3 The jazz audience

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Once the Dixieland revival found an audience in the 1940s, the monolithic façade of swing began to splinter into the interest groups that have populated the subsequent history of jazz: bop, cool, third stream, free jazz, fusion, neo-traditionalist. Jazz as music is inseparable from the African-American experience, and Duke Ellington rightly insisted that 'the Negro is the creative voice of America, is creative America' (Tucker 1993, 147). The question of the jazz audience, on the other hand, encompasses a more indeterminate populace. One could approach the topic of audience by offering a demographic profile of various constituencies of fans, but this would lend tacit assent to consumerism as validating criterion. There was an audience for jazz before there were consumers, in part because 'the Jazz Age was born . . . almost before there was jazz' (Schiff 1997, 87). 'Jazz' was initially so mercurial a term that it was applied to music intermittently: the audience responded to a social spectrum in which music was only a part. None the less, historians have gravitated to the narrative magnetism of giants shaping the music to their personal visions, and 1923 is often cited as an inaugural moment because it marks the first recordings of Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet and Bessie Smith. Gunther Schuller even refers to a 'pre-1923 era' (1968, 71). But if we de-prioritise recordings, a significant fact appears: jazz had already had a worldwide impact before 1923. As a case in point, consider a different artifact from 1923, Russian constructivist Alexander Rodchenko's photomontage for Vladimir Mayakovsky's book of poetry, *About This* (see Plate 3.1). The history of jazz has been so obsessively narrated as an American phenomenon that Rodchenko's image forces a perspectival adjustment. If it was launched with those famous recordings of 1923, how did jazz make it to Moscow so quickly, and what did it mean? To answer this question is to discover that the jazz audience was responsive to a culture complex in which modernism, fashion, dance and Americanism were inseparable from the music.

It is not hard to trace the routes by which jazz reached Moscow. Jazz was initially disseminated by the spread of new dances such as the foxtrot, which arrived in England in the summer of 1914 and crossed the Channel the next year. The chanteuse Gaby Deslys spent part of the war in New York, returning to the Casino de Paris with a jazz band in 1917, and black American soldiers were being conscripted by the Parisian avant-garde for fêtes in 1918. The

Plate 3.1 Alexander Rodchenko, photomontage for Vladimir Mayakovsky's poetry book *About This*. At the base of the montage we read 'Die Jazz-Band', above which, in smaller type, is 'ORIGINAL – JAZZ' (a Russian work cites jazz in German and English). At the top of the collage, somewhat obscured by a bottle of schnapps or brandy, are references to popular dances in decorative lettering: 'Jass-Two-Step', 'Fox-Trot' and 'Shimmy'. Rodchenko's montage incorporates other elements of the milieux in which 'jass' made its European debut, including dancing couples, café tables, high-heeled shoes and the looser style of women's dress suited to the new dances. There are several bottles of liquor as well as a large cigar floating into the centre of the montage like the Hindenberg blimp.

arrival of jazz coincided with the devastation of the Great War, marking it with a singular intensity in the European context. R. W. S. Mendl repeatedly emphasises the connection in his 1927 book, *The Appeal of Jazz*, calling jazz a 'musical alcohol' affording stimulating relaxation to soldiers on leave from the front, while being itself 'a reflection of the elemental instincts of war fever' (95). The hostilities delayed further diffusion, and it was only in 1918 that Germans experienced the foxtrot and the tango. Thereafter, jazz was rapidly infused with a cosmopolitan aura.

Almost as soon as jazz became a fad it was attracting attention as a serious cultural phenomenon. By 1923 it had become common for classical composers to incorporate jazz syncopation into their works (Stravinsky and Milhaud most famously, but also Hindemith, Martinů, Křenek, Erwin Schulhoff, Louis Gruenberg, John Alden Carpenter, John Powell and Henry F. Gilbert). Students at the Bauhaus, the German bulwark of international modernism, organised a jazz band in 1923. The previous year a vanguard yearbook, *Devetsil*, appeared in Prague, in which several of the contributors addressed the phenomenon of the jazz-band (invariably hyphenated) as part of a culture complex including football, cabaret, variety shows, circus, kino, Charlie Chaplin and modern dance. This nexus of associations was perpetuated by those European authors who wrote the first serious studies of jazz: Coeuroy and Schaeffner (1926), Bernhard (1927), Mendl (1927), Burian (1928), Bragaglia (1929) and Goffin (1932).

