

THE MUSICAL STYLE OF PEPPER ADAMS:

AN ANALYSIS OF TWELVE SOLOS⁷⁰

Twelve improvised baritone saxophone solos by Pepper Adams have been chosen for this study from a large body of commercially recorded work over a thirty year period.⁷¹ They are:

(1) "My Funny Valentine," written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, arranged by Bill Holman, recorded live at the Macumba Club, San Francisco, by the Stan Kenton Orchestra on the LP *Kenton '56* (Artistry 103);

(2) "Little Rootie Tootie," written by Thelonious Monk, arranged by Hal Overton, recorded live at Town Hall, New York, by the Thelonious Monk Orchestra on the LP *At Town Hall* (Riverside RLP 1138);

(3) "Sophisticated Lady," written by Duke Ellington, arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded at Van Gelder Studios, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, by the Pepper Adams Quartet on the LP *Chant* (Blue Note LT 991);

(4) "Blues and the Abstract Truth," written and arranged by Oliver Nelson, recorded at Van Gelder Studios, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, by Oliver Nelson on the LP *More Blues and the Abstract Truth* (Impulse A 75);

(5) "Sophisticated Lady," written by Duke Ellington, arranged by Garnett Brown, recorded at an unknown studio by the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra on a 45 rpm "single" (Solid State SD 2505);

(6) "I've Just Seen Her," written by Strouse and Adams, arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded at an unknown New York studio by the Pepper Adams Quintet on the LP *Encounter!* (Prestige 7677);

(7) "Hellure (How Are You're?)," written and arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded at EMI Studios, London, by the Pepper Adams Quartet on the LP *Ephemeria* (Spotlite PA 6);

(8) "Twelfth and Pingree," written and arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded live at The Domincile, Munich, by the Pepper Adams Quartet on the LP *Twelfth and Pingree* (Enja 2074);

⁷⁰I gratefully acknowledge Professor T. J. Anderson for his comments, suggestions, and observations, all crucial to the development of this chapter.

⁷¹For personnel on these recordings and other data, refer to the catalog, using the recording date alphanumeric codes below.


(9) "Sophisticated Lady," written by Duke Ellington, arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded at CI Recording, New York, by the Pepper Adams Quartet on the LP *Reflectory* (Muse 5182);

(10) "My Shining Hour," written by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer, arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded at Downtown Sound Studio, New York, by the Pepper Adams Quartet on the LP *The Master...* (Muse 5213);

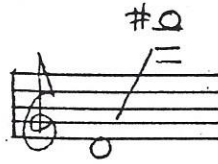
(11) "Alone Together," written by Dietz and Schwartz, arranged by Pepper Adams, recorded live at Fat Tuesday's, New York, by the Pepper Adams Quintet on the LP *Live at Fat Tuesday's* (Uptown 27.16);

(12) "My Funny Valentine," written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, arranged by Kim Richmond, recorded at Studio Victor, Montreal, by the Denny Christianson Big Band on the LP *Suite Mingus* (Justin Time 15).

Below are tables that present various characteristics of each of these compositions. A summary of these findings concludes the chapter.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
56-1105	My Funny Valentine	<p>Form: AABA 36 bar ternary</p> <p> - c. 80</p> <p>Backup texture: guitar accompaniment; orchestral chords, counterpoint; walking bass; no drums.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, marked by elasticity.</p> <p>Coherence: close to melody</p>	<p>Solo importance: lyricism, use of rests, long note durations, leaps to peak tones, use of dynamics, slurred notes.</p> <p>New to style: formula A (also in bar 32, theme), B.</p> <p>Anticipates later dev't: use of sequences, use of chord substitutions, doubling up.</p>

Range:



Tessitura:



Intensity: 65%

% of composition: 70

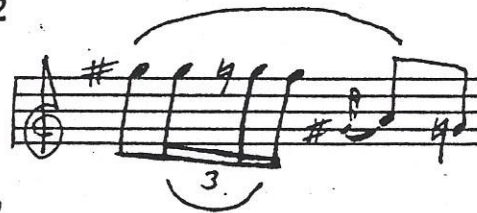
Harmonic rhythm:

A o | o | etc.

B d d | d d | etc.

Formulas

A: bar 22, ch. 2




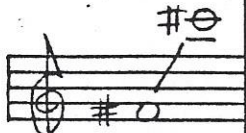
B: bar 34, ch. 2



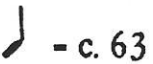
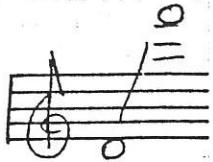
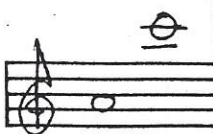
Licks

Charlie Parker: bar 7,
ch. 1; bar 19, ch. 2.

