THE FREE POETICS OF HERMETO PASCOAL:

MYTHOLOGY OR METHODOLOGY?

by Henrique L. Eisenmann

Prof. Robert Labaree, Advisor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the degree of Doctorate of Musical Arts

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Boston, Massachusetts

2017

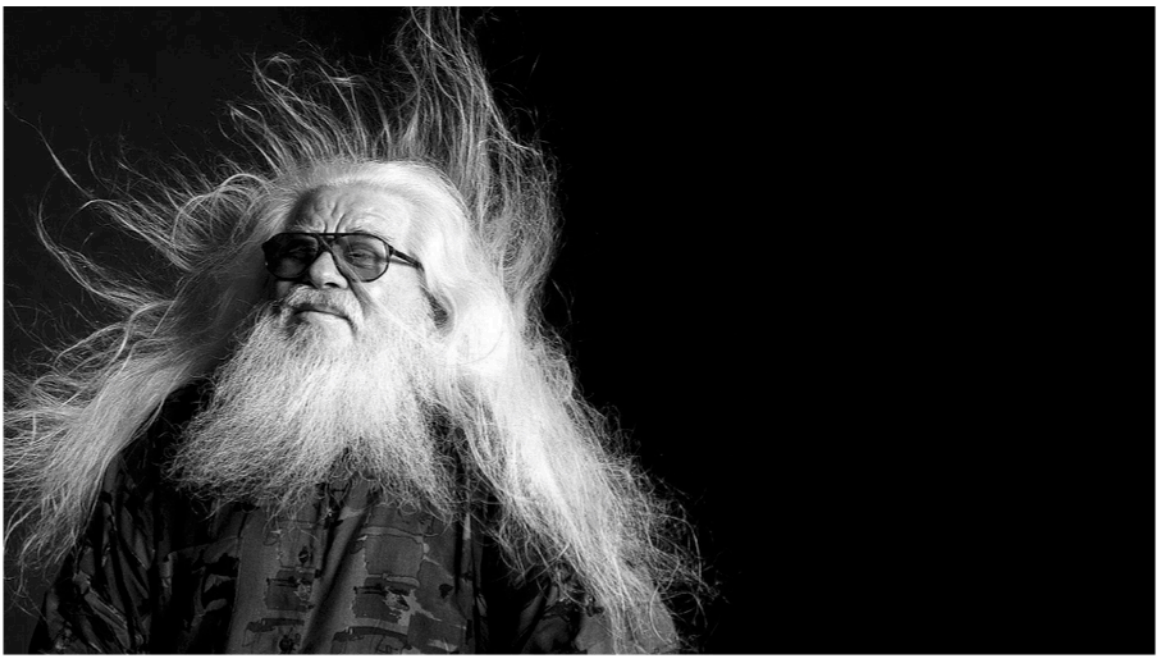
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE MYTHOLOGIES OF EXPERIMENTALISM 5

2. THE METHODOLOGIES OF EXPERIMENTALISM 23

3. EPILOGUE: FREE IMPROVISATION AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON 52

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY 61



(Hermeto Pascoal, photo credit: Bob Wolfenson)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Prof. Robert Labaree for the continuous support of my DMA studies, for his patience, motivation, thought-provoking questions and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank Prof. Hankus Netsky for his insightful comments and encouragement, but also for challenging my thoughts, incenting me to widen my research from various perspectives.

My sincere thanks also goes to Jovino Santos Neto, Evan Ziporyn, Joe Morris and Frank Carlberg, who devoted hours to emailing, Skype interviews and long discussions to help me find answers and strengthen my argument. Without they precious support it would not be possible to conduct this research.

I would like to especially thank Hermeto Pascoal for being a constant inspiration in my life and in my music, for his fierce courage to be innovative, for his humbleness and kindness, for his incredible vision and contribution to Brazilian and experimental music.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family: my parents and to my brothers for supporting me throughout writing this thesis and my life in general; and to my beloved fiancée Perry, who gave me so much love, inspiration, insightful thoughts, and encouragement from the first day I started writing this thesis.

CHAPTER 1 – THE MYTHOLOGIES OF EXPERIMENTALISM

> With his snow-white mane of hair, Santa Claus beard and pink sunglasses, Hermeto exemplifies an agelessly merry renegade spirit who has a streak of the practical joker. (New York Times, March 1989)[1]
>
> Hermeto Pascoal was like a mad professor – part cerebral, part zany –when he performed at Lincoln Center on Friday night. (New York Times, November 2004)[2]
>
> ... a sort of Brazilian Frank Zappa -- idiosyncratic, brilliant, funny, theatrical. (Boston Globe, 1990)[3]
>
> Hermeto Pascoal, who looks like a cross between Jerry Garcia and Rip Van Winkle (or "The Addams Family's" Cousin It) in his snowy mane and beard, isn't someone you'd expect to be an instigator of a riot [...] the irreverent Pascoal acted more like the leader of a mystical troupe. (Boston Globe, April 1990)[4]
>
> ... absurdist sense of humor. (Boston Globe, June 1991)[5]

Born in 1936 in the village of Lagoa da Canoa (state of Alagoas), one of Brazil's poorest regions, Hermeto Pascoal suffered from albinism and a severe condition of nystagmus (involuntary eye movements) and strabismus. Due to his sensitive skin, Hermeto could not work on the fields - as most of his family and friends did – nor could he stay outside for long periods of time; he was soon nicknamed "Sinhô" by his family and friends ("Sinhô" is a slung for old man). Throughout his entire life and career, Hermeto was called "crazy", starting by his

---

[1] Stephen Holden, "Reviews/Pop; A Playful Brazilian Pianist," *New York Times*, March 16, 1989.
[2] Jon Pareles, "Playful Complexities via Zany Professor," *New York Times,* November 2, 2004.
[3] Fernando Gonzalez, "Multiculturalism is becoming a way of life," *Boston Globe*, December 30, 1990.
[4] Paul Robicheau, "Ugly Fracas Mars Pascoal / Gismonti concert," *Boston Globe,* April 20, 1990.
[5] Fernando Gonzalez, "A weeklong toot to the saxophone," *Boston Globe*, June 7, 1991.

mother, who thought the young Hermeto had mental problems because of his obsession with the musical sounds in the voices of the people around his village.[6]

At the age of fourteen, Hermeto moved to Recife (Pernambuco), an important center of folk and traditional music, working as a radio musician with different groups. During that time, Hermeto would constantly listen to the rehearsals of the orchestras, directed by important conductors and composers such as Guerra-Peixe and Clóvis Pereira. A decade later, Hermeto moved to São Paulo, working as an accompanist for many local singers and big bands, playing Bossa Nova, rock'n roll and jazz. In 1967 he formed the legendary *Quarteto Novo,* one of the first instrumental groups in the country to mix jazz and Brazilian Northeastern traditional music. Two years later, percussionist Airto Moreira – who played in the *Quarteto Novo* – invited Hermeto to come to the USA to participate in two of his *fusion* records. During this visit Hermeto also met Miles Davis, who was impressed by the composer's creativity and invited him to record with him on the album *Live Evil* (1972), together with Keith Jarret, Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancok, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Dave Holland and many other renowned jazz musicians. From that moment on, Hermeto's music became progressively more experimental, as one can hear in some of his first albums as a leader, featuring unusual harmonies, noises, unconventional instruments and extended techniques.

Between 1979 and 1993 – period known as the *Escola Jabour* - Hermeto and his band would rehearse every day for around eight hours a day in his house in the

---

[6] Luiz Costa-Lima Neto, "Calendário do Som e a estética sócio-musical inclusiva de Hermeto Pascoal," *Revista USP,* São Paulo, n 82, p164. For a more detailed biography of Hermeto Pascoal, see Luiz Costa-Lima Neto, "The Musical Universe of Hermeto Pascoal," *Popular Music and Society* 34/02 (2011): 133-161.

suburbs of Rio de Janeiro (in a neighborhood called Jabour). This period was important in the consolidation of Hermeto's compositional and improvisational language; six albums were recorded during this time, many of which will be mentioned later in this thesis. Since 1993 Hermeto has been recording different types of albums featuring multiple instrumentations (solo, large ensemble, duos), and writing hundreds of pieces, advocating for the idea of *Música Universal*, meaning music with no labels or specific styles.[7]

The origins of Hermeto Pascoal's experimentalism and free improvisations have been a constant controversy for musicologists. Though some of his experimental practices are extremely similar to those from free jazz artists, Hermeto always vehemently denied any possibility of mimicking American music.[8] Would this be a case of an innate genius, with a natural propensity towards artistic freedom? Or is it all part of a larger myth-making process?

Before we continue, it is important to clarify what exactly I mean by "free jazz". Most of the American artists mentioned in this thesis did not call their music "free jazz". Anthony Braxton, Sun Ra, Charles Mingus, Cecil Taylor, all had their own terminology to describe their unique styles. However, the term "free jazz" became a powerful marketing tool to categorize – musically and racially – this new genre of experimental music. This issue becomes even more complicated when one considers music outside of the US, where the term jazz does not necessarily refer to

---

[7] The concept of *Música Universal* will be described in detail in Chapter 2.

[8] It is important to remember that freedom is not an exclusive attribute of American music. Many other musical traditions around the world feature improvisation and a large degree of indeterminacy and spontaneity. However, based on the available biographical accounts and interviews with Hermeto, it is clear that besides the local Brazilian music, American music played an essential role in informing the composer's improvisational language.

African-American tradition anymore. In order to facilitate the reading of this thesis, I will be using mostly the terms "free jazz" (as a general broad term which includes all the above mentioned artists) and "experimental music" to describe and analyze the music of those artists.[9]

Influence?

The relationship and similarities between Hermeto's music and free jazz are so conspicuous that one might ask how do scholars in Brazil deal with this fact? The simple answer is that they just do not acknowledge it, or give minimal importance to it.[10] I can highlight three prominent reasons for this, each of which will require elaboration in the following study: First, there's a nationalistic reluctance in admitting the similarities with free jazz; Hermeto himself denies any American influence, which was a normal behavior among musicians in the 1960s in Brazil.[11] Second, most of the reference material normally used by scholars to analyze Hermeto's music is outdated and based on the standard-jazz tradition, which

---

[9] The term "free improvisation" will also be used in this thesis, referring mostly to the idea of improvised music, and not to the European genre from the 1960s; free improvisation in this text means spontaneous musical invention without any pre-defined rules, and not harmonically-based.

[10] Costa-Lima Neto, briefly describes the biographical similarities between Hermeto and Ornette Coleman, but often claims that Hermeto's musical freedom comes primarily from his synthesis and interpretation of other forms of improvised music in Brazilian traditional music and sounds of nature, "surpassing the free jazz models." (Costa-Lima Neto, 1999, 46).

[11] Guitarist Heraldo do Monte (who played in the Quarteto Novo with Hermeto) admits the previous influence of Bebop in the improvisational vocabulary on Brazilian musicians, however describes the moment in which they decided to avoid the American influence in their music: "The sixties was the first decade in which we started to move away from the "bebopian" and "Charlieparkean" influences that we used to have, trying to create a new type of improvisation, very Brazilian in its core, with accent, rhythms, notes and scales from the Northeast, whenever possible, whenever the theme asked for it. And it was the first time this was done, because in the style of Bossa Nova, they [the local musicians] would play as a samba in Bossa style, but whenever they started to improvise they would move to the jazz vocabulary." *Quebrando Tudo,* documentary directed by Rodrigo Hinrichsen, Traquitana Filmes, 1998.

focuses on chord-scale theory, motives and harmonic analysis.[12] This approach is known to be inefficient and fruitless when describing spontaneous musical gestures and abstract structures, not just by Hermeto, but by any musician. Thirdly, most scholars focus on Hermeto's *lexicon* (his unique personal vocabulary) instead of scrutinizing the musical methodology behind this lexicon, which I would claim is the common ground among all free improvisers.[13]

It is a known fact that Hermeto's oeuvre is a synthesis of several different genres of music – including contemporary classical music, Bossa Nova, Choro, jazz and rock – but this paper will focus exclusively on the free improvisation aspect in Hermeto's music, which I consider to be one of his most important artistic contributions. His innovations in terms of written harmony, melody, structure, and arrangement were previously explored by other scholars, and were already put into practice by other Brazilian musicians before Hermeto.[14]

This thesis will explore the several areas of similarities between Hermeto and free jazz (experimental) musicians as a way to try to identify common origins

---

[12] Borem and Araújo use Schoenberg's *Harmony* as basis for analyzing harmony; Prandini utilizes mostly bebop transcriptions, Schoenberg and Persichetti. Lima-Neto uses mostly Brazilian books on jazz theory when analyzing musical improvisation.

[13] Lúcia P. Campos, "Tudo isso junto de uma vez só: o choro, o forró e as bandas de pífano na música de Hermeto Pascoal," Masters diss. , Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2006.
Campos wrote an extensive research on the influence of local *pífano, forró* and *choro* bands in Hermeto's music, claiming that these folkloric and popular musics were the core of Hermeto's lexicon. However, there's no mention to the methodologies Hermeto employed when dealing with these specific styles in a freer and more experimental way. Chapter 2 will provide more information on these methodologies.

