JAZZ AS DECAL FOR THE EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE
by Jed Rasula

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Jazz has only recently been acknowledged as relevant to the study of modernism. A title one might have expected long before now, *Jazz Modernism: From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce* by Alfred Appel, Jr., was not published until 2002, and its selection of canonized musicians, artists, and writers to represent the spirit of "jazz modernism" is at once understandable and disappointing. Completely overlooked in Appel's account is the extent to which something called "jazz" was absorbed into the modernist avant-garde, particularly in Europe. The Parisian setting in which jazz achieved its first notoriety in vanguard circles has often been studied, but Paris is only one piece of the historical puzzle. The following essay, documenting the (decidedly one-sided and opportunistic) absorption of jazz by the artistic and literary vanguard throughout Europe, attempts to establish the importance of jazz for any further consideration of the historical avant-garde.

It's described as "*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 of the nineteen-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."[1] 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, invariably associated 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*.

The anti-artistic tendencies of the avant-garde helped prepare this reception of jazz before it appeared in Europe. The prototype of avant-garde movements in the early 20th century, Italian Futurism, was inaugurated in 1909 as an assault against cultural conservatism, pillorying 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 at all). The anti-art posture of Dada, benefiting from Marinetti's precedent as vanguard impresario, enabled such venues as Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich to amalgamate shock to entertainment, a decisive precursor in turn for the appearance of jazz a few years later. In the early USSR the anti-art position established by Futurism and Dada was transformed into 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'"[2]—in which the arts would be thoroughly integrated to social needs without being fetishized.

To raise the spectre of the fetish, however, suggests precisely what was at stake in the enthusiasm for jazz, and how precarious was its footing in the developing European wish for a rational epicureanism. 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

[1] 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.
[2] Stephen Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York: Viking, 1974), xxv.

Surrealism. Because of its mobility as a generic signifier of modernism as such,[3] jazz was affixed to pronouncements and activities of the avant-garde like a decal on a traveler's bag, in the process becoming inseparable from fashion cycles affecting the absorption of jazz in social circles. Robert Goffin noted the paradox that "In New Orleans and in Chicago at this time jazz was the preserve of the dregs of the population. In Paris the cream of society went to hear [Louis] Mitchell."[4]

The role of Paris in sponsoring negrophilia in the arts and fashion is well known and thoroughly documented.[5] 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."[6] Given Parisian fashion cycles, it was not new for very long. Bernard Gendron argues that "one must recognize the primary role played by the avant-garde and its allies in the commodification of everything that was called 'negro'," [7] a charge that particularly applies to Jean Cocteau—a cultural "pimp" according to Hans Stuckenschmidt[8]—"who without much musical knowledge managed to turn his consumption of jazz into the well-

[3] Charles S. Johnson, writing in the Negro journal *Opportunity* in 1925, was somewhat distressed to find jazz becoming an all-purpose term for "things typically American.… the gogetters want to 'jazz up' business, modern expressionism in art is jazz art. We have jazz bands, jazz murderers, jazz magazines!" (Porter, *Jazz* 123). Back 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 the arts as such 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.

[4] Robert Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1944), 74.

[5] See Jody Blake, *Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde* (University of Chicago Press, 2002); Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[6] Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*, 112.

[7] Ibid., 107.

[8] Susan C. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The* Zeitopern *of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press 1988), 52.

recognized emblem of his own brand of avant-garde practice."[9] On the other hand, the brief season of enthusiasm for jazz on the part of Cocteau and members of Les Six may not warrant Gendron's claim that "jazz became seriously implicated in the depoliticization and the upscaling of the avant-garde."[10] Jody Blake more accurately recognizes that "jazz, which was condemned for breaking all the rules and dismissed for not being music at all, was the musical counterpart of dada's own anti-art activities."[11] The "blackening of Europe," at any rate, cannot be adequately assessed with reference to Parisian fashions, not least because negrophilia there had been integrated into both the avant-garde and fashionable society long before jazz arrived as yet another installment.

As for negrophilia, the grip of fashion could never quite dispel a question put to the issue by an American writer confronting Cubism in 1908. Having reflected on his adventures "mus[ing] over the art of the Niger and Dahomey…gaz[ing] at Hindu monstrosities, Aztec mysteries and many other primitive grotesques," Gelett Burgess pondered the consequence: "Men had painted and carved grim and obscene things when the world was young. Was this

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[9] Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*, 95.

[10] Ibid., 99. Gendron's charge is a variant of Adorno's claim that, in jazz, "all the elements of 'art,' of individual freedom of expression, of immediacy are revealed as mere cover-ups for the character of consumer goods" (*Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, tr. Susan H. Gillespie [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002], 498). In any event, Franco-centrism was so imposing in Paris that even the cosmopolitan Milhaud could not see beyond it. Writing in *Modern Music* in 1925, he recalled that "During the winter of 1921-1922 in America, the journalists regarded me with scorn whenever I made out a case for jazz. Three years later jazz-band concerts are given in New York, there is talk of a jazz opera at the Metropolitan, banjo classes are organized in the conservatories. Jazz is comfortably installed with official sanction." But, he added, "Here it is finished" ("The Day After Tomorrow," *Modern Music* 3: 1 [Nov-Dec 1925],22-23). In fact, jazz education in the United States was decades in the future, and if jazz appeared "finished" in Paris, in Germany it was thriving: the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt began offering instruction in jazz in January 1928. Such developments prompted Adorno to prophesy the end of jazz: having "become stabilized as a pedagogical means of 'rhythmic education'…the last muted trumpet, if not unheard, will soon die away without a shock" (*Essays on Music* 496). Eric Hobsbawm (who, unlike Adorno, was a real enthusiast of jazz) also noted the compromises likely to follow from institutionalization: "Jazz is important in the history of the modern arts because it developed an alternative way of creating art to that of the high-culture avant-garde, whose exhaustion has left so much of the conventional 'serious' arts as adjuncts to university teaching programmes, speculative capital investment or philanthropy. That is why the tendency of jazz to turn itself into yet another avant-garde is to be deplored" (*Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz* [London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998], 263). Hobsbawm's reasons for deploring the avant-garde may be found in *Behind the Times: The Decline and Fall of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Gardes* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998).

