “Archive” becomes attuned to not only what it can “see,” but by what it is willing to “overlook.”

What the “Archive” wants to overlook, even with an emphasis on preserving histories of voices and cultures who were oppressed, is the history of America, a history built on slavery: what institution would want to emphasize this fact? For as much as the Archive wants to collect these songs, these histories, for “preservation” and for purposes of scholarship, they must find a way to reckon with the history that those same songs, that that same music, signifies: to drive away that history is to strip “The Sorrow Songs” from the people who made them, who sang them, who resisted terrible oppressive systems with them.

W.E.B. Du Bois ends *The Souls of Black Folk* with a final chapter focused on the importance of “The Sorrow Songs”, and what they mean to him: “And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song-the rhythmic cry of the slave-stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas (*Souls of Black Folk* 178). He points out not only the experience of the slave in his interpretation of “The Sorrow Songs”, but wants to expand this music to reach over the seas, that it’s “the most beautiful expression of human experience.” This is staking a claim to something that the “Archive” cannot possibly comprehend nor even preserve nor present to the public: a whole range of human experience and sounds that the “Archive” has no idea how to deal with, beyond leaving it in the space of collection, to grow old with dust.

“The Sorrow Songs” are the first point of musical rupture, of a gap, that I would describe as an example of the limits of the “Archive.” The “Archive” can’t adequately address nor even “preserve” this difference: the liner notes and musical notations can be “saved”, but what about the “Sound”? How can a place dependent on static objects and frozen-in-time collections of text deal with something different, with something experiential? The archive, by its own necessary, “domesticated” conditions, cannot register the beauty, the experience, of the “Sorrow Songs.” W.E.B. Du Bois tried to pin down what exactly were the “Sorrow Songs”, what did they mean, and how best they could be described, at least to a wider public:

“What are these songs, and what do they mean?.. I know that these songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They tell us in these eager days that life was joyous to the black slave, careless and happy. I can easily believe this of some, of any. But not all the past South, though it rose from the dead, can gainsay the heart-touching witness of these songs. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways” (*Souls of Black Folk* 179)

W.E.B. Du Bois takes on two contradictory perspectives with regard to the men, women, and children, the enslaved of America, who made these “Sorrow Songs”: joyful and sorrowful. The “joyous” parts of these “eager days” for the enslaved are part and parcel of the “Sorrow Songs. Yet, to claim it as only “joyful”, as the times of celebration for the enslaved during their supposed “eager days” would commit a

grievous, dangerous error to history, to the African-Americans who suffered the ills of Slavery. He continues with analyzing the history of America. However, the traditional history of America, the traditional narrative taught ad nauseam in schools, does not work in Du Bois's connection with the "Sorrow Songs." The narrative of Pilgrims coming to stake a new land full of Freedoms, of a new nation made by Founding Fathers, of Whiteman's Burden and Manifest Destiny, are not expressed in the "Sorrow Songs." Du Bois writes:

"Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours; a gift of story and song-soft, stirring melody in all-harmonized and unmelodious land...Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people?" (*Souls of Black Folk* 187)

"Would America have been America without her Negro people?" is the critical point to continue to focus on the music of America, from the "Sorrow Songs" to the Blues and Jazz. America "without her Negro people" would not become anything more than thirteen colonies struggling to survive in the short term, let alone for more than four hundred years. The "Archive" cannot handle this history, let alone listen to it: it would mean that an American art form focused on what can't be written, on what can only be heard and experienced, is the important crux of the whole American experiment.

The “Sorrow Songs” point, of course, towards Sorrow, towards melancholic reflections and cries for Freedom, something that Jazz would continue on with artists like Charles Mingus and Max Roach, who took on active roles with their music in the Civil Rights movement of the fifties and sixties. In *Phonographies*, Alexander G. Weheliye stresses the importance of both Du Bois’s text, and its insistence on the importance of the spirituals in connection with American history. Weheliye writes: “Just as in Du Bois’s own text, the spirituals are not only relevant to black culture, but to American culture at large; the fact that they are the only true music produced in the history of the United States makes them an achievement his readers must acknowledge” (*Phonographies* 85). It is important to stress that the spirituals are something that Du Bois pushes forward, in both artistic importance and cultural relevance, since his work as a scholar, as a writer, has been institutionalized and considered “legitimate” in terms of scholarship, in terms of the “Archive.”

Yet, being able to point towards the spirituals as the “only true music produced in the history of the United States”, Weheliye points out, is another political aspect that the “Archive” cannot simply wave aside: again, the “readers must acknowledge” this “achievement” of the spirituals, of the black culture that gave birth to this music. However, even while acknowledging this “achievement”, where is its place in the “Archive” if not in the words of others, in the works of others, and in the “Sound” that escapes the dusty boxes and shelves that line the traditional “Archive.” Where can an art form, from the “Sorrow Songs” on down, that values change, structure, technique, rehearsal, and improvisation fit in the “Archive?” What does it mean for an art form to still be “jazz” and yet continuously change?

It would have to be “The Changing Same.”

“The Changing Same” is a term coined by Amiri Baraka, primarily for the Blues and Jazz, but I see it as pointing towards the “Archive,” as well. As has been noted above, the “Sorrow Songs” lead to the Blues, to the experience, to the expression, of a suddenly-emancipated(on paper) people. To consider the problem of “Sound” with regard to the “Archive,” the Blues must be examined in connection and relation to both the “Sorrow Songs” and Jazz, as well. As Baraka writes: “Blues (Lyric) its song quality is, it seems, the deepest expression of memory. Experience re/feeling. It is the racial memory. It is the “abstract” design of racial character that is evident, would be evident, in creation carrying the force of that racial memory” (*The Changing Same* 183). Baraka’s focus on the “experience re/feeling” is to echo back to the “Sorrow Songs,” to the enslaved who could not exist in the “Archive” expect in profit and ledger books, in the margins of historical materiality.

It is in “creation” that carries the “force of that racial memory,” of the “Sorrow Songs” presence in the Blues, something that the “Archive” cannot adequately express, since this experience is one of creation, and not necessarily preservationist. The music of the Blues did not exist in a vacuum: it is a history that must be listened to, a history that points towards gaps that the “Archive” cannot contain.

The Blues is something that comes from a people that had to migrate, in the face of the failure of Reconstruction in the South, which led them to the industrial North, and reckonings with the post-Reconstruction, Jim Crow South. It is something that is built on black history, on American history, on a response and an emotional

“re/feeling” that cannot be easily reined in: it is something like the “Sorrow Songs,” of joy and misery, all happening at the same time. Baraka makes this connection more apparent between the Blues and the “Sorrow Songs” by not trying to differentiate them, and by extending this connection to Jazz, in almost a nexus of connection. He writes: “...The differences between rhythm and blues and the so-called new music or art jazz, the different places are artificial, or they are merely indicative of the different placements of spirit” (*The Changing Same* 188-189). The “Archive” thrives on domesticating information, histories, voices, on classifications and categorizations that can put events and traditions in their “proper” places, in different collections.

Baraka pinpoints how the connections between The Blues and the “Sorrow Songs” have lead to the development and (re)experience of Jazz, of a history that is not written about, but is passed down through the music, through the act and experience of creation. Jazz, same as the “Sorrow Songs” and the Blues, is an art form that operates on harmonies and rehearsed structures, but improvisation becomes important to differentiate the song, the moment, which makes Jazz time different. The archive relationship to Time is stasis, domestication, and frozen; Jazz time inevitably clashes with the archive’s notion of Time. How could this kind of art fit in the traditional, domesticating nature of the “Archive?”

For Baraka, the music doesn’t necessarily need to “fit” anywhere: the movement is the thing. In his own words, jazz “has remained the changing same” (*The Changing Same* 203). He hits upon the notion of Jazz as a moving art form, of listening to it being a movement. What happens to a music that is quite literally and figuratively the “Changing Same,” what happens to this music when it is contained in

an Archive? Can it be considered redundant, for a music that operates on contradictions, and yet never stops moving, to be housed in the “Archive?” Since the music cannot be contained in traditional institutional structures of scholarship and preservation, what does it mean for this music to be recorded, except having to operate in a wholly different theoretical structure. What happens to a music, like Jazz, when it is given over to new recording technologies, ones that were never supposed to hold Jazz?

### **THE PROBLEM WITH THE JAZZ ARCHIVE**

Jazz is a specific cultural art form, a specific music form that has roots to the experiences of the enslaved, of the emancipated, and the new generations of freed African-Americans. To keep this music away, to be housed in some containers in an archival space, to be dusted off for observation and scholarship from time to time. It is a music based in the history of America, from slavery to post-Reconstruction, to Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement, and beyond. It is a continuation, a modality, a scale of difference with regard to its ancestors in the “Sorrow Songs” and the Blues. The “Sorrow Songs,” The Blues, and Jazz did not follow each other in a linear fashion, but all developed and came onto the American, and world, stage at the same times. No one song, no one chord played, nor no one structure followed will ever exactly be the same. That is something the “Archive” cannot handle: a music that does not stick to the usual movement of time that the “Archive” can handle, of straightforward and linear development. The space of the Archive cannot handle a music that both “remains” the same in terms of structure and time, but continuously moves in and out of that same time, through different harmonies, and modalities.

The concept of the “Archive”, of a space for preservation and collection, for dissemination of information and institutional legitimization, cannot conceptually handle a musical form that, even with notations and liner notes and all the requisite background information, escapes classification, escapes easy archivization. In the same sense, this does not mean that there have not been attempts at Jazz Archives. This is done primarily by jazz musicians, who provide their literal life’s work, their phonograph records, CD’s, musical notations, and so on, into the institutions that prioritize the “Archive.”

Is it enough, however, to house cassette tapes, CD’s, even digital playlists of Jazz for future generations, to make up even more collections, to have “Jazz Archives?” I do not think it is enough to simply hand over collections of material to be archived, and housed for limited access to both public and scholars, to be placed in boxes, to melt in the heat or covered over with dust for someone to find every once in a while. Jazz already is an archive. But, the “Archive” values the seen, the visible, and to just have the records and collections preserved is not enough. It is also not enough to have the written, the liner notes and music notations on hand: they are the “framework” of the “Sound” but they are still not the “Sound.”