[14] Hermeto's written harmonies were heavily influenced by the radio arrangers/conductors in Pernambuco, including a few modern classical composers (such as Clóvis Pereira and twelve-tone composer César Guerra-Peixe). The melodic aspect was strongly informed by the *forro* local bands in Brazil. Hermeto's improvisation over chord-changes can be also traced back to accordionist Sivuca, who had a very particular way to create melodic lines and was a mentor for Hermeto during the early 1950s. The exploration of folk rhythms, odd meters and traditional instruments was a common practice for percussionists Airto Moreira and Naná Vasconcelos before Hermeto.

for artistic inventiveness. To what extent was Hermeto influenced by them? Hermeto has always refuted any statements claiming that he was influenced by Jazz artists, always defending the idea that his musical inspiration comes from nature, his childhood and the local folk music from Brazil. In a personal interview with Jovino Santos Neto, who played in Hermeto's band from 1977 to 1992, I asked about the composer's possible influences:

> [...] During the seventies and late sixties there was a big expansion in all forms of art, especially in music; that's when we started to see the rise of musicians doing freer things: Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Weather Report and also Miles, who was participating in pretty "free" projects. Hermeto was doing exactly the same thing in Brazil. Therefore, when he came to the USA, he noticed that everything that he was developing in Brazil was also being developed here (USA).[15]

I asked whether Hermeto was researching for "new" sounds, or listening to any free jazz at that time, to which Jovino replied:

> No, Hermeto never owned a record. He didn't have a record player. I've never seen him listening to records in all those years. Sometimes after a show in Europe we would turn on the Classical music radio before sleeping... sometimes it would play a piece by Stravisnky. [...] This phase of Stravisnky's oeuvre (Petrouchka, La Sacre, Firebird) has harmonic and rhythmic concepts that are very close to Hermeto's music. But that doesn't mean that he actively listened to Stravinsky; he must have heard something in the radio, unconsciously. [16]

Both Jovino and Hermeto deny the idea of influence from American free jazz, which has been a normal practice among Brazilian musicians and scholars. Most Brazilian scholars support Hermeto's nationalistic point of view, for example Lucia Campos (2006), who explores in depth the Brazilian roots, styles and models appropriated by Hermeto. The majority of articles focus exclusively on the

---

[15] Skype interview with Jovino Santos Neto, on Dec 29th, 2016.
[16] Skype interview with Jovino Santos Neto, on Dec 29th, 2016.

compositional aspect of Hermeto's music (harmony, melody, arrangement, formal structure), leaving out the improvisational and experimental aspects which are of considerable importance in his oeuvre.[17]

Instead of focusing on the idea of plagiarism and "influence"— which naturally suggests a hierarchy of authorship — I propose looking at this case from a broader perspective, trying to identify the larger phenomena that connect all of these musicians. Some specific musical and performance aspects did emerge first in the US, but that does not mean they are an exclusively American innovation; it is possible to shift our point of view towards a more contextual, relational and comprehensive stand, identifying some of these phenomena as a case of convergent evolution (the independent evolution of similar characteristics).[18] The complexity of cultural interactions globally and the idea of simultaneous convergent evolution are not mutually exclusive. As students of music we are obliged to take in all of these factors and to be willing to live with the complexity and ambiguity of cultural interaction itself. Perhaps the question of whether Hermeto's experimentalism is a result of influence or unique genius is the wrong question. It gives too much importance to his own claims for his inspiration, to the nationalistic claims of his followers, and to Eurocentric conventions of avant-gardism.[19] Hermeto's experimentalism should be seen as an extension and essential part of an

---

[17] Though often used as interludes or introductions for conventional pieces, Hermeto's free improvised sections represent a groundbreaking transformation in the context of Brazilian music, which influenced generations of musicians and music schools in Brazil.

[18] The concept of musical convergent evolution will be described in depth in the 3rd chapter. In summary, it refers to the biological independent evolution of similar traits, as a result of adapting to similar contexts.

[19] The third chapter will explore the subject in depth.

international musical revolution, which encompasses all the above questions and accepts all these pluralities and complexities. This dialogical approach between influence and creative genius will be key in painting a more realistic and complex image of Hermeto, by confronting the multiple hypotheses and at the same challenging the standard manners in which one interprets modern art and the transmission of knowledge.

The rest of this chapter will explore biographical parallels between Hermeto's life and free Jazz artists, with focus on three different characterizations of Hermeto's creative life, which recur in writings about him over the past 25 years: "craziness" (the idea of insanity as a door to creativity); child-like playfulness (ludic approach to music); and spirituality. Though these aspects might sound like isolated and exotic phenomena, there is evidence of similar cases in the history of music that can offer comparison with Hermeto, from Charles Ives to Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Chapter 2 will scrutinize specific musical examples illustrating how these similarities were expressed in music terms. Understanding Hermeto's artistic restlessness in this larger context can be helpful to analyze his music and creative process, making it easier to include him into a broader list of artists advocating for a free and "universal" art.

The mythology of insanity: Hermeto Pascoal, the sorcerer.

In "Brothers from another Planet", John Corbett describes the life and music of three influential African-American musicians, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Sun Ra and George Clinton. Despite the fact that each one of them has worked with completely

different genres and audiences (Reggae, Jazz and Funk, respectively), all these musicians developed very similar myths around their personalities, promoting a personal persona based on the ideas of eccentricity, insanity, and outer space connection. All these artists used these characteristics in favor of creativity, turning these premises into a "platform for playful subversion, imagining a productive zone largely exterior to dominant ideology."[20]

According to Corbett, "In African-America slang there is a longstanding constellation of terms that revolves around the interrogation of sanity [...] normally linking madness with excellence and innovation." Indeed, terms such as "crazy", "insane", and "wild" have been extensively used in the musical world, either in the title of certain pieces (Crazy Blues, Nutty, Let's go Crazy, etc), in the lyrics of many popular songs or in nicknames and descriptions of jazz musicians. Many African-American musicians associated the idea of tradition with the terrestrial (Earth), and the concept of innovation with the outer space and insanity. Corbett claims this connection has its origins in the notion of oppression and marginalization experienced by African-Americans since the times of slavery, and in this case the eccentric (ec-centric) mythology of Ra, Perry and Clinton works not only as a metaphor for social alienation from the white "centric" domination, but also as a metaphor for liberation and openness, which can be easily translated to art.[21]

---

[20] John Corbett, *Extended Play,* 11.

[21] There are several other examples of American musicians implying the idea of outer space connection, insanity and musical creativity: The Art Ensemble of Chicago with its motto "Ancient to the Future" and their colorful costumes; Anthony Braxton and his ideas on astronomy and music; the album "Tenor Madness" (1956) in which Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane exchange short solos and musical gestures.

Corbett's theory is restricted to the history of African-Americans in the US. Hermeto Pascoal defies the limited geographical scope of Corbett's thesis.

Miles Davis called Hermeto Pascoal the "crazy albino" when they met in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the nickname "Bruxo" (sorcerer) started to be used by the media in Brazil and in the world — as in the quotes in the beginning of this chapter — describing his unexpected and experimental musical practices and absurd theatrical performances. There seems to be a perennial connection between insanity and experimentalism in art, in which insanity is one of the ways to justify the violation of the established aesthetic rules. There is a sense of separation (alienation) between the insane artist and society, which allow his art to be open and free, indifferent to the social critique and aesthetic rules; Hermeto's biography perfectly fits this description: the constant feeling of being different; an outsider coming from a low socio-economic class in addition to being visually impaired. This feeling of alienation always encouraged Hermeto's inclination towards artistic restlessness and self-teaching, questioning the established educational institutions (conservatories, schools) and criticizing any learning based on theory (as opposed to learning based on experience). Scholar Costa-Lima Neto describes many episodes of Hermeto being denied formal musical training because of his social condition and impaired vision; such traumatic events definitely contributed to Hermeto's disregard (if not anger) towards any music institutions and music theories.[22] The

[22] Luiz Costa-Lima Neto, "The Musical Universe of Hermeto Pascoal," *Popular Music and Society* 34/02 (2011): 133-161.

following sections will explore the idea of Hermeto's madness by scrutinizing two specific biographical traits: childhood and spiritual beliefs.

The mythology of ludism – Musical Games and Childhood

The concept of ludism was coined by psychologists to describe any activity that is performed with the playfulness and innocence of children. It normally relates to a range of fun and spontaneous actions. In an interview with the New York Times in 1989, Pascoal described his childhood:

> There was no electricity where I was born, so my "radio" was listening to the birds, the frogs, the horses, oxcarts going by - those were the sounds that shaped my growing up. I would take a reed and make a little flute out of it, sitting under the trees and playing for the birds that would gather above me. I would hear all those sounds and put them together in my head.[23]

Hermeto's childhood accounts offer clear proof of his natural inclination towards musical experimentalism. His connection to the sounds of nature and his ludic way to create musical games and instruments from daily objects could provide a very interesting comparison with American composer Charles Ives, whose childhood was also filled with musical games and playful experiments, which later became an essential part of the composer's groundbreaking musical language.[24]

---

[23] Jon Pareles, "The Sounds of Brazil; Citified in Sao Paulo," *New York Times,* March 10, 2004.
[24] Charles Ives' father George Ives was an important figure in introducing him to polytonality, atonality, polyrhythms and microtones through games, and ludic experiments. J. Peter Burkholder, et al, "Ives, Charles," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed November 7, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2252967.

Perhaps there is a relationship between ludic musical learning and a sense of experimentalism and aesthetic fearlessness in adult life.[25]

However, perhaps the clearest biographical similarity can be found in American composer and multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, who could also be included in Corbett's list of "mythologically insane" personalities. Kirk was born in 1935 (one year before Hermeto), and became blind at early ages due to poor medical treatment. Just like Hermeto, Kirk's childhood was filled with experimentalism, which later became a quintessential part of his music:

> It's useful to remember that most of Kirk's unusual techniques were not adopted when he was an adult professional trying to find an edge in a competitive business but were taken up when he was a teenager trying to find his musical voice. They were not extraneous additions to his playing; they were at the core of his sound from the beginning. "The basic gestalt of his music—the joy, the overwhelming virtuosity, the experimentation—was all there in the '50s," insists Kirk's childhood friend Todd Barkan. "In his youth, he adapted the day-to-day objects of his environment for music-making purposes—even a garden hose became the black mystery pipes. When I traveled with him in the '70s, he didn't seem substantially different from the person I'd known in the '50s, only more organized and focused." [26]

The similarities go even further: both composers had a strong spiritual belief, became multi instrumentalists, often played unconventional instruments (Hermeto played live animals, tea kettles, pots; Kirk played whistles, sirens, toys and tapes), both recorded videos playing with animals in the zoo[27], dressed in extravagant

---

[25] Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation* defends the importance of playing (ludism) in the creative process. The "curiosity, exploration, frivolousness and *joie de vivre"* of ludic behavior are essential qualities to provide unexpected clues to new discoveries in art and science.

[26] Geoffrey Himes, "Jazz Articles: Rahsaan Roland Kirk: The Cult of Kirk," *Jazz Times*, 2008.Accessed November 10, 2016, http://jazztimes.com/articles/17992-rahsaan-roland-kirk-the-cult-of-kirk.

[27] Dick Fountaine's documentary *Sound???* (1967) features a series of excerpts of Kirk's and John Cages' interviews and concerts, establishing a parallel between the two composers and their views on musical experimentalism. There's a long scene of Kirk playing flute at a Zoo, interacting with the sounds from the

unusual ways, had extremely theatrical performances and had a difficult relationship with the musical industry, which would often give more attention to their eccentricity rather than their music.[28] Regarding their music, both composers had a strong link to the folk music of their home countries (Brazilian folk in Hermeto and Blues and Gospel in Kirk), both used extended techniques on their instruments, and had a special connection to the sound of human voice.[29]

The mythology of spiritualism

E. Taylor Atkins describes the process of "Sacralization in Jazz"[30] during the sixties, in which Jazz musicians, rejecting the secular commercialism and materialism in art, started to see in Jazz the possibility to deepen their connection with the spiritual world of ecstasy and transcendence. Artist such as Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie and John Coltrane are well-known examples of musicians who promoted the idea of spiritual practice in improvised music; a mystical experience that would associate aesthetic quality with spiritual efficacy. It was not uncommon to see Jazz players composing pieces or dedicating titles and solos to Buddha, Allah, American gospel, Jewish Klezmer[31], Krishna or Afro-Caribbean *santería*. The

---

different animals. A few years later (probably mid 1970s), a similar video of Hermeto playing flute at a Zoo was recorded in a French documentary, available on youtube at https://youtu.be/Y10Ewgcqky8.

[28] Himes, 2008.

[29] Kirk's late records would often feature his voice commenting on political events, as well as use recorded voices and tapes in his pieces, e.g. president Nixon's and Billie Holiday's voices in *The Case of the 3 Sided Dream in Audio Color* (1975).

[30] E. Taylor Atkins, "Sacred Swing: The Sacralization of Jazz in the American Bahá'í Community," *American Music* 24/4 (University of Illinois , 2006): 383-420.

[31] More often cantorial music.

emergence of spiritual awareness in art in the US was a response to a context of civil rights movements, political tensions, hippie movement and rebellion against the crystallization of the cultural industry. However, this feeling of unrest and social transformation was not exclusive to America. It is not surprising to identify similar phenomenon happening in Brazil in the late sixties, a turbulent time in the Brazilian politics due to the military dictatorship.[32] The Tropicália movement, for example, was an important artistic movement created by a group of Brazilian musicians in 1968 with the goal of redefining the Brazilian national identity through the synthesis of antagonistic paradigms: the rural and the urban, the folk and the modern, the kitsch and the avant-garde, Pop Art and the *candomblé* (African-Brazilian religion).[33]

Aside from Atkins, scholar Ronald Radano gives an interesting perspective on the approximation between Free Jazz and Spirituality, focusing on the music of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.[34] Opposing themselves to the Western intellectualism and rationalism, the AACM artists turned to Pan-Africanism as doctrine for their music making, supporting the idea of communalism, religion, collective improvisation and solidarity. "Spiritualism became the foremost aesthetic criterion for identifying

---

[32] The year of 1964 radically transformed the social-political structure in Brazil. A coup d'état led by the military overthrew the president and closed the National Congress, encouraged by the anti-communist propaganda of the American government. In face of the severe prosecution and repression, art became one of the most powerful tools for the people to communicate and express their voice of discontentment towards the government.

