The Literary Manifestation of a Liberal Romanticism in American Jazz

Hugh L. Smith Jr.

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THE LITERARY MANIFESTATION OF A LIBERAL
ROMANTICISM IN AMERICAN JAZZ

By
Hugh L. Smith, Jr.

A Thesis
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of Doctor of Philosophy
In American Literature

The University of New Mexico
1955
This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dean

Date

6/2/1953

Committee

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Chairman

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INTRODUCTION

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums . . .

Whitman, "Song of Myself"

World War II and its aftermath have brought home to the individual American an inexorable fact which the rash Twenties suggested to only those sensitive to social and cultural currents: America is changing with increasing rapidity. The acceleration has reached a point today at which almost anyone can move away from a city for a year or so and be shocked by his next view of it. The building boom is as emblematic as are the vast, empty runways of many a weed-infested wartime airbase.

New cultural forces and ideas inevitably become important to the future of such an America. Literature, as one of man's great means of spiritual and intellectual evolution, both represents and criticizes changing civilization, whether it be judged later as great or limited art. Eternally lasting art is not the sole mission of literature.

Among the cultural forces of growing influence in America is the increasing scholarly and literary attention being given to the native American art form, Jazz. This dissertation will illustrate that Jazz owes its recognition to American literature and that all genres of the literature of Jazz have adopted an attitude of Liberal Romanticism in their treatment of Jazz. This attitude is in keeping with the outlook developed by the musicians themselves.

Liberal Romanticism can be defined as possessing the following Romantic characteristics: an expressive individualism, an ideal stand-
ard for both art and behavior, a belief in art approaching an art-
religion, a general nonconformity to the status quo, and an element
of anti-materialism. Liberal Romanticism also possesses the follow-
ing Liberal characteristics: a firm belief in racial equality and
brotherhood, a strong sense of humor with which to meet reality, a
general attitude of anti-snobbbery and informality, and an implied be-
lief in the perfectibility of mankind. The combination of these char-
acteristics amounts to Liberal Romanticism. This set of values is
unique in twentieth century American literature, its nearest parallel
seeming to lie in the literary expansiveness of the Twenties.

The dissertation treats in Chapter I the relationships be-
tween Jazz and the other arts in America in order to show that this
music owes to American literature its growing national recognition as
an art form.

In Chapter II three American writers of Liberal Romantic lean-
ings—George Washington Cable, Lafcadio Hearn, and Mark Twain—are
shown to have been among the few nineteenth century individuals to
take an interest in three of the diverse musical channels that led
to Jazz: Creole songs, Negro work songs, and Negro spirituals.

Chapter III examines the critical-historical genre in Jazz
literature, and this genre is found to have created a reverence for
the folk figures of Jazz as well as having cast an aura of myth about
certain periods in certain places in America in which Jazz styles
developed. The literary approach to Jazz offered by these books is
shown to be strongly Liberal Romantic.

Chapter IV offers the Jazz autobiography and biography as a
powerful expression of the Liberal Romantic attitude put to practice
in the lives of both Negro and white Jazz musicians.

Chapter V deals with the use of Jazz as subject matter in American fiction. Not only has it been employed as subject matter with steadily increasing frequency, but authors have become almost entirely Liberal Romantic in their depiction of the Jazz world.

Jazz literature offers sharp divergence from the current attitudes and manners in American literature. Indeed its expansiveness and zest for life is singular in national literary experience since the Twenties.
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CHAPTER I

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN JAZZ AND THE OTHER ARTS

IN AMERICA

*Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor, — yes,*  
*And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground . . .*

Browning, "Abt Vogler"

Jazz, which is being increasingly recognized as a valid art form today, owes most of this recognition to but one fellow art — literature. In order to make this clear, it is helpful to review the amount of recognition accorded Jazz by the other arts in America: classical music, popular music, painting, sculpture, and the dance. The artistic media available in moving pictures and radio will also be considered in their roles of accepting, ignoring, or rejecting Jazz.

Exactly what do we mean by Jazz? Definitions of any art form are most successful when they are either deliberately broad or connotative. In the case of Jazz, some of the best "definitions" are so connotative as to be hardly definitions at all; but they are among the best because they were coined by Jazz musicians and because they include, too, the Comic Spirit, which lies ever so close to the heart of the Jazz philosophy. As in Meredith's delineation, the spirit represents the sword of common sense; the refusal to take oneself or even one's art too seriously; and the acceptance of life — however bitter the life may prove — which is found in the lyrics to the blues (more specifically, what S. I. Hayakawa chooses to call the
"Negro blues" as opposed to "White" popular songs).

A recent example of the connotative approach will serve: Marvin Barrett tells, in The Saturday Review, of an occasion at the 1954 Newport Jazz Festival on which female singer Lee Wiley, highly regarded among Jazz musicians, was questioned by socialites. "They asked me my definition of jazz... 'Honey,' I said, 'when you find out, let me know.' Isn't that a good answer?" ¹ The importance to Miss Wiley of the emotional impact of Jazz upon the artist seems to be the connotation.

On the denotative, and therefore necessarily broad, side, there is available the definition arrived at by the third roundtable, "Definitions in Jazz," at Music Inn, Lenox, Massachusetts, ending on Labor Day, 1951, Dr. Marshall Stearns presiding. Stearns, along with Jazz scholars and musicians from all over the country, reached the following definition: "Jazz is an improvisational American Music utilizing European instrumentation and fusing elements of European harmony, Euro-African melody, and African rhythm." Stearns added the remark, "A book could be written on the meaning of most of these twenty words, and the panel intentionally kept the definition simple, general, and basic." ²


Jazz scholars and critics do not always agree on the exact, proper qualities of their subject any more than do literary critics, but they agree perhaps just as much, which seems an unusual accomplishment for representatives of so young an art. After all, Yvor Winters has called Emerson a sentimental fraud and Wallace Stevens a hedonist of increasing intensity. He blithely rates Jones Very above Emerson as a poet. Most graduate schools of literature consider it both fortunate and stimulating that critics do not agree too sharply in either definition or judgment. The intellectual carnage of the "traditionalists" versus "New Critics" struggle was spread across the literary pages of the Forties for all to see, and even today there has been no clear-cut victory for either side. No one is too worried, because most of those who are even aware of such a struggle know that literature is a high art in spite of the Edgar A. Guest who employ its outer surface forms for their own non-artistic purposes.

Then it is perhaps fortunate for Jazz that its recognized critics - men of some standing in such intellectual fields as anthropology and literature - are also split into schools. None doubts that he deals with a valuable and enduring art. Even in their arguments they exclude any mention of the Guy Lombardos, Sammy Kayes, Lawrence Welks, and other such popular dance band leaders. These men are not interested today in holding any brief for their music beyond the fact that it "gives the public what it wants." This simplifies the entire problem for today's Jazz critic by reducing his field of major concern,
It is significant when enough agreement can be found among Jazz scholars to form an Institute of Jazz Studies which includes representatives from the leading critical schools as well as from various academic disciplines. This happened in 1952: the Institute's board of directors includes arch Jazz purist Rudi Blesh; Henry Cowell, the American musicologist and classical composer; semanticist S. I. Hayakawa; musicologist Richard Waterman, of Northwestern University; and the literary scholars Tremaine McDowell, of the University of Minnesota, and Marshall Stearns, of Hunter College. The board of advisors includes folklorist B. A. Botkin, painter Stuart Davis, writers Ralph Ellison and Langston Hughes, musicologists M. Kolinski and Curt Sachs, such a Jazz modernist as Leonard Feather, and such equally divergent Jazz stylists as musicians Louis Armstrong and Stan Kenton.

The foregoing list of leaders of the institute should indicate another important fact: Jazz scholarship has gained an impressive number of its leaders from the ranks of literary artists and scholars. Stearns founded the institute, and there are countless professors of literature who share his interest in both fields. Examples might well begin with John Lucas, a Ph.D. who used to write for Downbeat magazine, is a drummer of some note, and now teaches literature at Carleton College; or John Parker, another Ph.D. who is chairman of the English department at Fayette College, and who has been known for some years to the Jazz fraternity as Knocky Parker, an outstanding pianist of
the Jelly Roll Morton mold. Both men have recorded Jazz commercially.

The already mentioned connection between Jazz and literature has become so publicly apparent that Russell Roth, writing cover-notes for "Classic Jazz at Carleton," a record album produced in 1954 by the Soma Recording Company of Minneapolis, said:

The propensity of so many professors and teachers of English for the traditional, or classic, forms of American Jazz is a phenomenon that has never been adequately explained. The fact of the matter is here, in this record - a kind of post-graduate dissertation in the music that the Swiss composer, Ernst Alexandre Ansermet guessed in 1919 "is perhaps the highway the whole world will swing along tomorrow."

The "traditional, or classic" part of Roth's statement could have been influenced by the title of the album; and that part might be left out without altering the truth of his statement. It just happens that the record features Jazz traditionalists - among them, cornetist Doc Evans, who has an M.A. in English, and drummer Jax Lucas, who is the John Lucas, Ph.D., mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Roth's mention of Ansermet is also significant to this study because it serves to stress the fact that Ansermet was perhaps the most important, if not the only, classical musician of note who held out such promise for Jazz as early as 1919. He wrote the passage after hearing the young Sidney Bechet, who was later to become one of the greatest of Jazz reed men. It might not be amiss at this point to open the consideration of the relationship of each art to Jazz by dealing with the attention accorded Jazz by classical musicians in America. Most Jazz musicians and Jazz critics seem to feel that
this general group considers itself above Jazz. Rudi Blesh, speaking of classical composers in particular, had this to say:

The prevailing line among composers who, irked by Jazz, nevertheless recognize the power and position of hot music today, is the familiar technique of "damning with faint praise." Others are more outspoken like the European Ernst Krenek, who writes, "Many composers who worried over the salvation or re-establishment of tonality have resorted to Jazz as a method of regeneration. For a time I was one of them."  

One classical attitude toward Jazz was humorously interpreted by Henry Cowell at a Newport Jazz Festival roundtable in the summer of 1954 as being based on the fact that since Jazz musicians do not always have to be able to sight-read too well, and since the music itself cannot be accurately transcribed on paper because of the limited methods of notation in existence, and since the livelihood of the classical musician depends on his ability to read music, it is to be expected that the classical musician will oppose what he may see as a threat to his job and his authority.

More seriously there seem to be good reasons for any lethargy toward Jazz that may exist in the field of classical music. There is the quite logical question of why classical musicians, who are already involved in a music adequate for their interests and needs, should be interested in a revolutionary new music formed from a totally different folk culture. We probably have no right whatsoever to demand that the classical musician pioneer in a field which seems to him to have so little to do with his own. Instead it is better that

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Jazz, through its Kentons and Brubecks, pioneer by using whatever parts of the already established European and American classical traditions that it feels it can constructively apply.

The apologists of Jazz, however, do not always see the difference so simply. Rudi Blesh closes an attack he has made on what he considers the attitude toward Jazz held by classical musicians in general by stating that "it is not surprising to find some of these men allying themselves with the arch enemy of Jazz, the commercial interests ...." This observation refers to the rather uniform praise accorded by some classical spokesmen to Paul Whiteman and lesser lights of the Twenties who were faintly Jazz-influenced commercial musicians who capitalized on the watered-down and currently salable aspects of Jazz. Whiteman did lead many a listener in the direction of Beiderbecke and other robust Jazz musicians, but to magazines like Etude, which might be considered some sort of popular spokesman for classical music, Whiteman and others whose music was similar to his were ends in themselves. The Louis Armstrong Hot Five sides made during the Whiteman era furnish one guide to the staying power of Whiteman's music. Such records are necessarily the music literature of Jazz because of the highly interpretive nature of the music, and the ephemeral nature of improvisation. Today's Jazz critics and collectors consider the Whiteman band ponderous machinery and listen to it only to catch an occasional Beiderbecke solo. The Hot Fives are ever in demand, as monthly advertisements illustrate in The
Record Changer magazine, chief trading mart of Jazz collectors for the past decade,

Etude, disturbed over the inroads of "jazz" in the Twenties, devoted an entire issue (August, 1924) to it. The editorial offers some idea of its policy:

The Etude has no illusions on Jazz. We hold a very definite and distinct opinion of the origin, the position and the future of Jazz.

The Etude reflects action in the music world. It is a mirror of contemporary musical educational effort. We, therefore, do most emphatically not endorse Jazz, merely by discussing it. Jazz, like much of the thematic material glorified by the great masters of the past, has come largely from the humblest origin.4

Jazz, for Etude, was "thematic material" which yet needed to be "glorified" by classical "masters." It could not exist in its own right. Etude added that Jazz "will have to be transmogrified many times before it can present its credentials for the Walhalla [sic] of music."

A solution to the difficulties posed to classical music teachers by either Jazz or popular music is suggested by Etude:

In musical education Jazz has been an accursed annoyance to teachers for years. Possibly the teachers are, themselves, somewhat to blame for this. Young people demand interesting, inspiring music. Many of the Jazz pieces they have played are infinitely more difficult to execute than the sober music their teachers have given them. If the teacher had recognized the wholesome appetite of youth for fun and had given interesting, sprightly music instead of preaching against the evils of Jazz, the nuisance might have been averted.5

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4Editorial, "Where the Etude Stands on Jazz," Etude, XLII, 8 (August, 1924), 515.

5Ibid., p. 515.
This accursed annoyance, whether or not it has "transmogrified" down through the years, has continued to plague *Etude* at any rate—so much so that the magazine has continued to publish articles with titles like "Conquering the Jazz Craze of Young Pianists," and "Can We Tame the Boogie Woogie Boppy?"

