

Transcription and the Investigation of Model-based Jazz Performance: A Case Study and an Unprovoked Defence

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This article compares the trombone parts of two performances of Arnett Nelson's composition 'Buddy's Habit'.¹ The comparison is made through the use of transcribed examples, and demonstrates firstly that one performance was used as a model for the other. King Oliver's Jazz Band recorded 'Buddy's Habit' in 1923, and it was this version which the young Melbourne group the Red Onion Jazz Band used as a model when it recorded the piece in 1964.² Following a procedure common to many young traditional jazz bands, in learning the tune the Onions studied the Oliver band's recording closely, and as a result the imprint of that performance on their own is undeniable. This is a case of a specific model-based procedure wherein a particular recording rather than a band or a style is taken as a reference point. Yet the Onions' interpretation is not by any means a duplication of the Oliver band's version, nor was it intended to be. Further investigation of the two performances establishes that there was considerable freedom in the Onions' approach.

Comparison of the two versions is facilitated in this instance by their having been written out from the respective recordings. The three definitions of 'transcription' given by Mark Tucker are all therefore relevant: 'the act of fixing in notated form music that is entirely or partly improvised, or for which no written score exists; also the resulting notated version itself. The term is also applied to the traditional practice of memorizing and reproducing a recorded improvisation without necessarily notating it.'³ The Onions, drawing on the Oliver band's performance, produced their own without the mediation of notation; aspects of each

¹ The title of this piece has differed on various recordings and releases between 'Habit' and 'Habits.' Red Nichols and Muggsy Spanier are among those who have recorded it as the latter; see also next note.

² King Oliver's Jazz Band, 'Buddy's Habit,' recorded in October 1923. Original release on 78-rpm single OKeh 40000; currently on, among others, *King Oliver's Jazz Band With Louis Armstrong*, Jazz Archives/EPM (France), 1991. Listed on the sleeve of this release as 'Buddy's Habits,' the title is given as 'Buddy's Habit' in Brian Rust and Walter Allen, *King Joe Oliver* (London: Jazz Book Club, 1957) 90. The Red Onion Jazz Band, 'Buddy's Habit,' recorded in September 1964. *The Red Onion Jazz Band*, LP, W&G, 1965. For background on the Red Onion Jazz Band see Timothy Stevens, 'The Red Onion Jazz Band at the 1963 Australian Jazz Convention,' *Musicology Australia* XXIV (2001): 32-58.

³ Mark Tucker, 'Transcription (i),' *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld (London: Macmillan, 1988) 1213.

are presented in score with the present article. However, whether transcription is employed as an element of either instrumental training or musicological research, it brings with it certain issues which are as yet unresolved: the relevance to an improvising tradition of what is written, the representation of musical elements which are difficult either to notate or to read, the concentration on pitch and rhythm to the neglect of tonal character, and so on. While this is not the place for a thorough critique of transcription, some of these issues are raised by its use in the study of a band which did not read a great deal, yet learned by imitation from achievements of the past. Several are discussed towards the end of the article, having been brought into view through the analysis of the examples. This article maintains that while transcription has its limitations it has a particular relevance to music made in the manner of a band such as the Onions.

It is hoped that the particular utility of transcription might become apparent through the demonstration that, while in learning 'Buddy's Habit,' the Onions did take their lead from Oliver's recording, their rendition of the tune was not without input of their own. That the band modelled performances after specific historical recordings has never been a secret, and was at the time becoming standard practice for it as part of a pervasive effort to achieve a closeness to the jazz tradition—an 'authenticity'—which was for them synonymous with playing jazz properly.⁴ In these dimensions their efforts, and those of many of their contemporaries, have been portrayed as deleterious to characteristics that had come to define the so-called Australian Style in jazz during the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁵ What transcribed examples can show is that while a relationship subsists between the later version and the earlier, material furnished by the model—in this case, Dutrey—has been mediated and modified by the younger player, Howard, according to his own musical personality.

Therefore, the purpose of placing the trombone parts alongside one another is not to measure how faithful the later version was to the earlier. In fact, the use of comparative transcriptions ought to demonstrate how mistaken is any assumption that Howard's objective was simply to copy Dutrey's performance.⁶ In determining the relationship of one performance to the other, something of Howard's own instrumental style, as well as his perception of the

⁴ This was, however, not the only reason, and the matter is discussed more fully in Stevens, '1963 Convention'.