[33] Gilberto Gil (one of the Tropicália creators) wrote a song called "Batmacumba", which is a word play with "Batman" (a symbol of America and Pop art) and "Macumba" (an African Brazilian religious ritual often associated with black magic). For more information on Tropicália, se Caetano Veloso, and Barbara Einzig, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*, New York: A.A. Knopf, 2002.

[34] Ronald Radano, "Jazzin' the Classics: The AACM's Challenge to Mainstream Aesthetics," *Black Music Research Journal 12/1 (1993):* 79-95.

greatness in art".[35] The figure of Muhal Richard Abrams could be easily compared to Hermeto; a leader whose influence surpassed the musical practice and whose house provided a space for musicians to congregate and learn from each other. According to Radano, "Abrams' boundless energy offered a model of purposefulness and commitment"[36], which resembles Costa-Lima Neto's description of Hermeto's rehearsals during the Jabour school period, in which the importance of community and spiritual dedication exceeded musical factors.

Fausto Borém describes Pascoal's childhood and his experiences living in Lagoa da Canoa until age fourteen, including some of his first impressions regarding the spiritual world, as illustrated by Pascoal's testimonial found on his website:

> I started to play music with everything I could find in nature. I would invent a lot as a kid... During this time I started to see a different side of nature, the side of the animals; I used to talk a lot with the animals, naturally. They could understand everything, we understood each other; I understood their actions. I knew their signs. For example, when the horses had a visage. What is a visage? Visage is a vision, something spiritual, a type of energy. Animals are very sensitive; we often have the wrong idea about them, thinking that animals have no spirit. But their spirit is as great as ours. [37]

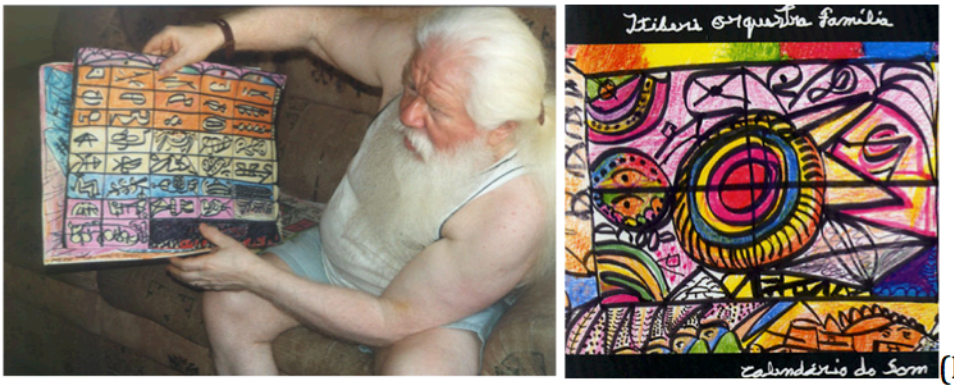
Between 1996-1997 Hermeto created the *Calendário do Som*[38] (Sound Calendar), in which he composed one piece per day for one whole year. Each page contains a lead sheet and a short commentary about the day or about his musical inspiration. In the preface for the *Calendário do Som*, Hermeto describes a spiritual intuition suggesting him to compose:

---

[35] Radano, 88.
[36] Radano, 88.
[37] Hermeto Pascoal, "Biografia," Last modified January 9, 2009. http://www.hermetopascoal.com.br.
[38] Hermeto Pascoal, *Calendário do Som*, São Paulo: Editora Senac (2004).

> Close to celebrating my 60th birthday, I started receiving intuitive messages which told me to compose a piece per day for one year, non-stop. I answered that I already composed on average a piece per day, but I received another message back saying: 'Hermeto, you have to compose it on the paper (notated) because this is not an obligation, it is a devotion'.[39]

This idea of music as a spiritual mission also alludes to a mythic primitive time when spiritual rituals and art were deeply connected.[40] Hermeto often painted his own album covers and drew images and shapes in his scores and letters. Such drawings are extremely colorful, abstract, with intelligible symbols that recall primitive hieroglyphs and pre-historic signs. (See figure 1).



(Fig. 1)

Hermeto strongly supports this idea of art as a medium to develop intellectual and emotional faculties, as he stated in an interview in 2010:

> Some people state that I'm a religious person. No, I'm a musician who develops all my perceptions through music. I respect a lot my intuition – it's my first priority – because I don't put the thinking in first place, I put the

[39] Idem, p. 2.

[40] In ancient epochs humankind was especially sensitive to the idea of belonging to the cosmos and entering the physical world in Earth through birth and exiting it through death. Art had the important role of aiding those processes, which can be seen in architecture (and its relation to the spirits and to the gods) and in garments, which would try to emulate the colors and shapes from mankind pre-earthly existence. It is not surprising to identify similar primitive colors and shapes in the visual work of Kandinsky – who was a firm believer of this ancient role of art. Joscelyn Godwin, "The revival of speculative music," *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 3(1982): 373-390.

> feeling in first place in all the things in my life." "I learned theory not in school, but by deducting, but still I always trust my feeling in first place. [41]

It is undeniable that Hermeto – a self-taught musicians born in one of the poorest regions of Brazil where the concept of modernity barely existed – shares a myriad of similarities with many experimental musicians around the world, but is his "avant-garde" musical language a natural inherent skill or the result of an utterly unique synthesis of influences?

Hermeto's eccentric personality - cultivated by the media and by his own personal myth-making – is one of the answers for his idiosyncratic creativity and propensity towards experimentalism. The concept of "craziness" can then be deconstructed into three main qualities: the defiance of aesthetic and social norms; the disregard of labels and the "permission" to experiment. Spiritualism also plays an important role in offering a pretext to overlook the aesthetic rules, by encouraging the ideas of intuition and outer-world experiences while rejecting intellectual and theoretical thinking. Again we could refer to John Corbett's idea of the mythology of insanity, in which musicians deeply believed in an extraneous connection to spiritual and outer worlds.

By investigating all of these aspects, it becomes clear that Hermeto followed a specific pattern common to many other artists, in particular those in the free jazz scene in the US during the 1960s and 1970s. The next chapter will concentrate on specific musical examples of these artists, identifying more free jazz artists who

---

[41] Bruno Dorigatti, "O Mundo infinito de Hermeto Pascoal," *Programa Saraiva Conteúdo* video, published on April 28th, 2010.

share the same beliefs as Hermeto, and elucidating how all of these mythologies (insanity, ludism and spirituality) reflect on the musical aspects of their oeuvre.

CHAPTER 2 – THE METHODOLOGIES OF EXPERIMENTALISM

Hermeto Pascoal's use of free improvisation is not an organized and gradual phenomenon in his musical career: throughout his life, the composer had many incursions into the world of free improvisation, bouncing back and forth between extreme freedom and thoroughly written and arranged material. Chapter 1 explores some of the motivation behind Hermeto's experimentalism; a mix of influences, sensorial stimuli and spiritual inclination. However, unique inspiration and motivation are not enough to master the art of free improvisation; one needs to develop or to borrow a methodology, a set of techniques to render ideas with the appropriate technical material. This set of skills – technical and aesthetic – is essential to create structure and develop concepts and narratives in free improvised music. Describing and analyzing free improvisation is an extremely difficult endeavor; there is a general lack of vocabulary, references, and academic research in the field, leading most works to either a historiographical elucubration or analysis based on traditional music theory, which does not necessarily address the structure of innovative ideas that can be found in Hermeto's music. Among the few studies on the structure of free improvised music, I chose to utilize "Properties of Free Music" by guitarist and free improviser Joe Morris[42] as a model, since it deals primarily with the idea of methodologies for improvisation. Even though Morris' work makes constant reference to European free improvisation – which does not necessarily relate directly to Hermeto's music – his description on the use of operational

[42] Joe Morris, *Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music* (Stony Creek: Riti Publishing, 2012).

methodologies is a useful tool to understand Hermeto's music and creative process.[43]

Even though he developed a unique *lexicon*[44], Hermeto very often shared the same free improvisation methodologies as many free jazz musicians. As Morris describes, "the influence of these examples (methodologies) has been wide and pervasive, and as a result players often align with an existing methodology and use the particulars as their default material."[45] This statement once again raises the question of whether Hermeto intentionally adopted those techniques and ideas, or independently developed them. The answer to this question is not as important as going through the process of investigating these similarities identifying the larger musical phenomena and the global context in which they are inserted. The goal here is not to identify evidences of Hermeto plagiarizing Miles or Ornette Coleman, but to put all of these composers side by side as active participants in the development of free improvisation around the globe, often sharing the same methodologies and bringing their idiosyncratic lexicons to create new voices. Chapter 3 will explore this theory in depth.

The following pages will focus on the description of these methodologies in five different improvisations recorded by Hermeto between 1976 and 1999. I find these to be the most experimental of all of his recordings; each of these pieces

---

[43] According to Morris, all the linear history of jazz fits under the umbrella of the concept of Free Music, from Louis Armstrong to Charlie Parker to Cecil Taylor, since all of these artists made use of *operational methodologies* that controls the performance of their music.

[44] The term *lexicon* is used by scholar John Corbett as the range of techniques and sensibilities particular to each player; their personal vocabulary. John Corbett, *A Listener's Guide to Free Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 85-87.

[45] Morris, 30.

features different types of extended techniques, group interactions, theatrical performances, unusual instruments, noises and open forms, all of which feature remarkable similarities with the practices of different free jazz musicians. Again, it is important to reiterate that this analysis is focused exclusively on the free improvised material in Hermeto's music. Arrangement, compositional structure, harmony and melody will not be discussed. Notwithstanding their different outputs, all the artists cited in the next pages had methods that informed their improvisation that can be related to Hermeto's musical practices.

The five pieces to be described are:

1. "Diálogo" from *Cérebro Magnético* (1980);
2. "De Bandeja e Tudo" from *Hermeto Pascoal e Grupo* (1982);
3. "Just Listen" from *Slaves Mass* (1976);
4. "Linguagem & Costumes" from *Eu e Eles* (1999);
5. Excerpts from "Hermeto Campeão", documentary by Thomaz Farkas (1981).

I chose to present the pieces according to their level of structural complexity and abstraction, instead of following a chronological fashion. This will facilitate the understanding of the free improvisation methodologies and their discourses. It is curious to observe that three of the pieces above have titles that relate to the idea of stimulating your senses: "Just Listen", "Diálogo" (dialogue) and "Linguagem e Costumes" (language and manners). It seems like Hermeto is fully aware that he is operating in a different realm than the traditional musical language, inviting the audience (Just Listen) and at the same time challenging their traditional understanding of musical language and conversation.

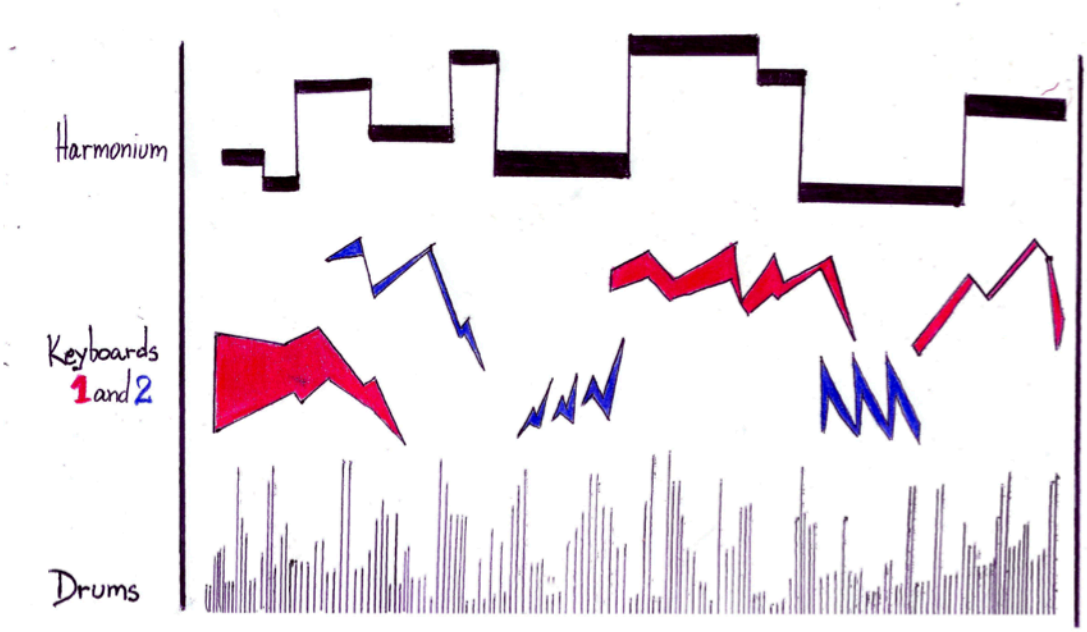
1. "Diálogo": Hermeto, Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman

"Diálogo" (1982) was recorded during the Jabour school: a time when Hermeto and his band would rehearse 8 to 10 hours a day, experimenting different improvisational strategies, composing and arranging pieces on the spot.[46] This might be one of his first group recordings that purposely avoids a steady meter. It is important to remember that Brazilian music has always been based on the indispensability of rhythmic precision and steady grooves. "Diálogo" questions that understanding; one can still hear a pulse but there's no meter, no regular division and grouping of the pulse.