During the same two decades, however, *Musical Quarterly*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday Review of Literature* and other quality magazines directed the attention of a good portion of intellectual America to articles by Jazz scholars exhibiting the positive approach to Jazz. Today, in the Fifties, the readers of such magazines probably take Jazz for granted; it has won its spurs with this particular public.

*Etude* ended its editorial with a group of commercially acceptable names generally associated with the popular music of the time:

On the other hand, the melodic and rhythmic inventive skill of many of the composers of Jazz, such men as Berlin, Confrey, Gershwin and Cohan, is extraordinary. Passing through the skilled hands of such orchestral leaders of high-class Jazz orchestras conducted [sic] by Paul Whiteman, Isham Jones, Waring and others, the effects have been such that serious musicians such as John Alden Carpenter, Percy Grainger and Leopold Stokowski, have predicted that Jazz will have an immense influence upon musical composition, not only of America, but also of the world...

... But who knows, the weeds of Jazz may be Burbanked into orchestral symphonies by leading American composers in another decade?

If the attitude of support for the Whiteman type of music existed in some classical quarters, it existed perhaps even more strongly in the ranks of the "commercial" dance band leaders. The

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personal feeling of this group toward Jazz was often one of private approval, but there is evidence that their public pronouncements about Jazz were carefully aimed at maintaining the good standing their own music enjoyed with the classical faction that approved of it.

*Etude*, in its 1924 Jazz issue, presented a representative article by the aforementioned "high-class" orchestra leader, Isham Jones. It was entitled, "American Dance Music is Not Jazz," but Jones took his stand on the first half of the title. Since then his particular brand of music has dropped out of sight. At that time, however, he made the following statement:

The successful popular composer of today, who is being given credit for the so-called Jazz music, is sincere. He is always striving for that wide appeal, and I am confident that in the future he will be given more credit for his endeavors. Many of the recent song hits were composed with no thought whatsoever of Jazz as the term is used by musicians... Because the song is successful and played by practically every dance orchestra, it is called Jazz; but that is not my idea of Jazz... The most popular songs of today are the ballad type, and usually the result of untiring work on the part of the composer; and it is a great injustice to the composer, as well as to the song, to term it Jazz.  

This was the general reception that the Jazz musician of the Twenties received from his musical contemporaries. He was not considered as "serious" as popular composers who often bought original material from unknown Negro musicians for a pittance and then capitalized on sugary renditions of it. A later chapter will examine the literature of these Jazz musicians of the Twenties (who might be considered composers also because of the nature of their music, and because they

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7Isham Jones, "American Dance Music is Not Jazz," *Etude*, XLII, 8 (August, 1924), 526.
were more often than not composers in the accepted sense anyway) in such biographies, as *Stardust Road*, *We Called It Music*, and *Trumpet on the Wing*.

But it is in another paragraph by Jones, a tiny one, that there is expressed another, and possibly a more important reason for the rejection of Jazz, a reason that has nothing to do with commercialism or professional jealousy. It is a reason endemic to America, and its importance is difficult to calculate. It may well be the capital factor behind the slow reception of Jazz in its native America. This paragraph reads as follows:

Jazz music, to a musician, means music that appeals strictly to the feet and without much thought of melody, and is usually considered by them as the "down South Negro type" of blues.

Jones has already attacked Jazz; he now employs its natural association with the Southern Negro as a clinching argument for the inferiority of the music. The association is natural, because the Negro has always been the chief inventor and foremost performing genius of Jazz. Jones' use of this association, however, is questionable because of its suggestion of an assumption of racial musical inferiority ("music that appeals strictly to the feet") within a nation that was even less than fifteen years away from the beginnings of a cold war with Adolf Hitler. The U.S., in fighting this cold war, and its inevitable shooting climax, was necessarily pledged to a public assumption of racial equality.
Jones' suggested assumption has never lacked votaries. There was no need to go beyond the pages of this Jazz issue of Etude to find them in his own day. Even the highly respected classical music critic, Henry T. Finck, whose work, appearing in the New York Evening Post since 1881, had contributed a memorable chapter in American musical criticism, comes close to this position in "Jazz - Lowlbrow and Highbrow." Here he said, "Partly, no doubt, Jazz - lowbrow Jazz - is African," and then continued with references to the musical performances of "wild African tribes," adding that "what with their drums and gongs and rattles and an endless variety of instruments unknown to us, we would feel like calling them musical orgies rather than performances . . . ."9

Roger Pryor Dodge has written a well-informed chapter in Jazzmen covering the early, muddled "Jazz critics," who made literary hay of the new art form and its adulteration. Interestingly, in four of his brief quotations the same racial prejudice seems painfully apparent, though Dodge quotes the writers neither consecutively nor apparently with any racial attitudes in mind. Gilbert Seldes, he of Seven Lively Arts, and one of the earnest pro-popular music critics of the Twenties is one of those who unconsciously displays the current attitude:

I say the negro is not our salvation because with all my feeling for what he instinctively offers, for his desirable indifference to our set of conventions of emotional decency, I am on the side of civilization. . . . Nowhere is the failure

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of the negro to exploit his gifts more obvious than in the use
he has made of the jazz orchestra; for although nearly every negro
jazz band is better than nearly every white band, no negro band
has yet come up to the level of the best white ones, and the leader
of the best of all, by a little joke, is called Whiteman.10

With George Jean Nathan and Isaac Goldberg, the prevailing prejudice
was also strong. Nathan, with his fine disdain, sounds hollow today:
"The negro, with his unusual sense of rhythm, is no more accurately
to be called musical than a metronome is to be called a Swiss music-
box."11 Goldberg, the author of Tin Pan Alley, draws a metaphor be-
tween "the academic jazz musician" and "... a decent white lady in
her parlor trying to sing a hot jazz number that literally cries for
a wild black mamma."12

Aaron H. Esman, M.D., published in 1951 a theory that appears
to be the last word available on this racial and moral prejudice which
may have been so important to the history of Jazz in America. Since
such a theory is of understandable value to the subject of Jazz in
American literature, Esman is quoted freely:

And jazz made its appearance on the Northern scene at about
the time of the greatest experiment in man's repression man has
ever known - Prohibition, the triumph of perverted Puritanism.
The consequence of this encounter was ineluctable and pre-
dictable. The new, strange sounds of jazz, completely alien to
the ears of acculturated Americans, evoked uncertainty, bewilder-
ment, confusion, - ultimately, anxiety. This phenomenon has
been seen with every advance in art. Beethoven's new harmonies,
Schoenberg's atonality, Stravinsky's dissonances, Picasso's dis-
tortions, Joyce's linguistic experimentation - all have had the
same effect. The majority in any culture are concerned. Any

10 Roger P. Dodge in Jazzmen, ed. by Frederic Ramsey and
11 Ibid., p. 306.
12 Ibid., p. 327.
striking innovation represents a threat to established culture, and as such inevitably arouses anxiety. This is true, not only with the masses but also with many intellectuals. It was particularly true in the case of jazz, because of its associations. Produced by a "primitive" group in an area where a less repressive morality flourished, jazz was by its very nature associated with vital libidinal impulses — sex, drink, sensual dancing — precisely the id drives that the super ego of the bourgeois culture sought to repress. In addition, psychoanalysis has shown us that in the unconscious of the white man the Negro frequently symbolizes the tabooed id impulses, in conformity with the symbolism: White equals good, black equals evil. Witness the preoccupation of the white Southerner with the fantasied threat posed by the Negro to "Southern womanhood" and the widespread myth of the superior sexual potency of Negroes.\(^{13}\)

Set against Eisman's theory Jones' description of inferior music as the "down South negro type of blues," Finck's word "lowlaw" and his clause about "musical orgies rather than performances" — and the noun "orgies" in particular — take on new meaning. So does Goldberg's wild black mamba. Seldes' frightened "I am on the side of civiliza-
tion," might be filed under one of Eisman's key sentences: "Jazz thus carried with it the threat of the return of the repressed — a universal source of anxiety."

By 1939 the critical attack upon Jazz from this racial and cultural basis had become so refined that the outright mention of race seldom entered into it any more at the higher intellectual levels. Winthrop Sargeant, a suave and often penetrating critic, wrote in that year, \textit{Jazz: Hot and Hybrid}, in which he goes into the mechanics of Jazz to some extent only to end by rejecting the music itself on several bases. One of the most interesting is the following: "The attendant weakness

\(^{13}\text{Aaron H. Eisman, M.D., "Jazz — A Study in Cultural Conflict," American Image, VIII, (June, 1951), 5-6.}\)
of jazz is that it is an art without positive moral values, an art that evades those attitudes of restraint and intellectual poise upon which complex civilizations are built. At best it offers civilized man a temporary escape into drunken self-hypnotism. The adjective "drunken" joins the repressive images already indicated by Finck's "orgy" and Goldberg's "wild" and "black." The "positive moral values" phrase is another revealing item.

Sargeant continues by pointing out what a distance exists between the creative state of mind of Jazz and of the great classical masters. Dodge, in his Jazzmen chapter, answers this by coolly reminding us that "... the liveliness and the ribald atmosphere surrounding most of the early classic music, was far more at odds with the more refined culture of the day than is jazz contemporaneously." Esman, however, adds a new light to the entire Sargeant conclusion when he explains that "... the culture was forced to carry out the same kind of activity as is used by the individual in combating anxiety - the employment of defense mechanisms. In this instance, the simplest of defenses - those of reinforced repression and denial were used. Many intellectuals rationalized their defenses by regarding jazz as an 'inferior' form of music, a 'popular diversion,' unworthy of consideration by those whose interests lay in the realm of the 'fine arts.'"

The Jazz musician, then, has always been the purveyor of

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15 Ibid.
16 Esman, op. cit., p. 6.
an art that has been isolated from polite society and rather generally
ignored by its fellow musical forms. He is as alone in the world
as any practicing artist has been in this century, for not only has
his art been misunderstood, it has often been morally ostracized.
These facts, too, are a key to his literature, and literature dealing
with him. To employ another apt quotation from Esman:

"In any case, the new form was simply a kind of cultural
limbo, its very existence ignored or decried. Sermons were
preached against it - all in the hope of driving it out of public
consciousness, so that it could no longer pose its threat of re-
awakening repressed instinctual drives."

Considering the psychiatric, cultural and social pressures
at work, it seems worthwhile to review very briefly the relationships
between Jazz and its fellow arts other than music, as well as the
media through which Jazz has been or has not been presented to the
public. Generally, the other arts in America, with the exception of
literature, have done little toward aiding a better understanding
of Jazz. Painters, already concerned with their own survival, could
probably not be expected to contribute a great deal, though they
have been on the whole very tolerant. Clive Bell, a notable art
critic, wrote a certain amount of "Jazz criticism" in the Twenties
that has no clear relevance today, based as it was on the same dance-
band, popular-song, novelty-tune equals Jazz equation which has
already been indicated, and which caused the Twenties to be called
"The Jazz Age." Few painters seem to have attempted to work with

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17Ibid.
Jazz musicians or Jazz itself. Stuart Davis is perhaps the most important American painter who has shown a primary direct concern with Jazz. His close friendships with Eddie Condon and other Jazzmen are an important factor in his unique position. John Marin and Georges Braque are even today called "jazz painters" simply on the strength of the general tone of their work. This is noted because of the fashion in the Twenties of calling anything and everything "jazz influenced." Today Americans are more careful about their application of this term; however, a few respected figures close to the pulse of American art, such as the dean of New Mexico painters, Raymond Jonson, who has been blazing new trails on canvas for nearly half a century, feel that there is a definite correlation between Jazz and certain movements in modern art which they esteem. In the case of Stuart Davis, though, the evidence is pleasantly obvious to anyone who knows Jazz jargon, because Davis is a modernist who paints words into his work. Occasionally a Jazz musician's term appears, as in the case of a non-representational illustration he did for the Art News Annual in 1947 to accompany the reprint of a Ring Lardner short story, "Rhythm." It contains, among other things, the humorous twist given to our language by Jazz. This is well expressed by the inclusion of the phrase "My old Kentucky Pad." "Pad," of course, is the Jazz musician's terminology for home, bed, apartment, or nearly any shelter.

Robert Reisner, in an article on modern art and Jazz, has

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pointed out that Piet Mondrain's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* hangs in the Museum of Modern Art, that works of Matisse have appeared in a publication called *Jazz*, and that the Koetz gallery offered an exhibit a few years ago called "Homage to Jazz," featuring works by Robert Motherwell, Byron Browne, Carl Holty and others. Nevertheless the young painter who chooses to paint Jazz subjects is in a minority among artists, and the experience of one, Joan Ceccarelli, probably indicates that such an artist can expect little encouragement from even Jazz advocates:

... Jazz had given me the freedom and release I needed. Jazz was as much a part of my art as it was a part of me. We were inseparable. ...

In 1945 I landed in New York loaded with canvases and sketches and enough dough to back my own exhibition. Despite advance publicity, not one musician or jazz critic showed up. I kept on painting and drawing. You can't let down just because you've been beat back a little. ... Through the medium of paint and brush we artists can give outsiders a visual picture of music and musicians. All I can hope is that the musician, in turn, will give the artist a little attention. ... If any of you ... [musicians] ... are interested let me know. I've sold a lot of your records simply because my paintings have aroused the interest of people who didn't know about jazz. 19

Each modern genre shakily fights its own battle. Occasional indications of what might happen between art and Jazz are offered by such apparently successful coalitions as E. Simms Campbell's illustration for the inside cover of *Esquire's Jazz Book* for 1944, and the art world is responsible for one of the outstanding American Jazz critics, Rudi Blesh, who is also interior decorator and indus-

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19 Joan Ceccarelli, "Can the Jazzman and the Artist Clasp Hands?", *Jazz Record*, No. 54 (April, 1947), 25.
American sculpture seems to be an even more barren field in its attitudes toward Jazz. Hope is offered for the future by a few items such as Jane Wasey's ebony figure, "Dark Note," a drawing of which is used to decorate the dust jacket of Barry Ulanov's *History of Jazz in America*.