[11] Blake, *Le Tumulte Noir*, 60.

revival a sign of some second childhood of the race, or a true rebirth of art?"[12] For many Europeans in the 1920s, a replenishing juvenility and an artistic renaissance were equally compelling. Insofar as the avant-garde was in pursuit of the same goals, jazz was destined to become part of its arsenal of affiliations. The link was made explicit by Cocteau: "If you accept the Jazz Band you should also welcome a literature that the intelligence can savour like a cocktail."[13] 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[14]; Milhaud, also announcing its demise, was more kind in observing that jazz was "like a salutary storm after which the sky is purer."[15] In similar terms of disdain, Anglo-American scholarship has often regarded the European avant-garde as adolescent hijincks unrelated to the serious work of culture; but as literary historians as well jazz historians now concede, the appearance of frivolity often masked a salutary desperation.

While Dada is still far from being adequately understood by Anglo-American critics, the Cabaret Voltaire has settled into place as a perfunctory citation, much the way Storyville serves in 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. [16] Richard Huelsenbeck "was obsessed with Negro rhythms… His preference was for the big tomtom, which he used to accompany his defiantly tarred-and-feathered 'Prayers'."[17] Huelsenbeck "pleads for stronger rhythm (Negro rhythm)," Ball observed. "He would prefer to drum literature into the ground."[18] The walls of Cabaret Voltaire were covered with modern art in the primitivist

[12] Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, *Cubism and Culture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 25.
[13] John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety 1917-1933* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 59.
[14] Frederick Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* (New York: Viking, 1968), 200.
[15] Gendron, *From Montmartre to the Mudd Club*, 94.
[16] Hans Richter, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, tr. David Britt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 27.
[17] Ibid., 20.
[18] Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, tr. Ann Raimes (New York: Viking, 1974), 51.

mode, including Marcel Janco's masks ("zig-zag abstracts," Arp called them[19]), and the performances included music-hall piano, recitations of Lautgedichte (or sound poetry, which readily struck listeners as faux-Africaine), and the relentless boom of Richard Huelsenbeck's drumming ("banging away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost"[20]). 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," and in Germany they became known as "the jazz," and Leo Vauchant complained of Parisians they "didn't know that jazz band meant an orchestra."[21]

In a telling glimpse of the backdrop against which jazz made its prodigious Parisian splash, Jean Cocteau noted that "Impressionist music is outdone…by a certain American dance which I saw at the Casino de Paris." In a footnote he pinpointed 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."[22] Little wonder that Cocteau took up drumming, as did the painter Picabia and composer Milhaud. Expatriate American artist Man Ray set himself up 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."[23] For combat veterans, of course, drums connoted other sorts of bombs. Francesco Berger, reporting on a jazz concert for *Monthly Musical Record* in 1919 (calling the drummer a "'utility' man") likened the aftermath of a performance to a battlefield: "when, after the final crash of a Piece, you look round for the *débris*, and are preparing to count the dead and wounded on the ground, you find the players mentally, if not physically, as cool as cucumbers, tuning their instruments for their next encounter, or exchanging with one another

[19] Richter, *Dada, Art and Anti-Art*, 46.
[20] Jean Arp, *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essays, Memories*, ed. Marcel Jean, tr. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking, 1972), 234.
[21] Chris Goddard, *Jazz Away from Home* (London: Paddington Press 1979), 16.
[22] Jean Cocteau, *A Call to Order*, tr. Rollo H. Myers (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1926), 13.
[23] Michel Leiris, *Manhood*, tr. Richard Howard (San Francisco: North Point, 1984), 108.

critical remarks on Puccini or Debussy."[24] Nor was the martial evocation confined to drums. Cocteau described a performance by Pilcer and Deslys dancing to a "hurricane of rhythm and beating of drums…which left them quite intoxicated and blinded under the glare of six anti-aircraft searchlights."[25] The martial context persisted long after the hostilities ceased, as in Albert Jeanneret's review of Billy Arnold's band in *L'Esprit nouveau* (1923): "This percussion, an arsenal which entirely unlocks the rhythm. Synesthesia. The entrails are stimulated."[26]

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."[27] Picasso's prescient exorcism preceded the Great War, while for others The Roaring Twenties and The Jazz Age were needed to achieve a comparable purgative. The acoustic transition from war to peacetime was heralded not only by drums but by brass: "the echoes of the last bugle were being drowned out by the music of innumerable jazz bands."[28] Fittingly, James Reese Europe—who had pioneered the era of modern dance in tandem with Vernon and Irene Castle, and whose military unit introduced dozens of European cities to the potential of "ragging" and "the jazz"—concluded a 1919 Chicago performance with a sonic depiction of trench warfare called "On Patrol in No Man's Land," for which the house lights were extinguished to accentuate the acoustic menace.[29] This synaesthetic tactic was precisely what the Italian Futurists had pioneered, evoking combat with vocal extemporizing and noise machines (*intonorumori*). The