Diálogo is completely improvised (no theme, melody or pre-conceived harmonies). It seems like a long improvised track which was cut short (it ends with a gradual, perhaps "forced" fade out). One can quickly identify 3 layers – or characters – in which musical conversation takes place: 1. The drum set and percussion which act in a very soloistic and active way, never falling into a steady groove and meter, always playing unexpected fills; 2. The keyboards (Hermeto recorded two overdubbed tracks playing electric piano) play short entwined atonal gestures, a mix of "jazzesque" lines (using diminished scale patterns), clusters, highly dissonant chords and wild fast lines. 3. The harmonium in the background plays a slow atonal melody, sometimes hitting a few sustained clusters; it feels like a separate layer, disconnected from the highly active keyboards and drums, creating

[46] Thomaz Farkas' documentary "Hermeto Campeão" (1980) explores in detail the daily work of the group in Hermeto's house.

the sensation of juxtaposition of independent musical events. Here is a graphic transcription of the piece highlighting these three layers.



The similarities between "Diálogo" and Miles Davis' album *Bitches Brew* (recorded in 1969) are indisputable. For example, the track "Miles runs the Voodoo down" also features two drummers and two different keyboards (Joe Zawinul and Chick Corea alternating fast musical gestures) utilizing very similar pitch content (diminished scale gestures, clusters, fast descending phrases)[47]. Even though most of Davis' track has a steady funk beat, at some points the drummers (John Alias and Jack DeJohnette) also explore the idea of meter ambiguity, displacing accents and playing in a melodic-contrapuntal manner. Below you can find a 30 second excerpt

[47] It is possible to trace part of Hermeto's improvisational language in Diálogo to the style of pianists such as Chick Corea and McCoy Tyner, especially regarding the use of quartal chords, diminished repeated patterns, rhythmic precision and angular phrases. However, for this analysis I am focusing the attention on the fact that most of Hermeto's phrases are not attached to any predictable meter and form, as opposed to Tyner and Corea's style, in which one can clearly identify the form, harmony and structure. Also, the absence of bass in "Diálogo" allows Hermeto's gestures to be heard without necessarily being associated to any particular harmony, which fits my previous definition (footnote 9) of free improvisation as spontaneous musical invention that is not harmonically-based.

of the two tracks in which these similarities are obvious. (Double click over image to play excerpts, or click on the following link: http://henriqueeisenmann.com/musical-examples).

(8'30") Miles Runs the Voodoo Down, from Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, 1969.

(2'30") Diálogo, from Hermeto Pascoal's *Cérebro Magnético*, 1980.

Diálogo starts with drums instantly jumping into a highly active and dense groove, with a clear pulse (a few regular bass drum hits and hi-hat strokes), but an ambiguous sense of meter, in which it is not clear where the downbeat is, and how are the subdivisions grouped. This sort of "melodic" drum playing recalls the style of Elvin Jones and Rashid Ali in late Coltrane's records.[48] The second drum track was also recorded by Hermeto, playing hi-hat and percussion accents. Differently than Jones, Ali, DeJohnette and Alias, Hermeto's non-metrical groove often quotes Brazilian popular rhythms such as Baião and Samba, which reinforces the idea of developing a language of free improvisation with a national taste.

Regarding the way the melodic gestures are placed, one could establish a parallel between Diálogo and Ornette Coleman's Harmolodics concept. Harmolodics is a methodology created by Coleman which gives equal importance to rhythm,

[48] John Corbett in *Extended Play* describes the process by which drummers in the 1960s began to move away from the time-keeping role towards a more abstract playing, in which the emphasis is not necessarily on the meter, but rather on the melody. Sunny Murray and Milford Graves are normally considered the first drummers to step into meterless playing. In this particular example of Hermeto's *Diálogo*, however, the drumming is still slightly connected to the idea of a steady pulse and ambiguous meter, which resembles more the later style of Elvin Jones and Rashid Ali. John Corbet, *Extended Play: Sounding off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994): 74-87.

melody and harmony, breaking the traditional role of each instrument in a traditional jazz context. Ornette opted for not having a chordal (piano or guitar) instrument in his quartet, which supports the idea of melodic inventiveness that is not necessarily attached and "imprisoned" by specific chords or harmonic progression. The fact that Diálogo does not feature a bass player reveals a similar idea in Hermeto's music: the musical form is not based on harmonic progression, but on the melodic structure. Using Morris' words, "Considering Coleman's desire for egalitarian sharing of responsibility and the expectations implied in the term Harmolodics, the improvisation should become a **dialogue** in which melody, rhythm, and harmony – through modulation of templates – are all in play between the players, with the soloist setting the direction as well as sharing with, and following, the other players."[49] This form of dialogue could not be clearer in Hermeto's improvisation: the two keyboards alternate and exchange ideas, shifting the direction, pitch content and dynamics of their phrases according to the reaction and interaction with each other (and the drumset). Sometimes there are "agreements" in their dialogue (matching scales, similar gestures, coincident rhythms), sometimes disagreements (contrary motions, juxtaposition of different ideas, opposite phrase lengths).

Another aspect of Harmolodics is the harmolodic clef, a transposition device created by Coleman to create harmonies in non-traditional ways, by allowing players to read and play melodies in any clef (bass, treble, tenor or alto). Costa-Lima

[49] Morris, 90. In this context, "modulation of templates" refers to Ornette's freedom in moving from one key to another in the middle of his solos, opening new "musical areas" to be explored by the rest of the band in their collective improvisations.

Neto describes a very similar practice cultivated by Hermeto and his musicians, in which the clefs are flexible and melodies can be played in simultaneous transpositions:

> It was very common for Hermeto to ask Carlos Malta [saxophonist] to record an overdub of the melodies – after having recorded the original melody written in Bb or Eb (transposed) – without transposing it, which would result in a highly dense melodic texture of non-conventional harmonies.[50]

Ornette Coleman's manner of improvising floating over the melody was definitely one of his most important contributions to free jazz. His lines don't necessarily start and end on strong beats, nor are attached necessarily to meter. Coleman has a lyrical way of stating a musical discourse with no dependence on form or chord changes. This idea is definitely in sync with the way Hermeto places his phrases over the rhythmic texture in the background. The solo section in Coleman's track "Free" from *Change of the Century* (1960) present another similar three-layered structure comparable with *Diálogo*. While Billy Higgins (drums) and Charlie Haden (bass) play swing feel (walking bass and ride cymbal) without form, chords and specific meter, Coleman places his phrases above this texture and Don Cherry (trumpet) plays long tones floating over the rest of the band, just like Hermeto's harmonium in Diálogo:

(0'30"- 0'50") Free, from Ornette Coleman's *Change of the Century,* 1960.

[50] Costa-Lima Neto, 1999, 150. Although not present in this particular example of "Diálogo", the use of transposition devices by Hermeto played a central role in many of his arrangements, such as in "Pintando o Sete" (*Live in Montreux*, 1979), "Pimenteira" (*Zabumbê-bum-á*, 1979) and many others.

2. "De Bandeja e Tudo": Miles, Fusion and electronics

De Bandeja e Tudo[51], recorded in 1982 in the album *Hermeto Pascoal e Grupo* is also part of the Jabour school period. During that time Hermeto's band was constantly travelling on tour and experimenting with different dynamics and methodologies (practices) of free improvisation. Even though all pieces in this album were thoroughly composed and written, featuring complex arrangements, conventional melodies and harmonies, still there are several moments and sections of complete freedom and spontaneity.

In a personal interview with Jovino Santos Neto, who played piano in Hermeto's group in this period, I asked whether Hermeto had any particular ways of "practicing" free improvisation with the band, to which he answered:

> He (Hermeto) would compose super complex suites, 10-20 minute-long pieces, and we needed to memorize everything and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse, exhaustively, until we learned it. [..] And after spending two hundred hours learning and rehearsing a super complex piece, Hermeto would sit on the drumset and play "#**#*#*#*" (imitates the sound of a free improvisation). "Let's play, man!" – he would scream. "Play what?" – we replied. "I don't know, just play!" And then we had to jump right on it, forgetting everything we played before and starting to improvise something new. The last 10 minutes or so in every rehearsal were always completely free. But then it was impossible not to start quoting some of the ideas and gestures that we have been developing during the rehearsals of the written material. We were building vocabulary.

The introduction for "De Bandeja e Tudo" is an improvised exploration of sound textures, noises and silence. In live versions of the same piece, the introductions are completely different, and many times non-existent.

---

[51] The literal translation for De Bandeja e Tudo would be "on a tray and all". In this particular context, "de bandeja" is a slang meaning "to give something for free, on a tray".

De Bandeja e Tudo, *Hermeto Pascoal & Grupo* (1982)

Heraldo do Monte (guest guitarist), an old colleague of Hermeto, leads the piece by introducing sparse sounds and overtones with his distorted guitar. Every short musical statement (gesture) is followed by silence and a few percussion noises (jingles, brushes, whistles, animal sounds). Each of these short gestures is completely different one from another, starting in different regions of the guitar (high / low registers), using long sustained distorted notes, followed by *sforzando* and sudden cuts and short notes, exploring different overtones and amplifier feedback noises. This alternation of short gestures interspaced with silences gives the impression of a collage, a type of sound composition that resembles the musique concrète.

Scholar Tato Taborda[52] in "Música de Invenção" explores this relationship between Hermeto's music and Pierre Schaeffer and Luigi Rusollo, pointing out the similar use of daily objects as musical instruments, the use of tape recordings of human voice, a certain fondness for noise and the aversion to synthesized and electronic sounds. Despite achieving similar levels of experimentalism, according to his own testimony and that of his colleagues, Hermeto never had any contact with the *musique concrète* composers nor their music. When asked about the subject, Hermeto claimed that "the animals were my main teachers"[53], and that his

[52] Tato Taborda, "Música de Invenção," Masters diss. UNIRIO, Rio de Janeiro, 1998: 119-120.
[53] Otávio Rodrigues, "Hermeto," *Vida simples*, December, 2003, accessed in January 12, 2009, www.vidasimples.abril.com.br.

experimentalism comes from his close connection to the daily sounds and objects around him. Jovino Santos Neto supported and confirmed this theory in many interviews and documentaries.[54]

Nonetheless, it is likely that the inspiration behind *De Bandeja e Tudo*'s introduction is much closer to the sounds of Miles Davis and Brazilian folk music than to the French electroacoustic model or to animal sounds. During his first visit to the US (1970-1971), Hermeto was featured as composer, pianist and singer in Miles Davis' *Live Evil* (1971), together with influential jazz and fusion artists such as Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Joe Zawinul, Dave Holland, Herbie Hancock and many others. Many musicians in the Brazilian scene claim that these two years in the US really changed Hermeto's personality, intensifying his eccentric persona and his artistic audacity; scholar Costa-Lima Neto reinforces the idea of "shift towards the experimental" during those years.[55] Some of the same sounds and shapes from *De Bandeja e Tudo* can be found in Miles' *Medley: Gemini/Double Image,* from *Live Evil,* which reinforces the idea of a shared free improvisation methodology.

(0'18" – 0'52") Medley: Gemini / Double Image, from Miles Davis's *Live Evil (1971).*

John McLaughlin (guitarist in *Live Evil*) uses the same type of sparse musical gestures, similar guitar tone (distortion) and a few idiomatic melodic phrases from the Blues vocabulary. In the case of Hermeto's track, the idiomatic melodic phrases

[54] Rodrigo Hinrichsen, *Quebrando Tudo*, Documentary, Directed by Rodrigo Hinrichsen (São Paulo Traquitana Filmes, 1998).
[55] There is no written evidence for this transformation, however it is clear from listening to the recordings from those years that Hermeto's music sharply tended towards free improvisation, abstract musical textures, use of noises and open forms.

on the guitar have their roots in the folk Northeastern music from Brazil, imitating the sounds of a *viola caipira* (traditional Brazilian 10-strings steel guitar). Still, both guitarists are abstractly referring to their own folk music. Even though in Miles' track there is a sense of pulse and repetition, this regularity is broken by trumpet, percussion and keyboard interjections (including a *cuíca* played by Airto Moreira) floating over the pulse. In Hermeto's track the same style of interjection can be heard, but played by different instruments (drumset, piano, whistles and recorded sounds of birds and oxen). The resulting musical textures are extremely similar. Eventually, in Hermeto's track, the improvised introduction leads to a written tune, which is much closer to the *fusion* and modal jazz traditions than to the free improvisation world. Nevertheless, the employment of similar methodologies on both pieces reveals two like-minded composers who work with different lexicons but strive for the same musical message.