⁵ For example, Bruce Chumies Ross writes of 'the obliteration of the distinct Australian style' after 1951 as jazz in Australia 'came increasingly under the influence of the international traditional style' ('An Australian Sound: Jazz in Melbourne and Adelaide 1941-1951,' in Peter Spearritt and David Walker, eds, *Australian Popular Culture* [Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1979] 78 and 70). Bruce Johnson writes that during the 1960s the followers and perpetrators of New Orleans music in Australia—whose attention to American recordings resembled the Onions'—'gave jazz more definition as a concept, but in so doing...narrowed its possibilities' (*The Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz* [Melbourne: OUP, 1987] 56). The simplest interpretation of this idea, that a more plentiful supply of recordings from overseas led to a sameness in the Australian scene, is contradicted by the music of the Onions. Bands still had to identify themselves within a local performance community, and the manner in which the Onions did this, alongside other groups with which they would share billing, such as the Yarra Yarra Jazz Band or the John Hawes Jazz Band, demonstrates the subsistence of creativity and individuality both musical and otherwise.

⁶ It happens in certain circumstances that an historical recording is held in such high regard as to lead instrumentalists to attempt a note-for-note recreation of it. Under different circumstances this might have been the Onions' objective with the tunes they performed. In fact it wasn't, and my point here is that the use of transcriptions can suggest what their aims were, and help in explicating their manner of thinking about and understanding jazz. It is, then, a tool with fairly specific objectives.

model, become clearer.⁷ Possibly, a comparison of two versions where the later diverges from the earlier while having clearly drawn on it might be thought to insinuate shortcomings on the part of the later musician. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that whatever can be posited about Howard's style through the use of transcription is subject to its limitations. Yet what can fairly be established is the likelihood that Howard made a conscious and informed decision to vary from the model. This explanation of the present example is supported by the nature of what Howard has gained from Dutrey: ideas of form as well as content.

The Onions and 'Buddy's Habit'

The Onions' recording of 'Buddy's Habit' was made in 1964,⁸ and included on the W&G LP *The Red Onion Jazz Band*. This was the band's first LP release, following two EPs for East, *An Impromptu Recital by the Amazing and Entertaining Red Onion Jazz Band* (1962) and *The Red Onion Jazz Band at the 1963 Australian Jazz Convention*, and one for W&G, *The Red Onions At Home* (1964). When the recording of 'Buddy's Habit' was made, the members of the band were Gerry Humphrys (clarinet), Brett Iggulden (trumpet), Bill Howard (trombone), Ian Clyne (piano), Rainer Breit (banjo), Kim Lynch (brass bass), and Allan Browne (drums). Sally Iggulden was also a regular guest with the band in live performance, playing washboard, and appeared on two selections on the LP. Since the convention EP, the band had been clearly working from individual historical recordings in developing its repertoire,⁹ and the following list shows the models taken for *The Red Onion Jazz Band*:

King Oliver: Buddy's Habit, New Orleans Stomp, Working Man's Blues

Jelly Roll Morton: Cannon Ball Blues, Jungle Blues

Louis Armstrong: Don't Forget To Mess Around, Struttin' With Some Barbecue

Clarence Williams: Cushion Foot Stomp

Kid Ory: Blues For Jimmy

Johnny Dodds: My Baby

Bix Beiderbecke: Oh, Baby

Standard tunes/popular songs:¹⁰ The Prisoner's Song

⁷ This may not be the best way of discerning an instrumentalist's style, but can certainly hint at some of the decisions made by him/her when the model is also available.

⁸ According to the band's 1964 engagements book, in the collection of Allan Browne, the band recorded six tunes on 23 September and five on 30 September that year. However, *The Red Onion Jazz Band* has twelve selections. According to a duplicated sheet distributed to band members, 'Buddy's Habit' was listed for inclusion in the recording session during June 1964 which produced the EP *The Red Onions at Home* ('R.O.J.B. Record Session—17th June 6:30,' duplicated sheet with handwritten additions in the collection of Allan Browne). Prudently, the band recorded six selections for this EP, although it featured only four and did not include 'Buddy's Habit.' The engagements book lists another recording session on October 8, 1964, about which no further information has been found, so while 'Buddy's Habit' may have been recorded at any of the sessions, it might have been the earliest recorded selection for the LP. *The Red Onion Jazz Band* was probably released in 1965, although it is not dated.

⁹ The manner in which this approach developed and in which it shaped the band's repertoire is discussed in Stevens, '1963 Convention.' It became a distinctive and defining aspect of the band, and demonstrated in practice its philosophy and its perception of history. It did not mean however that the band's own style and personality were sacrificed.