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[24] Francesco Berger, "A Jazz Band Concert," *Monthly Musical Record* (Aug 1, 1919), in Lewis Porter, *Jazz, A Century of Change*, (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 129.
[25] Cocteau, *A Call to Order*, 13-14n.
[26] Cook, *Opera for a New Republic*, 54. Jeanneret, a musician, was the brother of Le Corbusier. *L'Esprit nouveau* was the flagship journal for post-war French Purism. Jody Blake outlines the extent to which Purism assimilated primitivism and jazz to its own agenda. "The purists…regarded jazz-inspired rhythms as a means of eliminating coloristic elaboration and achieving the formal economy that was their goal in art as well as in music" (*Le Tumulte noir*, 141).
[27] E. H. Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive: Episodes in the History of Western Taste and Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 217.
[28] Armand Lanoux, *Paris in the Twenties*, tr. E. S. Seldon (New York: Golden Griffin/Essential Encyclopedia Arts, 1960), 30.
[29] The battlefield atmosphere can be distantly gleaned through the static in James Reese Europe's 1919 recording of the tune, with Noble Sissle taking the vocal. The tune was included by Sissle and Eubie Blake in their 1921 musical *Shuffle Along*, which launched the careers of Florence Mills, Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson, among others. "On Patrol in No Man's Land" can be heard in *Shuffle Along* (New World Records NW260, released in 1976).

combat precedent for jazz was not lost on English writer R. W. S. Mendl, whose 1927 book *The Appeal of Jazz* pointedly characterizes it as "musical alcohol" meant to relax soldiers on leave from the trenches. Mendl attributes to early jazz "a reflection of the elemental instincts of war fever."[30]

The prewar vanguard—whether that of Italian Futurism or French Simultaneism—sponsored *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. In the February issue of *Vanity Fair,* 1922, Wilson addressed "The Aesthetic Upheaval in France: The Influence of Jazz in Paris and the Americanization of French Literature and Art." Wilson 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."[31] He went on to excoriate vanguard enthusiasts, which he identified as Dadaists, for their tepid attempts to replicate as cultural shock those aspects of modernity incarnated in New York ("electric signs in Times Square make the Dadaists look timid"[32]).

> 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.[33]

[30] R. W. S. Mendl, *The Appeal of Jazz* (London: Philip Allan, [1927]), 95.
[31] 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.
[32] Ibid., 100.
[33] Ibid., 49.

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 reinforced the spectre 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: "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."[34] 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 vanguard 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. And see, said I, what we the few Americans here are losing while we are bending out energies toward your uplift…we the outposts of progress are compelled to remain in ignorance of the fox trot."[35] 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."[36] 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."[37]

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[34] Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 53.
[35] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume I: 1898-1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 70.
[36] Ibid., 357.
[37] 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.

The battle was not raged exclusively in Europe, nor was modernity the unilateral prerogative of America. Richard Sudhalter offers speculative evidence linking Dada to the Indiana University milieu of Hoagy Carmichael. Citing Hoagy's chum William Moenkhaus, who had studied in Switzerland during the Great War, Sudhalter speculates that Moenkhaus may have brought the Dada germ directly to the Book Nook, famed hangout for Hoagy's gang in Bloomington. "In this context the Book Nook's metamorphosis from simple hangout to scene of overheated discussion and spontaneous, often outrageous behavior (with hot jazz as both soundtrack and counterpoint) makes it seem a middle-American adaptation of the Cabaret Voltaire spirit."[38] This was during the time (1924) when Carmichael's Collegians and Bix's Wolverines played regularly at university and other functions. Sudhalter further speculates that "To watch [Hoagy], pale and intense in a yellow slicker, bobbing and jerking like a marionette at the keyboard, was to behold a man possessed by a purity of expression wholly consonant with the 'manifesto' of Cabaret Voltaire days. It takes no great leap of imagination to see him as a Hugo Ball figure in Moenkhaus's mind, pounding away as the high-spirited japery of this midwestern 'playground for crazy emotions' guggled and plashed around him."[39] It may, of course, be such a leap on Sudhalter's part—provoked, perhaps, by a certain physical resemblance between Hoagy and Ball. But the link is made plausible by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings' hit "That Dada Strain."[40]

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[38] Richard M. Sudhalter, *Stardust Melody: The Life and Music of Hoagy Carmichael* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57.
[39] Ibid., 60.
[40] As Francis Naumann documents, "Da Da Strain" was recorded by Mamie Smith in 1922, the first of half a dozen renditions of the song in the next six months. "Although it is tempting to speculate that the title of this song was inspired by reports of Dada that had appeared in the American press, it is more likely that the syncopation and rhythmic beat of the sound 'dada' lent itself naturally to musical adaptations, particularly to the rhythm and tempo of jazz. Nevertheless, it is compelling to note that some thirty years later, when Duchamp was asked to organize a Dada retrospective for the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, he chose to exhibit a copy of the original 78 rpm recording of this tune in a vitrine alongside other documents of the New York Dada period." *New York Dada 1915-23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), 242 n. 2. Ishmael Reed incorporates "That Dada Strain" into the phenomenon of "Jes Grew" in *Mumbo Jumbo:* "UPON HEARING ETHEL WATERS SING 'THAT DA-DA-STRAIN' AND A JAZZ BAND PLAY 'PAPA DE-DA-DA' EUROPEAN PAINTERS TAKE JES GREW ABROAD." *Mumbo Jumbo* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 105.