The drama has turned up a number of Jazz items, and seems, with its limited audience, to have been fairly helpful. There have been many Jazz "spots" in legitimate theatre productions. Boogie Woogie pianist Sam Price held one in Tallulah Bankhead's "Clash By Night" on Broadway in 1944; drummer Cozy Cole stopped the show in a New York production of *Carmen Jones*; trumpeter and band leader Bobby Sherwood once played the part of a Jazz musician (with music) in a Broadway production.

Americans have learned to accept radio and movies as varieties of drama. Radio drama has done next to nothing with Jazz as an art form. One program comes to mind: "Pete Kelley's Blues," which appeared in the early fifties. It dealt with the leader of a Dixieland style Jazz unit, and included in its cast such recognized exponents of that style as trumpeter Dick Cathcart and clarinetist Matty Matlock; and it proved to many that intelligent treatment of Jazz is possible and desirable in radio.

"Pete Kelley's Blues" is not yet artistically dead, for that matter. A new messiah of radio and television, Jack Webb, happens to have been in the original cast, and happens as well to have an intense
interest in Jazz. He is presently planning to produce a screen adap-
tation of the old radio series. Jazz, always a democratic music,
finds its friends in some startling places. Webb has already used a
short scene in the screen version of "Dragnet," employing an authentic
Dixieland group. The leader, who also acted convincingly his part
as a Jazz musician, exchanged a few words with the principal charac-
ters, "Friday" and "Frank Smith," who seemed to know him well. The
scene, in fact, threw a mild light on the condition of servitude of
some well meaning Jazz musicians who have to depend for their liveli-
hood on night club owners of highly questionable background.

The other constructive radio approach to Jazz is that of
giving air time to either highly articulate musicians like Stan Kenton
and Eddie Condon, or to sympathetic Jazz commentators. Jazz apprecia-
tion has been advanced from time to time by these means, through the
employment of live music, records, and intelligent discussions. Among
the landmarks have been national network programs presented by the U.S.
Treasury, those featuring Duke Ellington and Stan Kenton in particular;
and on the traditional side there was the wartime "This is Jazz" pro-
gram conducted by Rudi Blesh. Precursors were the humor-slanted
"Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street" and Orson Welles' fine
1944 West Coast network program on New Orleans Jazz for Standard Oil of
California's series on American music. Locally there have been such
programs as Ralph Berton's daily "Jazz University" programs of the
early Forties in New York City. Today, "Hayakawa's Jazz Seminar," con-
ducted by the noted semanticist, author and editor is being presented from WHA, the Wisconsin State Network's pivotal station, and is of striking enough quality to command a recent full page treatment by Saturday Review television and radio editor Robert Lewis Shayon, who pictures himself as a willing and sincere Jazz neophyte. On April 22, 1954, the American Broadcasting Company began a weekly program devoted to traditional-style Jazz and entitled "Strictly from Dixie." It approaches in the quality of its script and records the programs already mentioned. There may be hope for even more such radio programs as television continues its omnivorous advance. As Jazz scholar Orrin Keepnews has suggested:

The prophets have been saying radio would survive only as a medium aimed at specialized interests, but somehow (saddened by previous experiences of the mass media with jazz) we never thought they would get around to our music.

With the exception of such occasional efforts as Jack Webb's, the screen has been as sporadic and distorted in its presentation of Jazz as it has in its presentation of some other phases of American life. Authentic treatment has been very spotty. One good example is the case of Hollywood's brave attempt to film Dorothy Baker's 1938 Houghton-Mifflin prize novel, Young Man With a Horn, which came out some thirteen years after the book itself. Even after this length of time it was found necessary to make several adjustments in plot and characterization. Doris Day was substituted for the fictional colored

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singer, Josie Jordan, and a different ending resulted: Rick Martin, after a life devoted to Jazz, is married off to a new, white "Josie," and "matures," as an off-film voice reveals, through the process of playing semi-commercial trumpet behind his wife's voice. This surrender to the very thing he had fought in Phil Morrison's band saves him from the grimly realistic alcoholic-ward death scene in the book; however, a surprisingly good job was done in that a number of the problems of the Jazz artist were projected with feeling.

Ballet and the dance would seem to be related to Jazz, for if Jazz can be concert music, it should also offer dance possibilities outreaching the fox-trot category. Jazz certainly fits Ezra Pound's oft-quoted dictum that music should never depart too far from the dance. And yet many generally think of Jazz in dance-hall or jitterbug terms only. Outside of abortive efforts by a few individuals like Nura Dehn and the Savoy Ballroom dancers, little has been done toward employing genuine Jazz musicians to accompany the dance. The highly individual nature of performances in the two arts emphasizes one interesting and solemn handicap shared by both; performances are lost forever. There are a few moving pictures to preserve the past ballet performances; there are, fortunately, many records to preserve already performed Jazz.

It is literature, along with increasing recognition of Jazz in American magazines at nearly all levels, that has been chiefly responsible for bringing about a more serious general interest in Jazz than has ever before existed in this country. A publishing house editor
remarked to me recently that Jazz is coming into its own now, because since about 1950 a publisher needn't hesitate to issue either a popular or scholarly book in the subject. The literary man and the man of literary leanings are responsible for this change. As writers have continued to deal with the subject, their books have become increasingly better literature as their understanding of the music and its artists has increased. The untutored dares not write on the subject any longer; the prejudiced and misinformed articles of the Twenties, the unauthentic representation of Jazz in fiction, are not often seen; there is seldom either the novel which confuses Jazz with commercial popular music or holds up the symphonizing of Jazz as the legitimate end of Jazz, as the novels of the Twenties did. America is growing up, too, and is beginning to free itself of racial prejudice through such tangible indications as Supreme Court decisions on segregation. The growing qualitative and quantitative recognition accorded by our country to its own art form through its literature is an important and promising auspice in a maturing cultural climate.
I grossly offended a Creole musician the other day. He denied in toto the African sense of melody. "But," said I, "did you not tell me that you spent hours trying to imitate the notes of a roostabout-song on your flute?" "I did," he replied, "but not because it pleased me - only because I was curious to learn why I could not imitate it: it still baffles me, but it is nevertheless an abomination to my ear!" "Nay!" said I, "it hath a most sweet sound to me; and to the ethnologist a most fascinating interest. Verily, I would rather listen to it, than hear a symphony of Beethoven! . . . Whereupon he walked away in high fury; and now . . . he speaketh to me no more!

Lafcadio Hearn to H. E. Krehbiel -
October, 1883

Edward Lueders in one of the few studies of the history of music criticism in America, makes the point that . . . the critic must cultivate the literary medium which serves him, and must realize that he is primarily a craftsman in rhetoric.

The significant corollary of this in America is the high literary quality of our writings on music. Between the reviews of John S. Dwight in his Journal of Music and the sophisticated essays of armchair oracles such as James Gibbons Huneker and Carl Van Vechten, lies a growing tradition of literary bent and merit in our music criticism. This successful crossbreeding of the two arts, music and literature, is a consistent feature of American music criticism and has contributed greatly to its value and its staying power.¹


¹Edward G. Lueders, "Music Criticism in America," American Quarterly, III (Summer, 1951), 143.
Stevenson, Rupert Hughes. Other literary men, in this case of Liberal
Romantic leanings, originated American criticism of Jazz from the early
appearance of its folk roots in the form of Negro chants, work songs
and spirituals; Creole songs; and the adaptation of European folk
music to American uses. These men include George Washington Cable,
Lafcadio Hearn and Mark Twain, who dealt with the early roots; they
also include such subsequent literary lights as Rupert Hughes and Carl
Van Vechten, who dealt with later developments from these roots into
Jazz forms - Ragtime and the Blues. This steady literary-Jazz evo-
lation has led today's writers to use the world of Jazz for theme,
atmosphere, background and even philosophic material in novels and
short stories. Ralph Ellison, John O'Hara, Henry Miller, Eudora Welty,
Thomas Wolfe, James Jones and others illustrate this trend to varying
degrees, as will be discussed later.

In order to realize the part played by such men as Cable, Hearn
and Twain in directing attention to the musical roots of Jazz, and in
order to properly appreciate their attention to these roots during
their own lives - and occasionally in their writing - one must have at
least a slight acquaintance with the chronology of Jazz music. Jazz
critics today agree almost unanimously that the music rose out of the
South, principally New Orleans; that it is a mixture of several musi-
cal and folk roots, old and new; and that these traditions include, in
varying degrees of importance, African music, French music, European
classical music, and folk cries. Shouts, work songs, spirituals and Blues
form the American-bred tradition. There may even be additional influences
such as Oriental music, as Henry Cowell has suggested. It is the
American-born combinations of earlier musical channels into the sec-
ondary, indigenous roots in the above list, such as Creole music and
the American Negro songs (cries, work songs, spirituals) that led most
directly to the Jazz one hears today. Incidentally, these roots are
still being listened to, as exemplified by most of Huddie (Leadbelly)
Ledbetter's records and such selections as Kid Ory's "Sh La Basi!"
(a Creole song recorded in an album made by his group for Columbia
records).

The very direct force Creole music exerted on Jazz, and hence
on the development of even our popular music, is easily illustrated
by quotations from contemporary Jazz criticism as well as records.
The remarks of Sidney Finkelstein, Robert Goffin and Rudi Blesh are
typical, though varying somewhat in degree of emphasis. Finkelstein
has this to say:

In the period of flourishing New Orleans rag, blues and stomp
jazz, new melodies came from fresh sources; old French dances
that were still part of the city's living music, Creole songs,
instrumental show tunes and dances, songs and dances of Spanish
origin, military and parade marches, funeral marches, spirituals
and hymns, square dances, even the mock-oriental music often
heard in vaudeville. Songs undergo strange transforma-
tions in use. The popular hit of a few years back, "Pistol
Packing Mama," is almost note for note a Creole song.  

Goffin's statement is stronger and more direct: "In any case, the con-
sensus is that ragtime and jazz are of Creole origin."

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2Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 106
3Ibid., p. 107
4Robert Goffin, Horn of Plenty (N.Y.: Allen, Twene
Blesh makes the following observations:

Certain musical elements flowed over from the string-band repertory into the march-style music that gives the melodic variety, richness and line which shape the classic style [of Jazz]. These elements are the blues, French classical music (mainly operatic), and the French dance music of the quadrille and polka; Italian operatic music and street-songs; Spanish and Latin American music of a popular vein; the Creole songs, indigenous but with strong French characteristics; and, to a minor degree, Scotch and Irish folk music.5...

These Creole folk songs are a delightful and distinctive music that flowed into jazz amply enough to flavor it. C'est l'Autre Can-can is a song of this sort, one, perhaps, of actual French origin. Jelly Roll Morton has played and sung it on a record in the Library of Congress archives.6 A very recent record presents it in full jazz band form.6...

In addition to the Creole songs, there was a second American-conceived combination of Jazz roots: American Negro songs, which evolved through three phases: "The work-songs shaped the spiritual; without them both, the blues and jazz almost certainly would never have evolved."7 Creole and American Negro songs, or any combination of the two, are necessarily native phenomena, and they attracted their most forceful early champions from the ranks of liberal American writers, even Thomas Jefferson. Jazz critics of today have been known to place a quotation from Thomas Jefferson's Notes on Virginia early in their studies of the history of the music:

Early comment on slave music is sparse but occasionally significant. Thomas Jefferson, in 1784, for example, wrote "In music they [the Negroes] are more generally gifted than

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5Blesh, Shining Trumpets, op. cit., p. 176.
6Ibid., p. 179.
7Ibid., p. 49.
the whites, with accurate ears for a tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch.

... The instrument proper to them is the banjir, which they brought hither from Africa.\(^8\)

The contribution of Negro songs to Jazz has always been quite obvious. A collector of early folk cries, Willis L. James, of Spelman College, can illustrate quite effectively how a song like the "St. Louis Blues" is actually made up of a series of folk-cries.

Mrs. Trollope, on her trip to New Orleans in 1827, noted these cries in the form of work chants, and admired their musical quality:

We were very much pleased by the chant with which the Negro boatmen regulate and beguile their labor on the river; it consists but of very few notes, but they are sweetly harmonious, and the Negro voice is almost always rich and powerful.\(^9\)

Blesh, whose special field is this early kind of development, supports Willis James' theory:

These calls show clearly the Negro's conversion of speech into song. This tendency seems to be changing even the conversation of the Negro into a sort of singing. They exhibit also, a typically African variety of rhythm, abounding in syncopations, displaced accents, and anticipations and retardations of the basic beat. Finally, these cries are rich in tonal qualities, in variety and in variation of timbre, and in the vocal–instrumental tone quality we find in jazz. They prophesy New Orleans Jazz as clearly as they recall Africa.\(^10\)

Folk cries and work songs thus led to spirituals and the Blues, the latter a natural development from the sorrowful religious music of

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\(^8\)Tbid., p. 50


\(^10\)Blesh, Shining Trumpets, op. cit., p. 58.
the Negro. These steps and influences have been traced by so many writers as to be accepted as established fact in Jazz criticism today. Cable, Hearn, and Twain, in supporting the diverse indigenous American musical origins that were soon to contribute so much to the formation of Jazz, were in their way beginning the tradition of what was to become Jazz criticism by Liberal Romantic literary men, although strictly speaking Cable, Hearn, and Twain can only be said to have given attention to Jazz roots, not to Jazz itself.