Sequences: bars 3-4, ch. 1; bars
9-10, ch. 1; bar 24, ch. 2.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
59-0228	Little Rootie Tootie	<p>Form: AABA 32 bar ternary</p> <p>♪ = c. 184</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, walking bass, swing eighth drumming.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths.</p> <p>Coherence: pentatonic motive (bar 1) developed</p> <p>Range:</p>  <p>Tessitura:</p>  <p>Intensity: 80%</p> <p>% of composition: 10</p> <p>Harmonic rhythm: o o etc.</p> <p>Quotations: "Perdido," bar 25.</p>	Anticipates later dev't: quotations at section beginnings


Sequences: modified,
bars 21-23; modi-
fied, bars 27-29.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
61-0407	Sophisticated Lady	<p>Form: AABA 32 bar ternary</p> <p> - c. 63</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, fills; half-time bass; brushes, sticks on drums.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets; eighths; paired, accented triplets; sixteenths; rhythm section anticipations; bounce time; long meter.</p> <p>Coherence: close to melody</p> <p>Range: </p> <p>Tessitura: </p> <p>Intensity: 50%</p> <p>% of composition: 55</p>	<p>Solo importance: wide vibrato trill, sense of pacing (esp. with theme restatement).</p> <p>New to style: cadenza (with formula B), introduction with formula B.</p>

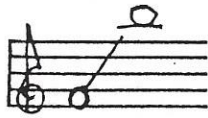
Harmonic rhythm:
 A o | ♪♪♪♪ | etc.
 B ♪♪ | ♪♪ | etc.

Formulas
 A: bar 2, 11, 17, 27.

Sequences: bars 3-4,
 7-8, 19-20, 27.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
64-1110	Blues and the Abstract Truth	<p>Form: ABCD 32 bar ternary</p> <p>♩ = c. 112</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, fills; walking bass; drum polyrhythms; rim shots on beat 4 (ch 1); drum riff (ch 2).</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, dotted rhythms.</p> <p>Coherence: use of sequences, formulas</p> <p>Range:</p> 	New to style: formula C, formulas at section beginnings.

Tessitura:



Intensity: 90%

% of composition: 20

Harmonic rhythm:
o | o | etc.

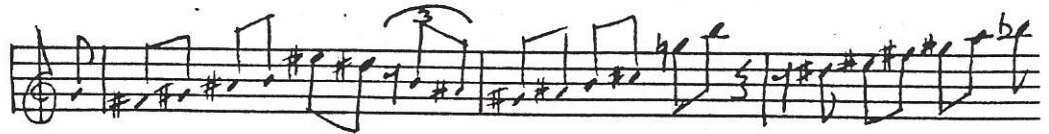
Formulas

A: bar 25, ch. 2.

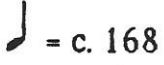
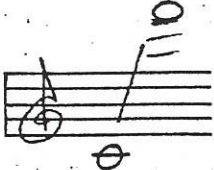

C: bars 9-11, ch. 1;

17-19, ch. 1;

8-10, ch. 2.



Sequences: bars 24-27,
ch. 1; 1-3, ch. 2;
modified, 4-6, ch.
2; 29-32, ch. 2.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
66-0000	Sophisticated Lady	<p>Form: AABA 32 bar ternary</p> <p> = c. 168</p> <p>Backup texture: guitar on each beat, piano accompaniment, walking bass, swing eighth drumming.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths.</p> <p>Coherence: use of sequences</p> <p>Range:</p>  <p>Tessitura:</p>  <p>Intensity: 50%</p> <p>% of composition: 30</p> <p>Harmonic rhythm: A o o J J J J B d d d d etc.</p>	<p>Solo importance: use of diminished scale; increased harmonic/melodic density.</p> <p>New to style: formula D, (false fingering), E; honking; bark-like timbre.</p> <p>Arrangement: Latin feel</p> <p>Anticipates later dev't: diminished scale patterns</p>

Formulas

A: bar 9

D: bar 2



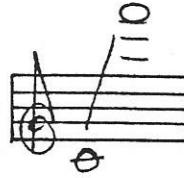
E: bar 31



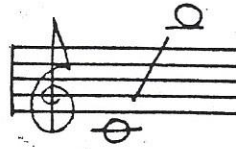
Sequences: bar 10, 12,
bars 13-16, bar 17,
26, 28

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
68-1211	I've Just Seen Her	<p>Form: AABA¹ 32 bar ternary</p> <p>♪ = c. 104</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, fills; walking bass; no drums.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths, dotted quarters</p> <p>Coherence: homophonic; 4 bar phrases</p>	<p>Solo importance: lyricism, cadenza (with formula B, E)</p> <p>New to style: long common tone (bars 14-17, theme)</p>

Range:



Tessitura:



Intensity: 90%

% of composition: 35

Harmonic rhythm:

A o | d d | etc.
B d d | d d | etc.