Weheliye, throughout his work of “Phonographies”, focuses on how there is a divide between the sonic and the written in terms of traditional thinking. The written is always valued more and, in a Derridean sense, is understood as being more “present,” accessible, available, even “apparent.” The sonic, on the other hand, becomes a trickier thing to get a handle on, a thing that needs to be “contained” in order to be either interacted with or understood, compared to the written:

“While many studies of black culture and literature discuss the two concepts, these works frequently posit music and orality as static constants, mapping on particular form of music, such as the blues, onto all of black culture, or locating a pre-technological orality in black cultural history” (*Phonographies* 6).

This structure forced the importance of the written word over the sonic, and thus to the “Archive” becoming more about vast collections, about containment of written documents, while leaving everything else, including the sonic, aside. For the structure of the “Archive,” it is necessary, in order to sort out collections and to keep the classification of these masses of text organized, to value documentation and preservation than other methodologies.

In a twist of history, this aspect of not “listening” even with the recordings preserved for both consumption and for appreciation are tied to a project of longer-term “Archive Fever,” of the desire to keep things like “Sound” in a preservable manner, in an easier manner to understand and study. This furtherance of “Archive Fever” only exists because of the possibility of sound recording technology. Stoevers notes that there was a specific historical impetus for preservation-type technologies, with a morbid, almost macabre curiosity attached to the technology. She writes that: “Permeated by death and invested with spirituality, recording technologies, McGarry and Sterne both argue, developed from the desire for preservation as a white bourgeois impulse, which also meant recording was shaped by racialized listening and helped shape the listening ear in turn” (*Sonic Color Line* 142). “Preservation,” as I have stressed throughout this work, is not a harmless nor politically neutral activity:

it is a concentrated effort to collect, to house, to keep, to store away, to contain. All of these terms define the limits and traditional structure of the “Archive.” This desire for preservation, this “Archive Fever” did not happen in a vacuum, since it is a striking, almost magical thing, of being able to record something, to have it, ostensibly, “forever.” The recording technology allowed for racialized listening, for a “white bourgeois impulse” to keep things static, even “saved.” The same “Archive Fever” that wants more documentation, a greater need for written collections, is found in the need for these recording technologies, in wanting to put a limit to “Sound” that was never thought possible before. It is a paradoxical need to keep things contained, which strangles the “Sound” that is being preserved, in the first place. With all of this in consideration, then, what is the “Jazz Archive” if nothing more than a perfect example of the necessarily self-contradictory, self-destructive tradition of collection and classification?

First and foremost, there is a lot to unpack in terms of the idea of “Jazz Archive”, dealing firstly with the development and ideas behind the music of Jazz. As both art form and commercial entity, a communal music and an intensely personal and saleable form of art, Jazz, by its very musical nature, cannot and should not be limited or restrained. There are different musical genres and stylings that work in different qualities, as in a Big-Band, Swing-time style will have a set measure and a different beat designed to make people dance/”swing” compared to a Bebop song, which is more focused on lengthy individual improvisations.

There are always differences happening in Jazz, and yet, the very mention of the term “Jazz” pigeonholes it into a commercial genre with a given set of

characteristics, of beats, instruments, modalities, routines, rhythms, and standard tunes. This kind of pigeon-holing was and is currently done to both sell records to a more commercial audience and to be able to even talk about said music. I see this kind of “pigeon-holing” of the music, for commercial interests, as a cousin to the “containment” or preservationist characteristic of the space of the “Archive.” The connections between commodification and preservation, between the mainstream industries and the spaces of the “Archive” connect well: they both operate in fields that want to define and limit Jazz. In this sense, to sell, to contain in a package, in a format, in a genre, to preserve, to hold onto, mean that this “containment” is another necessary component of both the field of the commercial genre, and the spaces of the “Archive.”

However, this kind of “containment” of an art form is never incidental, and as “Jazz Archive” states from the outset, “Jazz’ must be thought about in a historical manner that does not forget the strategies of limitation, of “containment,” that have been enacted: it must be a different set of priorities at hand.

There has been a sustained effort, however, to prioritize certain music and cultural forms of expression over others. Weheliye notes that, “Beginning with Plato, music was thought to have no significance without the accompaniment of words” (*Phonographies* 10). The Western tradition of interacting with music would prioritize the words in connection with the music more so than the sonically heard. To “listen,” in this sense, is to always prioritize one layer that is recognizable over what is actually being “heard.” There is a dichotomy between listening and what the “Archive” does: “listening” is to be active, to engage in another experience that is not

your own, while the “Archive” just collects, not by some mandate, but by the nature of the mass of collections, of documentation so intense and overwhelming, it can only be stored for someone else’s eyes, in the future.

With Jazz Archives, in particular, the musicians archive themselves, to end up in the same legitimate circles, restricting their music’s transformative power by being willfully buried in the “Archive.” Jim Merod writes about the historical requirements for Jazz musicians to have access to certain cultural spaces. Specifically, he writes about the “containment” practices of those same cultural spaces and businesses that “wanted” the “Sound,” but not necessarily all that it entailed, including the history and faces of black people in America. Merod writes:

“But the prevailing experience that crosses and recrosses the emergence of jazz as a cultural archive is the experience of containment. The music itself has been sequestered by carefully invoked blue laws that restricted it to segregated parts of cities, by requirements for cabaret cards, by the racism of white musicians' unions, and (until recently) by nearly perpetual neglect in the highest academies of the empire. All this added to the containment of an art form that is celebrated as America's finest contribution to world culture: a containment by journalistic rubrics that define jazz as a form of entertainment without history, a containment by television media that relegate jazz to late-night events” (Jazz as Cultural Archive 4).

It is important to understand that there was no mandate, no transcendental figure overlooking the “Archive”, declaring that Jazz must be kept aside or limited. The

history of Jazz, the experience of Jazz, is to continuously create and then have to fight for more active “listening,” for both musicians and music to not be pushed aside for the sake of commodification. For institutions to take on “Jazz Archives” is to necessarily have to deal with the history of segregation in America, of different opportunities for white musicians versus black musicians, of almost constant neglect in the academies of this nation, and so on. This is not an easy history to deal with, let alone acknowledge, and it is something that institutions must reckon with, otherwise having “Jazz Archives” means nothing more than a grouping of documents regarding a music that might as well be classical musical notation, for all the difference it makes: Jazz is an African-American music, first and foremost. In this sense, Jazz escapes the usual spaces of the “Archive” precisely because of its difference, of its historical context and musicality, and of the music being formed from the days of the enslaved. To speak about “Jazz Archives” is already to talk about a “racialized listening” that Dr. Stoecker examines, and to understand that a “Jazz Archive” is also a racial archive.

So, with the “Jazz Archive,” it is already hampered in its process of being “listened” to, of being studied and respected, because of the fact that it is working on the level of “Sound” versus the Western obsession with documents, with text, with “Archive Fever.”

What happens to Jazz Archives when the aural, the very thing that its improvisational structure works upon, is disregarded and compared to what is not there, to when there are no words? This points to another limitation, and a damaging one, in connection with the “Western canon,” and in connection with the “Archive.”

This line of thinking, this need to get rid of what isn't text, of what isn't accepted by the "Western canon," restricts in the same way the "Archive" contains, in the sense of not listening and not paying attention to what is right in front of them. Before I continue on, I cannot ignore the existence of digital archives, nor sonic archives that universities and institutions place online. It is not the main focus of my thesis here, but I see the existence of these different kinds of "Archives" not as argumentative obstacles, but as further signifiers to what is going on with the traditional state of the "Archive." The sonic and digital archives are still being curated by someone else, dependent upon institutional legitimacy and donations and contributions to help start the difficult process of transcribing and digitizing the material. Some, like the Louis Armstrong audio reel recordings, are in poor condition and have not enough institutional monetary support to continue the process of digitization. While this thesis is focused on the traditional materiality of the "Archive," this is not to say that digital and sonic archives are to be discounted: they seem to represent the newer side of "Archive Fever."

This same kind of thinking is contingent, however, on institutions wanting to take on Jazz Archives, in the first place. In Adrienne Rich's essay "Towards a Woman-Centered University," the University's, and Institution's, underpinnings are highlighted: "The hidden assumptions on which the university is built comprise more than simply a class system" (Rich). The University, like any higher Institution, prizes high collections to entice visitors, scholars, and prospective students, alike: the assumption is that the more the merrier, and that there are certain unspoken regulations to what is considered "scholarly." What can be boiled down here about

the “hidden assumptions” of the University are the same “hidden assumptions” that dominate the spaces of the “Archive”: that there are some things worth studying, and others, not so much. Since the musicians or their families must find a way to handle these “Archives,” they necessarily depend on the spaces provided by museums, libraries, universities.

Jazz archives are only considered “important” and are only legitimized by institutions regarding them as important, as critical to both have and to house. Whether it’s Rutgers or Columbia College or various universities from Pittsburgh to Detroit to the Schomburg Center in Harlem, these archives of jazz musicians are officially designated as “Collections” due to both to the fame of the musician and the volume of material, the size of material, the amount that can be triumphed and described over on museum websites and for visiting scholars.

This same archival process becomes an odd exercise in theatrical production, in hyping up the amount that has been collected, that will be on display and then locked away in the University or the Institution’s space. Derrida writes about this kind of performance, with regard to another aspect of “Archive Fever”: “...In what can also be read as a theatricalizing of archivization...”(*Archive Fever* 9). The spectacle of the “Archive” in itself, of boxes upon boxes of documentation must become “theatricalized”, a whole routine, almost choreographed of stepping into this “sacred” space for scholarship, and to feel a sense of awe at all of the material at hand. How many times does some scholar interested in jazz roll out boxes, liner sheets, scrapbooks, all in a row in some institution to be wowed by, and stumped by?

In terms of collections of music, of African-American music, they are situated at various Smithsonian museum galleries, from the Postal Museum to the American Art Museum, down to the African-American Museum and African Museum, all situated in various locations in Washington, D.C. , it seems that the problem of the “Jazz Archive” can be fixed by just having the material. But, that is never simply the case, since to just have “material” is not enough to make a study: it is also about intent, about what the public is allowed to see versus what the scholar might have area for maneuvering, for movement. The “Rock N’ Roll” collection, for example, is a heavy collection, disseminated but still containing photos, portraits, memorabilia, and so on. But, this kind of focus on the “material,” on not just the written, the textual, but the visual, can sometimes be understood as more closely related to memorabilia for passersby. These collections, of mostly signed guitars, photos, old records, and even Chuck Berry’s Cadillac, act as more of a touristic endeavor than a field to be worked on, to be studied, to be listened to, differently. So, just to use that archive as a counterpoint example, what makes that kind of archive different from what I term “Jazz Archives?” The massive collections that make up the “Rock N’ Roll Museum” is a spectacle, in line with the theatricalizing of archivization that Derrida proposed “Archive Fever” leads to: a gamesmanship of the “Archive.”