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Hearn, of course, had always been interested in music in spite of his lack of early technical training in the field; and this strong interest in music led to friendships with men he could not tolerate on other grounds. The power of his love for art to overcome personal differences is typical of a man with Liberal Romantic tendencies. Such an attachment was formed with Henry E. Krehbiel, who worked on the rival Gazette during Hearn's days as a newspaper reporter for the Commercial in Cincinnati. Krehbiel was to replace John R. G. Hassard as music critic for the New York Tribune in 1880. During the forty-three years he held this post, Krehbiel became one of the best known American music critics. Hearn, having gone on to New Orleans, corresponded with him for years, exchanging songs and ideas. In New Orleans Hearn made another such friendship, with the Puritanically mannered George Washington Cable, and later arranged a meeting between Krehbiel and Cable in New York. Hearn's love for Negro
and Creole music was strong enough to overcome his natural repulsion from personalities alien to his own sensuality.

Cable, on the other hand, shared these musical loves and Liberal Romantic tendencies of Hearn's to such an extent that at times he was able to fight to a standstill the inherent prudishness obtained from his mother, Rebecca, who taught her children that "dancing and the theater were but traps of the devil to catch men's souls."\(^m^1\) Witness, then, Cable writing in *Century Magazine* of the slave dances in Congo Square, often called the earliest melting pot of New Orleans, and therefore all, Jazz.

It was a frightful triumph of body over mind... No wonder the police stopped it in Congo Square. Only the music deserved to survive, and does survive — coin snatched out of the mire.\(^m^2\)

— this from a man who, caught in a driving rainstorm in New York City, refused the shelter of a theater marquee when he noticed a poster illustrated with a woman in tights.\(^m^3\) Cable, local color writer that he was, had already alienated many by being enough of a Romantic individualist to become the first Southern writer to deal with the Negro as a human being; he could hardly be expected to go further and maintain the heresy that any artistic product of the Negro might be valid or worthy of preservation.

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\(^m^1\)E. L. Tinker, "Cable and the Creoles," *American Literature*, V (January, 1934), 314.

\(^m^2\)George W. Cable, "The Dance in Place Congo," *Century Magazine*, XXXI (February, 1886), 525.

\(^m^3\)Tinker, *op. cit.*, 315.
The indispensability to Jazz of the Congo Square episodes is established: critics argue only over how much weight to give to it. Estimates are usually generous, as is Robert Goffin’s:

About 1890 some Negro amateurs had digested and unified this multiple musical folklore: African music, Creole songs, popular French tunes, Congo Square tradition.  

In another Century article Cable deals with Creole slave songs, treating love songs, voodoo songs, the lay and the dirge, and songs of the woods and water. With typical enthusiasm he reproduces the written music to several of these songs, and goes so far as to comment on the sociological implications of the lyrics, which in one instance treated the ostereon mistresses of white gentlemen as contrasted with the slaves who serve them and play music for them.

Yellow girl goes to the ball;
Nigger lights her to the hall.
Fiddler man!
Now what is that to you?
Say, what is that to you,
Fiddler man!

"It was much to him; but it might as well have been little. What could he do?" Cable adds, going ahead to explain that even these song lyrics were looked on by the whites as meaningless nonsense, and were therefore allowed. This public championing of racial brotherhood in the Deep South illustrates Cable’s further Liberal tendencies.

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14 Robert Goffin, Jazz, From the Congo to the Metropolitan (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1944), p. 31.

15 George W. Cable, "Creole Slave Songs," Century Magazine, XXXI (April, 1886), 308.
Rudi Blesh has said:

Jazz can be and should be — once its artistic quality is generally recognized — an important factor in alleviating the racial tensions between Negro and white in America. To proceed from acceptance of the Negro as a creator or executant in the white musical arts, to his acceptance as creator of his own, is only a single step, if a long one.16

The second attitude does seem inevitably to follow the first by a kind of self-imposed, irrefutable logic on the part of the thinker himself. Thus does Jazz lend itself to Liberal standards. Which attitude Cable first possessed is a matter of conjecture; he did possess both. His sympathy with the Negro appears not only in his stories, but aptly at its very height of expression in the "Dance in Place Congo" article for Century:

Up at the other end of Orleans street ... glistens the ancient Place d'Armes ... The Place Congo, at the opposite end of the street, was at the opposite end of everything. One was on the highest ground; the other was on the lowest. The one was the rendezvous of the rich man, the master, the military officer — of all that went to make up the ruling class; the other of the man, the sailor, the quadroon, the painted girl, and the negro slave. The negro was the most despised of human creatures and the Congo the plebeian among negroes. The white man's plaza had the army and navy on its right and left, the courthouse, the council-hall and the church at its back, and the world before it. The black man's was outside the rear gate, the poisonous wilderness on three sides and the proud man's contemptuously on its front.17

The importance of Cable's literary efforts to Jazz criticism is not to be underestimated. He has been quoted on Congo Square

16 Blesh, Shining Trumpets, op. cit., p. 326.
17 Cable, "The Dance in Place Congo," op. cit., 518.
instrumentation in the historical-critical books by Jazz historians and critics chronologically from Robert Goffin through Rudi Blesh and Barry Ulanov. One of the bitter battles in Jazz criticism has been fought over the extent of the African contribution to Jazz. Ulanov finds it practically negligible, but he is very much alone, and even he admits: "Certainly the African background of the first Jazz musicians played some part in their music."18

Cable's article on Creole slave songs deals with a number of aspects of New Orleans music which are still visible in Jazz today. He devotes, for example, a section to voodoo songs. It is of interest to note that voodoo influences still appear in song lyrics recorded by Jazz musicians. Cripple Clarence Lofton, an outstanding Chicago archaic-style Blues pianist, has recorded "Strut That Thing" which closes with the following lines:

Gettin' sick and tired of the way you do
Gawd, Mama, gonna poison you,
Sprinkle goofus dust 'roun yo' bed
Wake up some mornin', find yo' own self dead.

Goofer dust is, of course, a voodoo charm. Even more recently the commercially popular "rhythm and blues" band of Buddy Johnson made an aerie record named "Root Man Blues," which is unexpectedly powerful. The lyrics describe disappointment in love, followed by the promised remedy, "I'm gonna' get myself a root man." The root man is a voodoo dealer in magic potions made up of roots and other fashionably occult.

materials. These operators are still to be seen in Harlem.

The power of Creole music over Cable is found in his fiction as well. In *The Grandissimes*, the most highly regarded of his novels, he employs the lyrics to a Creole song about the Calinda, which he had seen danced in Congo Square:

Certain of the Muses were abroad that night. Faintly audible to the apothecary of the Rue Royale through that deserted stillness which is yet the marked peculiarity of New Orleans streets by night, came from a neighboring slave-yard the monotonous chant and machine-like tune-beat of an African dance. There our lately met marchand... led the ancient Calinda dance and that well-known song of derision, in whose ever multiplying stanzas the helpless satire of a feeble race still continues to celebrate the personal failings of each newly prominent figure among the dominant caste. There was a new distich to the song to-night, signifying that the pride of the Grandissimes must find his friends now among the Yankees:

"Miche Mon're, alle! h-alle!
Trouvé to zamis parmi les Yankis.
Dance calinda, bou-joum! bou-joum!
Dance calinda, bou-joum! bou-joum!" 19

The folk-mythology of the African ring-shout and of leader and group response songs has been broadly treated by Jazz critics as an influence on Jazz solo and ensemble groupings. Something of this African phenomena seems to appear as well in *The Grandissimes*:

Racoul began to sing and Clemence instantly to pace and turn, posture, bow, respond to the song, start, swing, straighten, stamp, wheel, lift her hand, stoop, twist, walk, whirl, tip-toe with crossed ankles, smite her palms, march, circle, leap—an endless improvisation of rhythmic motion to this modulated responsive chant:

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Raoul. "Je pas l'aimein ca."
Clemence. "Mache Igenne, oap! oap! oap!"
He. "Yo donne vingt cinq sous pou' manze poule."
She. "Miche Igenne, dit - dit - dit -"
He. "Je pas l'aimein ca!"
She. "Miche Igenne, oap! oap! oap!"
He. "Je pas l'aimein ca!"
She. "Miche Igenne, oap! oap! oap!".20

Frowenfeld was not so greatly amused as the ladies thought he should have been, and was told that this was not a fair indication of what he would see if there were ten dancers instead of one.

Upon two occasions in The Grandissimes, Cable the musician takes complete precedence over Cable the writer, and he includes the actual musical notation to Creole songs performed by his characters. In chapter twenty-seven this passage appears: "That boat song, do you mean, which they sing as a signal to those on shore?" He hummed.21 This is followed by exactly four staves of music, with lyrics appended. This device is repeated in chapter twenty-nine:

"Oh, Senor, it will make you strong again to see these fields all cane and the long rows of negroes and negresses cutting it, while they sing their song of these droll African numerals, counting the canes they cut," and the bearer of good tidings sang them for very joy . . .22

Here Cable employs two more staves, this time with words divided into syllables directly below each note, as in ordinary sheet music.

Cable even goes so far as to make a clear reference to the African influence on musical lyrics in the Creole dialect:

Bass-Coupe was taking her hand in one of his and laying his

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20 Ibid., p. 404.
21 Ibid., p. 217.
22 Ibid., p. 245.
other upon her head; and as some one made an unnecessary gesture for silence, he sang, beating slow and solemn time with his naked foot and with the hand that dropped hers to smite his breast:

"En haut la montagne, zami,
Me pe coupe canne, zami,
Pou i fe l'æzen' zami,
Pou' mo baille Palmyre,
Ah! Palmyre, Palmyre mo c'ere,
Me l'aime 'ou! — mo l'aime ou'...
"

"Montagne," asked one slave of another, "qui et ca, montagne? emia pas quic' ose comme ca dans la Louisiana? (What's a mountain? We haven't such things in Louisiana.)"

"Nein ye gagnein plein montagnes dans l'Arrigue. listen!

"Ah! Palmyre, Palmyre, mo' piti seze,
Mo l'aime 'ou! — mo l'aime, l'aime ou!'"

Here is a clear example of an effort in literature to illustrate a musical acculturation which formed one of the roots of Jazz.

Cable's own love of music extended beyond mere notation. On his lecture tour with Mark Twain he sang "Gumbo" songs as a part of his contribution to the entertainment. If he was a prude, if his refusal to travel or to cook food in the house on Sundays infuriated Twain, yet he was an uninhibited renegade of Liberal Romantic proportions in music. Who else at that time was enough of an individualist to seriously consider the musical qualities of a Negro's primitive, original musical instrument (which after all was not so much more primitive than the celebrated Greek instrument) as does Cable in the following passage?

To all this there was sometimes added a Pan's pipe of but three reeds, made from single joints of the common brake

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23 Ibid., pp. 232-33.
cane, and called by the English-speaking negroes "the quills"... But to show how far the art of playing the "quills" could be carried, if we are not going too much aside, see this "quill" tune... given me by Mr. Krehbiel, musical critic of the "New York Tribune," and got by him from a gentleman who heard it in Alabama. 24

The music follows, of course, with true Cable thoroughness. New instruments and unorthodox new uses of old instruments were a keystone in the development of Jazz as a music in its own right, with its own rules.

The democratizing power of anti-snobbery and social non-conformity of even the roots of Jazz is suggested by Cable's friendship with Hearn. Having little else in common, the two worked together on this music until enough amity was reached at one time to lead to such public expressions of respect as Cable offers Hearn in a footnote to one of the Century articles: "... to that skillful French translator and natural adept in research, Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, of New Orleans." 25 Later, of course, it must be granted that Hearn came to distrust Cable, even resenting his friendship with Krehbiel, but the fact that Cable and Hearn were ever close friends is surprising.

Hearn and Cable corresponded with the greatest of friendly enthusiasm for the embryo music they mutually appreciated. From New Orleans Hearn wrote Cable in New York in September of 1883:

Why can't you come down to see me. I'll show you nice music; I'll enable you to note down the musical cries of the Latin-faced vendors of herbs and gombo fève and calas and latanir and patates.


25 Ibid., p. 529
These street cries, even more accurately referred to by Hearn as "musical cries," were in the tradition of the folk cry discussed. Direct, sudden mutation from street cries to Jazz has been documented by on-the-spot research. The following words are quoted from Wallace Collins, an early New Orleans Jazz musician:

"Any rags?, that was one of the tunes. You know they had an old blind man who came around with a wagon to pick up junk. He'd go around singing — — he wasn't singing, he was talking but he was really singing:

Any rags
Any rags
Any rags
Ain't you got anything today?

Bolden picked it up and made a rag out of it." 26

I have already remarked that Buddy Bolden's band is the one most generally recognized to have first assimilated all the roots into a music we would call New Orleans style Jazz today.

Hearn employed lyrics to the Creole work song in his own writing. In a charming vignette for the New Orleans Item of November 13, 1879, entitled "The Creole Character," he tells of four indolent Creole carpenters hired to put a wooden awning on a grocery. Although their work is beyond reproach, and performed with great artistry, they have been working for three weeks, allowing themselves to be held up by all sorts of fancied interruptions.

... and they did not propose to work themselves to death. Life was too short... Then the carpenters went out again and climbed upon the half-finished awning, and grinned at a swarthy young woman passing, who had a graceful air of deportment and a

complexion like a statue of bronze. Then they laughed at one another, and it began to rain, so they went down and smoked some cigarettes, until it was time for dinner. After dinner they worked very slowly, deliberately, and artistically for ten minutes, until a mad dog came running down the street, which they chased for half a mile with surprising energy and astounding strength of purpose. And when they came back they recounted their heroic deeds to an admiring crowd in the grocery... Then they got ready to work; and commenced to hammer away to the air —

"Madame Caba,
Tiyon vous tombe;
Madame Caba,
Tiyon vous tombe;
Ah, la reine,
Piye la su' moi;
Madame Caba,
Piye sa su' moi;
Madame Caba,
Chandelle 'te teigne," etc.