3. "Just Listen": Cecil Taylor and Unit Structures

> When using the ontological perspective, we can look past the linear extensions of a particular tradition that result in a style of that tradition and instead see all of those things as a methodology – a way to do things. This point of view helps us put ideas into practice without being concerned about how well they adhere to the traditional values of an existing genre, and instead allows us to make choices that might actually liberate us from those values.[56]

The creation of melodic structures has been the bedrock for most free improvisation methodologies. Morris highlights three particularly influential methodologies which became important platforms for many improvisers over the

[56] Morris, 36.

world: Ornette Coleman's *Harmolodics* (previously defined earlier in this chapter), Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures*, and Anthony Braxton's *Tri-Axiom Theory*. All these methodologies – developed in the 1950s and 1960s - continue to be used intentionally or unintentionally by many musicians. Perhaps Hermeto's free improvisation might fit as an example of unintentional interpretation of these methodologies. Once again, "methodology" should not be understood as a style or genre, but rather as an operational tool for organizing and informing one's musical ideas. The particular example of "Listen to This" is a great case study to understand the importance and magnitude of Taylor's *Unit Structures.*

The core of Unit Structure is the employment of "dense, energetic, freely improvised elaborations on melodic 'cells', some of which are composed and some that are improvised."[57] Every small melodic structure is considered a "cell", and it can be expanded, compressed, and manipulated in several different ways, until a new cell emerges and starts to be processed. The way the cells are manipulated and exchanged depends on the improviser's plan, and can include variations of pitch, rhythm, tempo, modulation, dynamics, extension, reduction, repetition and many others tools. This approach to improvisation normally creates a different type of narrative flow, permeated with short interruptions and new impulses, constantly reinventing itself through the performer's spontaneity and free association of musical cells.

"Just Listen" was recorded in the US in 1977, part of the emblematic studio album *Slaves Mass*, which became famous for featuring the sounds of three live

[57] Morris, 78.

piglets growling in the studio, together with folk instruments and dissonant harmonies. "Just Listen" (track 5) was the first solo piano piece recorded by Hermeto in his career, and undoubtedly one of his most experimental and dissonant musical incursions. The track could be divided into 3 sections: free improvisation (introduction); main theme (a written piece with conventional tonal harmonies and rhythm); and free improvisation (even more dissonant and unconventional). In this context, the presence the middle tonal section almost sounds like a digression, an oneiric segment contrasting to the wild and telluric free improvisation of the first and third sections. This structure by itself already deconstructs the traditional standard jazz form of theme-solo-theme, by inverting it into a "solo-theme-solo" form.

In order to exemplify the concept of *Unit Structures* and the similarities with Hermeto's "Just Listen", I will be using Taylor's recording of "Choral of Voice (Elesion)" from the *Solo* album recorded in Tokyo in 1973. Both Taylor and Hermeto start their pieces by working around a small group of notes (*cell*), a compound of pitches with a clear musical color (Hermeto's cell has a clear diminished sound, while Taylor's cell sounds slightly more intervallic and whole-tone based). Both pieces are not metered (the melodic phrases do not fit any standard metric organization), the impulses and "re-working" of the melodic cells is what dictates the relationship to pulse and time. Different lengths of phrases are played, interspaced by short silences, as if the performers were taking a breath before the next melodic statement (gesture). In both pieces the initial melodic cell rapidly develops into a denser and dissonant material, leading to energetic chromatic

clusters and fast phrases. Below you can find a short audio excerpt of the beginning of each piece, accompanied by a transcription of the very first musical gesture, which determines the unit (musical cell; specific collection of notes and rhythms) that is developed throughout each improvisation (fig. 2 and fig 3).

"Just Listen" (0'00"-0'40"),
Hermeto Pascoal's *Slaves Mass* (1977).

"Choral of Voice (Elesion)" (0'00"-0'46"),
Cecil Taylor's *Solo* (1973).

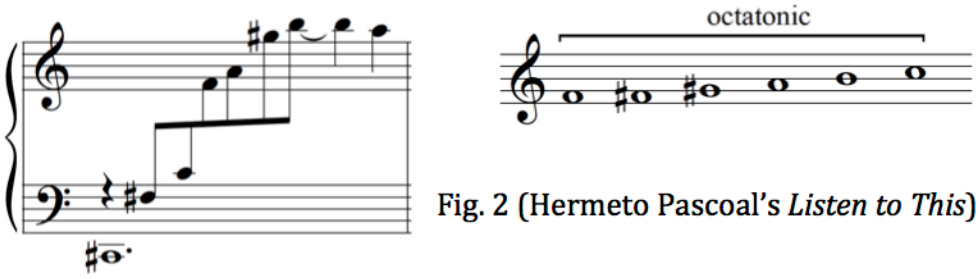


Fig. 2 (Hermeto Pascoal's *Listen to This*)

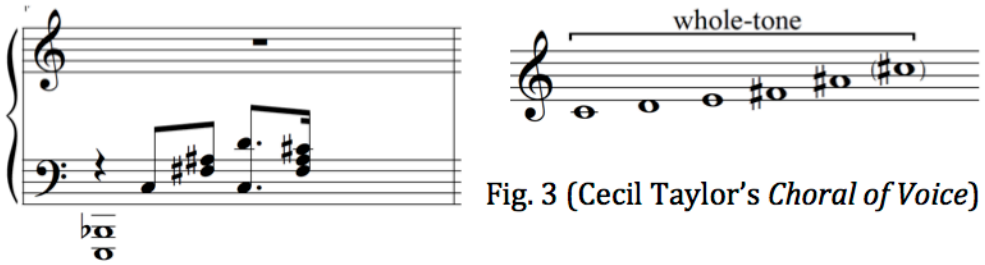
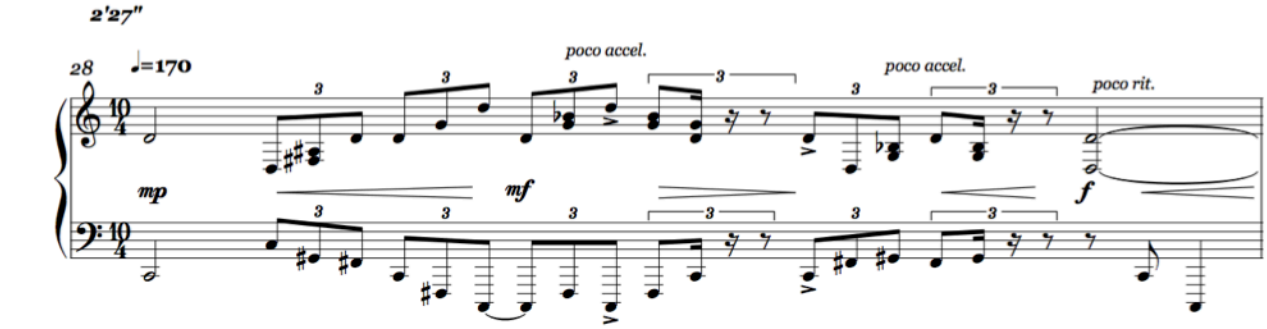


Fig. 3 (Cecil Taylor's *Choral of Voice*)

It is interesting to notice how both performers feature similar types of melodic gestures, including chromatic clusters, sudden dynamic shifts, *accelerandos*

and *ritardandos,* repetition of short motives, and contrary motion between right and left hand (as if the hands were plying in a mirrored movement). Kaja Draksler transcriptions of Taylor's *Life As...* offer useful material for understanding the structures of this "mirror movement" in Taylor's playing.[58] (Fig. 4)



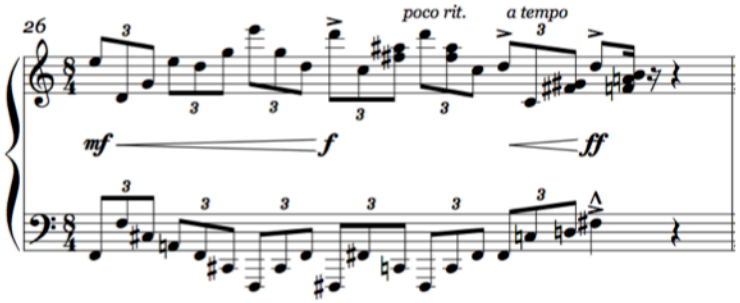


Fig 4. (Mirror movement in Taylor's *Life As...* , transcription by Kaja Draksler)

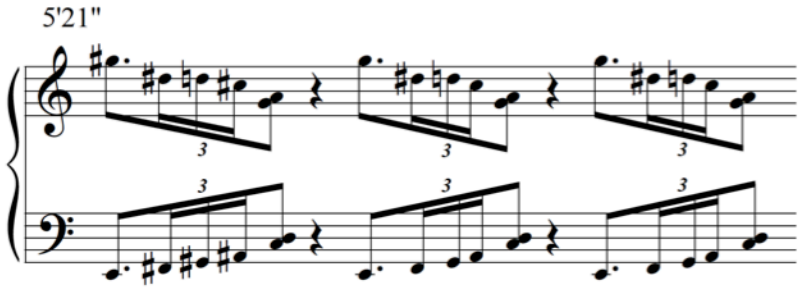


Fig 5. (Hermeto Pascoal's *Listen to This)*

[58] Kaja Draksler performs a deep transcription and analysis of a Cecil Taylor's improvisation in which all the above-mentioned melodic gestures are very clearly notated. Kaja Draksler, "Cecil Taylor: Life as… Structure within a free improvisation," Masters diss., Trboje, Slovenia, 2013.

Even though their pitch contents are completely different, these gestures work as structural pillars in creating musical discourse. By paying close attention to this musical material, it becomes clearer how nothing is random or by chance: both composers carefully chose the materials they are manipulating, creating a sense of inner logic and consistency throughout the pieces.

Hermeto takes the idea of discourse even further by actually speaking and screaming together with his piano clusters (see audio example below). In doing this, he demonstrates how connected can the human voice and musical gestures be. This association might offer some precious advice on "how" to listen to his music; how to use speech and voice inflections in order to give sense and meaning to musical gestures that could otherwise be perceived as nonsensical by the non-attentive listener.

Hermeto Pascoal, "Just Listen" (5'21" – 6'10")

I propose the exercise of listening to Taylor's segment below having in mind this idea of using human voice as a model to understand the structure and meaning of some of his wild and dissonant music gestures:

"Choral of Voice (Elesion)" (1'00" – 1'18")

Edward T. Cone described one of Stravinsky's compositional methods as a process of *stratification.*[59] The central idea in stratification is the fragmentation of music material into several small contrasting musical statements clashing and interrupting each other. The resulting sound is sort of "musical Cubism". All small layers and segments are connected by a technique Cone calls the *interlock*, finally resulting in a *synthesis*, or an overall convergence of small fragments creating a larger narrative. Using the same stratification concept to describe Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structure* theory might elucidate the process of creating musical meaning through the manipulation of small musical cells. In this sense Hermeto can be seen as an example of an improviser sharing some of these methodologies (whether consciously or unconsciously) and at the same time searching for ways to further explore and develop them.[60]

4. "Linguagem" and the Art Ensemble of Chicago

"Linguagem e Costumes" (language and manners) was recorded in 1999, as part of the album *Eu e Eles*, which consists of a solo album in which Hermeto overdubs himself playing several different instruments including flutes, bass, drums, euphonium, trumpet, percussion, piano, tuba, organ, sax, accordion and vocals. This particular track consists of the juxtaposition of several different layers of

---

[59] Edward T. Cone, "Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method," *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 1 (1962): 18-26.

[60] Cecil Taylor has a more structured and methodic approach towards the development of Unit Structures in his pieces, which differs from Hermeto's intuitive and less "organized" way of moving from one idea to another. Still, there are several similarities in their playing (similar gestures, use of short musical statements, use of silence, chromatic and angular melodies, sound and timbre) which often go unnoticed by scholars, and play an important role in understanding the evolution of the vernacular of free improvisation around the world.

percussion, flutes, and vocals, and even though they were all overdubbed by Hermeto, one can still identify many tools and methodologies common in the world of free improvisation. Musical narrative here is not achieved by individual solos or melodies, but rather by multiple simultaneous events, which sometimes are in "agreement" (as in dialogue or imitation gestures) or in complete disagreement (independent events in different meters, keys and styles). This type of interaction dynamics is a key element in understanding free improvisation. As John Corbett puts:

> Free improvisors tend to avoid or reject certain standard elements of the musical tool kit – steady rhythm, conventional harmony, melody. In the place of these usual objects of fascination, there's this other thing to pay attention to: interaction dynamics. How are the players relating to one another? What kinds of exchange are going on? Or not? Are they listening to the other, or are they off playing on their own? How does what they do correspond to the actions of the others?[61]

One particular group that dealt in depth with the idea of interaction dynamics is the Art Ensemble of Chicago, formed by members of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians). Founded in Chicago in 1965, the AACM became a symbol of vanguard to progress, supporting the idea of free music as an expression of spirituality and Afrocentricity. Their music was a form of protest against the cultural dominance of European music (represented by harmony and traditional classical forms). Their interest in the music of Africa, Asia and South America (as described in Chapter 1) represented an attempt to preserve the values of communalism, spirituality, and purposefulness in art. On stage, the

[61] John Corbett, 48.

members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago painted their faces (using African tribal drawings), wore colorful African garments and lab coats (representing the ancient and the future), and played hundreds of non-conventional instruments, including bells, gongs, kazoos, whistles, and hand drums.

Though interaction dynamics is a crucial part of analyzing any free improvised music, my focus for this analysis of "Linguagem & Costumes" will lay on the action of referring to the primitive, folk and ancient as a methodology for achieving freedom and unconventional musical structures. As a comparison, I will be using the introduction of the track "How Strange/Ole Jed" recorded in Paris, 1970, from the album *Art Ensemble of Chicago – with Fontella Bass.*[62]

Opposing the Western concept of linear structure, Hermeto starts his track by jumping right in the middle of a percussion groove, as if the music was already there before the track starts (circular structure). There is a clear reference to the native Brazilian's music, which was a part of Hermeto's musical universe during his childhood in *Lagoa da Canoa.* The track continues with the addition of several simultaneous bamboo flute lines, playing characteristic indigenous motives, as in cathartic tribal ritual. Over this busy texture, Hermeto starts to speak and repeat words from the native-Brazilian language *tupi guarani*, quoting a few folk songs, as in a dream in which images and melodies keep appearing and overlapping each other.