For starters, I see the archives that are placed for the public in the Smithsonian as spectacle, all focused on the intense visual aspects of seeing records, photos, memorabilia. There is also a major focus on the physical artifacts, such as signed guitars, drums, suits and outfits, lyrics, and for the “King of Rock N’ Roll” in Elvis, a whole mansion wing with just his plane and car collections. It’s the consumable, the

perishable, the stuff you look at once, take a picture to take back home, and then head off to the next thing. There is nothing objectively wrong with this Archive, as any object, any artifact, even Chuck Berry's Cadillac or Elvis Presley's automobile/plane collections matter to historians. However, this same kind of Archive, put out to the public, ends up feeling like a tourist taking in the sights once, and then never thinking twice about it. It's "Tourism Archive," in a nutshell.

What I have just analyzed is the "Archive" as a touristic space, fetishistic on some level, which can roll further on into an obsession with the macabre, with wanting to see where Elvis died or where JFK was killed, and so on. The "Archive" then becomes something more akin to a mausoleum, to a place where people go to visit the dead, to rummage around their personal effects, and to see if they can find something "interesting" in the midst of all of those documents and memorabilia. The "Archive," once it's been interacted with in the normal space of the visual, of the seen, becomes something akin to a madcap rush for more visual information, for more text.

This kind of rush for preservation fits with the preservation and death-permeated ideology that surrounded the recording technologies of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of this is to say that the "Archive"-as-spectacle leads to an odd fulfilment in the mass of material at hand. It is all about the literal rolling out of documents, of "evidence," that can wow public and scholar alike. But for a music rolling from the "Sorrow Songs" of the enslaved and the freedmen, to the Blues of the migrants and the persecuted, Jazz cannot be handled so easily this way: the improvisational characteristic of it has to change its experience, time and again.

The literal rolling out of documents, the spectacle of stacks of boxes for the scholar's perusal, of "evidence," limits the improvisational force of Jazz, for the sake of putting down specific works to specific artists. State-sponsored institutions commit to this sort of endeavor all the time. The Library of Congress, repository and giant archive of material, promotes such collections all the time, such as their description of the collection of jazz musician Eric Dolphy:

"The Eric Dolphy Collection is comprised of approximately 250 lead sheets, scores, sketches, and exercises for works composed by Dolphy and others. The collection includes holograph scores, sketches...Included as well are three sketchbooks in Dolphy's hand filled with lead sheets, sketches, and studies. "The collection also contains printed and manuscript works by Gunther Schuller, Charles Mingus, Jaki Byard, and other composers..."(*Library of Congress*).

To have so much material from a jazz legend like Eric Dolphy, with even more "printed and manuscript works" of Charles Mingus and other famous musicians, means that there is an excitement, a desire, a need, for more of the "Jazz Archive." This "Jazz Archive" not only depends on the musicians and their collections, but also the institutions willing to spend money and time on sifting through these epic collections, and to find ways to save these collections for future scholarship. However, even with the Library of Congress saving a collection like Eric Dolphy's, it does not mean that everything is solved, that the "Jazz Archive" has been legitimized, as both a commodity to show off to the public, and as an area of scholarship. "Jazz Archives" exist, but it does not mean it exists necessarily in the same realm as others.

Legitimately, the seat of Power in this country houses a plethora of jazz archives, and it remains there, buried under so many other archives: how would a jazz player, collecting their own lives and works, decide to not only classify, and signify, their own archive, but to do so willingly? Is there such a thing as a sustained, self-directed “Jazz Archive?” Jazz musicians hand in their paper wares, their phonographs, their memories recorded by interviewers, and any other memorabilia to the preserving, containing space of the collections area, of the “Archive.” So, it seems impossible to say that “Jazz” can ever actually be archived, and not simply strewn aside in a mass of papers and record collections.

And yet, Jazz Archives exist.

While the impossibility of the Jazz Archive has been put forward here, it does not necessarily mean that Jazz Archives must be disregarded or disavowed. To blot out the Jazz Archive is to play into the hands of a history that devalues the voices and cultures of the ancestors of enslaved, of black people.

The Jazz Archive, however, should not necessarily depend on the charitable dispositions of institutions that would want to parade around the collection, in the first place. In this sense, ideally, it is up to the musician, insofar as they have the documents and memoranda, to give over and be made into a collection. How much input they actually have is a matter for debate, but there is a recent example of someone with a clear purpose for their Jazz Archive: the saxophone player Sonny Rollins.

Award-winning saxophone player Sonny Rollins seems to be one of the most recent to really consider their own lot with the Archive, as well: not so much in a self-directed, “planned” collection, but a willingness to interact and interrogate the spaces of the “Archive.” He willingly sent off his collection, his archives, to The Schomburg Center for Black Research in Harlem. His Jazz Archive is documented as follows:

“The collection, amounting to more than 150 linear feet of material, is comprised of all manner of written correspondence (notably to his late wife and manager, Lucille Pearson Rollins) as well as hand-lettered essays, notes and drawings; practice and rehearsal tapes, often with detailed annotations; and photographs of both the promotional and candid sort. Among the other historically significant objects is a tenor saxophone that Rollins used early in his career” (*NPR*).

This kind of detailed archive, with “detailed annotations” already there, is such a carefully wrought process, shows how important archives are to jazz musicians. It is unusual, for a musician, still living, to not only hand over sensitive documentation and marginal notations, along with photographs personal and promotional, to the spaces of the institutional “Archive.” While it is not unusual or uncommon for a still- living artist to hand over their instruments to the archive, I see in Sonny Rollins’ case a bit differently. For Sonny Rollins to hand over a tenor saxophone that was used early in his career is to already make a distinction for his own “Jazz Archive.” For him to hand over this object that not only meant a lot to him, but is also imbued with a different kind of history, a different understanding of music, of America: this is how the “Jazz Archive” can mean something different for the spaces of scholarship.

Rollins considers, however, an important issue with the place of the “Jazz Archive” in the larger institutional structures: it is all too easy for “Jazz Archives” to be handed over, only to never really see them again. He makes a point to consider this, it is the limits and defining states of the “Archive” that disregard the Jazz collections, themselves. He notes this much in his interview with NPR:

“A lot of these collections go into universities and then they're put in the basement and that's it, they're never seen," Rollins added. "So I'm glad that, according to what I've been told, this will be available to scholars and students and whoever else wants to see it." (*NPR*).

Rollins noted that “a lot of these collections go into universities and then they’re put in the basement,” with an emphasis on these collections ending up “never seen” again. It is dangerous to entrust your life’s work to the necessities of the self-limiting, necessarily contradictory nature of the space of the “Archive.” “Jazz Archives,” however, offer something different by the very music and musicians they celebrate and preserve: it is the preservation of a life and a work of music that cannot easily be represented. Since Jazz is a musical form that prioritizes both intense rehearsals and spontaneous improvisations, how exactly do you create an Archive that isn’t just a carbon copy of consumer culture, of Tourism Archives such as the Smithsonian collections that make up their “Rock N’ Roll” Museum?

Jazz Archives starts with the Jazz musician in question giving up their collection of papers, memorabilia, personal effects, musical instruments, and so on. But Jazz Archives can also come from people interacting with these musicians,

especially interviewers: everything is written down, for posterity. Interestingly enough, there are books that are purported to be based on the musicians' words and anecdotes. One such book, titled "Mister Jelly Roll", ends up serving as another form of the Jazz Archive, of stories told to the interviewer by famous pianist Jelly Roll Morton. I use this as an example simply for the reason of its conflicting role in promoting and preserving a seminal jazz figure. Yet, this happens consistently when any new collection is handed over to an institution for preservation: the Name of the Artist is what drives interest.

However, what happens to the stories, the collections, the lives and works of musicians who were not able to recorded, to have a hand in their own "Jazz Archives," such as the mythical trumpet player Buddy Bolden. The spaces of the "Archive" focus on other issues, on the name and mass of documentation available. Much of the history of Jazz is dependent on sources and interviews with people who claim to have been there, who have only memory and possibly memorabilia as "evidence" of the route of the music.

The "Jazz Archive" is dependent on both materiality and publicity-potential for the university or the institution in question, handed over by musicians', sometimes in the form of papers and photographs, and other times in the physical objects they used to create the music. Once they have handed their collections over, it is usually out of their hands. They may, as in Sonny Rollins' case, be assured that their collections will not end up forgotten, in the dustbins of the "Archive." But that is not a certainty. But, that depends on the continued support and vision of the "Jazz Archive" that the institution has in place. So, the musicians', who created their music

in a group dynamic, in a collaborative environment, are left out of the conversation of preserving their own works, entirely. What happens when the “Jazz Archive,” however, is directed by someone who recorded everything, who wanted to make their life classifiable for history, for scholars and fans, alike? What happens when Louis Armstrong directs his own “Archive?”

### **THE SELF-CURATED JAZZ ARCHIVE OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG**

There are many Jazz Archives, but the ones who left an indelible mark, the ones with the promoted, Special Collections, tend to end up the “individual geniuses”, from Duke Ellington to Miles Davis to Thelonious Monk. They are each given special mention and focus. However, none seem bigger than the Jazz Giant who promoted, performed, and, more importantly, created his own Jazz Archive. I am speaking of the musician who carefully, intentionally directed his own historical archive than Louis Armstrong. Louis Armstrong literally made his home into his own “Archive,” a living Jazz Archive. As Brent Hayes Edwards writes:

“If the house in Queens is now a sort of monument and memorial, it is equally an institution of learning about jazz and U.S. history and about a character named “Louis Armstrong,” an archive that includes a stunning amount: hundreds of books, 1,600 recordings, 5,000 photographs, 86 scrapbooks, 650 reel-to-reel tapes made by Pops himself (most of which are carefully numbered and catalogued, and kept in boxes Armstrong decorated with fascinating collages and drawings), as well as “12 linear feet” of papers” (Epistrophies 13-14).

