

***Jazz and Modernism:
Reflections on a Zeitfrage***

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In 1913 the *San Francisco Bulletin* reported the appearance of “jazz,” a “futurist word which has just joined the language.”ⁱ It’s unclear whether the reference is to Italian futurism (futurist painting would not be seen in San Francisco until 1915), but the word at that point was vaguely modernist, not specifically musical. In 1917 Walter Kingsley, evoking the sensation of jazz, urged his readers to “Imagine Walter Pater, Swinburne and Borodin swaying to the same pulses that rule the moonlit music on the banks of African rivers.” As he goes on to explain, “The laws that govern jazz rule in the rhythms of great original prose, verse that sings itself, and opera of ultra modernity.”ⁱⁱ The varieties of “ultra modernity” would vary in subsequent years. Sigmund Spaeth characterized the “jazzmania” of the late Twenties as “the habit of thinking and acting in distorted terms; a manner of life consistently at war with conservative tradition,” manifesting itself across the social spectrum. So “Our murders, our trials, our welcomes to Channel swimmers and transatlantic flyers,” along with all the arts and “even our ethics and religion, have all fallen into the idiom of jazz.”ⁱⁱⁱ Before the Jazz Age had reached the cruising altitude of Jazzmania, however, species of ultra modernity were called upon for comparison. A German commentator after the Great War welcomed jazz as a “musical revelation, a religion, a philosophy of the world, just like Expressionism and Impressionism.”^{iv} In the first American book about jazz, Henry Osgood informed readers that “The ferment which produced the innovations in the other arts which we call ‘jazzy’ were at work in Europe long before its influence was felt here. Germany had her Sandburgs and Steins before we did.”^v Robert Goffin regarded jazz as “the first form of surrealism,” informing French readers

that “What Breton and Aragon did for poetry in 1920, Chirico and Ernst for painting, had been instinctively accomplished as early as 1910 by humble Negro musicians.”^{vi}

The terms *modernity* and *modernism* came into focus just about the time that jazz emerged as one among many instances of what these terms might mean. Fred Lewis Pattee gave the title *Tradition and Jazz* (1925) to his collection of literary criticism on such topics as “The Old Professor of English: An Autopsy.” In this context, jazz meant defiance of the *passé*. Consider, by contrast, this evocation of “*an art of living and enjoying*”: it is “nonchalant, fantastic, playful, nonheroic, and erotic”; “Nothing but joy, magic, and everybody’s optimistic faith in the beauty of life. Nothing but the immediate data of sensibility. Nothing but the art of wasting time. Nothing but the melody of the heart. The culture of miraculous enchantment.” What is this “sweetness of artificiality and...spontaneity of feelings” that “calls for the free mind of a juggler of ideas”? Much as it sounds like other celebrations of jazz in the Twenties, what’s being extolled here by Karel Teige is his program for Poetism, “the art of living in the most beautiful sense of the word, a modern Epicureanism”—but, he stresses, “Poetism is not an art, that is, art in its current romantic sense of the word.” Rather, it has the potential to “*liquidate existing art categories*,” Teige declares, because poetism not only has film at its disposal, but also “avionics, radio, technical, optical, and auditory inventions (optophonetics), sport, dance, circus and music hall, places of perpetual improvisation.” *Improvisation* is the major lesson, and “Clowns and Dadaists taught us this aesthetic skepticism.”^{vii} Teige’s list of contributing elements is itself an improvisational variation on what was (in 1924) an ensemble of modern enchantments consistently cited in vanguard declarations across Europe. Jazz and Charlie Chaplin were routinely mentioned, along with sports, dancing, music hall and circus, those “places of perpetual improvisation” valued precisely for the fact that they were unpretentious and, above all, *not Art*.

With its programmatic defiance of official culture, the avant-garde helped prepare this reception of jazz before it arrived in Europe. Italian futurism, the prototype of avant-garde movements in the early twentieth century, was inaugurated in 1909 as an assault

against cultural conservatism, assaulting officious institutional efforts to insulate art from modernity. Marinetti's polemical strategies closely resembled (and to some extent preceded) the entrepreneurial outlook of mass media moguls: keep the product before the public eye (bad press being better than none). The anti-art posture of dada, benefiting from Marinetti's precedent as vanguard impresario, enabled such venues as Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich to combine shock with entertainment, a decisive precursor to the appearance of jazz a few years later. In the early USSR the anti-art position became an ideological repudiation of bourgeois values, and the art-for-life insistence of constructivism spread far beyond the Soviet Union, validating a more general sense that modernity could result in a unified practice of daily life—"to consolidate a common front against 'the tyranny of the individual' in art."^{viii}

The enthusiasm with which jazz was received in Europe can be precisely correlated to the passion for primitivism fueling the avant-garde from cubism through surrealism. Reflecting on the cubist absorption in tribal relics in 1908, Gelett Burgess pondered the consequence: "Men had painted and carved grim and obscene things when the world was young. Was this revival a sign of some second childhood of the race, or a true rebirth of art?"^{ix} Wartime slaughter, just a few years later, meant that obscenity could no longer be relegated to a distant past; and by that point the fertilization of the arts by primitivism was well underway. For Blaise Cendrars—Swiss poet, editor of *Anthologie nègre* (1921), and collaborator with Milhaud and Léger on *Le Creation du monde* (1923)—"Le jazz hot is not an art but a new way of living."^x Because of its mobility as a generic signifier of modernism as such,^{xi} the word *jazz* was deployed by the avant-garde in an opportunistic way that mirrors the fashionable dalliance with jazz in social circles. The shared aspirations were made explicit by Cocteau: "Si on accepte les Jazz-Band (dont l'ancêtre est notre brave homme d'orchestre) il faut accueillir aussi une littérature que l'esprit goute comme un cocktail."^{xii} Of course the analogy betrays a recreational disposition that many, including Cocteau, would soon repudiate ("a certain decor, a certain racket, a certain Jazz-bandism" as he derisively put it^{xiii}); Milhaud, also announcing its demise, was more kind in observing that jazz was "like a salutary storm after which the sky is purer."^{xiv}