For Americans and Europeans alike, jazz was a phenomenon inextricably bound up with the issue of modernity. In *Yankee Blues*, Macdonald Moore calls jazz 'a scavenger symbol for the cultural traumas of the 1920s'. 'As they unpacked the metaphor of jazz, critics "discovered" the secret of modernism', he writes, as '"jazz" lent perceptual coherence to phenomena as discrete as European musical avant-gardism, bureaucratic and scientific rationalization, even contemporary faddism' (1985, 82–3, 119). Walter Kingsley evoked the sensation of jazz for *New York Sun* readers in 1917: 'Imagine Walter Pater, Swinburne and Borodin swaying to the same pulses that rule the moonlit music on the banks of African rivers.' 'The laws that govern jazz', he clarified, 'rule in the rhythms of great original prose, verse that sings itself, and opera of ultra modernity' (Walser 1999, 7). 'Modernity' and 'modernism' went into circulation just about the time that jazz became available as one among many instances of what these terms meant. Fred Lewis Pattee gave the title *Tradition and Jazz* (1925) to a collection of literary criticism on such topics as 'The Old Professor of English: An Autopsy'. Jazz in this context had no musical connotation but meant defiance of the *passé*. Musically, jazz could be affirmed as 'the characteristic folk music of modernity because America is the most modern country of the world' (Drdla in Walser 1999, 44). For Clive Bell, jazz was a broad cultural movement that

'took its name from music – the art that is always behind the times'. He was writing just before the Jazz Age was named as such, but Bell clearly thought the term applicable to a range of cultural manifestations. Its most distinctive feature, syncopation, 'has given us a ragtime literature which flouts traditional rhythms and sequences and grammar and logic'. He singled out T. S. Eliot and Stravinsky as the supreme practitioners of jazz in their respective media, and in literature cited Woolf, Cocteau and Cendrars appreciatively, while disparaging Joyce: 'he rags the literary instrument' with 'talents which though genuine are moderate only' (Bell 1928, 215, 223, 224).

Bell's arts of 'jazz' include post-impressionism, symbolism, primitivism and neo-classicism: a formidable medley, but similar to those proposed by other commentators. In 1913 an article in the *San Francisco Bulletin* speculated on the vivacity of this 'futurist word which has just joined the language' (Sudhalter 1999, 8). It is unclear whether the reference is to Italian futurism, but modern art movements provided handy comparisons. 'The ferment which produced the innovations in the other arts which we call "jazzy" was at work in Europe long before its influence was felt here. Germany had her Sandburgs and Steins before we did', Henry O. Osgood informed American readers in 1926 (245). A German commentator greeted jazz as a 'musical revelation, a religion, a philosophy of the world, just like Expressionism and Impressionism' (Georg Barthelme in Starr 1983, 12). Robert Goffin informed 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' (Walser 1999, 86). For American painter Stuart Davis, the incentive to modernise himself as an artist arose from 'the numerical precisions of the Negro piano players in the Negro saloons' (1971, 23–4). Eric Hobsbawm later observed that 'Jazz was, and is, for deviant members of the American middle class what surrealism and existentialism were for deviant French members of it' (Newton 1960, 242). Recognition was not a one-way street. 'That Dada Strain' was the title of a jazz tune, and musicians recognised in other artistic events a comparable incentive. Mezz Mezzrow claims that *The American Mercury* was 'the Austin High Gang's Bible. It looked to us like Mencken was yelling the same message in his magazine that we were trying to get across in our music: his words were practically lyrics to our hot jazz' (Mezzrow and Wolfe 1972, 94).[1]

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age* appeared in 1922, when American literary magazines like *Soil* and *Broom* were promoting jazz as exemplary, and when a Serbian avant-garde journal took the title *Dada Jazz*. Jazz began to crop up as a reference in poetry. T. S. Eliot struggled unsuccessfully to write a jazz-inflected music-hall psychodrama called *Sweeney Agonistes*. In *Processional: A Jazz Symphony of American Life* (1925), John Howard