¹⁰ That is, with no specific model version.

Oliver's music was a continuing interest for the Onions. *The Red Onions At Home*, *The Red Onion Jazz Band*, and the following LP, *Hot Red Onions* (1965), all contained selections learned from recordings by the Oliver band. When Humphrys, Lynch and Clyne left the group in 1965 to form the mod band The Loved Ones, the remaining Onions emphasised their continuing dedication to jazz by making up their numbers and adding a second trumpet to record an EP featuring only Oliver's music, *King Oliver Revisited* (1965).

'Buddy's Habit' is a three-part composition, comprising a 16-bar A strain in B-flat major, which is played twice, a second strain of 20 bars, largely built on a V-I progression, and a third strain of 32 bars, in E flat major. The formal organisation of the Onions' performance is identical to that of the Oliver band:

Bars	Section
1-4	Introduction (4 bars)
5-36	A strain, B-flat major (16 bars), repeated
37-56	B strain, B-flat major (20 bars)
57-60	Modulatory material (4 bars)
61-92	C strain, E-flat major (Oliver recording features slide whistle on this chorus) (32 bars)
93-124	C strain (ensemble chorus)
125-156	C strain (ensemble chorus)
157-158	Tag ending, emphasising tonic chord of E-flat major (2 bars)

The Oliver band's performance shows that melodies for the three strains are established. As lead instruments, the cornet/trumpet, clarinet, or slide whistle, maintain fidelity to a small amount of melodic material, with only slight variations or embellishments. The role of the accompanying instruments, have, over the time the band has been playing 'Buddy's Habit' in public, developed lines which complement the lead melodic material, their parts being similarly economical in construction.¹¹

The Onions' instrumentation differed from that of the Oliver band, which remained famous both for having two cornets in the front line, and for the fact that it was Oliver and Louis Armstrong who played them.¹² The slide whistle in the Oliver band, played possibly by Armstrong or by the drummer, Baby Dodds,¹³ was also an element of the original not featured by the Onions. Furthermore, the Onions had the benefit of recording technology which allowed the drums, far from distinct if present at all on the original, to be played to fuller capacity.

None of these differences posed an obstacle for the Onions, who strove to preserve the original arrangement. In Oliver's recording, the cornets are silent for the slide whistle chorus,

¹¹ There are complete transcriptions of both performances in vol. 2 of Timothy Stevens, *The Origins, Development and Significance of the Red Onion Jazz Band, 1960-1996* (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2000) 20-62.

¹² Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong (cornets), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Honoré Dutrey (trombone), Lil Hardin (piano), Johnny St Cyr (banjo), Charlie Jackson (bass saxophone), and Warren 'Baby' Dodds (drums).

¹³ Robert Parker writes: 'The identity of the slide-whistler is a mystery; discographers nowadays tend to blame Louis; earlier it was thought to be Baby Dodds.' He then admits that in the recording to which he is referring, 'Sobbin' Blues' from 22 June 1923, both cornets distinctly enter before the slide whistle has finished. Liner notes, *King Oliver Volume One, 1923 to 1929* (ABC, 1992). Allen and Rust name Dodds. *King Joe Oliver* 90.

which introduces a new melody and an accompaniment on trombone. The Onions, modifying the slide whistle line for presentation by Humphrys on clarinet, similarly utilise Howard, while Iggulden does not play. Allan Browne switches from drums to wood blocks, giving this chorus some, though admittedly only a little, of the dynamic reduction which is present in the original, and which permits the final choruses to build effectively.¹⁴ There are several points of interest in the Onions' manipulation of the Oliver band's material, such as the manner in which Humphrys creates a blend of the clarinet and slide whistle parts in a single line during the third strain. Breaks are also observed by the Onions as integral elements of the piece, and adjustments have been made so that, for example, the two-cornet break in the penultimate chorus (bars 107–8) is negotiated by trumpet and clarinet.¹⁵

The trombone part in this piece is noteworthy in demonstrating the most significant features of specific model-based jazz performance in a relatively concise example. The role of the trombone in a three-piece front line is often described as contrapuntal, but only in the sense of providing complementary melodic material; that is, it is not the primary focus. Its role is to blend with and support the trumpet and the clarinet, as the former maintains the known melody (or provides the 'lead') and the latter provides a harmonic and rhythmic context, largely through arpeggiation and running quaver lines. Trombone playing in the traditional jazz ensemble has ranged, however, from a near-duplication of the role of the tuba—a slightly embellished volleying between root and fifth on the first and third beats of the 4/4 bar—to an almost fully assimilated, though self-sufficient, melodic line (more reminiscent of what is found in truly contrapuntal music, although admittedly still far from it). As with all the instruments of the band, the trombone tends to favour certain patterns, although these vary with the performer, and is unfortunately susceptible to perhaps the greatest jazz cliché of them all: the portamento from dominant to tonic.