In profiles of the historical avant-garde, Cabaret Voltaire has become a perfunctory citation, playing much the same role as Storyville does for jazz history. Both sites share pertinent features of primitivist regeneration. New Orleans' Mardi Gras has no civic corollary in Zurich, but within the confines of Hugo Ball's cabaret, carnival was a nightly occasion. "The Cabaret Voltaire was a six-piece band. Each played his instrument, i.e. himself, passionately and with all his soul," Hans Richter recalled.^{xv} The walls of Cabaret Voltaire were covered with modern art in the primitivist mode, including Marcel Janco's masks ("zig-zag abstracts," Arp called them^{xvi}), and the performances included music-hall piano, recitations of Lautgedichte (which struck listeners as faux-Africaine), and the relentless boom of Huelsenbeck banging away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost.^{xvii} Huelsenbeck "plädiert dafür, daß man den Rhythmus verstärkt (den Negerrhythmus)," Ball observed. "Er möchte am liebsten die Literatur in Grund und Boden trommeln."^{xviii} It was specifically and most imposingly drums that heralded the arrival of jazz in Europe during the next few years, even to the extent that many took "the jazz" to be drums as such. In England drum kits were called "jazz-sets," in Germany they became known as "the jazz," and musician Leo Vauchant complained of Parisians they "didn't know that jazz band meant an orchestra."^{xix}

In a revealing glimpse of the backdrop against which jazz made its prodigious Parisian splash, Cocteau marveled at the mesmeric impact of the drummer, "a barman of noises under a gilt pergola loaded with bells, triangles, boards, and motor-cycle horns. With these he fabricated cocktails, adding from time to time a dash of cymbals."^{xx} Little wonder that Cocteau took up drumming, as did the painter Picabia and composer Milhaud. Expatriate American artist Man Ray posed for a self-portrait as a one man band, personifying what the French called "l'homme orchestre." Michel Leiris captures the dominant impression of Europeans, for whom any exposure to jazz "was dominated almost from beginning to end by the deafening drums"^{xxi}— "an arsenal which entirely unlocks the rhythm. Synesthesia," wrote Albert Jeanneret in his brother Le Corbusier's journal *L'Esprit nouveau*. "The entrails are stimulated."^{xxii}

Stirring the entrails was a prerogative traceable to Picasso (among others), particularly in his consideration that *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was a “canvas of exorcism.”^{xxiii} Picasso’s prescient exorcism, preceding the Great War, was affiliated with vanguard *modernolatria*, idolatry of the modern, the new. By the end of the war, modernity had arrived in the form of Americans, bearing within them like a Trojan horse the germ of jazz. Postwar European modernolatria therefore took modernity to be indistinguishable from Americanism. Edmund Wilson was among the earliest Americans to notice the phenomenon. Addressing “The Aesthetic Upheaval in France: The Influence of Jazz in Paris and the Americanization of French Literature and Art,” he noted the irony that Americans in Paris “discover that the very things they have come abroad to get away from—the machines, the advertisements, the elevators and the jazz—have begun to fascinate the French at the expense of their own amenities.”^{xxiv} Wilson went on to criticize the facile embrace of modernity:

Our skyscrapers may be monstrous but they are at least manifestations of force; our entertainments may be vulgar but they are at least terrifyingly alive.

That is why we find French Dadaism—a violent, rather sophomoric movement—laying hold on our advertisements, with their wild and aggressive make-up, as models for the pictures and text of their manifestos and tracts.^{xxv}

Wilson was wrong to attribute Dada typography to American advertisements, but he accurately diagnosed the paradox of Europeans self-consciously emulating American *lack* of self-consciousness—and jazz, for many Europeans, epitomized this paradoxical condition. Furthermore, residual stereotypes of negrophilia sparked fantasies of spontaneity and untutored talent. Wilson nowhere discussed jazz in his article, despite its title, but to evoke “the influence of jazz” on Europeans accurately registered a conceptual slippage pervasive in Europe (and, to a lesser extent, in America), since “jazz” meant “American,” and America meant modernity.

Americans were perceived as agents of modernity in Europe before the arrival of jazz, of course. In 1916 Hugo Ball noted in his diary: “Was die Kunst vom Amerikanismus

in ihre Prinzipien aufnehmen kann, darf sie nicht verschmähen; sie verleibt sonst in einer sentimental Romantik.”^{xxvi} Americans were harbingers of radical change, and were therefore suitable emblems of a cultural avant-garde with which the artistic vanguard struggled to keep pace. T. S. Eliot, for instance, made his initial mark in England not as a poet but as a proponent of Americanism in a college debate at Oxford in 1914. “I pointed out...how much they owed to Amurrican culcher in the drayma (including the movies) in music, in the cocktail, and in the dance.”^{xxvii} Understandably, he would later assimilate jazz as a flourish of his verbal calling card, assuring an English friend in 1920 that, in future visits, “it is a jazz-banjorine that I should bring [to a soiree], not a lute.”^{xxviii} As David Chinitz rightly perceives of this incident, “to have any truck with jazz at all around 1920 was not only to participate in a particular discourse but to take sides in an ideological battle over the significance and value of modernity.”^{xxix}