Lawson developed a theatrical method to reflect 'the wild disorder of contemporary life and the emotional exasperation which it produces' (Krutch 1939, 241). Meanwhile, popular writers in the 1920s availed themselves of jazz to inject a period flavour into otherwise old-fashioned moralising tales. In Germany, fiction writers such as Gerhard Schumann and Edwin Erich Dwinger depicted the toxic allure of jazz for the Aryan spirit. In English, jazz was sensationalist fodder in potboilers such as *The Great God Jazz* (n.d.) by H. M. E. Clamp, *The Jazz Widow* (1930) by May Christie and *Jazz Mad* (1928) by Svend Gade.

Literary uses of jazz were hardly restricted to motifs. The avant-garde registered an affinity in numerous cases, as with Cocteau and Les Six in Paris. Recognising in jazz 'the atavistic modernity they extolled', Berlin Dadaists like Walter Mehring called for an 'international lingual work of art, the language – ragtime' (Tower 1990, 89, 90). Dadaist sound poems do in fact bear a striking resemblance to scat singing. Gertrude Stein's is the closest literary equivalent to jazz improvisation, to which she pointedly refers in *Lectures in America*: 'The jazz bands made of this thing, the thing that makes you nervous at the theatre, they made of this thing an end in itself. They made of this different tempo a something that was nothing but a difference in tempo between anybody and everybody.' Stein's own compositional idiom is not different in principle from that of jazz polyrhythms, or 'two times going at once'. 'I kept wondering as I talked and listened all at once, I wondered is there any way of making what I know come out as I know it, come out not as remembering' (Stein 1935, 95, 180, 181). Is there a more concise definition of improvisation? Stein, of course, has long been associated with cognitive dissonance in literary circles, but jazz too was initially associated with noise and discordant experiences. 'Of all the emphatic sounds of modernism, noise is the most common and the most productively counterproductive' (Kahn 1999, 20). Douglas Kahn's tantalising formulation applies to jazz as well as to modernism, serving notice that while noise is the by-product of any harmonious model of social or aesthetic relations, the affirmation of noise imposes its own tacit field of relations.

A Chicago concert by James Reese Europe's band in 1919 concluded with a sonic rendition of trench warfare called 'In No Man's Land', during which the house lights were completely extinguished. This was precisely what the Italian futurists had been doing in their public declamations; and Bell cited Italian futurism as 'the nearest approach to a pictorial expression of the Jazz spirit' (1928, 214). Had he known the latest developments, Bell might have cited Dada instead of futurism. Certainly the insistent drumming that accompanied recitations of sound poetry at Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 served as prelude to the arrival of jazz. In Moscow, the state-sponsored jazz ensemble led by Valentin Parnakh included not only music, but lectures,

demonstrations of dance steps and jazz poetry. A 1922 concert juxtaposed the band with N. N. Foregger's 'noise orchestra' (inspired by the Italian futurist art of noises). To Parnakh's distress, one critic detected no difference between the two groups. Even informed enthusiasts associated jazz with noise. André Coeuroy and André Schaeffner bluntly stated, in their 1926 book, *Le Jazz*, 'Jazz is not a matter of argument or doctrine. Jazz is rhythm and noise' (142).[2] Jean Cocteau pinpointed the challenge of jazz for vanguard artists: 'This noise drenches us, wakens us *to do something else*' (1970, 86).[3]