All of this description of Louis Armstrong’s vast collection is an archival description,

one obsessed with spectacle. This is not new information about the spectacle of the “Archive” What separates Louis Armstrong’s collection from others, beyond the tremendous depth of material, is that intentionality, that insistence on both being recorded and recording.

What other mainstream celebrity music giant like Armstrong would take the time to fill up so much space, so many hours, so many photographs and books, for future generations to look at and study about, for history to distinctly remember them? There is no one quite like Louis Armstrong in this regard, and yet this kind of collection stands out even more in the world of Jazz.

For the Jazz Archive, repeatedly, is a type of collection that already stands out from traditional Archives by its own focus on a distinctly African-American art form. Jazz Archives exist in paradoxical states of being, in following the structure of the traditional “Archive:” to contain, preserve, articulate, and separate a musician’s work in a field of music that cannot be contained nor easily controlled, will inevitably change that music and that understanding of the musician’s work. To put it succinctly, to preserve and to contain does not mean it will engage with or in the field of “Jazz.” What really makes the vast collection of Louis Armstrong stand out, however, is that same intentionality, that different side of “Archive Fever,” has been turned into the personal, even a political act: Louis Armstrong did not want anyone to speak for him, as he would make sure he would be speaking directly to you.

This kind of collection for Armstrong was more than just something to hand off to a university or a museum exhibit, or for scholars to dig through after many

years, after all the publicity of the collection had faded away. What is important to consider, with Pop's place in regard to the Jazz Archive, is that he was willing to record literally everything, and everyone: he wanted everything out in the open for future generations to come. In an email correspondence, Dr. Brent Hayes Edwards gave a singular reasoning as to the "Jazz Archive" methods of Louis Armstrong, compared to all other Jazz musicians: "...not everybody is like Louis Armstrong" (Edwards Email). There is something to the methods of Louis Armstrong's self-curation, of self-archiving: the matter of intent is one area of crucial difference, but also the matter of

Ben Alexander writes about Armstrong's desire to record everything, to archive everything, as not being some simple hobby, but a sustained political and personal act for history's sake. Alexander describes:

"...Armstrong's admission that he has "thousands" of such tapes. Six hundred and fifty tapes (many in hand-decorated boxes) survive and are preserved today in the Louis Armstrong Archives at Queens College, the City University of New York. The collection also includes 1,600 commercial recordings; 86 scrap- books; 5,000 photographs; 270 sets of band parts; 12 linear feet of personal papers including correspondence and biographical manuscripts; 5 trumpets; 14 mouthpieces; and 120 awards and plaques. Third, and most important, is Armstrong's insistence that his collection of tapes was "for posterity." For the very reasons (understandable as they may have been) that Lucille wanted the tape destroyed, Armstrong was adamantly committed to its preservation" (Posterity 2).

What's important to focus on is that not only did Louis Armstrong want to record himself, his family, his friends, and his fellow musicians, but that he did it all in the name of "posterity," of history. A history that would be far removed from his own time, from his own imagination, yet he was still committed to preserving his voice, his thinking, his values for everyone to know and study about him.

For a black man operating in the white-owned mainstream entertainment industry, the normal way of operating would be to make his mark in his records, gain some money, and to not protest too much. However, Louis Armstrong, "Satchmo," came from the Ragtime and New Orleans-jazz days of history, and would speak otherwise to the power structures of his time, and the limits and definitions of the "Archive" that he contended with all of his life. The history of black America is the history of America, and for a black man like Louis Armstrong to speak for himself is a revolutionary act. It is a revolutionary act for someone like Armstrong to speak for himself because Jim Crow America wanted to deny black people freedom, movement, and opportunity to live.

Armstrong operated from the same traditions of the "Sorrow Songs" and the Blues, and helped make Jazz a household word in the entertainment industry. His goal for his "Archive" was intensely focused: to be heard, in all ways. More than just recording them, however, Louis Armstrong did something that Ben Alexander makes special mention of: he left his tapes unedited and unaltered. Alexander writes:

"Armstrong's tapes are remarkable, however, because he insisted that they remain unedited and unaltered, as his drunken argument with Lucille

makes clear. Armstrong wanted history to know Armstrong. Collectively, his tapes document an amazingly candid and frank relationship with, to us, “posterity” (Posterity 10).”

“Unedited and unaltered” and “Armstrong wanted history to know Armstrong” are incredible things to consider with regard to the “Archive,” to a space that traditionally does not hear out different voices, that does not want to necessarily “listen” too closely. To leave something for “posterity’s sake” is to know that future generations will want to study him, and he did not want them to get information in a second-hand manner. He wanted to be the one to tell his own story, in his own words.

With this kind of different Archival practice, the possibilities for movement in that same field are possibly endless. This is not limited to only recordings, since Armstrong both wrote his own personal manuscripts, and added personal scrapbooks, of other Archivable material of photographs, into the mix, into collages. Ben Alexander examines the careful self-curation that Louis Armstrong paid attention to, in constructing his own archive. Alexander writes:

“Today, the Louis Armstrong Archives contains eighty-six (scrapbooks) that he compiled. Some of the scrapbooks document specific events in Armstrong's life, for example his move from Chicago to New York. Others contain collaged pages of seemingly unrelated visual materials. Every scrapbook, however, is replete with a narrative autobiographical subtext that compares interestingly with Armstrong's texts and recordings. Images and words patterned onto a page create tensions and ambiguities that allow an

interpreter to discern a narrative form. The scrapbook documenting Armstrong's travels to the East Coast reveals a process of personal growth and development, a kind of visual *kunstkroman*, a story in which a character grows as an artist, with Armstrong as the protagonist. (Life, after all, is a journey). Volumes that contain pages of seemingly unrelated compositions lead to a greater range of interpretations” (Posterity 21).

Even with both the constraints of recordable information and the constraining limits of the Archive itself, Armstrong is pushing for a new way both to see, and to handle the Jazz Archive: instead of a containment of the field and of the music, it means recording and taking in everything, and sending it out to the world as is, or as best as it could be in its own terms.

He wanted people to hear him, at all times, way after the fact of his life, his scrapbooks and volumes upon volumes of tape reels and collages, indexes of recordings and personal manuscripts, and even his own home became an official protected museum space. This kind of “Archive Fever” in him, to make his different kind of Archive still fit within certain parameters of: in almost contradictory terms, it could be said his constant need to self-archive is another constraint, a containment only to the physical artifacts, from the record tapes to the manuscripts to beyond, because there is only constraint.

In this sense, and with the Archive Fever of both institution and individual musician, the Jazz Archive seems stuck in a cycle of endless collection and endless deferral to higher institutional authorities that will legitimate that collection-in-

question, and then another will endlessly collect and defer itself to another institution, and so on. There doesn't seem to be much potential for movement when it comes to the spaces afforded the "Jazz Archive." So, if this seems to be the pattern for the "individual geniuses" of the Jazz Tradition, where does that leave the Tradition itself, if the very ways to preserve it in the Archive, and to preserve the various musicians' work ends up containing said music? Where can this Archive Fever lead but to a self-fulfilling prophecy, of the means of preserving the work ending up constraining the work and the limits of said work?

There must be someone both important to stand out in the Jazz Tradition, and subtle enough to confound scholars, critics, and fans alike to this very day. It does not seem possible, when someone like Pop's, like Louis Armstrong, a titan of Jazz, had such an Archive Fever in him that seems to override the freedom of his work, of his music. Where is this figure?

If they do not exist, then the Archive stays solid, immovable, unreachable, unbreakable, unknowable, and impenetrable. There must be a figure of Jazz that is both inescapably proliferate with the work and yet mould-breaking, tradition-breaking, music-expanding. There must be a figure whose work is still being studied, still bought, and still uniquely popular. The figure that comes to mind, and the one with no clear, institutionally sanctioned "Archive," the figure who represents the freedom to think of the spaces of the "Archive" differently is John Coltrane.

#### **THE AUDIENCE-CENTERED ARCHIVE, OR: THE JOHN COLTRANE ARCHIVE**

John Coltrane, the seemingly unarchivable, larger-than-life jazz figure who

transcends Archives and Jazz. He does not fit easily into either section due to limited documents showing his progression, with no “evidence” beyond his discography and his records still selling in stores. Nor are his musical qualities so easily categorizable, even under the label of “Jazz,” since his music pushed against easy labels, with a focus on free-jazz and even described as “Anti-Jazz.”

When it came to the Coltrane “Archive,” there didn’t seem to be one, as far as in the popular or promoted realm. There was no place to go to, nor readily-accessible papers or liner sheets to look over. Coltrane “appears” missing in the realm of the Jazz Archive. Where are his sketches, his studies, his exercises? Where’s his correspondence, personal, familial or musical?

There has to be something different, neither the solely documented, the solely preservable, nor keeping the work, the music, as something transcendently different, something entirely alien. This process of figuring out what could possibly “make up” the “Coltrane Archive” would necessarily mean having to think differently, having to consider what Weheliye called “‘thinking sound/sound thinking” (*Phonographies* 8). It would mean having to go back to the works themselves, to the music, as a necessity, and also opening up with a central question in mind against this blind spot in the Jazz Archives: where is Coltrane’s “Archive?”

More than just that, and what this thesis hopes to provide, is an opening of what the “Archive” tends to leave out, with one question: What could the “John Coltrane Archive” look like? I posed this question to Dr. Brent Hayes Edwards the author of “Epistrophies: Jazz and the Literary Imagination,” since his own works

deals with both “Jazz Archives” and the archival approaches of jazz fans. He pointed out something important, with regard to John Coltrane and the “Jazz Archive”:

“But no, in general Coltrane does not seem to have written much at all.

It would be possible to think about some of his compositions as something like "archives" of historical events (the most famous example would be "Alabama"). But as far as I know he did not leave behind a collection of documents. Of course, the simple fact of the matter is that musicians have different relationships to writing -- not everybody is like Louis Armstrong...” (Edwards, Email.)

The key here, for my line of inquiry into the spaces of the “Archive” and the necessary limitations of Jazz Archives, is that John Coltrane is not Louis Armstrong. This is not just due to the personal archival practices of Louis Armstrong, and the lack of such effort in preservation by Coltrane: it is something deeper. It is something to do with the music, the works, the “compositions” that John Coltrane focused his attentions on. Namely, it is the difference between The Archive and the Repertoire that can allow for more understanding with regard to Coltrane’s lack, or even refusal, of a traditional “Jazz Archive.”