"Linguagem e Costumes" (0'40" – 1'14"), Hermeto Pascoal's *Eu e Eles* (1999).

[62] Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Art Ensemble of Chicago with Fontella Bass.* © 1970, America Records. Even though Fontella Bass was not a regular member of the AEC, the message conveyed by the introduction of this recording is representative of the AEC's ideal of Pan-Africanism and Great Black Music, which could be compared to Hermeto's reverence towards native Brazilian culture, present in many of his recordings.

A similar effect can be found in "How Strange / Ole Jed"; rhythmic stratification achieved by different layers of grooves, timbral effects (shakers and jingles), and occasional vocal interjections. Guest singer Fontella Bass screams and sings short melodic excerpts resembling an African tribal ritual.

"How Strange / Ole Jed" (1'50" – 2'30"), *Art Ensemble of Chicago with Fontella Bass* (1970).

For both Hermeto and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the reference to the ancient and non-European methods of organizing music worked as an entry-point to experimentalism, and at the same time served as a vehicle for social protest and acclamation of a new national identity. In the case of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, not only there was a clear goal towards the reverence of the Great Black music, but also a political agenda supporting the civil rights movements and the creation of a new African-American identity, proud of its African origins. For Hermeto, this turn to the primitive is a way to question the musical Imperialism[63] in Brazil and at the same time create a synthesis with the tradition of free jazz and improvisation, which intensifies the dialectic pluralism of Brazilian music.

[63] Acácio Piedade coined the concept of "Musical Friction" to express the dialectic relationship between North American Jazz and Brazilian instrumental music. This relationship was charged with tension due to the problematic of cultural imperialism, globalization and search for national identity. Brazilian musicians fought against the Americanization of Brazilian music by turning to the preserved folk styles and instruments from the Northeast. Acácio Piedade, "Brazilian Jazz and Friction of Musicalities," in *Jazz Planet*, E. Taylor Atkins (ed.) (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003): 41-58.

5. "Hermeto Campeão" and Anthony Braxton

The Short film *Hermeto Campeão*[64] (Hermeto champion) – produced by Thomaz Farkas in 1981 – documents Hermeto's rehearsing practices during the Jabour School period (1980 – 1993). Farkas' film features scenes of Hermeto explaining some of his creative processes and free improvisation to his band, at the same time encouraging them to play and interact with him. This film works as a perfect synthesis of all previous methodologies discussed in this chapter. To begin, the segment between 5'45" – 6'48" features an example of Hermeto explaining some of the extended techniques and multiphonics he is producing on the saxophone. He tells a story about a lazy donkey in a farm who started to choke after eating a piece of manioc; the sax multiphonics are an imitation of the sounds of the choking donkey. This use of nature as a model and inspiration for experimentalism, discussed in depth in Chapter 1, can also be seen in the segment 19'40" – 20'10", in which Hermeto starts to harmonize the sound of a swarm of bees, trying to reproduce their sound through dense harmonies and clusters. Between 33'00" and 34'42", Hermeto improvises by hitting dozens of metal plaques and bells (which aurally and visually recalls the Art Ensemble of Chicago live concerts with several percussion instruments), and then starts a solo vocal improvisation, exploring different unique vocal sounds, "beat-boxing" (beat-boxing started in the US only a few years later) and invented words and syllabi, in a structure which resembles John Cage's *62 Mesostics Re Merce Cunningham* (1971).

[64] Available on Youtube: https://youtu.be/6eBGQp70GL4

(5'45"-6'48") "Choking Donkey" multiphonics

(19'40"-20'10") Harmonizing a swarm of bees

(33'50"- 34'12") Vocal Improvisation

Albeit the ludic and humorous approach, Hermeto's resulting sonorities are advanced and carefully manipulated, and could continue to be paralleled to several free jazz artists and their improvisational practices.

For this particular analysis, one element that has not been discussed so far is in this research is the use of graphic notation. Due to the condition affecting his vision, Hermeto has a special way to relate to the visual aspect of his notation. First, in order to be able to read music he normally has to write his compositions in large canvases, using a big staff system and thick black pens. Second, throughout his career Hermeto has developed the habit of writing music in napkins, toilet seats, teapots, clothes and many other media, advocating for the idea that music can be created and written anywhere and anytime.[65] In many of his scores one can find bird drawings, different colors, unconventional symbols and words which resembles a child's drawing. The same type of drawing can be found in several of his albums artwork, for example in *Cérebro Magnético* (1980), *Mundo Verde Esperança* (2002) and *Chimarrão com Rapadura* (2006). (Fig, 6)

[65] A recent article in the Uai website features pictures of Hermeto's house and all his compositions written in objects from the daily life. (http://www.uai.com.br/app/noticia/musica/2016/05/22/noticias-musica,180041/so-escrevo-quando-tenho-vontade-diz-hermeto-pascoal.shtml).

(Fig. 6)

The first evidence I have found of Hermeto's graphic notation is in Farkas' film, during the last minutes (40'00" – 41'00"), in which he writes a piece in a conventional "jazz lead sheet" notation, but at the end of the page he draws a square with arrows pointing in different directions, then a scribbled line ascending and descending, and a circle with radial lines pointing outward (Fig. 7)

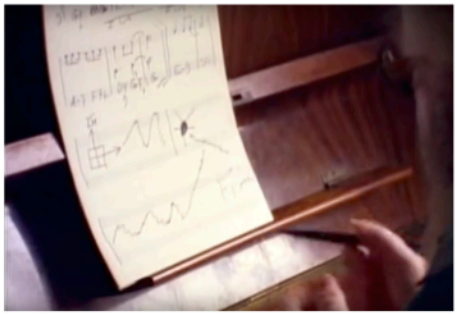
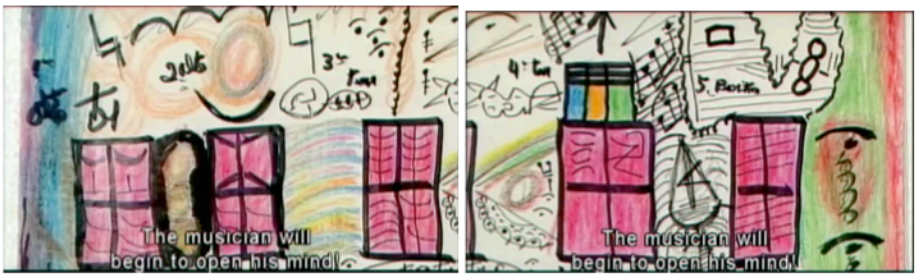


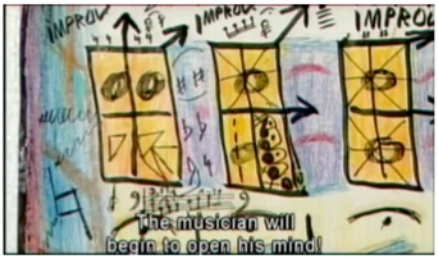
Fig. 7, Hermeto's Graphic notation

Another documentary, "Quebrando Tudo"[66], directed by Rodrigo Hinrichsen in 1998, features other scenes (fig. 8) of Hermeto revealing some of his graphic scores and explaining the reason behind his notation: "I've created a way to make people play without having to think about musical notes. It's about feeling, not thinking."[67] He continues by claiming that graphic scores will encourage musicians

[66] Rodrigo Hinrichsen, *Quebrando Tudo*, documentary directed by Rodrigo Hinrichsen (São Paulo Traquitana Filmes, 1998).
[67] Transcribed and translated from Hinrichsen, 1998.

to open their minds and develop their creativity, by allowing them to not follow the rules and systems of traditional music theory commonly taught in schools.





(Fig. 8)

One of the American free jazz players with the strongest connection to the visual aspect of music is unquestionably Anthony Braxton (b. 1945). Braxton's extensive writings and visual conception of music offer a great model to understand Hermeto's use of graphic notation. Braxton is another example of an artist with strong connections to mysticism, African culture, and the idea of universality in music. He claims that his music is "trans-idiomatic", in other words it does not belong to any particular musical tradition.[68] Braxton's statement is very similar to Hermeto's concept of *Música Universal*, meaning music with no labels or attachment to any specific language. As Itiberê Zwarg (bass player in Hermeto's band) describes:

[68] Graham Lock, " 'What I Call a Sound': Anthony Braxton's Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisors," in *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, no. 1 (2008).

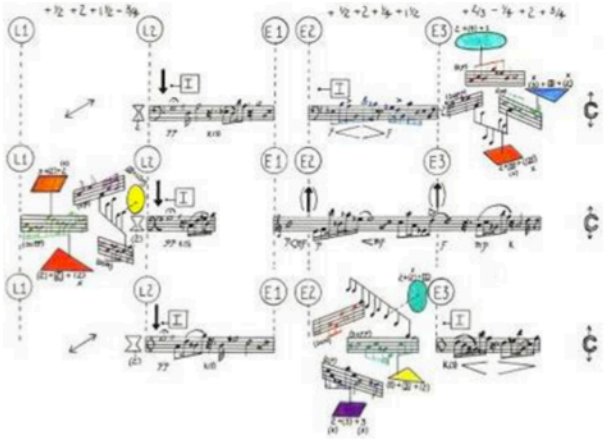
> Universal Music was the term found by Hermeto Pascoal to describe his music, which – without any prejudice - encompasses all the styles, gives value to traditional elements of Brazilian popular music, and at the same time, surpasses the barrier between classical and popular, juxtaposing traits from regional music from all over the world, reflecting its universality.[69]

The visual factor has definitely played an essential role in representing the universal in the music of both composers. Braxton opposes himself to the tradition of notation in Western classical music — in which the purpose is often the accurate and correct rendition of a detailed score, reaffirming the authority of the composer – and defends the idea of notation as only one aspect of a performance, a platform for improvisation, as in many African American musics. For him, improvisation is a "vibrational continuum that differs from moment to moment / person to person."[70]

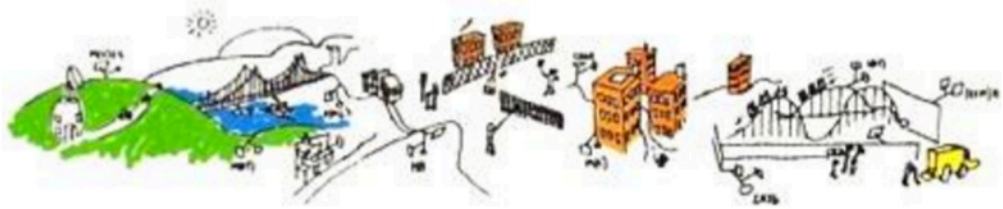
Scholar Graham Lock wrote a detailed analysis on Braxton's graphic notation in "What I Call a Sound: Anthony Braxton's Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisers". Lock claims that the use of symbols and graphics operate as "improvisational portals" for the performer, allowing one to bring his personal creativity and his "here-and-now" feeling to a performance at any given moment. Braxton explains that by using graphic notation one can overcome the critical notion of "correct execution", since the interpretation of colors and unusual symbols is completely personal and subjective, therefore immune to mistakes. It also allows performers to explore their instruments in different ways and parameters, resulting on a more personal and unique sound.[71]

---

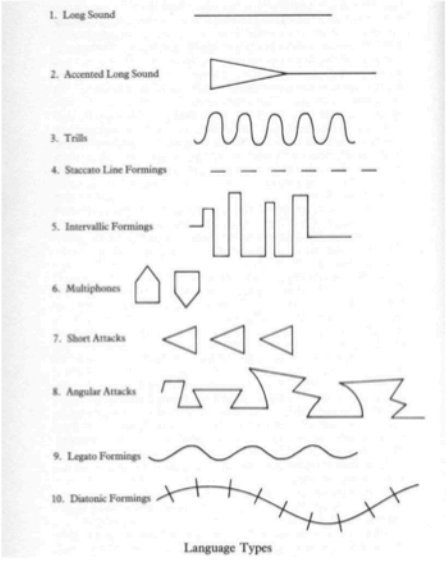
[69] Itiberê Zwarg, "Oficina Da Música Universal," Itiberê Zwarg. Accessed November 20, 2016. http://www.itiberezwarg.com.br/index.htm.
[70] Anthony Braxton, *Tri-Axium Writings*, (Synthesis Music, 1985): 243.
[71] For a detailed explanation on each of these scores, see Graham Lock (no page number).



(fig. 9) Composition #76, by Anthony Braxton.

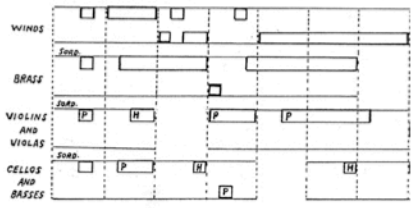


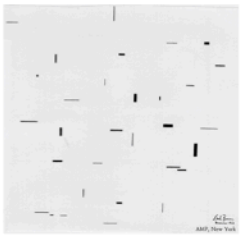
(fig. 10) Composition #142

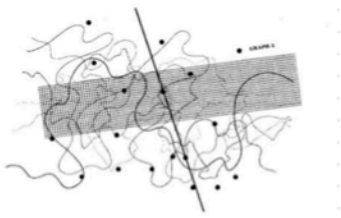


(fig. 11) "Language Types", from *Forces* pg 28.