'The object of a jazz band, apparently, is to provide as much noise as possible', wrote a bewildered London critic in *The Times* in 1919 (Godbolt 1984, 3). Jazz was widely associated with noise, and drums were perceived as pre-eminent noisemakers. A jazz band, it was assumed, was an assortment of unfamiliar instruments meant to showcase a drum set. At that point, in Britain, drum kits were called 'jazz-sets'. The usage may have spread to Germany where, after the war, drums were called 'the jazz' (Kater 1992, 14). Even a *New York Times* article of 1921 asserted that 'the drum-and-trap accessories . . . constitute the jazz, the rest merely band' (Hershey in Walser 1999, 25). Michel Leiris recalled the first Parisian exposure to jazz in which 'each performance was dominated almost from beginning to end by the deafening drums' (1984, 108). The attraction proved infectious, as Cocteau, Picabia and Milhaud each made an attempt to learn jazz drumming. In 1927, Mendl looked back on the 'crude, weird sounds' of the previous decade: 'the jazz effects were produced by motor horns, rattles, squeaky whistles, tin cans, almost any means of making crude and raucous noises: usually these horrible embellishments were served up by the drummer, who was a veritable host in himself, or *homme-orchestre*' (1927, 48).

Noise was not an exclusive prerogative of drums. Ezra Pound predicted that 'The future of piano music lies in the Jazz'. In context this was a disparaging remark, for Pound viewed the 'pye-ano' as 'a sort of cheap substitute for an orchestra' (1977, 203, 205). In 1922 Wallace Stevens evoked the allure of the most durable jazz icon:

> our bawdiness
> . . . indulged at last . . .
> Squiggling like saxophones.
> [1972, 77]

Two years later the *New York Times* cited 'that ghastly instrument, the saxophone' as an offence to musical taste (L. Levine 1993, 179); and an English dance hall in 1926 was able to renew its licence only on the condition that bands refrain from using saxophones. The exotic and risqué timbre of this novel reed instrument helped consolidate a musical soundscape, becoming in the process an internationally accessible cultural signifier, the logo

for jazz. The saxophone might have given Rodchenko an indelible image for his photomontage but for the fact that saxophones were scarce in the Soviet Union. In fact, Rodchenko excludes musical instruments altogether, the space being filled instead with the floating signifiers of fashionable dance and nightclubs.

The serious study of jazz was initiated by discographers, leaving a permanent imprint on subsequent attempts to write its history. Martin Williams's influential *The Jazz Tradition* (1983), while exemplary in its attentiveness, is little more than a chronological examination of key recordings. Most symptomatic is that Williams never mentions any connection between jazz and dancing (an effacement perpetuated in his booklet for *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*). But, until the rise of bebop, jazz was dance music. Its audience listened on its feet. The exceptions were in venues like the Cotton Club, where dance was displaced by floor shows of exotic spectacle catering to white clients. But the spectacle invariably involved dance; and Albert Murray reminds us that even in a concert setting jazz presents 'the dancing of attitudes' (1976, 189).[4]

In Europe, jazz arrived as a necessary accessory of the new dances – an extension, in effect, of the animation with which the musicians played. A Soviet enthusiast noted that, while the music was meant for dancing, the musicians' exertions constituted a dance of their own, making the jazz band a 'mimetic orchestra' (Starr 1983, 44). In both Europe and America, 'jazz' was often taken to refer to dancing rather than to a type of music: 'To Jazz or not to Jazz – that is the question', meaning, to dance or not to dance the latest dances, often bearing names like the Puppy Snuggle, the Terrapin Toddle and the Pollywog Wiggle. The American 'epidemic of mass social dancing' carried jazz with it around the world (Hobsbawm 1998, 268). The new dances did not go unprotested. The Vatican expressed official disapproval in 1914, and some municipalities arrested people for doing the foxtrot. A prominent American dance instructor charged that 'The music written for jazz is the very foundation and essence of salacious dancing' (Gelatt 1977, 213). In 1921 the *Ladies' Home Journal* condemned jazz as a subsidiary to lewd dances. The Salvation Army protested the 'implanting of jazz emotions' in babies at a maternity hospital proximate to a dance hall (Ogren 1989, 3). Indulging in the purple prose of the moral crusader, an American minister charged dance with every form of delinquency and social disgrace, but he never mentioned jazz or any other type of music, nor did he intimate any link between popular dances and African-American culture. For some, clearly, jazz was beneath notice, the mere sonic accompaniment to a menacing 'social pestilence' (Lamphear 1922, 38).