As is the case with many instruments, arguments persist about who 'developed' the trombone in the 1920s, from the oom-pah marching instrument to the more independent melodic voice. The Oliver band's trombonist, Honoré Dutrey (c.1887–1935), was a musician originally from New Orleans who is remembered primarily on account of the recordings which he made with Oliver. Dutrey is often denigrated by critics; James Lincoln Collier writes of his playing on the 1923 Oliver recordings, 'Dutrey is out of tune frequently and at times in his breaks seems to lose track of the down beat.'¹⁶ In the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, John Chilton writes:

¹⁴ Subtlety was not a hallmark of the Onions' style, particularly in 1964. The bathetic vibrato in the clarinet at this point of the performance, and the only marginal dynamic variation are evidence of two other characteristics of the band: humour and energy. Later, greater instrumental ability led to increased musical sophistication overall, but it is significant that even at this relatively early stage, the band had determined methods of varying texture according to the form of the tune and in view of the model version. It is interesting that in Browne's copy of the recording schedule for 17 June (see above, n. 8), he has stipulated 'Cymbal crashes with front line on intro. Woodblocks behind slide whistle'—although there is no slide whistle in the version appearing on the LP. If 'Buddy's Habit' was recorded again in the September or October sessions, then it is possible (although unlikely) that the recording made in June did include a slide whistle. More probable, however, is that 'slide whistle' was shorthand for the first statement of the C strain.

¹⁵ A break is a solo feature of about two bars' length, which usually occurs at the end or the half-way point of a chorus, when the rest of the band stops on the first beat of the bar. It may function both as a culmination of the previous and a pickup to the next section.

¹⁶ James Lincoln Collier, *Louis Armstrong* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984) 102.

Although he was not an inventive improviser or the possessor of an exceptional sense of harmony, Dutrey had a sonorous tone and an effective way of playing long, legato phrases in the lower register. His main gift was probably his power of understatement, which served as an effective contrast to the volatile creativity of the musicians with whom he usually worked.¹⁷

On account of his short life and small contribution to jazz he is not regarded as a major figure. Had his remembered recordings not been with the Oliver band, he may have been completely forgotten.¹⁸ Yet he played in a fluent, supple style, which may have been attributable to a poor sense of the beat, but may also have been a rare ability to break free of it.¹⁹

Honoré Dutrey in the recording by King Oliver's Jazz Band

In the Oliver band's recording, the three strains of 'Buddy's Habit' are mostly organised; that is, while they may not have been written down in detail,²⁰ the object is not the freer collective improvisation common in later years.²¹ There are only minimal variations between the two statements of the A strain. The rhythmic unison of the cornet and clarinet, their playing of a melody harmonised at the sixth, and the similarity of the trombone part to that of the bass saxophone, immediately suggest arrangement. After the solidity of the first 60 bars, at the arrival of the C strain there is an immediate change in Dutrey's playing, so that it is characterised by a more laconic relationship to the beat.²² His part as notated in the transcription has been organised to match the four-beat bar, but his placement is not really as strict as this would suggest. He employs a wider range of attack and dynamic within the phrase than is customary, making his sound still more flexible. At times, there is a sense of his being as much as half a beat away from the rest of the band, as at bars 71–75, where the clarinet and slide whistle are playing long notes, mostly on the first beat of the bar. It is impossible to know where Dutrey was hearing the beat, and if indeed he was wrong he deserves credit for his ability to put things on course again; in any case, his softer attack and rhythmic fluidity tend to keep things ambiguous.

Dutrey's three C strain choruses are presented in a three-stave score in Example 1. The last strain of a composition such as this is generally the one where collective improvisation predominates, successive choruses building in energy to a climactic finish. It is traditionally the one on which the band 'goes to town,' and yet there is in 'Buddy's Habit' a remarkable degree of organisation both to the Oliver band and, although in a slightly different manner, to

¹⁷ John Chilton, 'Dutrey, Honore,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* 319.