The “rift” between The Archive and the Repertoire, the Performative, begins when the issue of preservation, of the limited and definition-setting space of the “Archive” is set forward: the written and the material is not enough, and cannot “capture” the performance of those traditions, of the music, of the experience. Diana Taylor explores this rift between both the archiveably written and the performativity

of the repertoire in her work “The Archive and the Repertoire.” She writes: “The rift, I submit, does not lie between the written and spoken word, but between the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (The Archive and The Repertoire 19). The “supposedly enduring materials” that make up the traditional “Archive” are always given more credence as history, as “evidence,” than the oral traditions, the cultural traditions that come from a community that are not obsessed with the text, with the written word, with the documentable. The Repertoire, the embodied practice/knowledge, the performance, cannot so easily be “archived” or studied: it demands a different understanding, and one that Coltrane worked and played in throughout his life.

Coltrane, working from the family tradition of preaching and The Black Church, has an almost instinctual leaning towards The Repertoire, the Speech-as-Music and Music-as-Speech. It is not a one-to-one relation, nor a linear relationship, but a network of connections, influences, traditions, and all are inevitably changed by improvisational Jazz performance practices. Jim Merod comments specifically of the “archive” that jazz has created being something almost transcendental, meaning more than it could ever possibly say. He writes: “...the “archive” that jazz has created in its one-hundred year history of performance, inscription, recording, and songful execution is deeply spiritual: an attitude of faith” (Jazz Archive 7-8). By looking at Coltrane’s faith-based tradition and further development in Jazz, the space of the “Archive” must become something different: a work, a collection, a music that the musician refuses to stamp down authoritatively means things are up for debate.

In a sense, Coltrane's work seems to speak differently, to speak of histories, both of the time in which he lived in, specifically the Civil Rights movement of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, but also the histories of the Black Church, that hearkens back to the Blues, back to the "Sorrow Songs" of the enslaved who made America. This is, again, never specifically stated by Coltrane in his works, or even necessarily his interviews, but it is his work that continues this development, always looking forwards and backwards in terms of influences.

What is a history of influences, of America, of black people, that is not written down and stored, preserved, contained in the space of the "Archive?" It must look differently, act differently, and even listened differently. It is not so much of a stretch to say that history is not necessarily solely the province of the written.

Without the written, history still must be told, but told differently. In different communities, the practice of telling history is not dependent on the written, on the Western tradition, but, Ben Alexander notes, that "... there were old men called griots, who are in effect walking, living archives of oral history" (Posterity 30). Griots are an oral tradition, a living archive, and yet even that cannot explain anything regarding John Coltrane. "Living archives of oral history" must give out the stories and the histories in a different manner to their community, and is almost antithetical thinking to the Western tradition of the canon, of the legitimized, textual space of the "Archive."

Coltrane, in this sense, achieved through his Repertoire, through embodied practice and knowledge in his works, a role as a truth-teller, a resistance without a

need to spell everything out for the layman. He took the opposite approach with regard to Louis Armstrong's powerful self-directed drive in self-preservation : he spoke through his saxophone, and let the music tell the history. He acted as a history-teller, without words: he fulfilled the role of a griot.

A response to history, to historical events, to the times around him and encompassing him: music, compositions as “something like archives of historical events.” This completely changed my view of what Coltrane is, of both how he represented something much more than simply the music of Jazz of the sixties, and how he himself signified this kind of presence, this continual engagement with the “Archive.” The Repertoire, the music, enacts something different, something that cannot be easily captured. Diana Taylor makes note of this kind of performativity: “The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (The Archive and the Repertoire 20). The Repertoire, the “embodied memory” does not fit in either an official “Archive” nor even a Jazz Archive. It must be a performance based kind of repertoire.

So, if it is performance based, then it must be a repertoire that is always around in Coltrane's work: an embodied memory of performance, movement, sonic, and something in the moment, something ephemeral. And Edwards has a good point: Coltrane's Archive must always be something different. The “Archive,” the space of both preservation and domiciliation, of “Jazz Archives” that miss the point of the music, entirely, must change again when it comes to Coltrane's Archive. The difference between someone like Armstrong's self-directed Archive versus Coltrane's

purposeful silence significantly means the spaces of the “Archive” cannot just “collect” Coltrane’s work: it must be another experience, entirely. With this difference comes the potential for a true liberatory experience: the possibility of a liberatory archive. There is so much to unpack with Coltrane, that it can feel limitless, and with good reason: it is not just a focus on his music, but on every other aspect of his life. The Jazz Archive, in this case, must be something different. Everything, from his personal life, his home life, his family life, his development as a jazz musician, his spirituality, or anything regarding an origin,. There is nothing regarding John Coltrane that could give out a ready-made, easy answer for the issue of the Jazz Archive.

*It’s something more.*

This something more, however, begins to veer towards idolatry and idolization, towards forgetting that no otherworldly, transcendental force came down to make this music: it was a man, enmeshed in a range of influences, who played this music. However, this is forgotten, as scholars, fans, and even old musician friends, take Coltrane as superhuman, even sacred. This attitude even goes towards the last home he lived in, on Long Island.

Even the home becomes an archive to be mined, a museum to pass through and gawk at: “It is what is happening, right here, when a house, the Freuds’ last house, becomes a museum: the passage from one institution to another” (*Archive Fever* 3). His house in Dix Hills, Long Island is seen as a cornerstone, as the epicenter of Coltrane-ism. In home video footage, along with folklore about the

creation of “A Love Supreme”, the fabled last home of John Coltrane is venerated and memorialized with special significance. What happens when a beautiful work of art appears seemingly out of nowhere? The website of the Home restoration/Coltrane museum even specifies this kind of significance based on Coltrane’s performance, and his oeuvre:

“We are proud to say that the American jazz musician, John Coltrane, lived here on a quiet residential street during the last years of his life. In his home here, he composed his greatest work, “A Love Supreme” as well as all of his last works, considered by many to be his greatest and most stirring”  
*(About Coltrane Home).*

This insistence by the writer of the Coltrane Home website on the greatness of this place via the acts of creation that had taken place is a weird kind of archive commitment to make: not because showing off the home is in itself weird, but that this home ends up being bestowed with an extraordinary power. These are not in Coltrane’s words, of course: he died at forty from lung cancer, but now his home is following the museum route, the Freud House route, as if Derrida is waiting in the wings to speak about Coltrane and psychoanalytic jazz moments. It’s an insistence on both the transcendence of Coltrane, and of his home where he created such great work, that continues on in this “About Page” for a literal Archive to visit: “John asked God to enable him to help others through his music. His life was cut short, but this home can allow his message to continue” *(About Coltrane Home)*. The home becomes the space where his message can continue, but not the music itself. It’s as if, without the physical home to come to and visit, the music created there doesn’t really

exist. It's as if the physical must be there, in some form, to prove the reality of the individual, like the individual never existed without an origin, without some place literary scholars, critics, fans, and preservationists can point at and say "That's where it all started."

The work has been mentioned, but the medium of it, the recording technology necessary for Coltrane's work to be shared, has not been discussed in depth. This is where the phonograph<sup>1</sup>, or vinyl record, becomes important to understanding what a "John Coltrane Archive" could look like: something indeterminate, but always in the realm of the sonic.

This same obsession with Death and "preservation", I repeatedly argue, is not by accident, but the very thing that drives both the "Archive" and the recording technologies, but is a necessity for its survival and continued existence. Stoevers stresses the importance of this nexus of connections between the need for preservation of material, the conceptual limits of the Archive, and the focus of recording technology with regard to black voices. To think that recording the music of Black America is the same as preserving it is an assumption that does not fit well with the intentions of the technology, itself. To record is to preserve, and to preserve is to deal in the same conceptual limits of the "Archive." Stoevers notes this:

"McGarry's discussion of mediumship as preservation  
dovetails with Jonathan Sterne's argument that the cultural

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<sup>1</sup> "The advent of technological sound recording embodied in the phonograph made it possible to split sounds from the sources that (re)produced them, creating differently pitched technological oralities and musicalities in twentieth-century black culture" (Phonographies 7).

pervasiveness of technologies of preservation such as canning and embalming- developed to solve the problem of mass battlefield corpses-gave rise to the phonograph during the 1860s, a device, Thomas Edison argued, for “gathering up and retaining sounds hitherto fugitive” (*Sonic Color Line* 142)

When Thomas Edison argues for “gathering up and retaining sounds hitherto fugitive,” then the phonograph, and the “technologies of preservation,” are already infused with purpose of containment and restriction. The phonograph records sonic histories, but it cannot solely be focused on the physical grooves.

“Mediumship as preservation” is to bring back the dead, or to capture the dead at a given moment, but these terms are always obsessed with both the dead and the stasis the living can impose upon it. This is where an “Audience-Centered Archive” works against this kind of dangerous logic, and becomes a political act, especially with regard to John Coltrane’s life and work. But it is also working against the logic of the “Archive,” of both the “Fever” that Derrida writes about, and the obsession with preservation. The “Audience-Centered Archive” does not fit into the strictly textual, nor the strictly sonic, spaces of the “Archive.” But how can one make the “Audience-Centered Archive” fit into spaces of scholarship and preservation that value the traditional. Where is the sonic, where is the place of “Sound” in a world obsessed with preserving things, with holding onto records, with keeping things stilled in the “Archive?”

Even with a recording technology that goes against the improvisational structure of Jazz, there is still something at work, something that Weheliye makes note of: “The insistence on the (in)humanity of the phonograph remains key, for it assists in conjecturing the sonorous dimensions teleported by the phonograph that are elided in script and thus shushed in Derrida’s understanding of the voice as speech writing” (*Phonographies* 34). This same dangerous need for the Archive, for the idea and the concept of the Archive, becomes worse when it is considered as the only possible avenue of scholarship. Possibly, the idea of “Archive Fever” that Derrida proposes is itself already in need of Deconstruction, of something presupposing terms and limits: is Derrida’s focus on the written, even with the warning against “Archive Fever,” presupposing that the written is the only area that speaks?

An Origin, a Starting Point is a ready-made answer, and one that finds a happy home in the Archive. We know that’s not true, that the Origin is a made and developed thing, and yet the Power of the Archive, as traditionally seen and understood, is hard to bypass. But, that is one aspect: how would the Man himself talk about his influences, about the way his own personal Archive took him to?