With jazz, music became a medium in a quasi-spiritualist sense, or in the sense of that phase in Surrealism called "enter the mediums" heralding automatic writing by way of "sleeping fits." Some previously alien dimension of experience was being channeled through music. Ramón Gómez de la Serna recognized in jazz a human voice not human.[41] 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"[42]), 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"[43]), and as vitalizing accompaniment to gay times (in F. Scott Fitzgerald's various renditions). These social uses rendered jazz transitory, whereas, for the avant-garde, jazz was a transit, a mediumistic excursion to another world altogether. In more or less concurrent scenarios across Europe: Eliot substitutes banjo for lute, Man Ray photographs himself at a drum set, Rodchenko in the USSR uses a photo of a saxophone in a collage (for Mayakovsky's book *Pro Eto [About This]*), and a journal appears in Belgrade bearing the title *Dada Jazz*. Susan Cook, surveying the German scene, notes that "the avant-garde, in particular, felt the need to justify their interest and the logical necessity of drawing on these new idioms. It becomes quite clear in these passionate and divergent accounts that jazz had become a symbol of something much larger than the music itself. For the avant-garde, it represented the very spirit of modernism, freedom, and experimentation."[44]

The impact of jazz on classical composers exemplifies the full range of possible responses. 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, exciting 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

[41] Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Obras Completas* Vol. II (Barcelona: AHR, 1957), 1054.
[42] Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau, A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 259.
[43] George Antheil, "The Negro on the Spiral," *Negro: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Cunard (London: Wishart, 1934), 218.

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). Schulhoff's interests were typical of the time in their seamless transition from Dada to jazz—and, like so many other classical composers (Stravinsky, 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.

In the establishment of an ascertainable threshold of modernity, jazz was added to an ensemble that also included TSF, Cubism, and "sex-appeal." TSF was the universalized French abbreviation for radio transmission (telegraphie sans fils), and these enigmatic capital letters commonly perch at the margins of poems, collages and paintings throughout the 1920s—even figuring in the title of Jaroslav Seifert's 1925 collection of poems, *Na vlnách TSF* (On the Waves of TSF). "Sex appeal" was one of the numerous loans from American English, which began infiltrating European vocabulary after the Great War. Rarely translated, "sex appeal" and "cocktail" and "jazz" formed an incipient Esperanto for a floating international stylistic currency. Cubism, having preceded the war, had been sufficiently diffused by 1919 that it served as a general carrier, a principle of applied social locomotion, for all the other elements of modernity. Reviewing *Parade* in its 1919 London performance, F. S. Flint wondered what to call it: "Cubo-futurist? Physical *vers-libre?* Plastic jazz? The decorative grotesque?"[45] 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

[44] Susan C. Cook, "Jazz as Deliverance," *American Music* 7: 1 (Spring 1989), 37.
[45] Alan Young, *Dada and After: Extremist Modernism and English Literature* (Manchester University Press, 1981), 49.

garden of gesticulating figures, dancing and talking, while the rhythm of the primitive forms of ragtime throbbed through the wide room."[46]

The editor of the immense *Encyclopédie des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes au XXème Siècle* (an accompaniment to the major *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* of 1925) evoked a milieu in which, "Tired of curves, having used up the joys of a timid naturalism and stylized flora and fauna which their predecessors had abused, the designers of 1925 have developed a capricious geometry."[47] This "capricious geometry" resonated well with the jazz that accompanied it in the public's association, inasmuch as jazz (in addition to its "jungle" rhythms) was thought to transmit the spirit of the machine age, or to embody the dynamism of a machine aesthetic. Cubism as such was not at issue: "In the press, 'Cubism' sometimes came to represent anything anti-naturalistic, abstract, or geometric."[48] Armand Lanoux characterized the Charleston as "the Cubist dance par excellence,"[49] 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. "Clothing is not made for standing still," writes Richard Martin in *Cubism and Fashion*, "and fashion immediately took to Cubist theory and form that engaged movement.… As ready as Futurism was to spring into action, Cubism was a perpetual motion machine, moving with every facet. For fashion, the energy was only exacerbated."[50] Jazz, too, was a perpetual motion machine, supplementing the already "exacerbated" energy of Cubist fashion. Robert Goffin's initial response to jazz in 1920 was to write poetry, with visual cubist accompaniment: "Possessed immediately by a sort of frenzied lyricism, I wrote *Jazz Band*, a collection of poems in praise of the new music [to which a] great cubist artist contributed four woodcuts, to illustrate

[46] William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (University of Toronto Press, 1972), 49.
[47] Kenneth Wayne, "Cubism and Modern French Design," *Picasso, Braque, Léger and the Cubist Spirit 1919-1939* (Portland, Maine: Portland Museum of Art, 1996), 39.
[48] Ibid., 44.
[49] Lanoux, *Paris in the Twenties*, 49.
[50] Richard Martin, *Cubism and Fashion* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 53.

it."[51] In many quarters, Cubism was the name for whatever seemed fashionably modernist. Not surprisingly, jazz became one of the more eye (and ear) catching symptoms of this phenomenon, as it was assimilated into European life along with an allied American vocabulary (*flirt*, *sex appeal* and *cocktail:* a typical constellation is evident in a page from the Belgrade vanguard journal *Zenit* from 1921, figure 1). Skyscrapers, chewing gum, comic strips, sports cars, Gillette razors and short haircuts for women were among the other fashionable accessories of the jazz-and-cubist atmosphere.