¹⁸ It should also be noted, however, that in the collection of Bill Russell's interviews, 'Sweet' Emma Barrett and Natty Dominique speak very highly of Dutrey's abilities. Russell, *New Orleans Style*, comp. and ed. Barry Martyn and Mike Hazeldine (New Orleans: Jazzology, 1994) 125, 148, 157.

¹⁹ Also, looking ahead to Lester Young, arguably a prescient one.

²⁰ There may have been a written version of this piece, and the Oliver band may have referred to it. If a score did exist, however, it would certainly not have included clarinet or trombone lines. In any case, the specific method by which the Oliver band prepared its performance of 'Buddy's Habit' is not important for this paper, since it was only the recording itself which affected the Onions in the development of theirs. 'Arrangement' here means either written or agreed upon.

²¹ The recent version of 'Buddy's Habit' on Allan Browne's *New Rascals' East St Kilda Toodleoo* (Jazzhead, 2001) demonstrates just how far this can be taken.

²² Curiously enough however, bearing in mind Collier's judgement, this is least evident in the break he plays during the final chorus (bars 139–40).

Ex. 1. Dutrey's three C-strain choruses compared

1st chorus

61

2nd chorus

93

3rd chorus

125

65

97

129

69

101

133

73

105

137

77

109

141

This block contains three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 77 and ends at measure 108. The second staff starts at measure 109 and ends at measure 140. The third staff starts at measure 141 and ends at measure 150. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

81

113

145

This block contains three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 81 and ends at measure 112. The second staff starts at measure 113 and ends at measure 144. The third staff starts at measure 145 and ends at measure 150. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

85

117

149

This block contains three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 85 and ends at measure 116. The second staff starts at measure 117 and ends at measure 148. The third staff starts at measure 149 and ends at measure 150. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

89

121

153

This block contains three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 89 and ends at measure 120. The second staff starts at measure 121 and ends at measure 152. The third staff starts at measure 153 and ends at measure 154. The music is in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 121 features a triplet of eighth notes.

the Onions. The greater rhythmic and tonal freedom evident in Dutrey's playing during the C strain is particularly effective because once again, there is a regularity to the material being played. In fact, each member of the band seems to have formed a fairly strong idea of his part, so that improvisation seems to consist only of the slight variations made to the material on its restatements.²³ These variations are greater than those of the A or B strains, but still the lines are clearly based on something established.²⁴ The regularity gives the band its shape, its capacity for dependence, and serves also to identify the tune. Each musician has a role, and each musician's line is the result of a growing understanding of the others' lines, most probably over many performances of the tune. There are elements in these lines, moreover, which become integral to particular tunes, and this is something evident from a range of Oliver band performances, and something the Onions seem to have understood.

That Dutrey is economical with material is immediately evident, and it is clear that he has an established conception of the shape of the chorus. The regularity of his material is balanced in performance by rhythmic suppleness and dynamic variation.²⁵ In the C strain his lines sound more relaxed and less dictated by arrangement, whether written or agreed upon. Even beneath the slide whistle, his playing is notable for several unusual rhythmic and melodic shapes, not least among which is his opening figure. This melodic idea seems obscure, finishing on the ninth²⁶ and confined to one bar. A comparison of his final three choruses, however, demonstrates that Dutrey's vocabulary for this tune appears to have become firmly established, most probably during regular performances prior to the recording. Even the opening figure makes a further appearance, somewhat mystifying still, at bar 109. He maintains an idea of the tune as a whole, which is varied only slightly, so that each chorus consists of very similar material (see Example 1).

The structure of Dutrey's playing is, of course, largely a result of the melodic lead. The melody introduced by the slide whistle is in four-bar phrases, and the trombone's role from the outset is both to accompany these and to provide a link between them. So Dutrey plays shorter phrases, and at the end of each four-bar section makes the trombone's line generally more conspicuous. A greater rhythmic complexity and higher placement of ideas demonstrate this throughout the transcription. The first cornet in the final two choruses plays an embellished version of the same melody, so Dutrey's role (and much of his material) is unaltered.

Frequent recurrences of material in Dutrey's performance are in one sense consistent with the nature of the cornet part, but also indicate an economy in his playing; it is as though there actually were a trombone part agreed upon for this composition, consisting of elements which

²³ Unfortunately, by the second half of the final chorus the individual lines in the Oliver band have become very difficult to discern.

²⁴ The varying degree of improvisation on these early recordings remains an open and a hotly debated question. However, the concentration of material does not preclude the effect of considerable freedom, let alone the growing energy, and this is one of the great achievements of the band.