With jazz, music became mediumistic, as in that phase of surrealism heralding automatic writing by way of “sleeping fits.” Jazz was a kind of *waking fit*, as if some previously alien dimension of experience was being channeled through music. Jazz was widely felt as a wake up call (“Jazz woke us up,” declared the composer Auric as early as 1920, but “from now on let’s stop our ears so as not to hear it”^{xxx}), as the replenishment of war-torn souls (Antheil: “Negro music made us remember at least that we still had bodies which had not been exploded by shrapnel”^{xxxi}), and as vitalizing accompaniment to gay times. Ramón Gómez de la Serna characterized jazz as “the modern parliament of music.”^{xxxii}—at once clearing house and legislative body for the mood of the times. Such social expedience rendered jazz transitory, while for the avant-garde jazz offered an excursion to another world altogether, signified in such simultaneous apparitions as Man Ray’s self-portrait as drummer, a Belgrade journal titled *Dada Jazz*, and Alexander Rodchenko’s jazz-band montage of dancers, liquor, and the poet’s head on a punchbowl tray in Vladimir Mayakovsky’s book of poetry, *About This* (1923).

The impact of jazz on classical composers dramatizes a range of possible responses. Bohuslav Martinu, arriving in Paris from Prague in 1923, found that “the discovery of jazz in the postwar era has been one of the criteria determining the aspirations of the present

time.”^{xxxiii} Milhaud’s *Le Creation du monde* was a calculated immersion in the replenishing bath of primitivism. Stravinsky’s samplings of ragtime served to emancipate him from abject dependency on Russian folk themes. Copland and Antheil absorbed jazz elements as signature effects in their bad-boy phases, thrilling the public with a sense that ruffian modernity could invade the concert hall. But these are all familiar examples: too familiar, in fact, to do justice to other possibilities harbored by jazz. For some composers it represented a precise technical challenge, while jazz for others was not strictly musical. The career of Prague composer Erwin Schulhoff provides an instructive example. Moving to Germany in 1919, Schulhoff composed numerous dadaist works—including “Sonata Erotica,” a five minute orgasm for female soloist, and “Wolkenpumpe,” based on Hans Arp’s poem. By 1921 he was integrating jazz into such pieces as his *Suite for Chamber Orchestra* (1921), *Piano Concerto* (1923), the ballet *Die Mondsüchtige* (1925), and solo piano works like *Esquisses de Jazz* (1927). “I have a tremendous passion for the fashionable dances and there are times when I go dancing night after night,” he confided to Alban Berg, “purely out of rhythmic enthusiasm and subconscious sensuality; this gives my creative work a phenomenal impulse, because in my consciousness I am incredibly earthly, even bestial.”^{xxxiv} Schulhoff’s interests were typical of the time in their seamless transition from dada to jazz—and, like so many other classical composers (Stravinsky, Casella, Hindemith, Martinu, Poulenc, Milhaud), from jazz to neoclassicism. Jazz marked a ritual threshold over which avant-garde composers had to pass, to pass *as* avant-garde. That such moments marked another kind of passing is clear in the repudiation of jazz by the Parisian dadaists, for whom “Plus de jazz” also meant “no more dada,” making way for surrealism.

Nowhere was the conjunction between jazz and modernist music made more explicit than in Paris. At the Salle des Agriculteurs on December 15, 1921, Jean Wiéner featured Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire* in a program that included Stravinsky’s *Rag-time*, works by Satie and Poulenc, and a “Blues (danse américaine)” played by Wiéner himself, a gifted pianist with a unique ability to get the keyboard to *swing*. In the twenty two “Concerts Wiéner” (1921-1925) Stravinsky was the most frequently performed, followed by Satie; but these occasions also provided a major forum for members of les Six (particularly Milhaud

who, in December, 1923, accompanied Wiéner to Brussels to lecture on “New Resources in Music: Jazz-band and Mechanical Instruments”). Offerings from Schoenberg, Webern and Berg rotated regularly with the blues and the French school. Manuel de Falla, Sergei Prokofiev, and Heitor Villa-Lobos were also included in programs that balanced solo piano pieces, vocalists, and chamber works with compositions for mid-size instrumental ensembles like Stravinsky’s *Symphonies for Wind Instruments* and *Concertino*, as well as Milhaud’s *Le Boeuf sur le toit*. The free and easy mingling of modernist music with jazz was distinctly European. In the United States, by contrast, the threat to orchestral sobriety was nothing short of “Jazzerdammerung.”^{xxxv}

At the threshold of life style modernism, jazz became a crucial ingredient in an ensemble encompassing skyscrapers and chewing gum, comic strips, sports cars, Gillette razors, short haircuts and short skirts, “sex-appeal,” cubism, and TSF. These enigmatic letters (the universalized French abbreviation for radio transmission, *telegraphie sans fil*) commonly perch like chattering aviograms at the margins of poems, collages and paintings throughout the Twenties—even figuring in the title of Jaroslav Seifert’s 1925 collection of poems, *Na vlnách TSF* (On the Waves of TSF). “TSF,” “cocktail” and “jazz” contributed an incipient Esperanto to a floating international stylistic currency. Reviewing Satie’s *Parade* after its 1919 London performance, imagist poet F. S. Flint wondered what to call it: “Cubo-futurist? Physical *vers-libre*? Plastic jazz? The decorative grotesque?”^{xxxvi} Terminological indeterminacy was characteristic among those documenting current events. At the Cabaret Theatre Club in London, the Turkey Trot and Bunny Hug were thought of as “Vorticist dances” in 1914, in a milieu described by Osbert Sitwell as “a super-heated vorticist garden of gesticulating figures, dancing and talking, while the rhythm of the primitive forms of ragtime throbbed through the wide room.”^{xxxvii} The conceptual ambiguity of such occasions was remarked by a writer in *Life and Letters*, who noted that “jazz songs of the present day were performed in the same [BBC radio] programme as...a selection from the *Façade* of Edith Sitwell and William Walton.”^{xxxviii} To be sure, Sitwell’s poems were dada-inspired exercises in felicitous nonsense manifesting some of the same *joie de vivre* as goofy song lyrics of early jazz like *There’s a Wah-Wah Gal in Agua Caliente*. The same terminological

slippage is evident in one journalist's characterization of a painting by Arnold Schoenberg as a "jazz picture."^{xxxix}