Jazz was central to the Bauhaus environment. Given the Bauhaus's self-appointed role in synthesizing modern art and design, students and faculty were keenly sensitive to contemporary forms of cultural practice. In 1925 Oskar Schlemmer described a scene convulsively dedicated to "the latest, the most modern, up-to-the-minute, Dadaism, circus, *variété*, jazz, hectic pace, movies, America, airplanes, the automobile. Those are the terms in which people here think."[52] "Nightlife at the Bauhaus claims the same importance as daytime activities," one student reported. "One must know how to dance." "Of course the credit goes to Arnold Weininger," he adds. "He organized the Bauhaus band. Jazz band, accordion, xylophone, saxophone, bombast, revolver." [53] Five years later jazz still prevails, and "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."[54] Shortly before joining the Bauhaus staff, Laszlo 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,

[51] Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan*, 73.
[52] Oskar Schlemmer, *The Letters and Diaries*, ed. Tut Schlemmer, tr. Krishna Winston (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 185.
[53] Farkas Molnár, "Life at the Bauhaus," *Periszkóp* (June-July 1925), tr. John Bákti, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 464.
[54] Ernö Kállai, "Ten Years of Bauhaus," *Die Weltbühne* 21 (Jan. 1930). tr. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 640.

dance, and two visuals straining at the limits of silent film: radio antennae on rooftops and "Jazz-band, *with its sound*."[55]

Contemporaneous with the founding of the Bauhaus, an avant-garde collective in Prague 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. Chaplin's acrobatic movements were rendered accessible to the populace at large by way of dance—and dance was invariably an extension of jazz. Jan K. Celis emphasizes that, for the Devetsil group, jazz was not strictly a musical phenomenon, but a symbol of popular pastimes from over the ocean.[56] In "The Joys of the Electric Century," Artus Cerník evoked

> The bar, the place of modern dances: the shimmy, the one-step, the two-step, the boston, the fox-trot—of modern music, the jazz band—of the half-waltz, the half-ballad, the polka. These dances are not bad dances, after all. They are acrobatics, madness of youth, a wealth of moves, harmony. Hatred of them is absurd, and time will disarm their enemies. The cossack, the csardás, the trasák, the mazurka, the savoy—all are merely dance forms of the past. The time of futurism and music-halls is perkier, and we have a reason to rejoice over dances that make the blood circulate, that require presence of mind, physical ability, and confidence. … And the jazz-band! Listen to it just once—no, better yet, several times—so that you can locate its flavor. In it, there is the screaming of automobile horns, electric bells, and sirens – there are rough low notes which offend the overly refined ear,

[55] Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, "Dynamics of a Metropolis: A Film Sketch," *Moholy-Nagy*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 121.

[56] The passage is worth quoting in full: "The affinity with the other arts, with dance, poetry and film, is one of the reasons for the enthusiastic reception of jazz and its stylistic impact on the compositions of Bohuslav Martinu, J. Jezek, E. Schulhoff and Emil Burian, author of one of the first studies of jazz in Europe. Jazz was perceived not just as the musical realization of the rhythm of modernity, but also as a symbol of popular entertainments from across the ocean. Jazz responded to the aesthetic 'of the streets' as advocated by the members of Devetsil, incorporating their aspirations for an activity both playful and optimistic" (Jan K. Celis, "Devetsil," *Prague 1900-1938: Capitale secrète des avant-gardes* [Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1997], 172). My translation.

there is thunder with colorful flashes, gunshots, a ruckus encapsulated in some beautiful song of battle or triumph.[57]

As for "beautiful song," European poets plentifully 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."[58] The Italian Futurist Fillia, in his poem "Mechanical Sensuality," evoked the "polydimensional…tactile visual olfactory supersenses"[59] of a bar, including this approximation of the jazz ensemble:

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

Dadaists made a point of brandishing the term "jazz" as a typographic feature in their placards. The ad for a 1920 dada ball in Geneva deploys a single capital "A" to emphasize the vowel shared by the three words "Jazz," "Band," and "Dada." Dragan Aleksic issued two journals from Belgrade in 1922, *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz*, with advertising support from local bars where jazz was played (figure 2). A Merz matinee in Berlin in 1923, featuring Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Hausmann, makes reference to "Wang Wang Blues" (figure 3). Mexican

[57] Artus Cerník, "Radosti Elektrického století" ["The Joys of the Electric Century"], *Revolucní sborník Devetsil*, ed. Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige (Prague: Vortel, 1922), 141. For this translation, I am grateful to Lara Glenum and Josef Horácek.
[58] Juliette Roche, "Etat.....Colloidal...," *Demi Cercle* (Paris: Éditions d'Art 'La Cible', 1920), unpaginated. My translation.
[59] Fillia, "Sensualità meccanica [Mechanical Sensuality]," in Zbigniew Folejewski, *Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry: A Comparative Study and an Anthology* (University of Ottawa Press, 1980), 178.

poet Manuel Maples Arce's poem "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."[60]

Jean Cocteau's Parisian Jazz Band (with Auric and Poulenc) played at the opening of an exhibition of work by Picabia at Galerie La Cible in 1920, that precarious moment when the various factions of Parisian Dada were splitting up. (Given the context, the repudiation of jazz issued soon afterward by Auric and Cocteau may have been misconstrued by historians: "Plus de jazz" *also* meant No More Dada.) In 1922 Jacques Povolozky, owner of La Cible, published *L'Homme cosmogonique* by Nicolas Beauduin, a Whitmanian epic excerpts of which had appeared in most of the leading journals of the European avant-garde. Beauduin makes the obligatory reference to "Le JAZZ-BAND"[61]—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):

[60] Manuel Maples Arce, "T.S.F.," *Manomètre* 4 (August 1923), 68. My translation.
[61] Nicolas Beauduin, *L'Homme Cosmogonique* (Paris: Jacques Povolozky, 1922), 74. This extract translated by Tim Conley.