²⁵ The trombone has been selected not only for the regularity of the part, but because it is the only front line instrument which plays a consistent role throughout the C strain choruses. The final two choruses of Dodds's clarinet and Oliver's cornet show similarities also. Collier asserts that the Oliver group 'was not, essentially, an improvising band,' (*Louis Armstrong* 100) and in light of later developments in jazz this is true; it is important to understand, however, just how effective was the band's blend of freedom and discipline.

²⁶ Coincidentally, in all instances of the first four bars of the A strain melody (bars 8, 16, 24 and 32), Oliver concludes on the ninth, rather than the more logical and expected third. There seems no clear reason for this.

contributed to its identity and meaning in equal measure to the cornet and clarinet parts. Such is the nature of collective improvisation, at least in theory. The ideal of the band in which each member has an equal responsibility for the direction and elaboration of the music is frequently invoked as descriptor and defence of traditional jazz. However, Dutrey's improvisation most probably involves playing *with* material already established.²⁷ The longer passages at bars 61–67 and 109–115 bear striking resemblances to one another, and numerous shorter phrases (for example bars 65–66, 70–71, 105–6, 111–12, and 115–16) return in very similar forms at the same point in each of the two succeeding choruses.

Bill Howard in the recording by the Onions

Structure is significant in what Howard has gained from the study of Dutrey's playing on 'Buddy's Habit' (see Example 2). While Howard's playing is generally simpler, particularly in terms of rhythm, there is a similarly recognisable form to the three choruses he plays, both within the 32-bar form and between choruses. Howard has developed a vocabulary of gestures in a similar manner to Dutrey, from whom some of them have clearly been appropriated. These are generally conspicuous in the original; for instance, in Dutrey's version the figure which makes its first full appearance at bars 83–84 (having been perhaps heralded at bar 67), reappears at the equivalent point in each subsequent chorus (bars 115–16 and 147–8). Leading into the concluding eight bars of the chorus, this is a moment of considerable tension, and the melody Dutrey plays is emphatic.²⁸ Perhaps in consideration of this, Howard incorporates the phrase into his own ensemble playing, both at the points at which Dutrey uses it and in place of Dutrey's own (and rather more interesting) break, at bars 139–40.

The manner in which this phrase is accommodated and utilised is significant in Howard's playing, which is more varied overall than Dutrey's. Although Howard follows a similar path, in that the shape of each chorus is roughly consistent, there are far fewer instances of exact replication between choruses. Ideas are reappearing, but the degree of variation between their appearances is more striking. This is, of course, concordant with a later period in musical history when the understanding of improvisation in traditional jazz had expanded well beyond short breaks and the nuance of known phrases. A consistency of contour can be traced in Howard's choruses, but only rarely do all three choruses resemble each other as closely as did Dutrey's. Functional repetitions, in the spirit rather than the letter, are more the case here, as a comparison between bars 68–85 and 100–118 demonstrates. Very often in particular phrases the notes are almost all the same, but the variation in rhythmic placement recasts them as new melodies.

²⁷ The distinctions here indicate the complexity of the situation. The development of the trombone part over time was probably such that certain elements came to be understood as integral to the piece as a whole. Very possibly this took place for Dutrey through rehearsals and performances of his own, although this need not necessarily be the case. Howard's performance, with Dutrey's in view, indicates some of the possibilities of transmission without notation.

²⁸ Moreover, in none of the other tunes recorded at this or the subsequent session with the Oliver band, does Dutrey use this figure, suggesting that it was not merely an expedient, generic fragment, fit for insertion at will, regardless of the tune being played. Unfortunately, the Oliver band only recorded one version of 'Buddy's Habit,' so the theory cannot be fully tested, but comparison of recordings of 'Dipper Mouth Blues' or 'Mabel's Dream' would seem to suggest it might have been borne out.

Ex. 2. Howard's three C-strain choruses compared

The image displays a musical score for three different C-strain choruses, presented in three systems. Each system contains three staves, labeled '1st chorus', '2nd chorus', and '3rd chorus' on the left. The music is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). Measure numbers are indicated at the beginning of each line.