The dance audience was considerably larger than the listening audience, and even records were used mainly for dancing – a point made conspicuous

on 78 rpm labels, in which most jazz releases bore a generic indicator: 'Fox trot'. Dance was recreational in America, but in Europe it took on other connotations in the post-war milieu. The hero of Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf* submits to a Nietzschean self-overcoming in order to learn the foxtrot. As for musical incitement, 'The Jazz Band is the orgiastic dance orchestra', wrote Paul Bernhard. 'It is the instrumental and rhythmic expression of primal instincts given naked and manifestly primitive agitation' (1927, 26). Primitivism in dance – and, by association, jazz – was Europe's way of purging itself of overcivilised neuroses and hypersophistication. (The irony, of course, is that cultivated primitivism merely added another layer of sophistication.) For many, Josephine Baker was the cure incarnate, 'a wand of golden flesh', 'neither infrahuman nor superhuman . . . equally nonprimitive and uncivilized', wrote e. e. cummings (1966, 162). Count Harry Kessler located Baker's dance 'somewhere between the jungle and the skyscraper. The same is true of her music, jazz, in its color and rhythm. It is ultraprimitive and ultramodern' (Gumbrecht 1997, 67). Parisian fashion capitulated to the Baker vogue: women could slick down their hair with Bakerfix and wear Baker perfumes.

Jazz was nothing if not fashionable. A poem by Juliette Roche captures the euphoria of the early Jazz Age:

> the woodwinds of the Jazz-Bands
> the ginfizzes
> the ragtimes
> the conversations
> contain every possibility.

A chorus of consenting Europeans agreed: 'In the period of great license that followed the hostilities, jazz was a sign of allegiance, an orgiastic tribute to the colors of the moment' (Leiris 1984, 109); 'It was the time of savage joys, crazy rascals, and wild pranks within the realm of propriety: in short, the whole program of the era was called "Jazz"' (Janowitz 1927, 10); 'jazz is just as precisely the outward expression of our time as the waltz was of the outgoing nineteenth century' (Weill in Kaes *et al.* 1994, 597). Ernst Křenek used jazz in his opera *Jonny spielt auf* to evoke 'the collective feeling of the age' (*ibid.*, 586). Dutch cabaret star Louis Davids caught the spirit of reckless abandon in his song 'Mother is Dancing':

> Crying for your mother, baby?
> Baby, give it up.
> Mother needs her daily whoopee . . .
> Mommy craves that mean ol' banjo
> And the saxophone.
>
> [Senelick 1993, 220]

A character in J. Hartley Manners's 1922 play, *The National Anthem*, disparages its popularity: 'Why it's ridiculous. London is jigging to it . . . Paris is deafened by it. It has become the National Anthem of Civilization' (M. Moore 1985, 86). 'It is vulgar', a writer in *The Nation* conceded in 1922, 'but it is healthily frank – as frank as the conversation of a group of young people who cleanly and intelligently discuss birth control' (Schultz, 439).

Jazz was an ingredient of anything that people learned to call modern after World War I: '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' (Gerstel in Kaes *et al.* 1994, 555). In Europe it was celebrated for its unpretentiousness, accepted with a sigh of relief as an alleviation from the burden of Art. Cocteau caught the precise nature of the appeal: 'The music-hall, the circus, and American Negro bands, all these things fertilize an artist just as life does. To turn to one's own account the emotions aroused by this sort of entertainment is not to derive art from art. These entertainments are not art. They stimulate in the same way as machinery, animals, natural scenery, or danger' (1926, 21). Commentators might offer different menus, but the ingredients always derived from a common stock of associations. In the USSR it became a useful suffix; people spoke of 'theatrical jazz', 'cinema-jazz', 'extra-jazz', 'joy-jazz', 'circus-jazz' and so forth (Starr 1983, 108). Jazz was one of a number of English loan words and phrases permeating European vocabulary, such as 'flirt', 'cocktail' and 'sex appeal'. Given such a panoply of associations, the music itself was subject to conceptual indeterminacy. Some took it to mean orchestrated ragtime; to others it meant hokum and novelty revues. Period references often include music patently unrelated to what we now call jazz. As the Jazz Age took off and recordings proliferated, we can ascertain with greater certainty what counted as jazz music, but the term itself continued to connote an intricate social panorama ranging from sports cars and safety razors to skyscrapers, comic strips, chewing gum, short hairstyles for women and the chorus line (or what the Germans called 'Girlkultur').[5] Oskar Schlemmer described a climate 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' (Willett 1978, 119).