Just as "jazz" was momentarily confused with "dada" earlier, the ascendancy of cubism as couture style in the Twenties carried its own resonance with jazz. An American radio broadcaster praised jazz as "evidence of a new vitality in music, a struggle after a new form of expression, crude as the hieroglyphic of Cubism, but genuine art, nevertheless."^{xli} Armand Lanoux characterized the Charleston as "the Cubist dance par excellence,"^{xlii} an image of which fittingly appears in the 1926 film *Emak Bakia* by Man Ray. In the dissemination of Cubist-inspired geometries, Sonia Delaunay was among the more influential figures in fabric, clothing and decor, and it seems fitting that her son Charles Delaunay would become doyen of hot jazz discography.

Jazz was central to any environment, like the Bauhaus, in which modern design was paramount. Given the Bauhaus's self-appointed role in synthesizing modern art and design, students and faculty were keenly sensitive to contemporary cultural phenomena. In 1925 Oskar Schlemmer described a scene convulsively dedicated to "Dadaismus, Zirkus, Varieté, Jazzband, Tempo, Kino, Amerika, Flugzeug, Auto. Das ist die aktuelle Vorstellungswelt hier."^{xliii} "Nightlife at the Bauhaus claims the same importance as daytime activities," one student reported. "One must know how to dance"—and dance meant: "Jazz band, accordion, xylophone, saxophone, bombast, revolver."^{xliii} Five years later jazz still ruled, and "Man ist entweder kühl und sachlich-zerebral oder ganz einfach unsublimiert geschlechtlich. Man betet Diniformate an (Deutsche Industrienormen) oder lässt sich auf der Grammophonplatte die schmalzige Wollust amerikanischer Jazzbandschlager vorheulen."^{xliv} Shortly before joining the Bauhaus staff, Lászlo Moholy-Nagy drafted "Dynamics of a Metropolis: A Film Sketch" (1921-22). All the urban paraphernalia of modernity are here, including a traffic jam, factory work, a football match, pole vaulting, dance, and two visuals straining at the limits of silent film: radio antennae on rooftops and "Jazz-band, with its sound."^{xlv}

Contemporaneous with the founding of the Bauhaus, a Prague collective published *The Revolutionary Anthology of Devetsil*, with articles on various aspects of modern life. Charlie Chaplin (Charlot) was the emblem of modernity for the Czechs as for so many other

Europeans: his acrobatic movements seemed a veritable extension of jazz. For the Devetsil group, jazz was not strictly a musical phenomenon, but the practical basis for modern dances and other acrobatic “Joys of the Electric Century,” in Artus Cerník’s evocation. The rapture is palpable even if you don’t know Czech: “A prece: bar! Bar, místo moderních tanc°u: shimmy, one-steppu, two-steppu, bostonu, foxtrottu, moderní hudby, **jazz-bandu.**”^{xlvi} As E. F. Burian (the affiliated Prague musician and theatre director) recognized, “Jazz is more than just a style of music. It is about living in the present and relishing it. It is about dancing, reading pulp fiction, and going to the movies. It is a lifestyle.”^{xlvii} The lifestyle visibly beckons in a 1930 advertisement in the Czech review *ReD* in which a photomontage prominently features the Bauhaus jazz band opposite a bold face appeal in German: “**junge menschen aller länder, kommt ans bauhaus!**”^{xlviii}

Far more avidly than Americans, European poets availed themselves of references to popular dance, jazz and the atmosphere of bars in their evocations of contemporary life. Juliette Roche, sitting out the war in New York with her husband Albert Gleizes, captured the euphoria of the early jazz age: “the woodwinds of the Jazz-Bands / the gin-fizzes / the ragtimes / the conversations / contain every possibility.”^{xlix} The Italian futurist Fillia, in his poem “Mechanical Sensuality,” evoked the “polydimensional...tactile visual olfactory supersenses”^l of a bar, including this approximation of the jazz ensemble:

sssssss (Jazz-Band)	ta ta km barambarà ta ta km barambarà barambarà
AAAAAH !	la pum barambarà LA PUM BARAMBARA

Anticipating “eine gloriose Zukunft,” Berlin dadaist and cabaret performer Walter Mehring envisioned “zur kommenden Dichtung: dem internationalen Sprachkunstwerk, dem Sprachen-‘Rag-time’!”^{li} Dadaists made a point of brandishing the term “jazz” as a typographic feature in their placards, as in an ad for a 1920 dada ball deploying a single

capital “A” for the words “jAzz,” “bAnd,” and “dAda.” In Mexico the Estidentismo movement adopted this European fusion of the regalia of modernity, and the movement’s journal *Irradiador* evoked an “Algebraic schematization. Jazz-band, petroleum, New York. The whole city crackling, polarized in the radio antennae of an unlikely station.”^{lvi} Stridentist poet Manuel Maples Arce’s “T.S.F.” appeared in the Belgian journal *Manomètre*, celebrating the mysteries of radio transmission, including the heart attentive to the distant broadcasts of New York jazz: “Heart / attentive to the distance, it’s / a New York / jazz band.”^{lvi} A Whitmanian epic, *L’Homme cosmogonique* by Nicolas Beauduin, was widely excerpted in leading journals of the European avant-garde. Beauduin makes the obligatory reference to “Le JAZZ-BAND”^{lv}—with a parenthetical note: “frénétique”—howling its electric fever into the music hall atmosphere, charged with alcoholic delirium (a characterization pervasive in poetry throughout this period):