The main focus to consider here is that just because Archive Fever exists as an obsessional quality to an Archive, it does not mean such scholarship or engagement with the Archives of someone’s life should be discarded or disregarded: there is a possibility of redemptive scholarship, but it must be done in a different manner. Thanks to a reconstructive/redemptive project undertaken by Lewis Porter, a biography of the Man includes his own words. In it Coltrane recalls: his influences

that range from his family, like his grandfather<sup>2</sup> who involved him in religion, and yet, like in any biography using scraps and birth certificates, timelines and best-guesses, the Man that made the Music is elusive. Better yet, the Music, the “Sound,” and its process, becomes even more elusive: this is where repertoire comes into play, where in Taylor’s terms, it becomes an archive. You cannot capture the practice of it, the scales and hours of rehearsal, nor individual influence.

This point in the gaps of the Archive is reinforced by Lewis Porter, who can only speak of John Coltrane’s development as a musician in quasi-mystical, spiritual terms: “Still, it would be difficult to illustrate how these experiences worked their way into his music. The way one absorbs those kinds of influences is subtle, subliminal, mystical” (*Coltrane: His Life and Music* 25). It is as if this kind of absorption, of taking in all different kinds of influences, constitutes some kind of “Archive.” This seems contradictory, to contain a limitless number of influences that one both absorbs, and yet the “Archive” demands proof, proof of which cannot be so easily given when it comes to influences, to how one both deals and lives with that kind of influence. Influences abound for everyone who comes in contact with art, with music, with Coltrane, so it seems fair to say that everyone is an audience, at all times. What would look more liberatory in its possibilities, more opening for one’s appreciation and understanding of both Jazz and Coltrane, than to consider a possible “Archive” as an “Audience-Centered” Archive?” Coltrane makes us feel free.

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<sup>2</sup> He was most well versed, active politically...Politically inclined and everything. Religion was his field, you know. So that’s where-I grew up in that” (*Coltrane: A Life* 11-13).

It would have to mean a constantly moving, shifting repertory that also acts as an Archive that one can pick up in themselves, in their influences, in their historical contexts, but cannot be subjected to the suffocating dust of the preservation box, to the glass windows of museum exhibits, to touristic, voyeuristic eyes hungry for a quick photo of what they've seen, but no other engagement with the artifacts at their finger tips. In other words, it would be a life, a human way of understanding how one can absorb so many influences, and yet not count on an origin, and still have so much to go through.

Lewis Porter's biography continues with attempts at finding just where and how Coltrane developed his talents, but when the beginning of the "Archive" is so murky that it needs to be qualified, a different form or perspective has to be considered. "*Probably* in 1944 and continuing for about a year, Coltrane began taking saxophone lessons and theory classes at the Ornstein School of Music on Spruce Street" (*John Coltrane: His Life and Music* 33, emphasis added). The event of Coltrane taking up saxophone lessons and theory classes becomes mythologized in this biography, in the written relationship with the "Archive." Even Amiri Baraka, who wrote consistently about Coltrane whenever he could, provided a transcendent image of the musician in the liner notes of Coltrane's own album "Live at Birdland," Coltrane-as-mythological-figure. Baraka writes: "Coltrane apparently doesn't need an ivory tower. Now that he is a master, and the slightest sound from his instrument is valuable, he is able, literally, to make his statements anywhere" (*Live at Birdland*). "The slightest sound from his instrument is valuable"; that whole statement keeps to the usual pattern of talking about Coltrane, and transforms it into something Buddy Bolden-esque, mythological, otherworldly, and transcendent like a God. But, for all

the veneration of the man, how can you write about the music? Can you attempt to write like Jazz, like Coltrane's music? It seems impossible, and yet, what the audience gives back to the music, to the musician who they love, makes this a negotiation with the written, that has to speak something more than before.

Jazz, as fluid and changing and improvisational as it is, is more than anything else an art that goes against the grain, that speaks something else. It is an art of what Edwards calls pseudomorphosis: "in a work in a single artistic medium, the medium is asked to ape, or do the work of, some alien medium" (*Epistrophies* 17). This sense of an art working in one medium to do the work of another, of people saying that that saxophone sure can "sing" or "swing." It seems to speak of something else, some other "shit" that can't be easily grasped. To put this focus on the problems of the Archive, the figure of Coltrane is so expansive that it cannot be helped to think of him as impossible to understand: Jazz is performative, and performance cannot be captured, and yet there must be some sort of "Archive" to remember the musician in question, to understand the man named John Coltrane. Baraka himself engages in this practice of dealing with the "Archive"-less ways of Coltrane, by writing liner notes on his records, about his records, and then writing about the man, himself.

Following on Baraka's writing and veneration of Coltrane, his poem about Coltrane ("AM/TRAK") sketches around the figure of him, and offers up Baraka as more than just a scholar or reviewer of Coltrane's work, but as a man who was saved by the music. He, inspired by Coltrane, tries his own take on Jazz, on his relationship with Coltrane. Amiri Baraka, in this poem, engages in pseudomorphosis, of Jazz, of Coltrane:

“...Expressions

A Love Supreme

(I lay in solitary confinement, July 67

Tanks rolling thru Newark

& whistled all I knew of Trane

my knowledge heartbeat

& he was dead

they said.

And yet last night I played Meditations

& it told me what to do

Live, you crazy mother

fucker!

Live!

& organize

yr shit

as rightly burning!” (Epistrophies 25).

Brent Edwards notes the frequent use of the word “shit” meaning something more in this poem, in the last few sections:

“But in the third section of the [Amiri Baraka] poem, about Coltrane’s period playing with the Miles Davis Quintet, the word shit starts to seem to connote something slightly different—a sound becoming itself, one could say... And it is a demand from an audience, a refried vernacular term for the essence of what must be voiced: “tell us shit tell us tell us!” (*Epistrophies* 24).

When it comes to Coltrane, I cannot imagine saying or reacting in any other way except “This is the shit!” It almost seems silly to speak about this archive, this repertoire and performance with convoluted expressions or highly technical terms. Sometimes, the “something more” can only be nodded at, nudged at, and just heard. Sometimes, the gaps and silences are what you need to hear out.

The reality of Coltrane’s music, at least in Baraka’s writing, in what is recorded and put down, is that the music gives you its own self, that Coltrane doesn’t need to go on and explain every single little detail. In fact, explaining every single little thing robs Coltrane of his music: he intends for you to really feel it, listen to it, see and hear it, and continue to write about it. At least, that’s in the general way of one writer writing about another writer writing about music.

“But the poem concludes exhilaratingly (“And yet last night I played *Meditations*/ & it told me what to do”): what is in Coltrane’s music is still there, captured in the medium of recorded sound. The music gives you its own understanding of itself. It is an exhortation to “Live!” not a soundtrack to

mourning. And it tells you to get your shit together: to organize its combustion” (*Epistrophies* 25).

The use of “captured” in talking about the “medium of recorded sound” would usually come out to be a containment strategy, something that can only limit understanding, of “listening” to the music. Yet, Edwards in *Epistrophies* hits upon the notion of an art, a music that “gives you its own understanding of itself,” as something to be experienced and experiential, creative and created by both audience and performer, alike.

I myself am not immune to this kind of idealization and idolization of Coltrane, putting him always in the Archive as a transcendent figure. In my one writing about him for a class, solely focused on his album “A Love Supreme”, I revere him beyond belief. My own personal record collection, my own Archive, started because of John Coltrane:

“...Catching it and hearing it on vinyl, on huge speakers, I felt engulfed by it. More than anything else, even with this album only being thirty minutes or so, four or so songs, I’ve never felt impacted by something like this: *this is music, and yet it feels a lifetime of music being poured out to whoever’s listening*. I could think of no other record to write about, but my task is hard, because, *in my opinion, I feel the record speaks for itself*. (Santos “Sheets of Sound” emphasis mine).

This kind of writing, of trying to write around Coltrane, around his repertoire and his performance, adding reviews to the Archive that will never coalesce into one sole

interpretation or reaction. It may be due to the technological aspect of listening to a record, to something with grooves, with a physicality and materiality on one end, and yet also something distanced or put away, that the “Audience-Centered” archive of John Coltrane must look differently, must be understood differently. It cannot be the solely literary or textual, and yet it also is not the careful self-curation of Louis Armstrong: it must be something else.

There is no easy answer, and yet, a different understanding could occur in the very phonographs that we must “listen” to. Weheliye stresses that there is no one way, from griot orality to white-dominated commodification industries to institutions archiving everything, that can adequately explain nor explicate the sounds, the “black sounds”, found in phonographs, and therefore found in the work of John Coltrane.

Weheliye writes the following :

“Neither an authentic black orality nor a thoroughly commodified and inauthentic version thereof suffices to stage black history qua history of the temporal instead, we are confronted with a sounding black history that hinges on mechanical and electric iterability, suggesting a different form of writing than the fraught domain of alphabetic script, one that makes black sounds mechanically repeatable. Consequently, these sounds act as history, without abolishing their sonic dimensions” (*Phonographies* 81).

“A sounding black history” is already a different understanding of the “Archive”, of both the physical grooves of the phonograph, itself, but also what this music signifies

in relation to history: connection. The “Sorrow Songs” were a different kind of music for America to handle, same with the Blues, since it meant harmonies and rhythms and collaboration unusual to the Western tradition.

With regard to Jazz, this effect became ten-fold, with the whole basis of the music being different iterabilities, and becoming something else. With regard to John Coltrane’s music, the effects became even more complex and the playing continued to be “a sounding black history,” with no easy explanations given.

This difference, this second-guessing of what makes Coltrane’s music his music is difficult to decipher: the technical aspects have been covered over and over again, to the point where a whole reference book exists for both The Man and The Artist. The Coltrane Reference consists of two chronologies: the man and his life, and the figure and his music. This might seem like an obsessive compulsion to plot down every point, every recording session and reaction to a single musician. However, it’s that “something more” that people cannot help but grappling with, and loving. It may also be the listening ear, the embodied ear that Stoevever examines:

“At times, the listening ear appears monolithic precisely because that is what it strives to be. From antebellum slavery to mid-twentieth-century color blindness, the listening ear has evolved to become the *only* way to listen, interpret, and understand; in legal discourse, the listening ear claims to be how any “reasonable person” should listen” (*Sonic Color Line* 15-16).