... and that awning still remains in a wild and savage condition of incompleteness. 27

Hearn's own reputation as a non-conformist is common knowledge, and helps to place him in the Liberal Romantic tradition. His unorthodox pattern of living and his unpopular convictions caused him endless trouble in his attempts to earn a steady living as a newspaper man. He was a sterling individualist who lived for a time with a Voodoo queen, became one of the earliest American expatriates, and finally married a Japanese woman. He found in Japan a set of social standards and values which were better suited to his nature and individual beliefs. It is this kind of revolutionary willingness to experiment against the social pattern one is born into that constitutes one important quality of the Romantic individualist, the man who hopes

always for improvement and even dreams perhaps of final perfection
for mankind. He is not easily satisfied, and is likely to constantly
question the standards of the status quo.

Hearn corresponded copiously with Krehbiel, the music critic,
even though Krehbiel was a very proper man who had as little reason
to like the bohemian Hearn as had Cable. Krehbiel, for instance,
apparently never completely recovered from the shocking experience
of unexpectedly observing Hearn, who was in turn closely studying
an unclothed prostitute under a stark electric light bulb at the close
range necessitated by his poor eyesight. Hearn's explanation was
unorthodox and artistic enough: he had been trying to determine
whether the Greeks had been correct in stating that the most beautiful
line in the world was formed by the curve of a woman's hip. But Kreh-
biel was not mollified.

Early in Hearn's New Orleans years his penchant for Creole
music got him in trouble with an anti-Romantic world. He was making
his living as a sort of New Orleans correspondent for his old employer,
the Cincinnati Commercial. He began to omit political news in favor
of some odd material:

Soon he was putting Creole poems and songs in his Ozias Midwinter
letters, along with English translations... Murat Halstead at
last lost patience. As a newspaper publisher with an eye to ad-
vertisements and circulation he could no longer condone: [words
to a Creole song appear here]]. Nor did he consider political
news well-lost for:

'If thou wert a little bird,
And I were a little gun,
I would shoot thee - bang!
Ah, dear little mahogany jewel
I love thee as a little pig loves the mud. 28

Interestingly, this very translation of Hearn’s appears in one of the
Cable’s Century articles on Creole music.

In 1906, after Hearn’s death, a New York Sun editorial article
attempted to rule out the possibility of any original African music
as an influence in America by maintaining that Hearn had despaired of
finding any African sources, that he found only French and Spanish
music corrupted by the Negroes. Krehbiel, in high dudgeon, wrote an
article on September 12, some three weeks later, which was published in
the November issue of The Musician. Krehbiel’s argument, backed by
a letter he received from Hearn, is summed up in the following quote:

So far from believing that the music of the negroes to which
we listened while investigating voodooism and creole songs in
New Orleans... was corrupted by French and Spanish music, Hearn
believed that the opposite process had taken place. It was negro
music that had been sophisticated by French and Spanish influences. 29

Hearn’s then unusual position on the original artistic contribution of
the Negro is strongly argued by Krehbiel. He goes on to offer interest-
ing information on Hearn’s fascination with smaller intervals than
half-tones:

Once in the early years of our association I explained to him
that the scales of all peoples were not alike, and that there
were ears attuned to distinguish smaller intervals than our
semitone. That struck deep into his soul, and he was continually
looking for such tonal splinterings. He thought he heard them,
too, and used to talk about them on all possible and impossible
occasions... The notion that there were scales in the folk

28 Vera McWilliams, Lafcadio Hearn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.,
1946), pp. 100-01.

29 H.E. Krehbiel, "Lafcadio Hearn and Congo Music," The Musician,
II, (November, 1906), 544.
music of some peoples which contained tones smaller than the Occidental semitone fascinated him and he seemed to make it the crux by which he tested the genuineness of all folk tunes. I think he confounded it with the glissando effect which can be heard in slave spirituals. 30

Krehbiel later quotes a letter from Hearn which dealt with the same subject:

"I think you are right about the negro-American music, and that a Southern trip will be absolutely essential because I have never yet met a person here able to reproduce on paper those fractional tones we used to talk about, which lent such weirdness to the songs. The naked melody robbed of these has absolutely no national characteristic. The other day a couple of darkeys from the country passed my corner, singing, - not a creole song, but a plain negro ditty with a recurrent burthen consisting of the cry: 'Oh! Jee-roo-sa-le-e-e-m!' I can't describe to you the manner in which the syllable lem was broken up into four tiny notes, the utterance of which did not occupy one second, - all in a very low but very powerful key. The rest of the song was in a regular descending scale, the Oh being very much prolonged and the other notes very quick and sudden. Wish I could write it but I can't. I think all the original creole-negro songs were characterized by similar eccentricities." 31

There is little wonder that Hearn had found no person able to produce on paper the qualities he so admired in this music. As Blesh points out on the subject of notation: "... the magnificent timbres and the smooth glissandi cannot be shown at all, nor can the microtonal variations of pitch which abound in all real Negro music." 32 Poor Hearn, with his limited formal musical education, was probably closer to the truth than was Krehbiel, who often assumes a superior tone when writing of his friend. How near Hearn was to defining what was to become an important feature in Jazz can be illustrated by a quotation from nearly

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Blesh, Shining Trumpets, op. cit., p. 77.
any serious Jazz critic who has investigated the unique technical qualities of the music. Charles Edward Smith, a 20th century pioneer in this kind of study, was to write over fifty years later:

"Classical" musicians strive to produce purity of tone. In contrast, jazz uses a broader range of timbre, and there are conscious attempts to produce the dirty tone, raucous and husky qualities on all instruments, as well as with the voice. Musicians in the classical field are usually trained to develop perfect accuracy of pitch, although violinists, and trumpeters and other wind musicians consciously play sharp to achieve greater brilliance, just as the highest 10th of the piano range is tuned sharper than the true pitch. Jazz musicians, however, at times consciously play and sing slightly flat, and with wavering tone, smears and glissandi to produce hot intonation.33

II

At least two Jazz critics, Blesh and England’s Rex Harris, have mentioned the fact that Samuel Clemens undoubtedly drew his pseudonym from one of the work songs, in this case river-chant, which formed one source of Jazz. British Jazz critic Rex Harris suggests one work song that might have been Twain’s source:

There is, for instance, Heavin’ the Lead Line which must have been related, at any rate, to the one which gave Samuel Clemens the idea for his pen-name — Mark Twain.

Tell me there’s a buoy, a buoy right on the bar
The light is twisted and you can see just how.
Pull a little over to the larboard side.
Lawd, Lawd.
Quarter less twain,
Quarter less twain,
Lawd, Lawd, now send me quarter less twain.
Throw the lead line a little higher out.34

Blesh presents a version that is more suggestive:

One remembers the origin of Samuel Clemens’ pseudonym, remem-


bers that he found his pen-name while he piloted river boats on the Mississippi. One night in moonlight or in fog, he listened to the wild, rich Negro voice blending with sounds of water, chanting the depths as the line was heaved:

I've gone lyg down, so mark twain,
Mark twain.

Twain himself offers the following version in Life on the Mississippi, a fact which both Harris and Blesh may or may not have overlooked:

The cries of the leadsmen began to rise out of the distance, and were gruffly repeated by the word-passers on the hurricane deck. "M-a-r-k three! M-a-r-k three! Quarter-less-three! Half twain! Quarter twain! M-a-r-k twain! . . ."

Twain also employed the Negro work song as a part of his descriptive background in the same book as he wrote of the preparations for a steamboat departure:

... every windlass connected with every fore-hatch, from one end of that long array of steamboats to the other, was keeping up deafening whizz and whirr, lowering freight into the hold, and the half-naked crews of perspiring negroes that worked them were roaring such songs as "De Las' sack! De Las' sack!" - inspired to unimaginable exaltation by the chaos and turmoil and racket that was driving everybody else mad.

The Negro has nothing to lose in such turmoil; he is exalted by the unique experience of seeing white men experience his daily chaos in their own lives, if only for a brief interval, and the liberal Twain shows a sympathetic appreciation of this fact that is unusual in his age.

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35 Blesh, Shining Trumpets, op. cit., p. 57.


37 Ibid., xvi, p. 144.
Mark Twain's love of Negro spirituals is common literary knowledge. No biographer nor book-length critical writer on Twain neglects this part of him. Edward Wagenknecht's remarks are among the most effective on this subject:

Fortunately, however, there was one type of music — music of quality, music of dignity and beauty, music utterly free from all pretensions of "art-iness" — that Mark Twain drank in with his mother's milk and which became a part of his very being. I speak, of course, of the Negro Spirituals. When the Jubilee Singers came to Lucerne in 1897, they took him back to his youth, they made him see that the same truth holds in music that he had already learned in literature, that the finest art is not exotic, no hothouse flower, but grows its sturdy stock straight out of the earth, and that common people do not hate it, they love it because it explains them to themselves. "Arduous and painstaking cultivation has not diminished or artificialized their music," he wrote, "but on the contrary — to my surprise — has mightily reinforced its eloquence and beauty. Away back in the beginning — to my mind — their music made all other vocal music cheap, and that early notion is emphasized now. It is utterly beautiful, to me; and it moves me infinitely more than any other music can. I think that in the Jubilee and their songs America has produced the perfectest flower of the ages; and I wish it were a foreign product so that she would worship it and lavish money on it and go properly crazy over it." This is perhaps the loveliest passage in all Mark Twain's criticism; it shows him at his complete best, as he was when he allowed the sensitiveness that was in him to respond unhampered to the finest things with which he came in contact. He himself sang Spirituals to Mrs. Clemens the night that she died. He sang them on other occasions also. . . . Surely the influence of the Spirituals shows in his never-failing love for the Negro race. There are echoes of them, too, in his loveliest prose.38

Gladys Bellamy, after quoting virtually the same passage from Twain, offers confirmation typical of Twain biographers and critics: "Despite his characteristic tendency to superlatives, this passage reflects the fine sensitiveness within him; and twentieth-century America

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begins to share his appreciation for the quality of this music."  

Twentieth century appreciation of the spirituals, considered by Jazz critics to be the direct root of the Blues, brings to mind a passage by Rudi Blesh concerning such belated appreciation for all the musical forms which have participated in the evolution of Jazz. It has been mentioned that an appreciation of Negro music seems to lead inevitably to a more tolerant racial attitude. All the Liberal Romantics, of which the rebellious Twain was one, share both attitudes: love of Negro music, sympathy for the Negro's plight.

Mark Twain loved the minstrel show, and well he might. It offered humor, entertainment and Negro-based music to the fun-hungry frontier. Dixon Wecter has written of this phase of Twain:

Tom Sawyer and Joe Harper, it will be recalled, happily imitate the routines of the first black-face minstrel to hit their town. Similarly felt the real Sam Clemens: "I remember the first negro-minstrel show I ever saw. It must have been in the early forties. It was a new institution. In our village of Hannibal, on the banks of the Mississippi, we had not heard of it before, and it burst upon us as a glad and stunning surprise." All was captivation: the colleagues of Banjo and Bones with their patter of nonsense... the songs comic and gay like 'Buffalo Gals,' 'Camptown Races,' 'Swanee River,' and 'Old Dan Tucker,' or poignant like 'Massa's in de Cold Ground,' and 'My Old Kentucky Home'... His love for Stephen Foster, Mark never lost.

Rather than sneering at Stephen Foster, Jazz criticism generally regards his work as a compliment to its Negro sources.

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42 See Ulanov, op. cit., p. 23.
That Twain was unorthodox in his musical tastes seems very likely. He appears to have resisted, with the strong non-conformity shown by the Liberal Romantic toward polite society, the attempts of his family to make his taste "respectable" in musical matters as well as in other matters.

An early attempt to portray Twain as an admirer of the already accepted art of classical music was that of Ralph Holmes' "Mark Twain and Music," appearing in the October, 1922, Century Magazine. He opens with the following:

Were we musically a less self-conscious people than we are, or had Samuel Langhorne Clemens been less typically American than he was, there would be hardly more than casual interest in the great Humanist's reactions to the most subtle and most general of the arts.

But musically we are still in our teens; we are still prideful of our first long trousers and not above jingling the coins in our pocket. . . .

We have even begun to make some gestures of our own in the direction of creating music; it is not impossible to get a hearing for the assertion that jazz is a folk music comparable with the aboriginal outpourings of Europe. 43

Holmes then quotes Clara, Mark's daughter, who married the concert musician, Osaip G. Gabrielson. Clara was a musician herself, of course. She recalls that her earliest memories of music in the Clemens household were of Negro spirituals. Twain sang them, accompanying himself on the piano entirely by ear. Holmes then offers a quick run-down on the tragic era in the great humorist's life, marked by: the death of daughter Olivia, of his wife, of a sister and another relative; Jean's traffic accident, and Clara's nervous breakdown.

Next came an interesting turn of events in Twain's musical experience which Holmes interprets as Twain's eventual happy maturity of taste for classical music.

Under such a weight of grief as this Mark Twain took possession of a new house at Fifth Avenue and Ninth Street, New York, heartbroken and ready to heed the advice of Clara to seek some solace in music—in music that offered a tortured heart a balm more efficacious than the simple and soon exhausted virtues of mere melody. The fascinating mazes of counterpoint, the splendid outlines of Beethoven's harmonic edifices, the sweep and surge of some of the Wagnerian selections as rendered by the orchestrelle which he had installed in the Fifth Avenue house, "beguiled," as Mr. Paine puts it, "from dull, material surroundings back into worlds and dreams that he had known and laid away."