When André Breton said that beauty had to be convulsive in order to exist, he might as well have been speaking of jazz, which epitomised convulsiveness in social behaviour. Jazz incited a binge mentality. For a fashionable primitivism, the role of jazz was to 'apply the rouge on civilization', but, Ivan Goll lamented, 'these primeval people will be used up fast!' (Kaes *et al.* 1994, 560). That jazz itself might be a passing phase was registered by A. G. Bragaglia in 1929: 'The jazz-band already represents for us the physiognomy

of nostalgia for our time' (1929, 9). As early as 1920 the French composer, Georges Auric, was writing its eulogy: 'Jazz woke us up', he conceded, but 'from now on let's stop our ears so as not to hear it' (Steegmuller 1970, 259); and his friend, Cocteau, wrote dismissively of 'a certain decor, a certain racket, a certain Jazz-bandism' as 'the froth of the modern movement' (Brown 1968, 200). Of course, the frenetic cycle of absorption and repudiation characterises not only the vanguard of the period, but also the routine turnover of fashion. Insofar as jazz was closely linked with fashionable activities, it was subject to commercial pressures to conform to fashion cycles, and was inevitably slated for obsolescence.

Much of the history has been written as if stylistic changes were strictly musical. But, in the larger cultural context, jazz was the servant of public fantasy, a condition to which musicians had to adapt. The reluctance of many black musicians to use the word 'jazz' is surely related to fashion. Why risk a promising career by being affiliated with a contested term? In its early years, jazz was conspicuously associated with hokum, 'spasm bands', and the 'nut jazz' of Ted Lewis and other novelty acts. Paul Whiteman's claim to have made a lady out of jazz was not altogether the infamous appropriation of black music it is often made out to be, but an attempt to keep it from sinking with its associations. By 1927, the editor of *Melody Maker* had alleged that 'it signifies everything that is old-fashioned' (Godbolt 1984, 35), and a few years later, before the swing phenomenon revitalised jazz and gave it a temporary name change, Constant Lambert observed that it had been reduced to 'a sort of aural tickling . . . a drug for the devitalised' in 'an age of tonal debauch' (1934, 228, 239).

Predictions of the demise of jazz proved irrelevant in the end, since the worldwide audience for Americanism meant that jazz would always benefit by the association. 'The rhythm of our time is jazz', said Kurt Weill, adding that it represented 'the Americanization of our whole external life' (in Kaes *et al.* 1994, 597). 'Jazz, filled with the youthful energy of America, is the pregnant outburst of a changed, untragic feel for life', another German affirmed (Warschauer in *ibid.*, 572). The Dean of the Yale Music School protested: 'America knows how to weep as well as how to laugh'[6] – a view epitomising genteel aspirations in America at a time when 'One could understand what Culture was by looking at the characteristics of jazz and reversing them' (L. Levine 1993, 174). During an American tour, Maurice Ravel reproached his hosts: 'you Americans take jazz too lightly' (Sullivan 1999, 199). Most of those who took it seriously did so because of the European attention it received. Lincoln Kirstein recalled that, for his set, 'Harlem was far more an *arrondissement* of Paris than a battleground of Greater New York' (1991, 34). Americans could use jazz to attain the sophistication of Europe, while Europeans sought in it the elixir of a primitive sagacity. In

Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, jazz awakens Harry Haller from his Old World lethargy. 'For me', he reflects, 'its raw and savage gaiety reached an underworld of instinct and breathed a simple honest sensuality . . . There was something of the Negro in it, and something of the American, who with all his strength seems so boyishly fresh and childlike to us Europeans' (1969, 43). For an American like Gilbert Seldes, jazz was an embryonic vernacular art, 'the normal development of our resources, the expected, the wonderful, arrival of America at a point of creative intensity' (1923, 151). Intensity, of course, need not mean sobriety or dignity. 'Jazz is just fun and foolishness', Frank Patterson wrote in 1922: '[It] expresses our American nature – and as long as our nature is expressed by anything so simple and straightforward we will have no cause to worry' (Collier 1993, 226) – to worry, that is, about degeneration or decadence.