Le JAZZ-BAND hurle	<i>(frénétique)</i>
Dans l’air se répand une fièvre électrique si forte que soudainement les Music-halls semblent, chargés de délire et d’alcool, des fournaises de joie terrible qui exposent dans le soir fou trouvé par leur apothéose.	

Marinetti singled out Beauduin as the exemplar of jazz literature as such in his 1924 survey of futurism around the world: “singer of jazz-band paroxysm and the international Grand Express.”^{lv}

References to jazz abounded in avant-garde manifestos as well, albeit often perfunctory, like a daub of dayglo paint on a poster: “America lock skyscrapers wide-mind SELF-SHIP. . . Jazz band Zenithist music. Thirty-six soda-bottles—Bruit.”^{lvi} In Barcelona, Salvador Dalí and two associates published “Yellow Manifesto (Catalan Antiartistic Manifesto)” declaring the purgative virtues of sports, cinema, rapid transit, modern inventions like the phonograph, and of course “the popular music of today: jazz and today’s

dances.”^{lvii} In the Rumanian journal *75HP* (75 Horsepower) the editor wrote, in place of a manifesto, an “aviogram” in bold red and black:

LIKE WINDOWS THE CONCERT OF THE CENTURY BEGINS
 ELEVATORS RINGS INTER-BANK CLOWN-LIKE JAZZ
 HORN
 F FLAT
 D
 F FLAT
 IN
 PAJAMAS
 FOOTBALL^{lviii}

Voronca envisions words “run[ning] through the faubourg wrapping themselves in the jazz of vertiginous sentences,”^{lix} anticipating Jack Kerouac’s enthusiasm for “bop prosody.” Following in the wake of Marinetti’s “parole in libertà” or words in freedom, Ball envisioned a further step: “Wir suchten der isolierten Vokabel die Fülle einer Beschwörung, die Glut eines Gestirns zu verleihen.”^{lx} The sense of liberating pledge links the *logos* of dada (nurtured by the emancipation of sheer sound values) with the bruitist affirmations of jazz. Skimming lightly over a parade of associations, jazz sought out the sudden plunge into primal layers of consciousness.

In the variable shorthand by which factions of the European vanguard advanced their positions, the present was affirmed (and much of it denounced) by blending primitivist regeneration with futurist longing: that combination of ultramodern and ultraprimitive so many saw in Josephine Baker. The paradox of an urban jungle emerged under the sign of jazz, bearing a “psychophysiology” spelled out in the Polish manifesto of Integralism (1925): “We definitely live under the sign of the urban. *Filter-intelligence, surprise-lucidity. Rhythm-speed.* Simultaneous balls—atmospheres giving concerts—billions of saxophones, telegraph nerves from the equator to the poles—strikes of lightning . . . New psycho-physiologies are

growing.”^{lxii} Drawing on the polymathic anarchism of dada and the utopian program of constructivism, Integralism, as its name suggests, was meant to integrate not only art forms but forms of life: “Poetry, music, architecture, painting, dance, all step forward integrally linked towards a definitive and lofty scale.”^{lxiii} The contributing form of music, presumably, is jazz (explicitly so for Prague’s Poetism: “*Poetry for HEARING*: the music of loud noises, jazz, radiogenics”).^{lxiv}

In light of the conceptual and sometimes pragmatic overlap between jazz and the avant-garde, it’s not surprising that European studies of jazz in the 1920s bear concrete traces of the link. Some of the earliest titles on jazz were German: *Jazz und Shimmy* by F. W. Koebner (1921), *Das neue Jazzbuch* by Alfred Baresel (1925), and *Jazz, eine musikalische Zeitfrage* by Paul Bernhard (1927). Studies elsewhere include *Le Jazz* by André Coeuroy and André Schaeffner (1926), *Jazz* by E. F. Burian (1928) and *Jazz Band* by A. G. Bragaglia (1929). There was also an intriguing 1927 novel called *Jazz* by Hans Janowitz, who had studied in Prague and known Kafka, Brod, Karl Kraus, and wrote the screenplay for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.^{lxv} Several of these authors had connections with the avant-garde. Coeuroy and Schaeffner in Paris, like Baresel and Bernard in Germany, had links with the new music (Milhaud, Stravinsky, Hindemith, etc.). Burian was involved with the Prague avant-guard. And Bragaglia’s book came with an explicit avant-garde provenance in that he was a pioneer of Futurist photography. As author of one of the key early manifestos of the movement, “Futurist Photodynamism” (1911), Bragaglia established a protocol of syncopation for photography that has clear affinities with jazz. Despite its salutary impact, Bragaglia recognized that by the end of the 1920s jazz was on the way out, “already, for us, the face of nostalgia for our time.”^{lxvi}

As jazz changed with subsequent decades, and as critics and historians began to document the changes, the residual (if long dormant) associations between jazz and modernism persisted. African American writer Ralph Ellison, attempting to place Minton’s significance in the bebop revolution, said that it “is to modern jazz what the Café Voltaire in Zurich is to the Dadaist phase of literature and painting.”^{lxvii} When Robert Goffin called jazz “the first form of surrealism,” he summoned a host of writers and painters (including