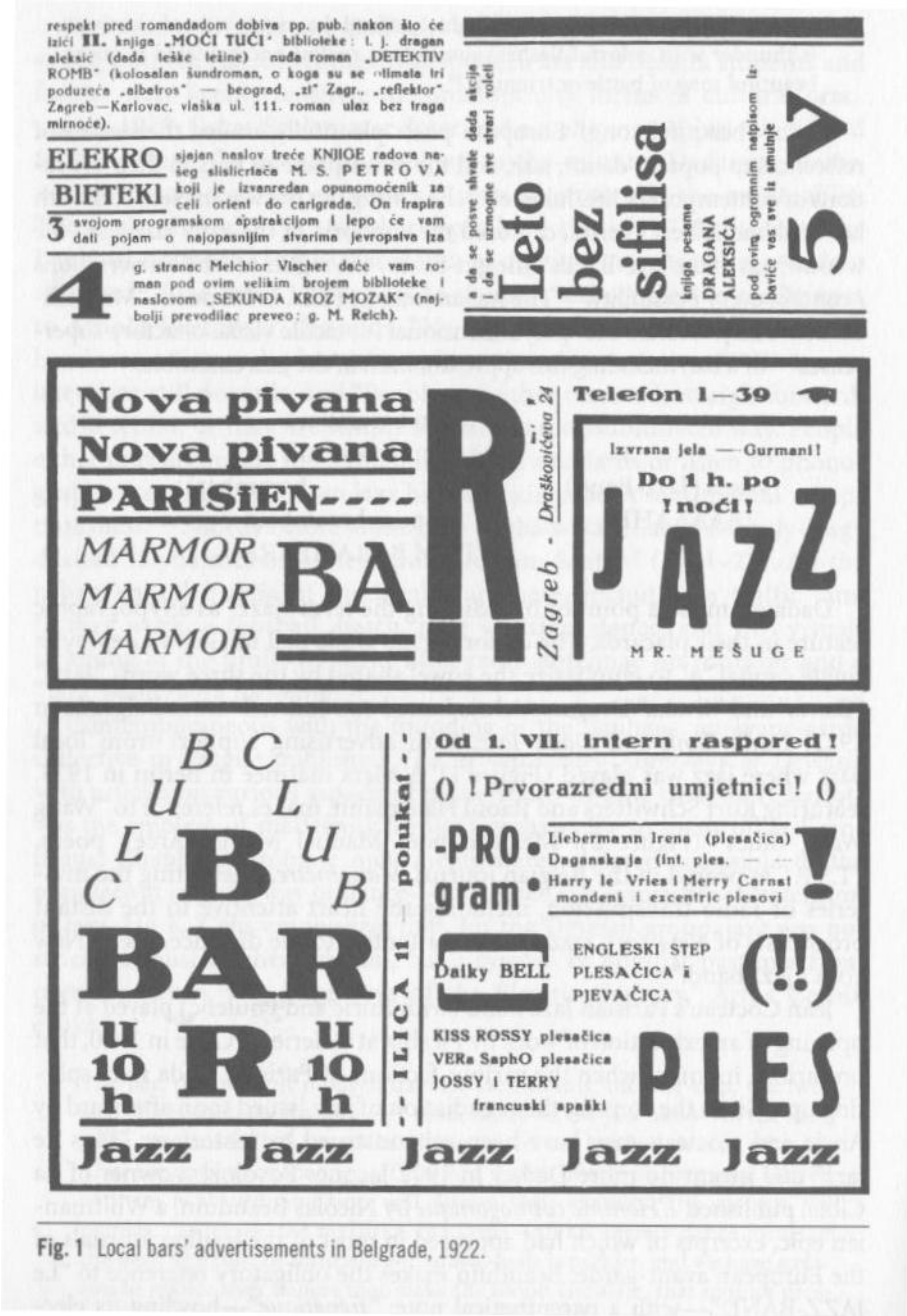

Fig. 1 Local bars' advertisements in Belgrade, 1922.

Fig. 2 A Merz matinée in Berlin, 1923.

Le JAZZ-BAND hurle (*frénétique*)
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 troué 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."[62]

[62] 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.

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.”[63] 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.”[64] In the Rumanian journal *75HP* (75 Horsepower) the editor wrote, in place of a manifesto, an “aviogram” in bold red and black (figure 4):

LIKE WINDOWS THE CONCERT OF THE CENTURY BEGINS
ELEVATORS RINGS INTER-BANK CLOWN-LIKE JAZZ
HORN
F FLAT
D
F FLAT
IN
PAJAMAS
FOOTBALL[65]

[63] Ljubomir Micic, “Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Graveyard,” *Zenit* 2: 12 (March 1922), tr. Maja Starcevic, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 508.
[64] Salvador Dalí, *Collected Writings*, ed. and tr. Haim Finkelstein (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 61.
[65] Ilarie Voronca, “Untitled Statement,” *75HP* (Oct. 1924), tr. Monica Voilescu, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 537.

Voronca envisions words "run[ning] through the faubourg wrapping themselves in the jazz of vertiginous sentences,"[66] anticipating Jack Kerouac's enthusiasm for "bop prosody"—or what,