The link with degeneracy was a persistent feature of the early jazz years. While its contribution to social effervescence was obvious, some composers heralded the potential of jazz for regeneration. In a 1924 *Vanity Fair* article, 'American Noises: How to Make Them, and Why', Seldes envisioned the tributary opening out on a global prospect: 'The discoveries which jazz has made, the freshness of tones – the American noises, in short – will be snapped up by composers in and out of the jazz movement. It is the musical world at large which will ultimately gain by the coming of jazz' (Kammen 1996, 118). The gains, in retrospect, were not restricted to signature jazz touches in a few bars of otherwise conventional art music. During the Jazz Age, however, imitation was the dominant form of appropriation, a circumstance Americans might view with anxiety. In its 'search for fresh booty', Matthew Josephson saw European colonialism in 1922 poised to devour jazz and its fashionable accessories 'on the hunch that the world is on its way to being Americanized in the next two decades' (1922, 347). Separating jazz from fashionable accessories has been the most consistent challenge for the music ever since, as the protagonists of high and low culture, seriousness and distraction, have laid equal claim to jazz, that durable Janus-faced icon of degeneration and regeneration.

The story of the jazz audience changes dramatically after the demise of the Jazz Age. By the time swing revitalised an industry hit hard by the depression, a new cadre of jazz enthusiasts had emerged. Early discographers played a notable role in winnowing out novelty items from the canon, heightening a sense of 'The Real Thing' to be excavated from distraction and pretence. However elusive this spectre continued to be, it enabled writers to impose highbrow criteria on the discussion of jazz, establishing the atmosphere to which Ellington was famously exposed on his first European tour in 1933, which emboldened him to pursue musical projects more ambitious than the 32-bar song. The impact of real innovation was slow to emerge, obscured

by the miasma of swing. But, in any event, the monolithic aura of 'jazz'as a unitary musical and cultural event did not outlast the 1920s.

Why, then, has the term 'jazz' proven so durable, so insistent in its implication of continuity, despite contentious claims of rival factions for a pure lineage? Beginning in the 1930s, a jazz press developed in Europe and in North America, establishing criteria for the evaluation of jazz records and performances. Because these evaluations were musical, not cultural, what passed for jazz was increasingly subject to a logic of musical progress. The critics, predominately white, deployed a vocabulary of universalism, confining the African-American cultural background to a demographic footnote. In the hands of white critics – and discerning industry promoters such as John Hammond and Leonard Feather – jazz was endowed with a tacitly Hegelian destiny: the progressive self-realisation of musical potential in the stylistic achievement of innovators. This model, readily available in art criticism and in literary history, was easily adaptable to jazz.

The progressivist vision of jazz could also be inferred from the orientation of musicians, particularly after World War II. Popular music is restricted to basic and easily recognisable formats, and the musical ability of pop stars is often limited to their genre. Early jazz was so rudimentary in musical terms that educated musicians disdained it. But employment opportunities forced the issue, and legions of musicians found professional careers in a context in which their actual musical sophistication was underemployed. Many black musicians were looking for musical challenges to alleviate the routinisation of an increasingly homogenised swing idiom. The revolutionary impact of bebop – its eruption as revolt – marks a distinct moment in jazz history: the appearance of a counterforce contesting industry standards. Bebop has been mythologised as a blow struck for black freedom, a secession of the music from the burden of dance, an embrace of small-combo improvisation liberated from the prescriptive destiny of big-band charts; and, while such claims are not spurious, they overlook the most decisive role of bebop, which was the formation of a new audience.

Bebop impinged on the credentialling prerogative of white critics, with figures such as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell somersaulting beyond the going terms of musical approval with a flamboyance that could be construed as insolence. The piquant devil-may-care spirit attributed to jazz in the 1920s was remade by bebop into a posture of defiant musical fitness, and a definitive invitation to drop pretence. If jazz originally signified a fashionable hedonism, a requisite excess of gaiety following the Great War, bebop commemorated a new austerity passing oblique judgement on a world less easily assessed, a fitting counterpart to French existentialism. Insofar as bebop was initially a cult, its audience consisted of insiders, initiates and those in search of an initiation not necessarily

musical. One might plausibly claim that the audience for jazz in the past fifty years has largely been oriented to bebop as benchmark – an ironic fate for a musical phenomenon that made the first serious claim for progressive jazz.