The idea of synesthesia between the visual and the sonic is a common characteristic in the music of Hermeto and Braxton[72], easily observable in their approach towards graphic notations. Even though Hermeto was never in touch with Braxton and his music, both composers saw in graphic notation an opportunity to give sense to their aural impressions and express their sensorial experiences with freedom. The use of graphic scores is not an exclusivity of free jazz artists. It is important to remember that contemporary composers such as Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, John Cage and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati were already exploring in depth the realm of graphic notation during the 1950s, as one can see in the examples below:

1 

2 

3 

(fig. 12) 1. Feldman's *Intersection* (1951); 2. Brown's *December 1952* (1952); 3. Cage's *Fontana Mix* (1958); 4. Habenstock-Ramati's *Mobile for Shakespeare* (1958).

4

[72] It is important to note that even though Braxton's graphic scores displayed in this thesis are abstract, many of his other graphic scores are very mathematical and connected to astrology and science, while Hermeto's graphic scores are purely visual and abstract. Still, both composers shared a similar synesthetic ideal and saw similar purposes in the use of graphic scores.

Conclusion: the conscious vs. unconscious sharing of methodologies.

The five analyses in this chapter clearly demonstrate that Hermeto is sharing the same methodologies as many free jazz musicians, sometimes consciously (in the case of Miles Davis), and other times unconsciously (in the case of Anthony Braxton or Ornette Coleman, given the fact that Hermeto never personally met those artists). It is possible that Hermeto was fully aware of all these artists and their oeuvre, but he insists in claiming that they did not influence him. Regardless of the intentionality or not in sharing improvisational methodologies, Hermeto developed an extremely efficient *synthesis* of styles, demonstrating full understanding (*interpretation)* of the techniques and structures which operate in such platforms, resulting on a very unique and innovative lexicon (*invention*)[73]. The vast majority of articles about Hermeto's music focus on the relationships with Brazilian traditional music and/or traditional jazz theory (harmonic and melodic analysis); studying Hermeto's music through the perspective of free improvisation methodologies can offer a much more efficient method for analyzing and understanding his aesthetic choices and musical purpose while at the same time it positions him in the global avant-garde context he deserves.

[73] Morris states that any creation of any free improvised music involves three important actions: synthesis, interpretation and invention. Synthesis in this process would be the first and simpler step: the combination of pre-existing genres or methodologies into something different. Interpretation would be the second step, the understanding of the aesthetic and technical particularities of these genres and different synthesized materials. Invention is the utmost step, the creation of musical innovation and original material. All these steps are normally entwined and mutually dependent; therefore, not only invention is never possible without synthesis and interpretation, but also synthesis and interpretation may be an innovation by themselves.

3rd Chapter – EPILOGUE: FREE IMPROVISATION AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Mysticism, spirituality, cultural synthesis, emancipation of meter, and the synesthetic frontiers between the visual and the sonic are all common characteristics in Hermeto and many free jazz artists, described in Chapter 1 and exemplified in Chapter 2. Even though Hermeto was never in direct touch with most of the aforementioned artists (with the exception of Miles Davis), there is enough evidence proving that all of them had a similar mindset about the power and purpose of music. These are not isolated coincidences. The more we explore the life and music of free improvisers, the easier it becomes to identify a larger pattern happening in the world, perhaps a result of similar cultural, political and social circumstances affecting the arts and the way artists think.

It is assumed by the current tradition of Western scholarship that the avant-garde only comes at the top of modern Western societies, as an ultimate development of Modernism. Thus, how would one define the music of Hermeto, born in one the poorest states in Brazil, with no formal musical education or any connection with modernism in his early life? One of the most fascinating characteristics of the avant-garde is that it does not necessarily require any training in a particular musical tradition therefore it is immediately accessible to anybody: composers such as Ornette Coleman, Frank Zappa and Sun Ra, for example, never received a formal contemporary music education, and still became important avant-garde artists. Music education - in Brazil and most of the world - is couched in the privileged sectors of society, but the avant-garde can be a

potential entry point to anyone from any social group. Therefore, one benefit of a study of free jazz and free improvisation like this one is that it can provide clues to what an avant-garde musical movement originating outside of the Western elite might look like. Free improvisation should be seen as a quintessential example of what Italian critic Umberto Eco describes as an "open work": it features many of the paradigmatic avant-garde characteristics such as artistic indeterminacy, ambiguous authorship, controlled disorder. Improvised music is a "work in movement", to use Eco's words, constantly reinventing itself, calling on the listener to actively participate in interpreting the structures of the musical event; it wholly represents the world we live in: disordered, chaotic and full of potentialities. Eco claims that the open work is universal; it reflects aspects of modern psychology, science (theory of relativity), mathematics (information theory) and many other areas of knowledge. However, Eco's point of view is exclusively based on Western European art which includes all sorts of aleatoric, atonal and experimental music in the 1960s. There is no mention of any form of popular art, or jazz or any genre outside of Europe. This leads us to the conclusion that the Avant-Garde and Experimental music are artistic movements often claimed to be property of Europe and more recently the US. This tendency is so ingrained in the realm of musicology that even many scholars from countries outside of the Western world keep analyzing musical phenomena in reference (and most times submission) to the Western standards of Modernism, which always have Europe and US in the standard bearers of innovation and creativity.[74]

[74] A clear example of this phenomenon is the work by Brazilian scholar Tato Taborda, who analyzes

As John Corbett says, "Freely improvised music is the first thoroughly transnational musical art form, its identity inflected by the various intersections and cross-pollinations engendered by all this migration."[75] The European elitist "ownership" of the Avant-Garde ignores the fact that there are *open works* everywhere, from India to Egypt, South Africa, Brazil and many others. What if the concept of openness in art would start to be seen as a Global default option?[76] Hermeto represents a statement against this American European neo-colonialist model[77] by calling to question the norm of who defines what is avant-garde. Riding the same cultural wave as Hermeto, Free Improvisation as a global phenomenon can defy this establishment by creating a global community of artists who

---

Hermeto's experimentalist practices in comparison to rules and conventions of Italian and French avant-garde music. Another example can be found in most biographies of Edgar Varèse, which often underestimate or ignore the importance of his relationship to Latin American composers. (see Graciela Paraskevaídis, "Edgar Varèse y su relación con músicos e intelectuales latinoamericanos de su tiempo. Algunas historias en redondo." *Revista Musical Chilena* 56 (2002): 7-20). The local media also generally plays a crucial role in revering innovations coming from Europe and America while diminishing the importance and value of local experimental practices.

[75] John Corbett, *A Listener's Guide to Free Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 10.

[76] Not only there are numerous examples of pioneer avant-garde artists outside of the Western world (who will be mentioned later in this chapter), but most traditional musics around the world, including European music before the nineteenth century, feature "open" characteristics which contrast with the more recent models of fixity and authorship which have become defining qualities of Western art music in the past two centuries.

[77] Criticizing the traditional jazz historiography, Sherrie Tucker describes the entrance of Black studies, ethnic studies and women's studies in the American academy during the 1960s and 1970s as part of a larger social movement to critique the monolithic canon of jazz tradition that for decades excluded and elbowed out women people of color, poor people, foreigners, gays and lesbians. I propose using this exact same criticism to describe the American European monopoly over the canon of modernism and avant-garde. Sherrie Tucker, "Deconstructing the jazz tradition: The subjectless subject of new jazz studies," *The Source: Challenging Jazz Criticism* 2, (January 1, 2005): 31-46.

constantly push the barriers of creative music, disregarding any labels and categorizations.[78] Here I borrow the words of Luiz Costa-Lima Neto:

> ...Hermeto did not give in to the cultural industry's labels, he created his own, an 'anti-label' which does not intend to respect any limits regarding genre and style in his experimental project. Thus, terms such as Música Livre (free music) or Música Universal (universal music) were coined by Hermeto as "native" labels to define his musical system.[79]

Notwithstanding the Eurocentric view, Eco's mission was very clear: to define universal tendencies in art. When freed from the geographical limitations, the concept of *Open Work* is a useful tool to define the new wave of free improvisation in the world - including Hermeto's music - without having to resort to conventional labels such as World Music, Fusion, Jazz or Contemporary. In this sense, Open Works represent exactly the opposite of labeling; they are open-ended structures in constant transformation and synthesis. Though the aesthetic results may be different, the *poetics* (artistic purpose) of *Open Works* are often aligned.

Conceptualizing free improvisation as a global phenomenon can clarify some important answers to the question of whether Hermeto's experimental music is a result of synthesis of musical influences, imitation of American free jazz, or a singular case of innate disposition towards modernity. None of these hypotheses seems completely correct. Perhaps there are certain developments in

---

[78] As an example, here is a list with a few free improvisation collectives from around the world during the same period: Group Ongaku, in Japan (founded in 1958); Nuova Consonanza in Italy 1964; The Brotherhood of Breath in South Africa in the late 1960s.

[79] Translated to English from Luiz Costa-Lima Neto, "Da casa de Tia Ciata à casa da Família Hermeto Pascoal no bairro do Jabour: tradição e pós-modernidade na vida e na música de um compositor popular experimental no Brasil," *Música e Cultura 3* (2008):1-34, accessed December 15, 2016, www.musicaecultura.ufsc.br.

music and art that do not necessarily depend exclusively on this one-to-one infection/influence which often come associated with the sense of hierarchy and ownership. That is not to say that Hermeto did not absorb any of the American free jazz concepts and methodologies, but that the understanding of a broader context might be more fruitful for studying his music. Eco was attempting to describe universal tendencies in art. Perhaps scholars seeking to understand the universality of human creativity regardless of geography should consider turning for help to disciplines outside of music proper.

In *Structural Anthropology* (1963), French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss focuses on the relationship among phenomena and the systems they create, instead of the analysis of the nature of a particular phenomenon. In other words, Lévi-Strauss studies the systems which connect the major aspects of human culture such as language, social organization, moral, religion, culture, instead of focusing on the particularities of isolated cases.[80]

The idea of innovation — scientific, social, moral and cultural — being born in one particular place and then transmitted through one-to-one infection has constantly proved itself flawed. This type of comparative study serves well the purpose of defending chronological hierarchies, however it obfuscates the conceptualization of larger and more complex systems. Lévi-Strauss criticizes the

---

[80] As Claire Jacobson writes in the preface for the 1963 edition of *Structural Anthropology:* "Homologies between institutions within the same society or among various societies can be explained, not in terms of a mechanical causality, but rather in dialectical terms. Correspondences or isomorphisms should be sought, not between empirical data pertaining to different institutions, but between systematized forms, or models, which are abstracted on different levels and which can be compared either intra- or cross-culturally. To Lévi-Strauss, the building of such models is the basic aim of anthropology". Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Book Publishers, 1963): x.

"investigators of cultural contacts and borrowings"[81], proposing that certain phenomena should be analyzed *synchronically* (without direct reference to history and time) as opposed to *diachronically*. In the realm of music, there are several examples of musical innovation happening simultaneously in different parts of the world with no direct connection.[82] I will borrow the term *convergent evolution* from Evolutionary Biology to describe these events:

> In evolutionary biology, convergent evolution is the process whereby organisms not closely related (not monophyletic), independently evolve similar traits as a result of having to adapt to similar environments or ecological niches.[83]

As in the example of birds and insects developing wings and the ability to fly — a clear case of convergent evolution — very often composers from different places are exposed to "similar environments", even when geographically distant. These environments could be related to politics, social configuration, spirituality, civil rights, wars, philosophic and aesthetic questionings. The advent of atonalism in the late 19th century, for example, was not a unique creation of a few European composers inspired by Wagner's chromaticism, but a result of a general mindset that was spread all over Europe, embedded in fin-de-siècle philosophies that could also be found in different other parts of the world. Charles Ives (1974-1954) is a

---

[81] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 248.

[82] In the field of science, the topic of multiple discoveries has been extensively researched, with hundreds of examples of innovation and discoveries happening in several unconnected places at the exact same time. In the art field however, there is very little mention to this phenomenon. Arthur Koestler is one of the first scholars to explore multiple discoveries in a broader sense, trying to dissect the structure of creative processes throughout history. Arthur Koeslter, *The Act of Creation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964)

[83] https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/convergent_evolution.htm. For a more detailed definition and examples, see Otto Haas, and George Gaylord Simpson, "Analysis of Some Phylogenetic Terms, with Attempts at Redefinition," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 90, no. 5 (1946): 319-49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3301045.

great example of a composer who developed several experimental musical innovations without necessarily being influenced directly by the European streams, but rather by his own playful experiments and philosophical beliefs.[84] Egyptian composer Halim El-Dabh (b. 1921) is yet another example of a composer outside of Europe producing incredibly avant-garde electronic music at the same time as European composers.[85] Schoenberg, Russolo and Varèse, had little interest in each other, but in retrospect they can be seen as part of a larger movement questioning the traditional musical formulations of the preceding three centuries.[86] By looking at these events as simultaneous innovations, one can justify Levi-Strauss's claim that there is such a thing as a *universal thinking*, highlighting the unconscious nature of collective phenomena.