Cendrars, Apollinaire, Joyce, de Chirico, Magritte, Ernst and Dalí) to make the case that giving “free play to the spontaneous manifestations of the subconscious” was a goal shared alike by jazz musicians and the avant-garde.^{lxvii} Reflecting back on the readiness with which Europeans greeted jazz, Eric Hobsbawm observed “jazz had the advantage of fitting smoothly into the ordinary pattern of *avant-garde* intellectualism, among dadaists and surrealists, the big city romantics, the idealizers of the machine age, the expressionists and their like.”^{lxviii} As Hobsbawm recognized, there was more than analogy at work. In fact, it may be asserted that the greatest difference between European and American responses to jazz (apart from the historical fact that jazz derived from racially denigrated Americans) is that the modernist avant-garde was a pervasive phenomenon across Europe when jazz appeared, whereas it had played almost no role in the United States. It’s important to stress the role played by the European avant-garde in welcoming jazz; conservative establishment response, as in America, found jazz a repugnant symptom of cultural decline: “Für uns bedeutet der Jazz: Auflehnung dumpfer Völkerinstinkte gegen eine Musik ohne Rhythmus. Abbild der Zeit: Chaos, Maschine, Lärm.”^{lxix}

After 1930 the European vanguard was overtaken by political circumstances that dissipated the utopian energies characteristic of futurism, surrealism, constructivism, and even dada. Jazz was invariably associated, throughout the world, with high spirits and good times; and while it obviously didn’t dissolve during the 1930s, its “season” as an emblem of modernism was decidedly past. Clive Bell’s 1920 diatribe against jazz (as the manner of modernism in general) was premature in its assumption that jazz music was a passing fancy. But in 1931, when Ramón Gómez de la Serna published his book length survey *Ismos* in Madrid, it made sense that “Jassbandismo” would appear alongside “Apollinerismo,” “Picassismo,” “Futurismo,” “Negrismo,” “Klaxismo,” “Simultaneismo,” “Charlotismo,” “Dadaismo” and “Suprarrealismo.” In a prescient forecast, Gómez de la Serna suggested that *jazzbandism* had provided the present with a forceful image of apocalypse, of a world of the dead resurrected in the carnivalesque image of jazz^{lxx}: a distinctly Spanish vision (reminiscent of García Lorca’s enthusiasm for “all that has dark sounds”^{lxxi}). Whatever the outcome, it’s fitting to regard jazz tumbling with a retinue of other *isms* into the cauldron of

Europe's mid-century fate—a fate perhaps more palpable in postwar Germany even before African American jazzbands arrived, when “jazz” brandished a diagnostic stiletto spelled out by Alice Gerstel in *Die Aktion*:

Denn hier, hier in Stimmung und Jazzmusik, entfaltet sich die letzt Produktivität dieser sterilen Zeit: die Genialität der Eklektik, das Barmixertum der Seelen, die Hemmungslosigkeit, der Durcheinanderwürfelung und Verschmelzung der Komplexe, die Raserei des Marionettenhaften, die Leidenschaft der zum Tode Verurteilten, die noch einen blauen und singenden Hering essen möchten.^{lxxii}

“Whether you look at futurism, cubism, imagism, or surrealism,” writes Geoffrey Jacques, “modernist culture is conspicuous with jazz feelings and references, which suggests that jazz was more than a fad or a ‘craze,’ as a then-popular word would have it. But if jazz was modern art, it was modernist with a difference.”^{lxxiii} To explore that difference would take me beyond the scope of this essay; and, in any case, it is the subject of a book with a title so obvious it’s a wonder no one thought of it before—*Jazz Modernism* in which Alfred Appel Jr. blends anecdote and observation to make Armstrong and Ellington stand shoulder to shoulder with Matisse and Joyce. After nearly a century, of course, generic distinctions are blurred in the pantheon, so why shouldn’t Duke and Pops be accorded the status of exemplary modernists? There was a time, especially in Europe during the Twenties, when “jazz” did not bring proper names to mind, when it served to mark a time and place and mood with indelible succinctness:

Eyes tumbling into shots of absinthe
fog horn

bleating ship

a saxophone^{lxxiv}

Translations of French & German extracts

COCTEAU: "If you accept the Jazz Band you should also welcome a literature that the intelligence can savour like a cocktail." —from: John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 59.

HUGO BALL: Huelsenbeck "pleads for stronger rhythm (Negro rhythm)," Ball observed. "He would prefer to drum literature into the ground." —from: Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*. Ed. John Elderfield. Tr. Ann Raimes (New York: Viking, 1974), 51.

HUGO BALL: "Art must not scorn the things that it can take from Americanism and assimilate into its principles; otherwise it will be left behind in sentimental romanticism." —from: Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 53.

OSKAR SCHLEMMER: "Dadaism, circus, variété, jazz, hectic pace, movies, America, airplanes, the automobile. Those are the terms in which people here think." —from: Oskar Schlemmer, *The Letters and Diaries*, ed. Tut Schlemmer, tr. Krishna Winston (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 185.

ERNO KALLAI: "People are either reserved, straightforward, and cerebral, or they are simply sexual in an unsublimated way. People either pray according to German industrial standards or listen to phonograph records of American jazz hits twanging about sentimental voluptuousness." —from: Ernö Kállai, "Ten Years of Bauhaus," tr. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Los Angeles County Museum of Art / Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 640.