- System 1:** Measures 61, 93, and 125. The 1st chorus (61) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The 2nd chorus (93) is mostly rests with some notes in the final measure. The 3rd chorus (125) has a more active bass line.
- System 2:** Measures 65, 97, and 129. The 1st chorus (65) continues with a melodic line. The 2nd chorus (97) has notes in the final measure. The 3rd chorus (129) continues with a steady bass line.
- System 3:** Measures 69, 101, and 133. The 1st chorus (69) continues. The 2nd chorus (101) has notes in the final measure. The 3rd chorus (133) continues with a steady bass line.
- System 4:** Measures 73, 105, and 137. The 1st chorus (73) continues. The 2nd chorus (105) has notes in the final measure. The 3rd chorus (137) continues with a steady bass line.

77

109

141

This block contains three systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 77-108) shows a bass line with a melodic line and a bass line. The second system (measures 109-140) continues the melodic line and bass line. The third system (measures 141-172) continues the melodic line and bass line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

81

113

145

This block contains three systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 81-112) shows a bass line with a melodic line and a bass line. The second system (measures 113-144) continues the melodic line and bass line. The third system (measures 145-176) continues the melodic line and bass line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

85

117

149

This block contains three systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 85-116) shows a bass line with a melodic line and a bass line. The second system (measures 117-148) continues the melodic line and bass line. The third system (measures 149-180) continues the melodic line and bass line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

89

121

153

This block contains three systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 89-120) shows a bass line with a melodic line and a bass line. The second system (measures 121-152) continues the melodic line and bass line. The third system (measures 153-184) continues the melodic line and bass line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Howard's playing also shows evidence of a particular procedure significant in the Onions' music, the clearest illustration of which is a comparison between the first C strain choruses of each trombonist (see Example 3). Howard departs from Dutrey's ensemble line gradually, yet mirrors it to a surprising degree during the first 32 bars. This would seem to suggest a consistency of approach with that taken in the study of important soloists such as Bix Beiderbecke or Johnny Dodds. Iggulden's performance of Beiderbecke's solo on 'Barnacle Bill' and Humphrys's rendition of Dodds's feature on 'Perdido Street'²⁹ both emphasise their fidelity to the models at the outset but move gradually away from them as they progress.

The degree of mirroring by Howard is more surprising because this is an ensemble part, and not the primary focus. It is treated, however, with much the same gravity as if it were a solo feature. Howard, by this time a more than competent trombonist, had little need for dependence on a model, so we must assume that he held Dutrey's playing on this selection in sufficiently high regard to emulate it, admitting its essentiality to the piece as a whole. At the same time it must be remembered that close attention to models, and the study both of line and function, were by 1964 becoming important characteristics of the Onions' music, and the method of learning parts through listening was employed to varying degrees by the whole band as it became more and more familiar with the music. Howard demonstrates in 'Buddy's Habit,' as well as elsewhere, his particularly painstaking approach.

The transcriber's pen hath done this thing

It is obvious, therefore, that transcription is central to this examination and implicated in these contentions. At present, transcription analysis is significant among the tools of jazz scholarship, and has come to be accepted, relieving such scholarship of the rather suspect vagaries or romanticisms which prevailed in earlier years.³⁰ Provenance seems assured through transcriptions, since what is inscribed seems so much less deniable than what is perceived by the ear, and thus only a matter of opinion. But at the same time, discussion of jazz dissociated from either live performance or the next best thing, recordings, is arguably a dangerous pursuit.³¹ Perhaps no less so is the study of recordings as opposed to spontaneous, live, improvised performance. If recordings allow jazz a history, they run the risk of denying its continual renewal and change. If transcription allows an argument for structure and logic to be made more convincingly, it endorses these musical parameters at the expense of others. It invokes a system and criteria of analysis which were developed for notated music, and although one of the earliest jazz writers, Roger Pryor Dodge, predicted that jazz history would reflect

²⁹ Both these performances are on *The Red Onion Jazz Band at the 1963 Australian Jazz Convention* (EP, East, 1964).

³⁰ Curiously, Gunther Schuller provides examples of the two existing alongside one another, and this as well as his 'classicising' programme, pursued through the use of transcriptions and their analysis, have seen him encounter disfavour in recent years. See in particular Krin Gabbard, 'Introduction: The Jazz Canon and its Consequences,' in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Durham: Duke University, 1995) 11-12, where Schuller's 'consistent reluctance...to press his analyses beyond his own impressions' is identified in, *inter alia*, his description of 'Billie Holiday's talent [as] "in the deepest sense inexplicable".' Schuller quote from *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: OUP, 1989) 528.

³¹ The testimonies of participating musicians offer a further perspective, but they are not always in agreement with recorded evidence, and the contradiction they often present only provides a complication for which space is not permitted here.