This ultimate "discovery" of music by Mark Twain was a great satisfaction to Clara Clemens, for it vindicated theories which she had long advanced to her father. She says:

"As my own musical career progressed, I naturally became more and more anxious that my father should be able to find in music some of the same satisfactions that I did, and we had many long arguments. He insisted that he did not understand classical music, and never would; but I insisted that his failure was due entirely to his lack of familiarity with such music.

"The outcome of these talks was the decision to get some sort of reproducing organ which would approximate orchestral effects, and although I was in a sanitarium when the orchestrelle was installed in the house on Fifth Avenue, father acted largely on my suggestions as to the records he should get, and by the time I had returned home he had convinced himself that I had been entirely right—that, given willingness and desire to know the best music, only unfamiliarity could make it remain an experience beyond his understanding."44

Today this suggests to at least this writer a pathetically ironic picture of the man whom Van Wyck Brooks maintains was female-dominated to begin with. Here is Twain, his spirit by now completely broken, confronted with a Phoenix of his wife in daughter Clara, who seems delighted at the opportunity to win her long musical contention with her rebel father. Clara's righteous insistence, her Puritanistic

44 Ibid., pp. 849-50.
certainty, which is anathema to the Liberal Romantic, dominates her very prose; she sounds dangerously like an evangelist, and dangerously like Woman Dominant: "... he had convinced himself that I had been entirely right. ..." Her avoidance of the grammatical first person: "The outcome of these talks was the decision to get some sort of ... organ" is at times unconsciously ominous.

Interestingly enough we find, too, even after her triumph, a puzzled note of regret:

"The experience came to him so late in life, though, that he never became a frequenter of concert-halls, and except for one or two of my own recitals I do not think he ever sat through an entire concert of any kind. I am certain that he never heard Mr. Gabriellwitch conduct, nor me sing with an orchestra."45

No, one doesn't imagine that he did, even though "... he did reach a point where he was no longer afraid that I would ask Ossip to play ..."46 — doubtless a sign of growing fortitude.

Clara closes her story with a rush of self-assuring certainty, indiscriminately trampling all her own doubts as well as any imagined opposition:

"This experience of my father's is one reason why I have small patience with those who belittle phonographs, player-pianos, player-organs, or even hand-organs. They can be so successfully used as an avenue of approach to real music that I feel that the humblest of them has some dignity about it, abused though they usually are."47

Holmes steps back into his essay at this point to wrap the winding sheet about Twain, and to attempt to close his argument in a convincing

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45 Ibid., 850.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
It was music, too, that solaced his last hours, for almost the last words Mark Twain spoke were to request that Clara come in and sing to him. Then, though, it was "not from the grand old masters," but the simple old Scotch ballads that he longed for. Mr. Paine has described the scene, but not quite with the intimacy of the words in which Mme. Gabriëlwitch has set it down for this brief commentary.

"Finding it very difficult to sing for my father during his last hours, I only succeeded in humming one song, and selected the Scotch air, 'Flow Gently, Sweet Afton,' knowing that to be one of his favorites. It seemed to have a quieting effect on him. He sank from excited talking into reposeful musing, only uttering passing remarks now and then for several hours afterward. The song itself, a lullaby, rocked his feverish brain into a state of placidity and peace."

It is probably a myth that when a man is dreaming, drunk, or dying he reverts to his true nature, but Twain's final acceptance of folk music to die by does not do a bit of good for Mr. Holmes' and Clara's position, especially since Twain at last was in a situation which did not require him to defer to others' opinions and arguments. He was beyond reach; he had no more fear; he had at last faced the finality, and he remained "unrefined" in his final decision. If Twain was as typically American as Holmes submits, then he might have been just about independent enough in his artistic tastes to like Jazz too, had it been able to gain his ear. Here is a music that appears to fulfill just about every requirement of his revolutionary, highly nationalized nature: it fits his sympathy for the Negro, his preference for American art, his rebellious social nature and his love of individual expression. All he heard of the roots of Jazz - the spirituals and Stephen Foster's adaptations of other roots - impressed him as did no other music:

48 Ibid.
early and always. It does not seem unreasonable that this rebel with
the strong sense of humor would be attracted to both the music of
Jazz and the Liberal Romantic values of the Jazz man.

Relying on Holmes' basic attitude of refining Twain for polite
artistic taste, L. H. Swain came along in 1937 with an article which
warns over the same general postulate while suggesting that Twain's
occasional pose as a "mucker" caused him to pretend to dislike clas-
sical music in order to avoid public ridicule. This would hardly
explain Twain's attitude, after his public days were over, upon the
occasion of Clara's first suggestion of introducing the classical
masters into his defenseless life.

Swain assures us that "Clemens' musical taste ranged widely,
but he was less eccentric than he and his biographer Paine like to
think . . ."49 Such a belief would have reassured Clara. Swain closes
on a confident note similar to Holmes': "The criticism was incidental,
and perhaps as inevitable as his growth in esthetic appreciation."

Rather than growing, as his critics would have it, Twain's musical
judgment was conceivably esthetically sound to begin with, but in a
different musical category from theirs. In this respect his taste
was probably well ahead of not only his countrymen in regard to
spirituals, as his esthetic analysts admit, but also with regard to
his appreciation of work chants, minstrel music, and Negro music in

49L.H. Swain, "Mark Twain as a Music Critic: A Case Study in

50Ibid.
Among its earliest literary supporters (and they were evidently all literary), Jazz may well be proud to have had the attention of Rupert Hughes. Hughes was a classical musician, a music critic, and a literary figure of note in the early days of Jazz, just as he is today. One of his early fictional products, Zal, a psychological novel about a concert pianist, illustrates all these qualities in Hughes. In 1899 he published an article devoted entirely to an appreciation of Ragtime as a musical form. Ragtime is actually an early pianistic phase of Jazz. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis have produced the definitive critical-historical volume on it: They All Played Ragtime. For a time in the Twenties the word was corrupted to mean almost any kind of popular music, but today it has reassumed its original connotation, that of certain very definite pieces of music: piano rags. To be performed most effectively, they require a pianist who can embellish them with his own variations. One example of genuine Ragtime that nearly every American should be familiar with is Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," written in Sedalia, Missouri, and named after the tavern in which Joplin often played piano. Ragtime even attained a certain degree of popularity from about 1897 to 1917, but commercial music interests squeezed it and its composers and performers, mainly colored, out of the market. Tin Pan Alley flooded the music stores with pseudo-rags, began naming anything a
"rag" in order to sell it, and created finally a hopeless confusion in the mind of the public. Today Rags are coming back to some extent in Jazz circles. Modern Jazz pianists Wally Rose and Ralph Sutton in particular have recorded rags written by Joplin, Tom Turpin, and other great rag composers and pianists. Particularly good examples are Rose's records of the following Joplin rags: "Euphonic Sounds," "Easy Winners," "Pineapple Rag," and "Cascades," the last having been written by Joplin in honor of the water cascades at the 1904 St. Louis exposition.

Rudi Blesh outlines the part Rupert Hughes played in Ragtime criticism:

The earliest notable defender of ragtime was Rupert Hughes, who wrote "A Eulogy of Ragtime" for the Boston Musical Record of April 1, 1899. "It is young and unshackled and throbbing with life," he wrote. "And it is racial." A part of his eulogy follows:

"Ragtime music meets little encouragement from the scholarly musician. It has two classes of enemies: the green-eyed, blue-goggled fogy who sees in all popular music a diminution of the attention due to Bach's works; and the more modern scholar who thinks he has dismissed the whole musical activity of the Negro by a single contemptuous word.

"It is only a reminiscence of Scotch lyrics; behold the Scotch snap,' or regarding ragtime, 'It is only a distorted reminiscence of Spanish and Mexican dances; behold the synco-
pation.'

"But neither the reproach of 'reminiscence' nor the equal odium of 'innovation' has ever succeeded against a vital musical idea, and I feel safe in predicting that ragtime has come to stay, that it will be taken up and developed into a great dance-form to be handled with respect, not only by a learning body of Negro creators, but by scholarly musicians of the whole world.

"To attempt to prove what the future is going to do would be idle; and I must rest content with trying to describe ragtime music as it is, after pausing to remind the skeptic that all oaks were once acorns, that the venerate sonata was once a bundle of popular dances."\footnote{Blesh and Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), pp. 131-32.}
An established critic like Hughes very nearly had to have Liberal Romantic tendencies to offer his prestige and support to such a "lowlbrow," Negro musical form in 1899.

Scott Joplin spent his dying years trying to bear out Hughes' predictions for Ragtime by writing a Ragtime opera, Treemonisha, which was never published, and was performed but once. Joplin's later work, such as "Euphonious Sounds," carries often a strange promise of an even newer, still gay, but thoughtful and tender American musical phase. Veteran Jazz pianist James P. Johnson, who taught Fats Waller, maintains that nobody thoroughly understands "Euphonious Sounds" even yet.

Blesh and Janis wrote Rupert Hughes in 1950, and the old man replied in a firm way that might touch anyone who has ever heard and responded to a well-written Rag played at medium tempo by a stable Jazz pianist:

"It is both surprising and flattering to have you bring back to memory my ancient article on ragtime. I can say nothing about it now except that, for all the critical contempt of ragtime among the intellectuals, it was a revolutionary phase of music evolution, and it has had a profound influence on all subsequent music.

"It swept Europe and thrilled millions, and it was strangely so difficult to master that many of the harshest critics of it could not play it. It required a new technique in rhythm and fingering, and I saw many a snooty conservatory trained expert, get his fingers all tangled up as he tried to do what thousands of Negroes and their imitators did naturally and with ease."^52

Hughes' comment about "snooty conservatory experts" and his daring in suggesting that technical requirements of Ragtime bear comparison in their own way with classical techniques certainly carry the mark of

^52 Ibid., p. 271.
an anti-snobbery and non-conformity (as well as respect for the Negro’s musical contribution) that fit the Liberal Romantic pattern found in the Jazz world and in so much of Jazz criticism. He seems to belong in the tradition established by Cable, Hearn, and Twain, though they were pre-Jazz writers who dealt with roots, while Hughes deals with one phase of Jazz itself.

The arrival of effective Jazz criticism, which will be treated in the next chapter, was delayed until the Thirties in America, but at least one more Liberal Romantic was to come between Hughes and that time, and to support Jazz in a manner that still reads validly to Jazz critics today. This man was Carl Van Vechten, of the Twenties, an expressive individualist of the first water. He dared to approve of and encourage the Negro, Jazz, and social non-conformity. He traveled easily in any social strata, and was and is the spirit of anti-snobbery.

This loose pattern of literary support for Jazz and Jazz roots was to continue to verify its Liberal Romantic nature in the persons of the Jazz men themselves, in their autobiographical writings, in the generally literary and journalistic backgrounds of the established Jazz critics of today, and in the Liberal Romantic nature of fictional writings about Jazz.
CHAPTER III

THE CRITICAL-HISTORICAL GENRE IN THE LITERATURE

OF JAZZ

The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet.

Keats, "Eve of St. Agnes"

Before attempting to survey the critical-historical volumes on Jazz in the light of their contribution to the Liberal Romantic literary tradition under discussion, one point should be clarified. Some of the volumes included in the rather thorough survey on the following pages may not appear to bear directly on the Liberal Romantic value structure. If their relationship to the thesis is not immediately obvious, they nevertheless affect it indirectly for several reasons. First, they offer critical recognition to a little known art, which recognition in itself is a championing of the Negro's contribution. Next, they are making an attempt to readjust some very solidified musical and artistic value judgments current in American society for many years. Finally, they are furthering a misunderstood and abused native art form. These aims most surely find their place in the Liberal Romantic values of expressive individualism (on the part of these critics), racial equality and brotherhood, and non-conformity with the status quo (of artistic judgment) as well as a strong anti-snobbishness.
It may be noted in addition that these works often provide factual material that has been employed by fictional writers who are treating Jazz from the Liberal Romantic attitude. These volumes have also added their parts to the building of various Jazz myths which have become repositories of Liberal Romantic values: the creation of Jazz folk figures of symbolic proportions in Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, and others; and the creation of mythical auras around Storyville, the Chicago Jazz fraternity of the Twenties, Harlem, and other places and times. Each volume has contributed its bit to the steady, growing support and recognition that a Liberal Romantic American literary movement has gained for Jazz almost single-handed.

With the arrival of the Fifties an impressive segment of intellectual America, educated during the Thirties and Forties by serious, approving articles in the quality magazines as well as influenced by the libraries, has come to appreciate the fact that the discovery and early recognition of Jazz as an art form is attributable to a pair of Frenchmen and a Belgian. The latter, Robert Goffin, a cultured lawyer with a capacious record collection, is also a literary man of some note in France, having published several volumes of poetry and literary criticism. By the Forties, incidentally, Goffin had published some twenty volumes in France alone, including two books on Rimbaud: Sur les Traces d'Arthur Rimbaud, and Rimbaud Vivant. Goffin, just about the first person outside the Jazz musician's professional
world to recognize Jazz publicly as an art form, was greatly impressed in 1919 by the American Jazz band of Louis Mitchell, which was then visiting Paris. This band, with Sidney Bechet as a member, was the one which so impressed Ernst Ansermet during the same engagement. Goffin's first reaction to this music was to produce a book of poems called *Jazz Band*. It appeared in France in 1920 with an introduction by Jules Romains. Already Jazz had gained its first foothold in European culture through the patronage of French literature. By 1927 Goffin was operating the first Jazz magazine, *Music*, and his efforts since that time have been unceasing. In 1931 he produced the first critical-historical volume of Jazz, *Aux Frontières du Jazz*. He discusses its reception in America:

The American magazine *Fortune* was nice enough to acclaim this book as the first work to completely explain America's new artistic message. The author of this article declared further that I seemed to know more of the Negroes than did Carl Van Vechten himself, even adding that many details in my book testified that I must have spent every night of my life in Harlem. Needless to remark, at that time I had never set foot in America! . . . I am rather proud to think that I was the first in the world to draw the distinction technically between hot and commercial Jazz. I even had the audacity, on the strength of a few records, to dedicate my book to Louis Armstrong, "the real King of Jazz," explaining that Paul Whiteman had been wrapped in an unmerited mantle.