Formulas

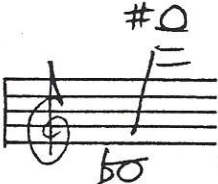

A: bar 29, ch. 1; bars
3-4, ch. 2; bar 16,
ch. 2.

B: bars 7-8, ch. 2

Licks

Charlie Parker: bar 22,
ch. 1; 30, ch. 1; 13, ch. 2;
21, ch. 2.

Sequences: bar 25, ch. 1;
bars 7-8, ch. 2; modi-
fied, bar 25, ch. 2.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
73-0910	Hellure	<p>Form: 12 bar blues</p> <p>♩ - 126</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, fills; walking bass; shuffle drumming.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths</p> <p>Coherence: shuffle rhythm</p> <p>Range:</p>  <p>Tessitura:</p>  <p>Intensity: 60%</p> <p>% of composition: 70</p> <p>Harmonic rhythm: A o l d d l etc.</p> <p><i>Formulas</i></p> <p>A: bar 5, ch. 3; bar 5, ch. 8.</p> <p>B: bars 9-10, ch. 6</p>	<p>Solo importance: substitute chords; honking, bouncing off low notes; sequence development; licks, formulas, quotes at chord changes.</p> <p>New to style: multi-chorus diminished scales</p>

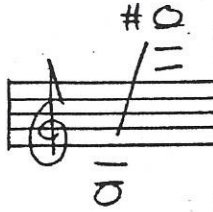
Licks

Charlie Parker: bar 5,
ch 2; bar 5, ch. 9.

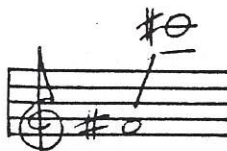
Quotations:

"Perdido," bar 5, ch 7

Sequences: bar 7, ch. 1; bars
11-12, ch. 1; bars 3-5, ch
2; bars 9-11, ch. 2; bar
1-2, ch. 3; bars 3-4, ch. 3;
bars 8-9, ch. 3; bars 12-4,
ch 3-4; bars 5-12, ch 4; etc.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
75-0813	Twelfth and Pingree	<p>Form: 12 bar blues</p> <p>♩ = 116</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment, fills (out, ch. 4-5); walking bass; shuffle drumming.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths</p> <p>Coherence: shuffle rhythm</p> <p>Range:</p> 	<p>Solo importance: use of rests; long note values; melodic dissonance; long diminished scales; honking.</p> <p>New to style: bitonality (ch. 4-5), quotation parodied</p>

Tessitura:



Intensity: 70%

% of composition: 30

Harmonic rhythm:
o | d | d | etc.

Formulas

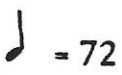
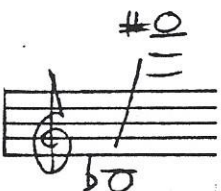




A: bar 6, ch. 1; bar
7, ch. 1; bar 8,
ch. 2.

Quotations

"Perdido": bar 5, ch.
4; bar 1, ch. 7; bar
9, ch. 7.

unknown show tune:
bars 1-4, ch. 4

Sequences: bars 9-10, ch.
2; bars 11-12, ch. 2;
modified, bar 8, ch.
3; bar 7, ch. 5; bars
9-10, ch. 7.

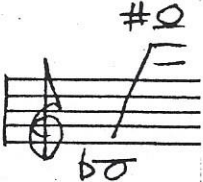

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
78-0614	Sophisticated Lady	<p>Form: AABA 32 bar ternary</p> <p> = 72</p> <p>Backup texture: mainly bass/sax duo</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths, 32nds</p> <p>Coherence: close to melody.</p> <p>Range: </p> <p>Tessitura: </p> <p>Intensity: 70%</p> <p>% of composition: 70</p> <p>Harmonic rhythm: A o  etc. B   etc.</p> <p><i>Formulas</i> A: bar 1, bridge B: bridge</p>	<p>Solo importance: metrical freedom; wide vibrato trill; avoidance of sequences, theme; honking; commanding presence, maturity; bark-like timbre; aggressive; cadenza (with formula A, B).</p> <p>Quotations: unknown show tune, cadenza; "Stuffy," bridge,</p> <p>Formula B: introduction, bar 8, theme.</p> <p>New to style: "free-form" arrangement</p>

Quotations

"Perdido," bridge;

"Stuffy," bridge.