WALTER MEHRING: "an international lingual work of art, the language-ragtime" —from: Beeke S. Tower, "Jungle Music and Song of Machines: Jazz and American Dance in Weimar Culture," *Envisioning America: Prints, Drawings, and Photographs by George Grosz and His Contemporaries, 1915-1933* (Cambridge, MA.: Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1990), 90.

NICOLAS BEAUDUIN:

The JAZZ-BAND screams *fre-n-zieeeee*
Electric effluvia in the air
so strong that the Music Halls

flame

-from: Joseph Shipley, ed., *Modern French Poetry, An Anthology* tr. Joseph T. Shipley (New York: Greenberg, 1926), 342.

HUGO BALL: "We tried to give the isolated vocables the fullness of an oath, the glow of a star." —from: *Flight 68*.

JOST HERMAND & FRANK TROMMLER: (no translation available)

ALICE GERSTEL: "For here, here in the mood and in the jazz music what remains of the creative force of this sterile time unfolds: the genius of the eclectic, the cocktail mix of souls, the recklessness, the random toss and melding of complexes, the recklessness of puppets on a string, the passion of people condemned to death who want to eat one more blue and singing herring." —from: *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 555.
[translator not specified]

ⁱ Richard Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

ⁱⁱ Robert Walser, ed., *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sigmund Spaeth, "Jazzmania," *North American Review* (May 1928), in Karl Koenig, ed., *Jazz in Print (1856-1929), An Anthology of Selected Early Readings in Jazz History* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2002), 533.

^{iv} S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 12.

^v Henry O. Osgood, *So This is Jazz* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1926), 245.

^{vi} Robert Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1944), 3; Robert Walser, *Keeping Time*, 86.

^{vii} Karel Teige, "Poetism," *Host* 3: 9/10 (July 1924), tr. Alexandra Büchner, in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, ed. Timothy O.

Benson and Éva Forgács (Los Angeles County Museum of Art / Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 581.

^{viii} Stephen Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York: Viking, 1974), xxv.

^{ix} Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, *Cubism and Culture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 25.

^x Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 112.

^{xi} In 1920, long before F. Scott Fitzgerald broke the champagne of his prose over the official hull of The Jazz Age, Clive Bell had conflated modernism in all the arts with jazz. Eliot and Stravinsky were Bell's exemplars of jazz poetry and music composition, and he professed some admiration for Woolf, Cocteau and Cendrars; but he was dismissive of Joyce, who "rags the literary instrument" with "talents which though genuine are moderate only" (*Since Cezanne* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928], 224). Dismissive of immediate gratification and sensationalism, Bell seized on the term "jazz" to signify any cultural phenomenon that was superficially exciting but lacked staying power: "Jazz art is soon created, soon liked, and soon forgotten. It is the movement of masters of eighteen" (216). As this was written when Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong were eighteen, there were no examples of longevity from which to draw any other conclusion.

^{xii} Jean Cocteau, "Kritiken aus allen Zeitungen der Welt," *Dada Almanach* ed. Richard Huelsenbeck (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1920), 43. The cocktail hit Paris in tandem with jazz, creating a lasting mutual imprint: even at the end of the decade Félicien Champsaur could introduce his play *Le Jazz des Masques* "comme un cocktail nouveau" (Paris: Louis Querelle, 1928), 30.

^{xiii} Frederick Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* (New York: Viking, 1968), 200.

^{xiv} Bernard Gendron, *From Montmartre to the Mudd Club*, 94.

^{xv} Hans Richter, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, tr. David Britt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 27.

^{xvi} Hans Richter, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, 46.

^{xvii} Jean Arp, *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essays, Memories*, ed. Marcel Jean, tr. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking, 1972), 234.

^{xviii} Hugo Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (München und Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1927), 78.

^{xix} Chris Goddard, *Jazz Away from Home* (London: Paddington Press 1979), 16.

^{xx} Jean Cocteau, *A Call to Order*, tr. Rollo H. Myers (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1926), 13.

^{xxi} Michel Leiris, *Manhood*, tr. Richard Howard (San Francisco: North Point, 1984), 108.

^{xxii} Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill and Hindemith* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1988), 54.

^{xxiii} E. H. Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 217.

^{xxiv} Edmund Wilson, “The Aesthetic Upheaval in France: The Influence of Jazz in Paris and the Americanization of French Literature and Art,” *Vanity Fair* (February 1922), 49.

^{xxv} *Ibid.*, 49.

^{xxvi} Hugo Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 80.

^{xxvii} T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume I: 1898-1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 70.

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, 357.

^{xxix} David Chinitz, “A Jazz-Banjorine, Not a Lute Eliot and Popular Music before *The Waste Land*,” *T. S. Eliot’s Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music*, ed. John Xiros Cooper (New York: Garland, 2000), 10.

^{xxx} Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau, A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 259.

^{xxxi} George Antheil, “The Negro on the Spiral,” *Negro: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Cunard (London: Wishart, 1934), 218.

^{xxxii} Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Ismos* (Buenos Aires: Poseidon, 1947), 187.

^{xxxiii} Bohuslav Martinu, *Le Raid merveilleux* (Supraphon compact disc, liner notes, 2004), 9.

^{xxxiv} Erwin Schulhoff, *Centenary Edition Chamber Music* (Harmonia Mundi compact disc, liner notes, 1996), 10.

^{xxxv} Oscar Thompson, “Jazz as Art Music, Piles Failure on Failure,” *Musical America* (Feb. 13, 1926), in Karl Koenig, ed., *Jazz in Print*, 454.

^{xxxvi} Alan Young, *Dada and After: Extremist Modernism and English Literature* (Manchester University Press, 1981), 49.