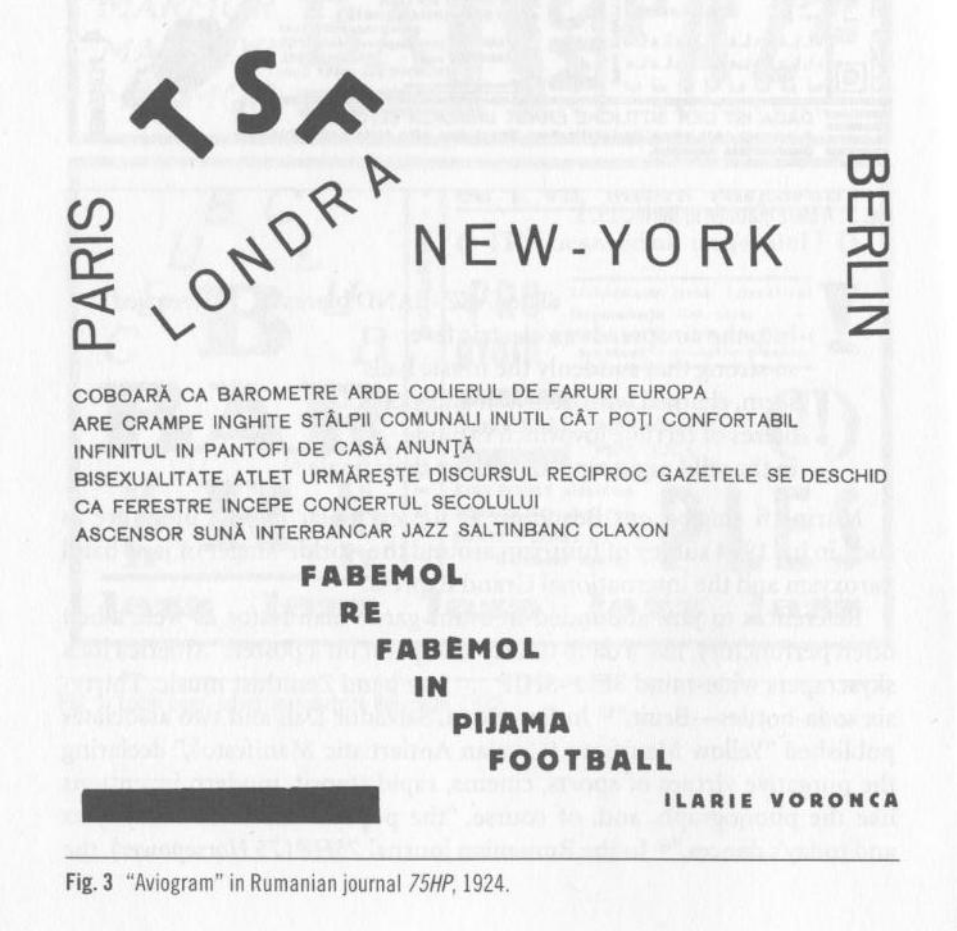

Fig. 3 "Aviogram" in Rumanian journal *75HP*, 1924.

much earlier, Berlin Dadaist Walter Mehring envisioned as "an international lingual work of art, the language-ragtime"[67]—affirming the widespread Dada aspiration to "rediscover the evangelical concept of the 'word' (logos) as a magical complex image."[68] Following in the wake of Marinetti's "parole in libertà" or words in freedom, Ball envisioned a further step: "We tried

[66] Ibid., 537.
[67] 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.
[68] Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 68.

to give the isolated vocables the fullness of an oath, the glow of a star." The sense of liberating pledge links the *logos* of Dada (nurtured by vocables emancipated by sheer sound values) with the bruitist affirmations of jazz. "Touching lightly on a hundred ideas at the same time without naming them, this sentence [renovated by Dada] made it possible to hear the innately playful, but hidden, irrational character of the listener; it wakened and strengthened the lowest strata of memory."[69] Skimming lightly over a parade of associations, jazz too sought out the primal layers of consciousness long buried under European cultural amnesia.

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. The paradox of an urban jungle emerged, often under the sign of jazz, which solicited a transfiguration of "psychophysiology" as in the 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."[70] Drawing on the polymathic anarchism of Dada and the utopian program of Constructivism,[71] 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."[72] The contributing form of music, presumably, is jazz (explicitly so for Prague's Poetism: "*Poetry for HEARING:* the music of loud noises, jazz, radiogenics."[73] Four months prior to the publication of *Integral*, the allied avant-

[69] Ibid., 68. Tracing the precursors of Dada, Ball acknowledges Arthur Rimbaud as "the patron of our many poses and flights of fancy," specifying the racial subconscious opened by the French poet: "Rimbaud's discovery is the European as the 'false Negro'" (*Flight Out of Time* 68).
[70] "Man," *Integral* 1 (Mar. 1, 1925), tr. Monica Voiculescu, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 554.
[71] Marcel Janco's prominence in the Bucharest avant-garde of the 1920s made Dada a more concrete genealogical factor than in some other outposts of Constructivism. Of the six original founders of Cabaret Voltaire, Janco and Tzara were Rumanian, although Tzara headed west to Paris after the war, where his presence gave rise to those Dada factions that eventuated in Surrealism.
[72] Ilarie Voronca, "Surrealism and Integralism," *Integral* 1 (Mar. 1925), tr. Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 556.
[73] Karel Teige, "Poetism Manifesto," *ReD* 1: 9 (1928), tr. Alexandra Büchner, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 600.

garde journal *Contimpuranul* held an art exhibit. At its opening, a scholar discoursed on the African influence on modern art, but his lecture was "suddenly sundered by a drum roll":

> The lights that then erupted revealed on the podium, behind the master of ceremonies, a jazz-band, replete with Negro musician. The sound of strings, sirens and drums. The perplexed multitude attempted without much success to advance at the podium. Did the directors of the exhibition pre-plan perhaps this general first impression, this bewildering amalgam of tones like a gigantic collection of colored butterflies? Because at least as far as the intervention of the jazz band is concerned it is certain that we were not only dealing with an effect of stage direction but with a veritable modernist ritual, of Dadaist manifestation.[74]

Responding to the same exhibition, another commentator concluded "In fact, everything can be contained in a single word: musicalization!"[75]