Sequences: numerous

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
80-0311	My Shining Hour	<p>Form: AABA 32 bar ternary</p> <p>$d = 152$</p> <p>Backup texture: pi-accompaniment; walking bass; swing eighth drumming.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: mainly eighths</p> <p>Coherence: eighth note lines; use of quotes</p> <p>Tone: portamento from below</p> <p>Range:</p>  <p>Tessitura:</p>  <p>Intensity: 90%</p>	<p>Solo importance: melodic; density; rapid tempo; scalar passages; honking; aggressive; quotes at section beginnings.</p> <p>Cadenza: pattern of sequence/quote; quotes used: second Parker lick, "We're Here To Entertain You" (Mickey Mouse theme), "Stuffy".</p> <p>Arrangement: uptempo, usually a ballad; trading 8s before solo, last A as solo preparation.</p> <p>New to style: long quotations</p> <p>Anticipates later dev't: greater humor usage</p>

% of composition: 55

Harmonic rhythm:

o | o | etc.

Formulas

A: bar 5, ch. 2

Licks

Charlie Parker: bars 5-6,
ch. 1; bars 31-32, ch. 4;
bars 1-4, 10, ch. 5.

Quotations

unknown show tune, bars
17-19, ch. 2;

"Something Tonight," bars
1-8, ch. 3;

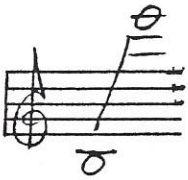

"Lady in Red," bars 1-8,
ch. 4;

"Roll Out the Barrel," bars-
1-8, ch. 5.

"Stuffy," bars 30-10, ch. 5-
6.

unknown Xavier Cugat
tune, bars 1-12, ch. 7.

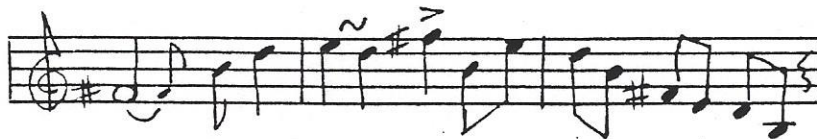
Sequences: bars 9-11, ch. 1;
bars 13-14, ch. 4; bars 31-
4, ch. 4-5; bars 23-24, ch. 5;
bars 27-28, ch. 6.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improvised Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
83-0819	Alone Together	<p>Form: AABA 44 bar ternary</p> <p>♩ = c. 116</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment; walking bass; shuffle drumming, poly-rhythms.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets; eighths; marked by elasticity.</p> <p>Coherence: close to melody</p> <p>Range:</p>  <p>Tessitura:</p>  <p>Intensity: 75%</p> <p>% of composition: 30</p> <p>Harmonic rhythm: A o d d etc.</p>	<p>Solo importance: opening motive developed; long lines; honking; false fingering (bar 33); trill (bar 42); barking timbre; aggressive.</p> <p>New to style: counterpoint lines, theme; formulas F, G.</p> <p>Arrangement: shuffle, usually a ballad; solo on bridge.</p>

Formulas

C: bars 41-42

F: bars 15-16



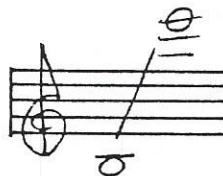
G: bars 25-26

Sequences: bars 7-8, ch. 1;
bars 21-22.

<u>Recording Date</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Improved Solo</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>
86-0308	My Funny Valentine	<p>Form: AABA 34 bar ternary</p> <p>$\downarrow = 60$</p> <p>Backup texture: piano accompaniment; orchestral chords, counterpoint; brass pedal point; haltime bass; bass glissandos; brushed drums; exotic percussion.</p> <p>Use of rhythm: triplets, eighths, sixteenths, thirtyseconds, marked by elasticity.</p>	<p>Solo importance: lyricism; use of rests; long note crescendos; barking timbre; aggressive;</p> <p>Quotation: Stravinsky, "Firebird Suite," coda</p> <p>New to style: use of sub-tone, coda; formula H (bar 20, theme)</p>

Coherence: close to
melody

Range:



Tessitura:



Intensity: 90%

of composition: 40

Harmonic rhythm:

A o | o | etc.
B d d | d d | etc.

Quotations

"Perdido," bar 26, 29,
31, ch. 1; bar 29,
ch. 2.

Licks

Charlie Parker: bar 19-20

Sequences: bars 1-2; bars
21-22; bars 28-29;
bars 29-30.