^{xxxvii} William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (University of Toronto Press, 1972), 49.

^{xxxviii} “Jazz,” *Life and Letters*, July 1928, in Karl Koenig, ed., *Jazz in Print*, 538.

^{xxxix} Henry F. Osgood, *So This Is Jazz*, 245.

^{xl} Kingsley Welles, “Is the Popularity of Jazz Music Waning?” *Radio Broadcasting*, Dec. 1925; in Karl Koenig, ed., *Jazz in Print*, 440.

^{xli} Armand Lanoux, *Paris in the Twenties* tr. E. S. Seldon (New York: Golden Griffin, 1960), 49.

^{xlii} Oskar Schlemmer, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Tut Schlemmer, (München: Albert Langen, Georg Müller, 1958), 191. To jazz could be applied Schlemmer’s characterization of the Bauhaus as “der Seismograph des internationalen Kunstgeschehens” (146).

^{xliii} Farkas Molnár, “Life at the Bauhaus,” *Periszkóp* (June-July 1925), tr. John Bákti, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 464.

^{xliv} Ernö Kállai, “Zehn Jahre Bauhaus,” *Die Weltbühne* (Jan. 21, 1930), 139.

^{xlv} Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, “Dynamics of a Metropolis: A Film Sketch,” *Moholy-Nagy*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 121.

^{xlii} Artus Černík, “Radosti Elektrického Století,” *Revolucní Sborník Devetsil*, ed. Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige (Prague: Vortel, 1922), 141.

^{xlvii} E. F. Burian, *Nejen o Hubde: Texty 1925-1938* ed. Jaromír Paclt (Prague: Supraphon, 1981), 161. Translation thanks to Josef Horácek.

^{xlviii} *ReD* 3: 5 (1930), 130-131.

^{xlix} Juliette Roche, “Etat.....Colloidal...,” *Demi Cercle* (Paris: Éditions d’Art ‘La Cible’, 1920), unpaginated. My translation.

^l Fillia, “Sensualità meccanica,” Zbigniew Folejewski, *Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry: A Comparative Study and an Anthology* (University of Ottawa Press, 1980), 178.

^{li} Walter Mehring, *Das Ketzerbrevier: Ein Kabarettprogramm* (München: Kurt Wolff, 1921), 31. The development of jazz scatting, particularly by Louis Armstrong, bears a striking resemblance to dada Lautgedichte.

^{lii} Luis Mario Schneider, *El Estridentismo o una Literatura de la Estrategia* (Xoco, Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes 1997), 283. My translation.

^{liii} Manuel Maples Arce, “T.S.F.,” *Manomètre* 4 (August 1923), 68. My translation.

^{liv} Nicolas Beauduin, *L’Homme Cosmogonique* (Paris: Jacques Povolozky, 1922), 74.

^{lv} F. T. Marinetti, “Le Futurisme Mondial,” *Le Futurisme* 9 (Jan. 11, 1924), in *Manifesti e Documenti Teorici del Futurismo 1909-1944*, ed. Luciano Caruso (Milan: SPES, 1980), unpaginated. My translation.

^{lvii} Ljubomir Micic, “Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Graveyard,” *Zenit* 2: 12 (March 1922), tr. Maja Starcevic, *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 508.

^{lviii} Salvador Dalí, *Collected Writings*, ed. and tr. Haim Finkelstein (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 61.

^{lx} Ilarie Voronca, “Untitled Statement,” *75HP* (Oct. 1924), tr. Monica Voilescu, *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 537.

^{lix} *Ibid.*, 537.

^{lx} Hugo Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 102.

^{lxii} “Man,” *Integral* 1 (Mar. 1, 1925), tr. Monica Voiculescu, *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 554.

^{lxii} Ilarie Voronca, “Surrealism and Integralism,” *Integral* 1 (Mar. 1925), tr. Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 556.

^{lxiii} Karel Teige, “Poetism Manifesto,” *ReD* 1: 9 (1928), tr. Alexandra Büchner, *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 600.

^{lxiv} Janowitz explicitly claims the right to play fast and loose with narrative conventions by appealing to the laws of jazz: “Ein Jazz-Roman hat das Recht, mitten in der Wiederholung eines Motivs leise auszuklingen und einfach zu Ende zu sein. Dieses unveräußerliche Recht in dem ersten Jazz-Roman zu wahren, der nach den Gesetzen der Jazzmusik entstanden ist, muß mir selbstverständlich gestattet sein.” *Jazz* (Berlin: Verlag die Schmiede, 1927), 160.

^{lxv} A. G. Bragaglia, *Jazz Band* (Milan: Edizioni ‘Corbaccio’, 1929), 9. My translation.

^{lxvi} Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 206.

^{lxvii} Robert Goffin, *From the Congo to the Metropolitan*, 5, 3.

^{lxviii} Francis Newton [Eric Hobsbawm], *The Jazz Scene* (Boston: Monthly Review Press, 1960), 244.

^{lxix} Jost Hermand and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (München: Nymphenburger, 1978), 314.

^{lx} Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Ismos* 191.

^{lxxi} Federico García Lorca, *Deep Song and Other Prose*, ed. and tr. Christopher Maurer (New York: New Directions, 1980), 43.

^{lxii} Alice Gerstel, “Jazz-Band,” *Die Aktion* 5/6 (Feb. 4, 1922), 90.

^{lxiii} Geoffrey Jacques, “Listening to Jazz,” *American Popular Music*, ed. Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 75.

^{lxxiv} Vítězslav Nezval, “Diabolo: A Poem of the Night,” *Antilyrik & Other Poems*, tr. Jerome Rothenberg and Milos Sovak (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2001), 106.