In light of the conceptual and sometimes pragmatic overlap between jazz and the avant-garde sketched above, it is not surprising that European studies of jazz that began appearing in the 1920s bear concrete traces of the link. When the editor of *Esquire* wrote his Introduction to Robert Goffin's *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan* (1944), he declared Goffin to be "the first serious man of letters to take jazz seriously enough to devote a book to it."[76] This striking piece of misinformation seems to have led to a notable lack of awareness on the part of jazz historians ever since. In fact, Goffin was but one of several "men of letters" who wrote books on jazz, and his 1930 *Aux Frontières du Jazz* was one of the later publications. Preceding it were *Das neue Jazzbuch* by Alfred Baresel (1925), *Le Jazz* by André Coeuroy and André Schaeffner (1926), *Jazz, eine musikalische Zeitfrage* by Paul Bernhard (1927), *Jazz* by E. F. Burian (1928)

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[74] Tudor Vianu, "The First *Contimpuranul* International Exhibition," *Miscarea literara* (Dec. 6, 1924), tr. Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 540.
[75] Oscar Walter Cisek, "The International Exhibition Organized by the Magazine *Contimpuranul*," *Gândirea* 4: 7 (Jan. 15, 1925), tr. Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, in *Between Worlds*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 552.
[76] Arnold Gingrich, "Introduction," in Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan*, ix.

and *Jazz Band* by A. G. Bragaglia (1929). There was also an intriguing 1927 jazz novel (simply called *Jazz*) by Hans Janowitz, who had studied in Prague and known Kafka, Brod, and Karl Kraus and who, prior to writing *Jazz*, had been scriptwriter for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.*[77] These European authors of books on jazz all had some connection 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 performed with a jazz band in a Prague cabaret and, as a composer, wrote "Cocktails" for voice and jazz band (1926), a jazz opera "Bubu of Montparnasse" and "Jazz-Requiem" (both 1928). He went on to become one of Prague's most important theatre directors. *Jazz* was published in Prague by Aventinum, a leading publisher of Czech authors associated with Poetism and Surrealism. Burian's epigraph is from Karel Teige, the leading Czech theorist of the avant-garde:

> Music, just like theater, has no idea how to keep up with the times and with the other arts. Concerts and recitals are indeed stale waters of a small fish pond… the revival of music… happens only from external, secular stimuli. Though dead in the concert halls, music is alive in the world at large. Passion for living reality… you can hardly fear or refuse a music whose instruments and performers are still taboo – Jazz![78]

Bragaglia's book also came with distinct 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

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[77] Jurgen Grandt suggests that "the narrative voice in Janowitz's *Jazz* is also, in a way, jazz music itself, creating and reinventing itself in the moment" ("Kinds of Blue: Toni Morrison, Hans Janowitz, and the Jazz Aesthetic," manuscript, p. 7). Certainly Janowitz openly declares his right to play fast and loose with narrative conventions by appealing to the laws of jazz: "A jazz-novel has the right to fade softly in the middle of a motif's repetition and simply come to an end. To safeguard this inalienable right in the first jazz-novel having unfolded according to the laws of jazz music—well, this should naturally be granted to me" (*Jazz*, ed. Rolf Rieß [Bonn: Weidle Verlag, 1999], 112, translation by Jurgen Grandt in "Kinds of Blue").

[78] Karel Teige, epigraph in E. F. Burian, *Jazz* (Prague: Aventinum, 1928). Translation by Lara Glenum and Josef Horácek.

has clear affinities with jazz. He later became deeply involved in theatre, and his monograph on jazz was one of a number of studies on the arts, including dance (1928), film (1929) and the stage (1926, 1929, 1930). In fact, *Jazz Band* is less about the music than about its impact in these other fields, particularly its antiromanticism. 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."[79]

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 the artistic avant-garde were called on to lend a force of analogy. 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."[80] Robert Goffin contended that "Jazz was the first form of surrealism."[81] He summons 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.[82] 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."[83] 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 avant-garde was a pervasive phenomenon across Europe when jazz appeared, whereas it had played almost no role in the United States.

The heyday of the European avant-garde was from 1910-1930, after which it was overtaken by political circumstances that dissipated the utopian energies characteristic of

[79] A. G. Bragaglia, *Jazz Band* (Milan: Edizioni 'Corbaccio', 1929), 9.
[80] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 206.
[81] Goffin, *Jazz from the Congo to the Metropolitan*, 3.
[82] Ibid., 5, 3.

Futurism, Surrealism, Constructivism, and even (in its own way) 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, and similar Parisian pronouncements a few years later were also premature. 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[84]: a distinctly Spanish vision (and Spain had long since embarked on its own *blackening of Europe*—its Moorish and Gypsy *duende* inspiring García Lorca's affirmation of "all that has dark sounds"[85]). Whatever the outcome, it is fitting to regard jazz tumbling with a retinue of other *isms* into the cauldron of Europe's mid-century fate. When avant-gardes emerged again along with jazz, they had independent histories of their own and would never again be casually (and opportunistically) conflated.

"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."[86] To explore that difference would take us beyond the scope of this essay; and, in any case, it is the subject of a recent book with a title so obvious it's a wonder no one thought of it before—*Jazz Modernism* in which Alfred Appel Jr. deftly blends anecdote and observation to make Armstrong and Ellington stand shoulder to

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[83] Francis Newton [Eric Hobsbawm], *The Jazz Scene* (Boston: Monthly Review Press, 1960), 244.
[84] Gómez de la Serna, *Obras Completas* Vol. II, 1062.
[85] Federico García Lorca, *Deep Song and Other Prose*, ed. and tr. Christopher Maurer (New York: New Directions, 1980), 43.
[86] Geoffrey Jacques, "Listening to Jazz," *American Popular Music*, ed. Rachel Rubin and Jeffrey Melnick (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 75.

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? But there was a time, especially in Europe during the heyday of the avant-garde, 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[87]

[87] Vítezslav Nezval, "Diabolo: A Poem of the Night," *Antilyrik & Other Poems*, tr. Jerome Rothenberg and Milos Sovak (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2001), 106.

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