The understood way of scholarship, of dealing with the “Archive,” of the “Archive Fever” lines up with the “listening ear”: not wanting to hear any other way, since

things have been done and studied in a certain way for ages. So, what happens when John Coltrane demanded to be listened to, in a different way, not in any directly spoken or written manner, but by the force of his music?

Coltrane's music was never reviewed in the same manner, never simply praised or hated: it was a range of reviews and criticism that hailed, reviled, critiqued, and celebrated him. But it was all based on his work, and there's so much to unpack there, as Coltrane's work continually changed. This fits in line with the "Changing Same" of Jazz that Baraka wrote about: to be a living music, a living art form, change is a necessity.

In Figure 1, the writing about Coltrane's musical progression is sonically different and must be written about differently:

five years earlier was his finger-waggle, a reminder that he was still Trane, trying something different, but neither a victim of brainwashers nor a turncoat denying his past.

With this reference point, he invited us to consider that we would always have "My Favorite Things" and could now try something different.

This was music of massed sonorities. The rhythm section was not a thing apart, providing a swinging foundation, but a collusive force. The collective assault either focused your attention or dispersed it. In the absence of melody and harmonic progressions, it relied on the fever of the players, and while this shattering din could never be the sole future of jazz or of any other kind of music, it could—and, in fact, already did—represent a new way to play and experience music. The sound spread evenly, like the dribblings on a Jackson Pollack, yet the wall-to-wall harangue allowed for plenty of individual details as each player emerged from the ensemble for an *Ascension*-like salvo.

The strength in Coltrane's playing emanated from his spine, as he squeezed out sounds accompanied by calisthenics, his embouchure tight enough to redden his face, saliva flying from his reed. When he wasn't blowing tenor or soprano, he shook percussion instruments, as did the other saxophonists. The part of the audience that was shocked and infuriated retreated into silence or left. The Dionysus of the wheelchair added to the barrage, cheering the players without pause. At one point, he initiated a chant, "COL-trane, COL-trane, COL-trane," which he kept up for several minutes. Despite the volatile energy level, there were hollows and prominences—each soloist readily distinguishable. Yes, the saxophonists squealed and screeched, but they found individual ways to squeal and screech. I recall Sanders playing for a long stretch with his fingers splayed outward, never touching the saxophone keys, rendering an unholy and unbroken wail, and Donald Ayler offering little more than listless tremolos spaced within an octave's range. Albert's solo was something else: a hurricane of raw emotion and radiant luster. I had not paid much attention to Albert Ayler previously, and immediately resolved to make up for it. The final onslaught was so heavy (needless to say, Rollins had long since gone home) that, despite a chanted wind-down, its cessation was followed by an abrupt emptiness, as though we had suddenly been turned back on our own resources. I felt light and giddy and strangely peaceful.

Laurie and I quietly walked up the aisle and were nearly out of the hall before she asked what I thought. I said something to the effect that I couldn't explain why but I liked it. She said, "I did, too." We were so relieved that neither of us thought the other was crazy. Was it really music? Did they know what they were doing? Chalk those patronizing questions to the novelty (it wasn't called "the new thing" for nothing), the adventure, the fear of being taken in, the mystification of getting slaughtered and loving it. I soon realized that it had unscrewed something in my mind in regard to musical indeterminacy. Weeks later, we attended a Broadway musical and in the moments before the overture, I started to doze and became deeply immersed in a delightful, chattering symphony of sounds—the pit band tuning up. When *Ascension* came out, later that year, I was ready and dived in wholeheartedly, playing it to death.

On September 25, 1990, Alice Coltrane told Yasuhiro Fujioka that a tape of this concert exists, but it remains unreleased (See the Discography, session **66-0219**; we have not heard this recording).

[Additional data from *Village Voice*: 1/20/66, 17; *New York Amsterdam News*: 2/19/66, 20; *New York Times*: 1/2/66, Sec. 2, 4 X; 2/18/66, 22; *Down Beat*: 2/24/66, 15.]

*Figure 1 -The Coltrane Reference pg. 343*

From the focus on the way he played from “his spine” and the “unholy wail” of his saxophone now changing from the loveliness of “My Favorite Things,” the reviewer must try and contend with something wholly different, sonically rich and perplexing. To the point that the music, ostensibly being the latter-day Coltrane of free-jazz and holy wailing meditations via the saxophone and almost stripping away any simple melodic forms, is still good. The person writing this overview of an unrecorded concert: “I soon realized that it had unscrewed something in my mind in regard to musical indeterminacy” (*The Coltrane Reference* 343).

But it comes from the man himself, when interviewed about his own development and continuing progression as a musician. In the last interview recorded before his death, the interviewer Frank Kofsky keeps plying on question after question to John Coltrane. Everything from Malcolm X and Black Nationalism to Vietnam and musicians being underpaid, Coltrane seems to give out quick answers, not because of smugness or a lack of thinking, but almost like the questions are silly: the answers seem self-evident to him. “Well, I think that music, being an expression of the human heart, or of the human being itself, does express just what is happening. I feel it expresses the whole thing- the whole of human experience at the particular time that it is being expressed” (*John Coltrane and The Jazz Revolution of the Sixties* 433). So, to speak of the Archive and John Coltrane is to inevitably run into the musician, is to listen to the music: how does his music become a pseudomorphic experience, speaking and saying something more than just a jazz solo or jazz number? Three songs, responding to different historical periods, seem to be able to give some kind of perspective on this. “My Favorite Things”, a number from the famous

Rodgers and Hammerstein musical “The Sound of Music,” would not seem to make for a great jazz song, let alone a record-breaking hit. But, in the hands of Coltrane and his quartet, in 1961, he seems to have hit on something: a musicality that can replicate the words, and yet drift off into free-flowing jazz solos for over thirteen minutes. Just the starting solo by Coltrane seems to be not only repeating the famous lyrics to the Julie Andrews classic song (“Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens... These are a few of my favorite things.”) And yet, this song is a transformation; each musician in the quartet, from Steven Jones on double bass, McCoy Turner on piano, to Elvin Jones on drums, each one is responding and talking to Coltrane through their solos and chord changes.

This cover of a famous song should not have launched Coltrane into such astounding success, primarily because its very length and soloing make it a different track from the original “My Favorite Things.” This kind of meditative, swinging song that is always speaking and yet never fully understood, is working on a pseudomorphic level: having the listener understand something else is at play. This kind of play, of one kind of artistic medium turning into something else “typically involves a certain wrenching or scraping against the grain of the original medium” (*Epistrophies* 17). This kind of twist on history, of a jazz quartet taking apart and reassembling a classic Broadway song, shows the breadth and depth of freedom these artists willfully undertook: Coltrane went farther out than anyone expected, and somehow came back with a good word for the rest of us. Now, since this kind of “scraping against the grain of the original medium” is done via Coltrane’s music in a purposeful manner, we have to believe that Coltrane wasn’t some isolated artist living

in a shack in the woods. He was a man living in the world during a turbulent time, The Sixties: Vietnam was roaring up; the civil rights movement was surging with Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King Jr.; Malcolm X was delivering powerful sermons on the “American Nightmare” he saw around him: all of this was surging around Coltrane, and he didn’t escape from it.

In fact, he sang about it through his saxophone. One such example springs to mind in his response to the Birmingham Church bombings of 1963. Released a week before John F. Kennedy’s assassination, “Alabama” was written and performed by Coltrane as a direct response to the Ku Klux Klan Bombings that took the lives of four African-American girls. Yet, this direct response is never directly set down in words, in a written, “verifiable” history. Coltrane’s music, as both call-and-response to the times he lived in and the times before, pointed forwards, and the only clue is the title of the song.

The song itself begins like a funeral dirge for the nation for what has transpired. This evil violence cannot be waved aside: white men bombing churches, killing little girls because of their skin color. Coltrane and his quartet continue to build and build this sense of sadness, of speaking something more, and images to the listener have to appear: Martin Luther King Jr.’s funeral sermon, the bombed-out churches, the bodies of the girls, all on the news at the time, the music acting as the news of the present.

This outer history of violence is played for the first few minutes of the song, before the inner history of Coltrane, of both his religious upbringing and spiritual

development, spring out into long solos with himself and the rest of his quartet. More conversations, more furious development occur before, near the tail-end of the six minute song, the return to the funeral dirge occurs. This is a reminder that Coltrane knows about history: it is impossible to escape from it and the losses, whether it be slavery, the abandonment of Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and intense violence perpetrated in the name of white supremacy.

Before diving into the last song that really hits upon this notion of responding to inner and outer history, the mention of different interactions and interpretations of John Coltrane and the archive of repertoire and performance he left behind cannot be underestimated. In the documentary “Chasing Trane”, so many musicians, politicians, scholars, academics, and fans are filmed remembering the love they have for John Coltrane and his music. One scholar in particular goes the extra mile, and cannot help but love John Coltrane, and collect everything he can that has to do with him.

Yasuhiro Fujioka aka Fuji is a man who has written four books about John Coltrane. This collector and scholar and long-time fan of John Coltrane is still collecting, playing his songs, and writing about him. He was an integral part of “The Coltrane Reference” book chronicling the man and the music, and he can’t help loving Coltrane: “I admit it. I am obsessed with John Coltrane” (*Chasing Trane* 1:23:45) Even now, on trips abroad, he still collects memorabilia of anything to do with John Coltrane. After so many years, from hearing his music on the radio to the present day, he is still “Chasing ‘Trane” (*Chasing Trane* 1:24:55). Why does this man matter, when compared to millions of other fans, or even the dozens of people interviewed for the documentary? I see him mattering because, in the few short

minutes that he is in the documentary, he wants to express his own love of Coltrane, of wanting to be surrounded by his music, and the power of the Archive. However, he does not limit himself and his love of John Coltrane to officially sanctioned CD releases or vinyl reissues, done under official corporate/music label guidelines. He collects any and all photographs, old and new vinyl records, posters, interviews. He collects so much he literally built a second house in Osaka, Japan to store it all: he named it “Coltrane House” (*Chasing Trane* 1:25,19). This isn’t some state-sanctioned institution deeming it okay to go and research Coltrane, nor is it “Coltrane Home” in Long Island, which makes the Home the primary place of value in Coltrane’s development and long-lasting influence. Fuji’s “Coltrane House” is a love-letter, done for no one else except himself<sup>3</sup>.