Ex. 3. Dutrey and Howard compared

Dutrey 1923

61

Howard 1964

61

This block shows the first system of musical notation, comparing measures 61-64 of two different recordings. The top staff is labeled 'Dutrey 1923' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Howard 1964'. Both staves begin with a measure number '61'. The notation is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The top staff features a melodic line with various note values and rests, including a prominent eighth-note pattern. The bottom staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

65

65

This block shows the second system of musical notation, comparing measures 65-68. The top staff is labeled '65' and the bottom staff is labeled '65'. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system, showing the progression of the piece.

69

69

This block shows the third system of musical notation, comparing measures 69-72. The top staff is labeled '69' and the bottom staff is labeled '69'. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system, showing the progression of the piece.

73

73

This block shows the fourth system of musical notation, comparing measures 73-76. The top staff is labeled '73' and the bottom staff is labeled '73'. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system, showing the progression of the piece.

77

77

This block shows the fifth system of musical notation, comparing measures 77-80. The top staff is labeled '77' and the bottom staff is labeled '77'. The notation continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns as the first system, showing the progression of the piece.

The image displays a musical transcription of a piece in bass clef, organized into three systems. Each system consists of two staves. The first system covers measures 81 to 84, the second system covers measures 85 to 88, and the third system covers measures 89 to 92. The music is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and ties. Some notes are marked with accents or slurs. The transcription is a faithful representation of the original recording.

the shift from improvised to notated music which had facilitated the development of Western art music,³² at best this makes the employment of transcriptions in jazz study premature, if not inappropriate.

However it is the circumstances in which the Onions recorded 'Buddy's Habit', basing their performance on a specific model, which makes the use of transcription in the present article significantly different from that employed by Dodge, Schuller, or other writers dealing with figures in the American jazz tradition. The distance from that tradition at which the Onions felt themselves to be working caused them to pay a certain regard to recordings identified as great or essential, and this was a fundamental element in their epistemology of jazz. The implication of the Oliver band's historic recording in the development of the Onions' performance means that comparison is essential to the understanding of the latter. Again, this does not imply comparison as measure of quality, technique, or fidelity for its own sake, but as a means by which the perspective and the method of a young band might be discovered. The perspectives and methods hint at the Onions' philosophy, which was on other occasions

³² Dodge used transcriptions too, at a time when this was most uncommon. His identification of notation as an issue central to the definition of jazz, in articles written during the 1920s, is fascinating for a reader today. Dodge insisted that the unnotatable was essential in jazz; at the same time he saw the potential for transcriptions to allow jazz to be taken seriously and to gain respectability. See Dodge, 'Negro Jazz' (originally titled 'Jazz Contra Whiteman'), and 'Harpsichords and Jazz Trumpets,' the first of his articles to utilise transcriptions, both in Pryor Dodge, ed., *Hot Jazz and Jazz Dance: Roger Pryor Dodge Collected Writings 1929-1964* (New York: OUP, 1995) 3-8, 12-26.

stated explicitly (respect for and emulation of a great tradition of American traditional jazz musicians) but at the same time qualify that philosophy. While they took leads from the models, they emulated the spirit of the music as much as its machinery.

Transcription alone is unable to establish whether or not Dutrey's trombone line was improvised, besides which the subtle variations which may in the larger part constitute the improvised content are practically impossible to represent. Dutrey's playing can be measured against aspects of 'Buddy's Habit'—the chord changes, the regular 4/4 beat, the material provided by his colleagues, and so on—and his particular interaction with these will suggest something of his own process. Where there is so much more comprehensive a model, however, as was the case for the Onions, more specific intuitions can be tested.

It remains possible nonetheless that an argument based on transcribed examples is limited by what those examples can demonstrate, and this article does not seek to deal with Howard's tone quality or the overall blend of the ensemble. The complication of these issues by recording technology is a further problem. At the very least we can accept that the Onions listened closely and probably exclusively to the Oliver band's recording of 'Buddy's Habit,' having elevated it to the status of a model, and acknowledging the contribution of the Oliver band to the music the Onions loved. Their performance reflects the careful study they undertook, not only on the surface but throughout the ensemble. Furthermore, the examples make clearly apparent the points at which Howard, for one, departed from what was set down in the model. Analysis based on transcription illuminates in this case the manner in which a young Australian band perceived, lauded and manipulated aspects of the American jazz tradition, in the creation of vital and original music.