SUMMARY

The twelve tunes selected for study are either 12 bar blues or variants of the 32 bar song form. They were recorded at approximately three year intervals, except for the period 1968-1973, when Adams had few opportunities to solo on a commercial date. All of the tunes are less than ten minutes in length and most feature Pepper backed by piano, bass, and drums.

Walking bass lines and swing eighth drumming characterize the back-up texture of most of the tunes. Pepper's range is rather constant throughout: in the upper register he plays either the high G or A^b, in one case reaching the altissimo A natural; in the low register, Pepper prefers the less extreme low D^b, D natural, E^b, or G, only once hitting the low B^b.

Adams uses licks, quotes, and formulas at the beginning of sections, or where harmony shifts occur in the 12 bar blues structure. Although eight formulas have been identified in these solos, only two, "A" and "B," are used in virtually every solo. Formula A is Adams's most frequently used formula, one that he sometimes uses to articulate substitute chords a half step above the underlying harmony. There are numerous Charlie Parker licks in these solos, and the opening motive of Juan Tizol's "Perdido" is used frequently.

Slurred notes and phrases, and doubling up are devices present in all of Adams's solos. Furthermore, he paces his solos so that they climax at least halfway into the improvisation. Adams's later playing concentrates more on sequence development than his earlier work. His use of the "diminished" scale, essentially a sequence chain of half and whole steps, is consistent with this approach.

Adams arrangements of two ballad standards, "Alone Together" and "My Shining Hour," as medium and uptempo numbers respectively are unconventional, especially with the former rendered with a shuffle rhythm!⁷² Pepper uses the trading fours or eights jazz convention in some of his arrangements, sometimes even before *his* solo! Pepper's blues arrangements, with the ensemble going out swinging before the theme restatement, suggest the New Orleans jazz tradition of letting it all out at the end of a tune.

Adams's arrangement of "I've Just Seen Her" does not call for drums. (The 1956 Bill Holman arrangement of "My Funny Valentine" also omits drums.) Adams uses the cadenza in his arrangements as a final vehicle for improvisation and as a means of summing up thematic material stated earlier. His arrangement of "Sophisticated Lady" (1978) has a free-form sax/bass duet, the only example of free playing in any format on any of Adams's commercial recordings.

Pepper's ballads are played far more lyrically, with space, long note values, and less melodic density, than the medium and uptempo numbers. On the two blues, Pepper calls for a shuffle rhythm. On one, "Twelfth and Pingree," Adams, utilizing bitonality for two choruses, achieves a particularly humorous effect by playing a Broadway show tune in a different key than the existing one.

Adams's solo odyssey on "My Shining Hour" (1980), much like a Sonny Rollins solo, uses a series of quotations to extend and vary the improvisation.

⁷²Adams's contrapuntal lines in the theme statement of "Alone Together" are a hallmark of his style in quintet settings. Listen to his many recordings with Donald Byrd for examples of this.

The "Theme from Mickey Mouse," for example, is paraphrased in the cadenza in the midst of bravura passages. Adams's manipulation of quotations, and well as his use of the wide vibrato trill, are ways in which Adams injects humor into his improvisations to vary its emotional effect.⁷³

Adams also uses false fingerings as a kind of trill. In "My Shining Hour" he "lips the tone" from below, that is, playing portamenti from beneath the desired note. In "I've Just Seen Her" a long common tone that bridges two sections of the theme is particularly fetching. Unusual in terms of common jazz practice is Adams's double-time run at the end of his first solo chorus in the 1956 version of "My Funny Valentine." Adams does not state the ending flurry of notes as a kind of showy afterthought--common in jazz, especially at the end of a chorus--but as a means of building intensity and preparing for the solo's climax, stated in double time after a four bar brass passage in the following chorus.

Pepper's solos became more melodically dense and increasingly more reliant on the "diminished" scale beginning in the mid-'60s. By the '70s he was elongating diminished scale patterns over several choruses. His playing in the '70s and '80s reveals a new aggressiveness and intensity, with more honking and a raw, bark-like, rougher timbre--"like sawing logs," according

⁷³Listen to the beginning of Pepper's solo on "Soulful Kiddy" (60-1111), for another example of his wide vibrato trill.

to Freddie Hubbard.⁷⁴ From his 1978 *Reflectory* date onward, Adams demonstrates an instrumental maturity and commanding presence, particularly upon the ensemble, whom he pushes and dominates.

Although the 1986 solo on "My Funny Valentine" is valuable for revealing an Adams formula and counterbalancing the first "My Funny Valentine" solo of 1956, solo space is limited and constrained by the complex arrangement. The 1983 solo on "Alone Together" is a better indication of his final style.

⁷⁴Author's conversation with Hubbard, May, 1988.