Despite its musical integrity, bebop re-established the association of jazz with fashion. As a conspicuously dissident and subterranean movement, bop was inseparable from a lifestyle mystique. Hipster subculture – which had incubated within the ranks of the big bands throughout the swing years – was extended to the culture at large through the notoriety of bop. Even as late as 1979, Gillespie felt obliged to devote large stretches of his autobiography to disentangling fact from innuendo. By that point, of course, bop had long been overtaken by rock as the exemplary purveyor of dissident posturing. As a lifestyle initiative, however, bebop was timely, playing a decisive role in the formation of white counterculture, most notably in the case of the Beats. Jack Kerouac in particular embodied a response to bop that was at once reverent and manic. His theory and practice of 'spontaneous prose' was explicitly modelled on jazz improvisation; and his free-associational essay, 'The Beginning of Bop' (1959), conveyed a white fan's virginal excitement with a shrewd understanding of the significance of the movement for black pride.

LeRoi Jones, who at the time was still associated with Beat poetry, made the telling observation that white musicians and fans were attracted to bop because of its nonconformity, while their black counterparts 'began to realize that merely by being a Negro in America, one was a nonconformist' (1968, 188). The mixed signals of nonconformity played a relentlessly intrusive role in the constellation of the jazz audience throughout the 1950s, as hot and cool, hard bop and third stream jostled for attention. The post-war years also imposed a new condition on jazz, which was the longevity of its earliest stars; so fans could also relish the continuing (and often inspiring) careers of figures like Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins and Art Tatum. The spark of autonomy and independence ignited by bop remained a vital instigation to further transfigurations of the music. Much as the bop mystique degenerated into a conformism of nonconformity, it could also act as a standing challenge. Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman incarnated jazz as unrepeatable singularity; and Coleman's most famous album named not only a more open style of playing but served as an exhortation to his peers to 'free jazz' from prepossessing appreciations, dispossessions, appropriations and preconditions. It was a rare moment, when sheer unremitting intensity resurrected the oldest association of jazz with noise; a moment quickly kindling into the Black Power movement. Jones's *Blues People* marks the junction: it was the first history of jazz written by an African-American, but it was also the last book Jones published before he became Amiri Baraka. Novelist Ralph Ellison objected to the militant spirit

of *Blues People*. Ellison had been one of the most insightful and devoted commentators on jazz since the publication of *Invisible Man* in 1952, but his review of Jones's book turned out to be a farewell gesture to the musical (and social) world of an older generation. The ensuing revolutionary turbulence of African-American politics elevated John Coltrane to the status of spiritual liberator, but his death in 1967 abruptly exposed the precarious footing of jazz in a musical marketplace dominated by *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. As Miles Davis spliced jazz with rock in *Bitches Brew*, the liberatory demeanour of free jazz migrated to Europe with the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and exile has turned out to be a permanent state of affairs – figuratively if not always literally.[7]

The jazz audience, from the very beginning, has been global; and its American constituency has steadily declined since a brief zenith in the swing era. Professional jazz musicians now make their living largely abroad; and with the widespread establishment of jazz workshops and credentialling programmes, the American jazz audience may consist largely of aspiring musicians. If so, it follows a pattern of professionalisation symptomatic of American culture in general. Considering the historical impact of jazz, it is understandable that some might bemoan the shrinking audience, especially by comparison with film, television or pop-music audiences. But there is another order of available reference, ranging from the utterly non-commercial art of poetry to the esoteric glamour of opera. The jazz audience comprises a comparable constituency: increasingly knowledgeable, curious about the history of the music, disinclined to follow fashion, and often profoundly devoted to a form of cultural reckoning that shows no sign of depletion or attenuation for those ready for anything; and, for nearly a century, jazz has managed to find an audience ready for anything.