---

[84] In *Charles Ives and his music*, Henry Cowell offers biographical accounts of Ives' life describing his childhood musical experiments (encouraged by his father George Ives), and his Transcendentalist studies, which deeply influenced Ives' artistic independence and free-thinking. During his youth (as a student at Yale University during the late 1890s), Ives was already performing experiments with polytonal fugues (multiple simultaneous keys), extremely dissonant reharmonizations, twelve-tone ideas, and the concept of simultaneous different pieces being played at the same time. Henry Cowell, and Sidney Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (Oxford: University Press, 1969).

[85] According to Michael Khoury, El-Dabh is considered the "father of the Arab avant-garde." He was the first composer in the world to create a piece in the *musique concrète* style, incorporating noises from the environment around him (he worked as an agricultural engineer) and Egyptian indigenous musics into his own musical language. In the words of Khoury, "in 1944, El-Dabh created his first wire recorder piece using sounds from his surrounding. The collection of source materials for this piece happened concurrently with the experiments of the French composer Pierre Schaeffer, who premiered his first composition termed *musique concrète* in 1948. El-Dabh and Schaeffer were not aware of each other; however, Schaeffer gets the credit for being the father of this movement." Michael Khoury, "A Look at Lightening: The Life and Compositions of Halim El-Dabh," In Thomas Burkhalter, et al. eds.,*The Arab Avant Garde* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2013): 165-184.

[86] Albeit their radically different and singular styles, all of the above mentioned composers had an analogous vision regarding the purpose of their artistic innovations. As scholar Robert Henderson describes, "His [Varèse] music seems to have evolved from the same need that activated the Italian futurist painters, and a crucial phrase from the futurist manifesto could well be applied to Varese himself, 'that a clean-sweep should be made of all stale and threadbare subject matter in order to express the vortex of modern life." Varèse himself acclaimed Schoenberg and Debussy as revolutionary composers "breaking away from the peremptory formulas of the 19th century." Robert Henderson, "Varèse," *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1474 (1965): 942-44.

One important question that might arise is how to apply the idea of convergent evolution in the case of Hermeto, given the fact that he definitely was exposed to free jazz music — albeit unconsciously — in the 1970s. Wouldn't that be a clear example of cultural diffusion or infection? Most of the examples of cultural infection cited by Lévi-Strauss are between native peoples with absolutely no geographical or chronological relationship, which is clearly different from the case of Hermeto. However, as Lévi-Strauss says: "External connections can explain transmission, but only internal connections can account for persistence."[87] It is likely that Hermeto was introduced to many musical techniques and new sounds through his contact with American free jazz, but his persistence in developing his creative voice and synthesizing these improvisational methodologies only prove his inherent inclination towards freer musical forms. It is plausible to claim that Hermeto learned some experimental techniques through his contact with American free jazz, as demonstrated in Chapter 2; however, I would argue that these only helped reinforce and inform his innate feeling of artistic restlessness and willingness to innovate.

Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation* uses the idea of *ripeness* to describe the optimal condition for the advent of discoveries and innovations in art and science. Ripeness is not an individual and biological occurrence, but a cultural phenomenon in which the maturity of different skills leads to the inevitable development of relevant discoveries. Hermeto's unique biography and synthesis of so many different musical methodologies made him *ripe* for developing an

---

[87] Lévi-Strauss, 258.

experimental musical language through improvisation. According to Koestler, the idea of *ripeness* explains the "independent development of the same techniques and similar styles of art in different cultures."[88]

Theories such as Koestler's and the idea of a *culturally convergent evolution* constantly encourage researchers to switch focus from the creative individual genius to the ripe context surrounding individual discoveries. Koestler's vision challenges the current paradigm in which the tracking of particular heroic innovators distract us from understanding the collective phenomenon leading to these discoveries.[89] By applying this structural approach to musicology, we can exclude the idea of geographical and historical disposition as a common denominator when defining free improvisation. Hermeto can now be liberated from the idea of "influence" of free jazz musicians, and rather be seen as a representative of the same universal phenomenon in Brazil.

---

[88] Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964): 109.
[89] When describing the idea of multiple discoveries in science, Koestler wrote: "some of the major breakthroughs in the history of science represent such dramatic *tour de force*, that 'ripeness' seems a very lame explanation." In other words, the study of innovation constantly can become a quest to identify individuals, specific names, and heroes, instead of trying to identify the larger phenomenon of 'ripeness'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Iain. *This is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Anderson, Iain. *This is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

Araújo, F., and Fausto Borém. "Variação Progressiva de Schoenberg em Hermeto Pascoal: análise e realização de duas *lead sheets* do *Calendário do Som*." *Per Musi* 28 (2013): 70-95.

Bailey, Derek. *Improvisation: its nature and practice in music.* Boston: Da Capo Press, 1992.

Blake, Ran. *The Primacy of the Ear*. Third Stream Association, 2010.

Borém, F. , and Maurício F. Garcia. "*Cannon* de Hermeto Pascoal: aspectos religiosos em uma obra-prima para flauta." *Per Musi* 22 (2010): 63-79.

Borém, F., and Fabiano Araújo. "Hermeto Pascoal: experiência de vida e a formação de sua linguagem harmonica." *Per Musi* 22 (2010): 22-43.

Bohlman, Philip V. , and Goffredo Plastino. *Jazz Worlds / World Jazz.* University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Budds, Michael J. *Jazz in the sixties: The Expansion of Musical Resources & Techniques.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1978.

Campos, Lúcia P. "Tudo isso junto de uma vez só: o choro, o forró e as bandas de pífano na música de Hermeto Pascoal." Masters diss. , Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2006.

Cone, Edward T. "Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method." *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 1 (1962): 18-26.

Corbett, John. *A Listener's Guide to Free Improvisation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Corbett, John. *Extended Play: Sounding off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Costa-Lima Neto, Luiz. "O *Calendário do Som* e a estética sociomusical inclusiva de Hermeto Pascoal." *Revista USP* 82 (2009): 164-188.

—. “O cantar natural de Hermeto Pascoal: compartilhando vozes e escutas por meio das gravações em disco – parte 1.” *Claves 8* vol 1 (2013): 55-74.

—. “A música experimental de Hermeto Pascoal e Grupo: concepção e linguagem (1981-1993).” Masters diss., UNIRIO, 1999.

—. “The Musical Universe of Hermeto Pascoal.” *Popular Music and Society* 34/02 (2011): 133-161.

—. “O Cantor Hermeto Pascoal: os instrumentos da voz.” *Per Musi* 22 (2010): 44-62.

—. "Da casa de Tia Ciata à casa da Família Hermeto Pascoal no bairro do Jabour: tradição e pós-modernidade na vida e na música de um compositor popular experimental no Brasil." *Música e Cultura 3* (2008):1-34, accessed December 15, 2016. www.musicaecultura.ufsc.br.

Cowell, Henry, and Sidney Cowell. *Charles Ives and His Music*. Oxford: University Press, 1969.

Dujmić, Dunja. "The Musical Transcendentalism of Charles Ives." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 2, no. 1 (1971): 89-95.

Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Farkas, Thomaz. *Hermeto, Campeão*. Short Movie. Directed by Thomaz Farkas. São Paulo: Thomaz Farkas Companhia Produtora, 1981.

Fountain, Dick. *Sound???*. Short Movie. Short Movie. Directed by Dick Fountaine. New Tempo ABC TVCUK / PBS, 1967.

Fukuchi, Hidetoshi. *Op. 34: Evidence of Arnold Schoenberg's Musikalische Gedanke*. Denton, Texas. UNT Digital Library. http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc4519/. Accessed November 8, 2016.

Gilman, Bruce. “Sorcerer’s apprentice.” *Brazzil Magazine.* Accessed March 25, 2009. www.brazzil.com/musdec96.htm.

Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Godwin, Joscelyn. "The revival of speculative music." *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 3(1982): 373-390.

Henderson, Robert. "Varèse." *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1474 (1965): 942-44.

Haas, Otto, and George Gaylord Simpson. "Analysis of Some Phylogenetic Terms, with Attempts at Redefinition." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 90, no. 5 (1946): 319-49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3301045.

Himes, Geoffrey. "Jazz Articles: Rahsaan Roland Kirk: The Cult of Kirk." *Jazz Times*, 2008. Accessed November 10, 2016. http://jazztimes.com/articles/17992-rahsaan-roland-kirk-the-cult-of-kirk.

Hinrichsen, Rodrigo. *Quebrando Tudo*. Documentary. Directed by Rodrigo Hinrichsen. São Paulo Traquitana Filmes, 1998.

Jones, LeRoi. *Black Music.* Boston: Da Capo Press, 1998.

Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz.* Graz: Universal Edition A. G. Wien, 1975.

Khoury, Michael. "A Look at Lightening: The Life and Compositions of Halim El-Dabh." In Thomas Burkhalter, et al. eds.,*The Arab Avant Garde,* 165-184. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2013.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Act of Creation.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology.* New York: Basic Book Publishers, 1963.

Lewis, George E. *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Litweiler, John. *The Freedom Principle: Jazz after 1958.* Da Capo Press, 1990.

Lock, Graham. ""What I Call a Sound": Anthony Braxton's Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisers." *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation* [Online], 4.1 (2008): n. pag. Accessed on November 20, 2016.

Mandel, Howard. *Miles, Ornette, Cecil: Jazz Beyond Jazz.* Routledge, 2007.

McGowan, Chris and Ricardo Pessanha. *The Billboard Book of Brazilian Music: Samba, Bossa Nova and the popular sounds of Brazil.* New York: Guinness Publishing Ltd, 1991.

Morris, Joe. *Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music.* Stony Creek: Riti Publishing, 2012.

Palmer, Otto. *Rudolf Steiner on His Book The Philosophy of Freedom*. Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1975.

Paraskevaídis, Graciela. "Edgar Varèse y su relación con músicos e intelectuales latinoamericanos de su tiempo. Algunas historias en redondo." *Revista Musical Chilena* 56 (2002): 7-20.

Pascoal, Hermeto. *Calendário do Som*. São Paulo: Editora Senac (2004).

Pascoal, Hermeto. "Biografia." Last modified January 9, 2009. http://www.hermetopascoal.com.br.

Perez da Silva, Camila. "A Sonoridade híbrida de Hermeto Pascoal e a indústria cultural." Masters diss. , Universidade Federal de São Carlos, 2009.

Piedade, Acácio Tadeu. "Brazilian Jazz and Friction of Musicalities." In *Jazz Planet*, E. Taylor Atkins (ed.). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi (2003): 41-58.

Prandini, José Carlos. "Um estudo da improvisação na música de Hermeto Pascoal: transcrições e análise dos solos improvisados." Master's diss., UNICAMP, Campinas 1996.

Radano, Ronald M. "Jazzin' the Classics: The AACM's Challenge to Mainstream Aesthetics." *Black Music Research Journal* 12:1 (1992): 79-85.

Schuller, Gunther, and Varèse. "Conversation with Varèse." *Perspectives of New Music* 3, no. 2 (1965): 32-37.

Swed, John F. *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra.* Da Capo Press, 1998.

Tucker, Sherrie, (Author). "Deconstructing the jazz tradition: The subjectless subject of new jazz studies." *The Source: Challenging Jazz Criticism* 2, (January 1, 2005): 31-46.

Veloso, Caetano, and Barbara Einzig. *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil.* New York: A.A. Knopf, 2002.

Wen-Chung, Chou. "Varèse: A Sketch of the Man and His Music." *The Musical Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1966): 151-70.

DISCOGRAPHY:

Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Art Ensemble of Chicago with Fontella Bass.* © 1970, America Records. LP.

Davis, Miles. *Bitches Brew*. © 1970, Columbia. LP.

Davis, Miles. *Live Evil.* © 1971, Columbia. LP.

Kirk, Rahsaan Roland. *The Case of the 3 Sided Dream in Audio Color.* © 1975, Atlantic Records. LP.

Moreira, Airto and Flora Purim. *Natural Feelings.* © 1970, Buddah Records. LP.

Moreira, Airto and Flora Purim. *Seeds on the Ground.* © 1971, One Way Records. LP.

Pascoal, Hermeto. *Hermeto Pascoal: Brazilian Adventure*. © 1971, Muse Records. MCD 6006. CD.

—. *A música livre de Hermeto Pascoal*. © 1973, Polygram. PLG BR 8246211. LP.

—. *Slave Mass*. © 1977, CBS. LP.

—. *Zabumbê-bum-á*. © 1978, WEA Brasil, 1978.

—. *Hermeto Pascoal ao vivo em Montreux*. © 1979, WEA Brasil. LP.

—. *Cérebro Magnético*. © 1980, WEA Brasil. 30.127. LP

—. *Hermeto Pascoal & Grupo*. © 1982, Som da Gente. SDG 010/92. CD.

—. *Lagoa da Canoa - Município de Arapiraca*. © 1984, Som da Gente. SDG 011/92.

—. *Brasil Universo.* © 1985, Som da Gente. SDG 012/93. CD.

—. *Só não toca quem não quer*. © 1987, Som da Gente. SDG 001/87. CD.

—. *Festa dos Deuses*. © 1992, Polygram. PLGBR 510 407-2. CD.

—. *Por diferentes caminhos*. © 1994, Som da Gente. CD.

—. *Eu e eles.* © 1999, Selo Rádio MEC. CD.

—. *Mundo Verde Esperança.* © 2002 Selo Rádio MEC. CD.

Quarteto Novo. *Quarteto Novo.* © 1967, EMI. LP.

Taylor, Cecil. *Solo*. © 1973, Trio Records. LP.

Zwarg, Itiberê. *Itiberê Orquestra Família: Calendário do Som.* © 2005, Gravadora Maritaca. CD.