This got me to thinking about the Archive and Death: that to have an archive, at all, is to already be dead, to have your works collected somewhere, commented on by someone else, and you having no real say in it, at least not for long. So, what does a man, a musician, that dies young leave behind? What did John Coltrane leave behind? In the film, the last snippet with Cornel West, talking about A Love Supreme hit upon something that I find integral to the issue of John Coltrane’s Archive: “ This is what John Coltrane learned in Sunday School where he was taught that the Kingdom of God is within you, and everywhere you go, you want to leave a little heaven behind. And he left some heaven behind” (*Chasing Trane* 1:34: 25). What Cornel West hits upon is the transcendental religious experience that Coltrane

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<sup>3</sup> “But the influence of that work, its archival status and result, is a construction that has the power to revamp our sense of the larger social and cultural contexts in which it finds its home” (Jazz Archive 13).

continuously wanted to give to the audience, to the record, to the music stored in the phonograph: this experience would be left up to the “viewer”, or in this case, the “listener”, the one with “open ears.” This is something that can be “written about,” in a general sense, but it must be experienced, and experience is hard to describe, let alone “nail down.”

This experience of Jazz, of music that cannot be easily categorized, is something that repeatedly occurs throughout its history: from the ragtime era of New Orleans to the Roaring Twenties, to the emergence of Louis Armstrong as an industry and history powerhouse, down to the (re)invention of Jazz through Bebop players like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, to the Cool Jazz stylings of Miles Davis, and immediately thereafter the avant-garde of the “New Thing” with John Coltrane, and then the electric fusion Jazz that continues to this day.

All of these different developments, all of these events, were written about and talked about in their day and age, and are still researched and archived now, but it’s only after the fact of a musical movement that, in hindsight, the Archive tries to make sense out of it. How can a space like the “Archive,” which prioritizes the static study of the old, of the already-experienced, of the past for present and future scholarship, be able to handle a music like Jazz, let alone the untold developments and movements that make up that music, as well. The article “Jazz Archive” touches on this notion:

“A sub textual point worth lifting from Murray's text is its suggestive delineation of the liminal, or implied (essentially invisible), energy stored

within an artistic or cultural archive. In fact, the archival, or collected, ordered, and amassed momentum of a body of work as generative as that produced by Monk, Parker, and their cohort in the early 1940s is an event to be discovered after the fact of its creation” (Jazz Archive 13).

It is only after the fact, the figure and work of John Coltrane is being examined as the start of something different, as something “generative.” So how does a repertoire, a performance, end up “leaving a little heaven behind?” The last song I want to focus on, “Psalm”, does just that, and then some.

“Psalm” is the literal outspoken version of pseudomorphosis that even John Coltrane specifies to the listener. Opening the vinyl album liner notes, he mentions that this song is really “a musical narration of the theme , “A Love Supreme” which is written in the context; it is entitled “PSALM” (*A Love Supreme*.) By “in the context” he means the poem also on the album’s liner notes, which open to show a full painted portrait of Coltrane playing his saxophone. Hearing “Psalm” for the first time, it’s a tough piece to figure out: the quartet that was jamming throughout the album almost recedes away, folds into Coltrane’s melancholic saxophone playing. This piece, over seven minutes long, becomes even more complex thanks to Coltrane’s liner notes on the vinyl. Yet, even this still does not explain everything about the piece, itself. It must be “read” a different way, and “listened” in a different way. A YouTube video pairs up both the song and the poem show this connection, as the sounds of the saxophone and the words of the poem become one moving thing. Coltrane speaks the words of the poem he himself wrote, but through his saxophone: the part that really sticks out as him sounding out words is from 1:55 to 2:35, each word coming off

strained, grasping, reaching out towards God ( “Psalm- A Love Supreme” ). I see this as Coltrane acting as both archiver and performer, the repertoire forever towards us, with no regard for making things clear.

In Figure 2 on the following page, the connection is put more bluntly:

① Recitative ascent ——— recitation at 5th ——— descent

A Love Su-preme. I will do all I can to be wor-thy of Thee O Lord.

② ascent recitation

It all has to do with it. *THANK YOU GOD.* Peace. There is none o-ther.

recitation continues on low C ——— descent ——— ③ ascent ——— recitation

God is. It is so beau-ti-ful, *THANK YOU GOD.* God is all. Help us to

at 5th ——— descent ——— closing ——— descent

re-solve our fears and weak-ness-es. In you all things are pos-si-ble.

④ opening ascent ——— recitation at 5th

*THANK YOU GOD.* We know. God made us so. Keep your eye on God.

further ascent ——— brief recitation

God is. He al-ways was. He al-ways will be. No mat-ter what . . .

descent ——— V ascent ——— recitation at 5th

it is God. He is gra-ci-ous and mer-ci-ful. It is most im-por-tant

elongated descent

that I know Thee-ee.

Lines 1-16 of the poem "A Love Supreme" as played on the saxophone by Coltrane as "Psalm."  
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Figure 2 -John Coltrane: *His Life and His Music* (pg. 245)

Lewis Porter finding the liner sheet Coltrane had made for the song. Every note corresponds to every word, and every word corresponds to every note. Nothing is left to chance, this is jazz at its most rehearsed and organized, and yet it feels free-flowing, precisely because of that pseudomorphosis, of one medium scratching against another, of art turning into art into art. The historical context of Coltrane's work matters just as much as the technological advancements of the phonograph, and yet, these advancements must fight away from the conceptual limits of the "Archive": it is an "Archive Fever", and one obsessed with Death.

I believe that Coltrane personifies this, through his music and his life, and cannot be easily defined. I have written about the Archive, about Performances and Gaps and so on, but I haven't really spoken about John Coltrane: why this figure, why this interest, and this inundation of information, but little long-term study?

Perhaps it's the first real jazz record that caught my attention, during a "History of Jazz" class, the sounds of "A Love Supreme" coming from two speakers overhead in a big auditorium setting, such awesome music. It was like heaven opening up to give our class some sounds, and as far as I could tell, only I was mesmerized by that music. I had to find out more about this man, whoever he was. I picked that album to write a paper about, eight pages devoted to four songs, and forty listens later, I thought I knew John Coltrane. Of course I didn't, in the sense that listening to one album gives you one thing, and listening to another album by the same artist gives you something else entirely. So, the different strands of history, of civil rights and black nationalism, avant-garde free jazz and the classic quartets and quintets, this man seemed to point to something. He seemed to represent something

more. Judging by the writings done about him, from Lewis Porter to Amiri Baraka, to scholars and to documentary films, there is no way to “capture” Coltrane except by your own impressions of what he represents.

Everything is personal and political. To choose to play non-offensive, catchy Jazz numbers is as important a personal and political choice as say, Louis Armstrong’s “Black and Blue”, or Coltrane specifically titling his song “Alabama” and making sure the song itself was a “funeral dirge” to the church bombings in Birmingham, Alabama.

This theme that Coltrane picks up on, of not necessarily needing to stay in one musical lane or one written lane, but being able to share across so many fields, is one he may have been developing years before “A Love Supreme.” Coltrane’s development and insistence on going against the grain with regard to his music is a perfect encapsulation of what Amiri Baraka titled “The Changing Same,” of the history and development of Jazz: constant change, even within the same song, from the same musician.

The possibility of Coltrane’s performance and music as an “Archive” of sorts, a Jazz Archive, came up in an email response with Edwards. He mentioned this possibility with inclusion of a PDF document of a Downbeat magazine interview concerning Coltrane. This was in 1962, with his friend Eric Dolphy, whose archives are handled more in the traditional manner of text and memorabilia, when the interviewer/critic wanted to know why Coltrane was doing this whole “anti-jazz” deal. Coltrane answered as always, “It’s more than beauty that I feel in music, that I

think musicians feel in music. What we know we feel we'd like to convey to the listener. We hope that this can be shared by all. I think, basically, that's about what it is we're trying to do" (DeMichael 72). It is both a vague and specific thing Coltrane mentions that he wants to impart onto listeners: the feelings he felt, and still feels. This was in 1962, a little after his big success with "My Favorite Things," and a few years before both "Alabama" and "Psalm." Coltrane's Jazz is always change, so why emphasize a few songs? So why "Psalm"?

It seems to speak to something he said in the past, of imparting something he felt so strongly about? I believe it's the feeling of love, of understanding that there will always be a gap, of history, memory, his spirituality, everything. This different kind of "listening" even has this otherwise archive-resistant figure write about himself and this piece. "Psalm," in the Coltrane vein, creates opportunities for different "listening," for the freedom of experience, for the Jazz Archive:

"The great body of work that makes up the jazz archive, however, has proven itself-for the majority of its one-hundred-year-long life-to be a resistant, essentially unassimilable cultural complex. It has occupied the social and cultural no-man's-land where black and white populations divide and, curiously, cross into each other's lives. Thinking of Said's intensely intellectual call for a spirit of generosity in the academic world and its environs, we might then set up a theory of jazz as an art of deeply learned attention-an art of hearing" (Jazz Archive 5).

Coltrane felt his music, and wanted to reach out to others.

With regard to pseudomorphosis and the “Archive,” there is an impossible tension to maneuver, since things meant to be “preserved” cannot necessarily “move.”

However, with a repertoire like Coltrane’s, the “Archive” must change it’s own perspective, and apprise itself as something fluid. The “Audience-Centered Archive” must look differently, must be approached differently, and must be heard, and listened to, differently.

In my own last appraisal of “A Love Supreme”, I feel this fluidity, I feel the emotion that Coltrane imbued this album with coming back to my words, each one in conversation with the other: “Emotion is, if the word suffices, the “key” to this record, to understanding, appreciating, and loving it all. The feeling of it...it’s the feeling of the movement, of the music itself and how it is being shaped and changed as it goes along that hits the listener, that hits me as I listen to it.... As “Psalm” faded away, and the last few seconds of the album faded away, I felt a relief, a sadness, a love, and a sense of calm and peace that I can’t really describe: the music hit me, that’s for sure....(Santos “Sheets of Sound”).

John Coltrane’s “Archive” is one that cannot be distinguished from both his performance, his words, his repertoire, his life, his home, his spirituality, his history, the history of the world around him, and his audience’s reception to him and his work. It is an “Archive” of constant change, and that is more than welcome when it comes to Jazz, to Coltrane: it is ethically necessary, and sonically richer for it.

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