My book was not translated because of its decidedly uncompromising attitude. . . .

Goffin's next critical-historical volume, *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan*, appeared in America in 1944. In 1947 his biography of Louis Armstrong, *Horn of Plenty*, was also published in America; it appeared in France under the title, *Le Roi du Jazz*.

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1 Goffin, *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan*, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
The American translation of Hughes Panassie's white-slanted study, *Le Jazz Hot*, was the first European critical-historical volume on Jazz to appear in America, however. Fellow Frenchman Charles Delaunay's Jazz record and personnel guide, the *Hot Discography*, was the first published book of pure record research and documentation in the world of Jazz.

Arnold Gingrich, former editor of *Esquire* magazine, has outlined this European birth and at first reluctant American growth of serious Jazz study in the following manner:

In other words, it took this Belgian, Goffin, and the two Frenchmen, Panassie and Delaunay, to sit down and listen to jazz...

Oh, yes, it can be argued that there was a guy named Gershwin and a bandman named Whiteman and a concert away back in the twenties at Carnegie Hall. But all that only confused the matter and delayed the recognition of real jazz. The only true jazz presented on that intended-to-be historic occasion in '24 was one number offered purely as a novelty and meant to be considered only as comic relief.

It took another ten years, really, before the differentiation between the real thing and the fake began to be clear to us over here. What they knew about American jazz in the twenties in Europe, and articulated clearly in critical articles, was not even dimly suspected on this side of the water until the thirties.

It was almost a decade after the "false dawn" of that Gershwin-Whiteman concert that the light broke over here, with Charles Edward Smith's first article in February '34, called "Collecting Hot." From then on, the way of the righteous, in the recognition and appreciation of hot jazz was clear — as clear as Goffin had made it, in comparable articles in French, ten years earlier.

Recognition in America included a steady list of critical-historical volumes on Jazz by American critics, mostly of literary and journalistic background; however, it was Louis Armstrong, who first broke the

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2Goffin, *Jazz*, Ibid., Introduction, pp. ix, x.
ground beyond articles with a strange little book in 1936 that is half biography and half apologia for the music he has always lived with and for. His critical strategy, effective as it becomes at times, gambled for its understanding upon the employment of the word "swing" instead of Jazz, because the latest development in Jazz in the Thirties had been what came to be known as "swing style," the rhythmic basis of which was a driving style accenting all four beats in the measure (Dixieland accents only every other beat), used with either big band or small unit. Louis or his publishers probably figured that America, then in something of a "swing" craze, would associate the word with good Jazz music and continue to appreciate the development of the music itself. Swing, of course, is still played, and the best parts of it remain with us on records and incorporated into the styles of a number of our greatest musicians: Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Roy Eldridge, and George Auld, to name a few. But Armstrong's criticism has proved to be basically sound, if applied to Jazz in general rather than the swing manifestation of it alone. More important, however, to the thesis of this study is the Romantic individuality of Armstrong himself - a humble, great man - showing through his prose at every turn. Consider the following, undogmatic statement:

What I want to say now is that jazz had been taking hold of people. It had come up slowly out of the old negro folk songs and the spirituals, and the regular beat of the jazz syncopation probably came out of the strumming of the banjos which the slaves had learned to play before the Civil War. Some say it went back to the tom-toms of our people in Africa before we
were civilized. And it might be.  

One gulps at the phrase, "before we were civilized," and is reminded of some of our efforts to "civilize" the Negro. This tolerance, this willingness to follow the golden mean in human relations is evident in Armstrong's own self-developed and balanced attitude toward American mythology:

I know lots of men who are successful in life and are always saying they owe their success to their hard knocks - and the harder the better. I think that's sometimes true and sometimes it isn't.  

His own childhood was a somewhat brutal business, as his recent autobiography of those early years in New Orleans well proves. But America was not yet ready to hear this, and Louis could somehow wait to tell it. Instead, he employs just a suggestion of it all. His attitude is well illustrated as he slyly pokes fun at himself in dealing with his final departure from the Colored Waif's Home, a sort of reformatory in which he was confined for firing a .38 caliber pistol during a New Year's Eve celebration.

So when my mother came out to the home to get me she had a written release signed by Judge Wilson. . . But of course the Head Keeper wanted the other kids to think that it was his doing - and that was all right.

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4 Ibid., p. 5.

5 It may seem unusual that the author of a dissertation should refer to "Louis" and "Bix," but scholarship has never hesitated to use the first names of the principal Jazz figures, and it seems logical to continue the tradition of Liberal Romantic informality for purposes of literature. The first names, or nicknames, are the men; they offer colorful and accurate images in most cases. The vividness of the language of Jazz is a triumph of the principles of metaphor and linguistic suggestion.

6 Ibid., p. 23.
It should be added here that his mother begged some kindly whites for months to intercede in Louis' behalf before she was finally able to wheedle his release.

The reader is told that he was called "Little Louis," and, keeping everything in the diminutive, he avoids both rancor and bathos: "So I put on my little cheap suit and went home with my mother."\(^7\)

His occasional lapses into the colorful language of the Jazz musician are usually effective. Of magnolias, which he loves most of all New Orleans blooms, he says: "Those big white flowers do swing their scent."\(^8\) Later he tells us proudly:

I may mention here that there are more than four hundred words used among swing musicians that no one else would understand. They have a language of their own, and I don't think anything could show better how closely they have worked together and how much they feel that they are apart from "regular" musicians and have a world of their own that they believe in and that most people have not understood.\(^9\)

This language is a serious thing to the Jazz musician then, though he makes it a joke in itself. It has been important enough to the world of linguistics to command the scholarly treatment twice in American Speech magazine.\(^10\) Today serious study of the language of Jazz continues. In October 1954, for instance, the G. and C. Merriam Company publication, Word Study, contained an article on the supposed deriva-

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 24.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 26.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 77.

tion of the word "Bebop" (a very definite form of Jazz, incidentally), contributed by a scholar at Michigan State College.11 Frivolous treatments of Jazz language have appeared in *Vogue*, *Parents' Magazine*, and just about every periodical that has sold well enough to attract writers who are eager to capitalize on the laugh value of anything that does not violate middle-class standards of literary morality.

The Louis of the movies of the Thirties is probably remembered as a clown, in the minstrel tradition Hollywood saw fit to force on him. The literary Armstrong is a different man. Say he was coached, if you will; his unmistakable expressions appear nevertheless. If he was helped with organization and form, the prose is unschooled enough, powerful enough, to be valid in its own right. It tells very well, for example, the story of the French discovery of Jazz, tells it from the wondering viewpoint of the American disinherited:

> Until swing music came, America had no music it could really call its own. If you will look at the European music journals you will see what their critics think of our own swing music... It is funny that swing music got its first serious recognition, not at home, but in Europe. During my own three years playing in England and on the Continent, the very finest music critics would come back to my dressing room, or call upon me at my hotel, and talk with me for hours about the "significance" of our music and what they thought it meant. That had never happened to me before, in America, although since I have been home this time I notice that our own critics and journals are beginning to have the same kind of serious interest.12

There is complete faith, since justified, in his fellow Jazz musicians - the kind of faith that led him to advance money unquestioningly to Milton Mezzrow for unwritten arrangements, or for no concrete reason

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at all, during a time in Mezzrow's life that could only be described as one of nearly complete physical and spiritual annihilation. Mezzrow tells of this in his autobiography.

Louis has his own ideas about the reasons for the development of Jazz. He has thought about it, first with the sensitive attitude of the creator who, being without formal education, almost necessarily engages the Romantic viewpoint of the value of subjective expression, but who, unlike some Romantics, maintains an equally profound belief in the kind of formal education he never received.

If those early swing musicians had gone to music schools and been taught to know and worship the great masters of classical music and been told it was sacrilegious to change a single note of what was put before them to play, swing music would never have been born at all. They would have the idea that written music, whether it is a great classic or just a popular air, is something sacred that must never be touched, especially by a beginner. That was the way music was taught in the schools and nobody ever questioned it. Every piece of music, good or bad or indifferent, as soon as it was published was supposed to have sort of a life of its own, apart from who played it or what the player felt in playing it — and nobody would meddle with it in the least. It makes me think of the people who collect books, as against the people who write them. The book-collector gets to feel that a book has a life of its own and is sacred, apart from what's in it, and just because it is written down and bound up in covers.

Now I do not believe that books or music, or any other kind of art, are sacred, or even important to us, apart from what they truly express.

Now I think that there are two kinds of men chiefly who can break loose like that. One is the kind of man who learns everything about his art and the other is the kind who doesn't know anything about it — who is just plain ignorant, but has a great deal of feeling he's got to express in some way, and has to find that way out of himself. Swing came mostly from the last kind of men. 13

13 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
His comparison of "the people who collect books, as against the people who write them" is one of several occasions on which Louis, in discussing his art, turns at once to literature as offering the best comparison for his purposes.

Louis' readers are given some idea of the necessarily nomadic life of the Jazz musician by one poignant little passage concerned with a temporary breakdown at Quincy, Illinois, of the Mississippi steamboat on which Louis played before he was twenty-one (and from which he saw Jackson Island):

Some new part was needed for the rudder before we dared go on and possibly get into another storm like that one, and we had to send way back to St. Louis to get what was needed.

While we were waiting around for that, I spent two evenings in the town and on the first night met a little colored girl who was in high school. She liked my music a lot and was very nice to me. We had a real good time together and I wonder if she remembers it now.14

It was sixteen years from the summer of 1920 to the year Swing That Music appeared, and it was farther than that from Quincy, Illinois, to international fame, but a strolling minstrel can still have infinite moments.

As literature Swing That Music offers several typically American vignettes. At least one is worth repeating:

One night we happened to be playing for the big dance in Lawrence, Massachusetts, given by the local Elks Lodge. They had had a beauty contest and that night the winner of it was there. She had won a free trip to Hollywood and a chance to try out for the movies. The girl was Miss Thelma Todd who later came to a tragic death in Hollywood. When I read of it, I remembered how happy she was that night in Lawrence, with all the world, as she must have

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14 Ibid., p. 64.
thought, right ahead of her and nothing to do but take it. All showpeople have lots of trouble in their lives, I think.\textsuperscript{15}

But the overall theme of the book is Louis' belief in his music and the men who play it:

Take the "jam sessions" for instance. . . . Where do you find anything like that among "regular" or "sweet" musicians? A group of swing players, tired out after their pay performances, getting together alone in the early morning hours to swing together just for the fun of it. . . .\textsuperscript{16}

Seldom is such belief, such affirmation, found in any field of American literature today. The fact that this feeling is held toward his own profession, and that his profession is in turn an art is further unique; but this is the pattern of literature by and about the American Jazz musician, even though he is native to the most materially prosperous country in history. His very existence, and the resultant existence of his art; his refusal to be bought off by the most tempting salaries paid to musicians anywhere in the world; his group belief in art without having the benefits of art's escape hatch to existence in America - the schools; these conditions are also unique. Finally, his belief in his professional art in this era of post-war prosperity is most unusual. Surely he is the old Romantic spirit come back alive in the Twentieth Century, bitterest era of all to the Romantic. The Jazz musician has refused to be erased as an individual.

Near the end of his book, Armstrong reminds us:

And even now, thirty years after Swing was born, this book is

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 77.
the first history of swing music, and of the men who made it to be published in the English language.\textsuperscript{17}

And it probably is the first American book without racial or social prejudice, to treat Jazz separately from the popular music that it had so influenced.

Three years later, in 1939, \textit{Jazzmen} appeared and consolidated some of the growing Jazz myths as well as establishing the subject matter which was to be treated in the critical-historical volumes to come. Edited by Frederic Ramsey, Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, this book was subtitled, "The Story of Hot Jazz Told in the Lives of the Men Who Created It." Divided into four general sections, "New Orleans," "Chicago," "New York," and "Hot Jazz Today," it combined the talents of a number of authors to cover each division. Under these headings the book dealt with such topics as the birth of Jazz in New Orleans; Buddy Bolden and King Oliver, the trumpet patriarchs; Louis Armstrong, Oliver's pupil; Bix Beiderbecke, the now legendary white cornetist; the Austin High gang of Chicago (and "Chicago style" Jazz—generally rougher than New Orleans style in texture, and responsible for the addition of the saxophone as well as for a diminution of ensemble work); Jazz forms like the Blues and Boogie Woogie; New York Jazz; and Jazz record collecting. The book's last chapter, "Consider the Critics," by Roger Pryor Dodge, offered an able summary of Jazz criticism to that date, and began with the following statement:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 117.
\end{quote}
As soon as jazz became disturbingly identifiable as something more than "our popular music," countless uninformed commentators sprang up with something to say about it. In what the era might have called "the spirit of the thing," they made a jocose offering of a great part of the early recognition of jazz.

In general, symphonic jazz was considered a progressive advance upon primitive improvisation, and critics were anxious to see an art form blossom divorced from the dance and comparable to nineteenth century concert music. Even throughout the most sympathetic critical writing we find jazz tackled as a problem-child whose significant development is dependent upon immediate separation from the untutored musician.

Unfortunately, such premature white-collar meddling with jazz not only cut off the music public from following the slow, but determined, development of jazz by jazz musicians themselves, but induced academic-minded composers to leap headlong into vast, pretentious jazz works. Pretentious folk-art extension, in the word's best sense, can never be seriously entertained unless the vital elements of the folk-art have been first seriously considered by the ambitious composer.  

Dodge contributed, too, a highly accurate prediction:

We now approach the era of the Jazz Critic — he who is to jazz, what the concert critic is to classical, academic music. It is no longer the exception to find a jazz critic on familiar ground when discussing his subject. He knows all of the here-tofore anonymous players by name and handles the subject turned over to him in the same sublimated shop talk manner as his established, classical conferees handle the Academy! Just as the concert critic, well acquainted with the seventeenth and eighteenth century music and full of well-bred enthusiasm, willing, however, find no terms enthusiastic enough for Wagner or Debussy, so will the jazz critic talk seriously on Boogie Woogie piano and then proceed with obvious satisfaction to consider a Teddy Wilson.  

Frederic Ramsey, Jr. contributed to Jazzmen an outstanding chapter on the career of King Oliver and the story of his fabulous Creole Jazz Band which rocked Chicago in the early Twenties with such musicians as Louis Armstrong, its second cornetist (second only

18 Ramsey and Smith, Jazzmen, op. cit., p. 301.

19 Ibid., p. 328.
to the King himself), drummer Baby Dodds, and clarinetist Johnny Dodds. Armstrong's own feeling for King Oliver, his teacher and the father of Jazz cornet style, was reaffirmed in 1954 with the appearance of Louis' second book, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*:

The king of all the musicians was Joe Oliver, the finest trumpeter who ever played in New Orleans. . . . No one had the fire and the endurance Joe had. No one in jazz has created as much music as he has. Almost everything important in music today came from him. That is why they called him "King," and he deserved the title. Musicians from all over the world used to come to hear Joe Oliver when he was playing at the Lincoln Gardens in Chicago, and he never failed to thrill them.20

Jazzmen furnishes, in Ramsey's depiction of Oliver's final years, the only literary version extant of one of the most pathetic stories in the history of American music. This is high-tragedy material: the fall from high estate of a "King" of an American artistic royal-line which has produced its lesser nobility: "Count" Basie, and "Duke" Ellington, as well as at least one pretender: the "King of Jazz," Paul Whiteman. But the real King, the mighty Oliver, was a physical and musical giant who is today an almost legendary figure in New Orleans. He was billed in Chicago as "the world's greatest jazz cornetist," which he undoubtedly must have been until Armstrong inherited his mantle in the late Twenties. The King left Chicago in 1927 at the beginning of an almost miraculous series of misfortunes. He was never to come back. In New York he began a series of downhill slides which Ramsey documents tellingly with a series of letters to and from Oliver. Oliver's band left him, one by one, as bookings

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got scarce because of the impact of talking pictures on the music entertainment world; the King then suddenly lost his teeth from pyorrhea, and could barely play at all. By 1935 he was on his way to Georgia, where he was to die in 1938, one year before the appearance of *Jazzmen*. He wrote to his niece:

I received your card, you don't know how much I appreciate your thinking about the old man... Thank God I only need one thing and this is clothes. I am not making enough money to buy clothes as I can't play any more. I get a little money from an agent for the use of my name and after I pay room rent and eat I don't have much left... I felt terrible when I met Allen, I didn't want him to see me, but his eyes fell right on me... I've only got one suit and that's the one sent me while I was in Wichita, Kansas. So you know the King must look hot. But I don't feel downhearted. I still feel like I will snap out of the rut some day... 21

To the end New York remained a symbol of return to the heights for Oliver: "Soon as the weather can fit my clothes I know I can do better in New York." 22 If he could somehow get back to the big city everything would straighten itself out; but the great cornetist who was the fountainhead of New Orleans and later Chicago Jazz was working as a poolroom attendant from 9 a.m. until midnight in Savannah, Georgia. Under the unwritten Iron Law of Wages that has always existed for Negroes in the South, he made just enough to eat and sleep under a roof — that was all:

Dear Sister:

Well, I hope you don't feel like I am lying down on you. I put in such long hours until I don't feel anything like looking at a bottle of ink or picking up my pen and you know I'm one who love [sic] to write... I am feeling pretty good, but just


can’t get rid of this cough. Don’t like that sticking on me so long. I just can’t get rid of it. I’ve tried most everything. My heart don’t bother me just a little at times. . . . I’ve started a little dime bank saving. Got $1.60 in it and won’t touch it. I am going to try and save myself a ticket to New York. . . . 23

At the end the King could not afford medical attention:

It’s not like New York or Chicago here. You’ve got to go through a lot of red tape to get any kind of treatment from the city here. I may never see New York again in life. 24

There was not enough money to buy a tombstone when the King was buried.

If King Oliver is a dead Paul Bunyan of American music and New Orleans folklore, Louis Armstrong is a living one, and in Jazzmen Louis was granted an entire chapter sensitively written by William Russell. Louis’ birthday, July 4, 1900, is symbolic of the great American folk figure that he has become in this century. His life has paralleled the rise of Jazz and the rise of recognition of the American Negro as both human being and artist.

But there is other living folklore in Jazzmen. The book ideally illustrates the uniqueness of Jazz’s position in this respect. The practitioners of this brand new art in a brand new, overgrown nation, were necessarily young men. Even now they are middle-aged men—living pioneers—and their effect on America is very easy to underestimate. Into the tradition of the American high school, with its dances played by local student swing bands, and its across-the-street drug store with constantly playing juke box, falls the

23 Ibid., p. 90.

24 Ibid., p. 91.
Austin High Gang, who also claim a chapter in *Jazzmen*. These boys and their musical associates are today either outstanding Jazz and popular musicians, as in the case of Jimmy MacPartland and Bud Freeman, or dead and almost legendary in Jazz music circles, as Frank Teschemacher. The original gang, from Austin High on Chicago’s West Side, was five in number. Before long they took in Dave Tough from nearby Oak Park High, Benny Goodman from Chicago’s Hull House, Gene Krupa, and many others. Together they laid the foundation, over many sessions, over several years, for what is today called Chicago Style Jazz.

Their beginning is centered on an intensity of artistic devotion that is not the most common thing in America: it is more reminiscent of the kind of enthusiasm that has occasionally been shown for the older arts in America, the kind that bred the Transcendental Club, the Bread and Cheese Club, and the Hegelian St. Louis School of Philosophers:

In 1922 five kids from Austin High School out at Chicago’s west end, got up a little band. The buff brick high school they attended was so much like the others it was hard to describe, and the boys themselves were the sort who might have gone on to college but for their interest in music... Their interest in music, brought to a head when they first played together, was so keen that they played and practiced in school, in their homes, and even in the vacant apartment of a house owned by the father of one of them. "The poor people downstairs," Jim Lannigan commented, "they finally had to move out."25

What artistic movement of equal influence, of equal power, had been so originated, voluntarily by students, in the high schools of America?

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Would students gather to paint, play classical music, exchange poetic readings, without school sponsorship? Austin high school and other high schools might do well to sponsor the one artistic activity that is sure to be appreciated to some degree by American students - Jazz music.

For that matter, properly presented literature about Jazz musicians, both fictional and biographical, could well be considered for high school reading curricula. Literature for the high school student is an important problem today, and Jazz, as subject matter, should start well ahead of most other subjects in student-interest potential, because most high school students listen to popular music constantly: at dances, on the juke box, on records, and over radio and television. It is a much easier adjustment from popular music to Jazz than from classical music to Jazz, because the Jazz musician has had to learn to win most of his converts by playing diluted music. He has, in most cases, had to know how to perform commercially in dance bands to earn a living, but he has smuggled his artistry into that business to some extent too. This writer’s personal observations concerning the popularity of Jazz as subject matter for high school term papers might also be indicative of potential literary interest in Jazz at this level.

The story of the Austin High Gang is pure Americana:

Across the street from Austin was an ice cream parlor known as "The Spoon and the Straw." The boys dropped in often, as did other students from their high school, and usually someone had a nickel to feed the automatic phonograph. One day they made a
tremendous discovery. It was a record by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, made under the name of the Friars' Inn Society Orchestra. They played the record over and over ['"Tin Roof Blues"']... all of them getting a kick out of hearing that kind of music for the first time.26

The New Orleans Rhythm Kings were a white band in imitation of the great King Oliver band there in Chicago at the time. The song, "Tin Roof Blues," was a re-titled number "Jazzy Babies Blues," written by Oliver, but never published by him; It was taken by ear from his band's performances. Today it is still known as "Tin Roof Blues," and Oliver never has received public credit. In about 1954 it appeared in a stereotyped popular version, with unusually inane lyrics, and re-named "Make Love to Me." The corner drugstore, the student hangout that is an unofficial and vital part of nearly every high school in America has here played a documented part in the development of American culture, and the literature in Jazz has told this story.

Jazzymen also presented, with the story of the Austin High Gang, yet another instance of an already-mentioned sociological phenomenon brought about by Jazz: the democratising influence of the music through its erasure of the color barrier among Jazz musicians - in this case very young musicians - long before society or the Supreme Court were to feel the pressure of the inherent need for such an adjustment in America:

Although Chicago's local of the American Federation of Musicians was Jim Crow (almost all locals except New York City are, even today) the musicians themselves got around this policy. They played

26 Ibid., p. 163.
together in the Negro district, at speakeasies patronized by musicians, and in the homes of such musicians as Johnny Dodds. "It was a jam session all the time," Wettling remarked.\(^{27}\)

\textit{Jazzmen} gives some idea here, too, of the development of the singular, vast fraternity of those who play Jazz. Its magnitude in the Twenties and Thirties was nationwide. From the time the New Orleans men reached Chicago it began to develop; it extended on to New York, and finally throughout America. The leading Jazz musicians formed a penniless, migrant democracy of talent within which every member knew every other member, regardless of race, home or background. The biographies and autobiographies of all Jazz musicians cross and re-cross constantly; they all form one vast biography of the music itself, of its character, its Liberal Romantic social impact, its sense of humor, its role as a living art-religion for those who played it and then wrote of their lives. It formed their lives, formed their very characters, and has constituted an unrecognized segment of our literature.

The Beiderbecke legend is brought up to date by a \textit{Jazzmen} chapter which serves as a good outline of the Beiderbecke myth itself, if one may employ here the William Troy concept of myth in literature, and in general, the discipline employed by the new "Myth school" of literary study. Beiderbecke appears repeatedly in the literature of Jazz; he is in nearly every biography; he has been used as the basis for at least one novel; he roams in and out of Jazz fiction as symbol, standard, subject of anecdote, etc. His myth represents the ultimate

\(^{27}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 171.$
Liberal Romantic attitude on Jazz. He died early, as did Thomas Chatterton, Keats and Shelley. He died for art, according to the myth (the facts are indecisive and unimportant). He was the non-compromising spirit of Jazz integrity, and at the same time the ruggedest of Romantic individualists in other ways: in his habits of eating, dress, sleeping, drinking and living in general. His music is unique, even among Jazzmen. The sound of his cornet is like no other; his piano compositions are strange to the Jazz of his time.

Edward J. Nichols, who wrote the Beiderbecke chapter for Jazzmen with much of this in mind, stated his purpose:

Before Bix becomes all legend, it's better to set down some facts. . . . You see Armstrong is still alive, where they can get at him, but the quiet years following Bix thinned out the little facts in the memories of those who were with him. Not the sound of his horn, mind you, but only the little facts. His friends don't even care much about the places and dates. Sometimes they get impatient with your questions and they say, "Listen, how do I remember where it was? Maybe it wasn't Dinah and maybe it was only ten choruses, but you hadda hear that horn. If you heard the horn that's all there is. That's Bix and you don't need any more."

They all remember the horn all right, and most of the boys remember a particular session. They're like Paul Norris out in Hammond, Indiana, who followed the Wolverines from campus to city to the joints on the Indiana lakes: "I got to show you the house. Right off that porch there, by the side window. Six of them came off the job at Gary and we threw a little dance in there. Bix was sitting against the wall right by that window. You heard him out at the Beach, but you were only hearing the best cornet in your life. What I'm saying is the greatest music out of a horn or anything else blew right through that window. It was open and Bix would lean by it for air, only he wasn't breathing anything but through the cornet. If I was all the way sober I wouldn't tell you, but I'll admit Buck and I still park here some nights and try to recall the choruses all over again."

They never know exactly when it was or who else played with him . . . but they get that across—the-campfire look and you can see a legend in the making. 28

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28 Ibid., p. 144.
Nichols repeats a few of the legends about the boy from Davenport, and then offers the facts available to him. Along the way he blasts Dorothy Baker’s novel, *Young Man With A Horn*, which had come out just before *Jazzmen* (literature is quick to adopt a promising legend), but his attack is hardly fair. Romanticized and sentimentalized as the novel was, it did not even claim to be based on Bix’s life; it only claimed to have been inspired by what Miss Baker called the spirit of his music. There were similarities to, and undoubtedly gross mischaracterizations of Bix, but such variations are the prerogative of the author of fiction. Nichols’ excellent chapter on Bix cannot hope to control the claims of fiction any more than of legend.

*Jazzmen* offered good local-color passages on New Orleans’ Storyville – one of the now-legendary communities in American history – and its music; on Chicago’s South Side Jazz world in the Twenties; on the Jazz community in New York City; and on New Orleans’ still-strong musical remnants at the time the book was written. These passages, and the introductory sections of nearly every chapter, stress the writers’ emotional impressions; all carry the feel of Romantic literature.

Of itself, *Jazzmen* is not great literature, but literary raw material which has since been mined to some extent. It is a readable, Romanticized literary record of the significance of the youngest American art.

With *Jazzmen* in 1939 came two early book-length technical analyses of Jazz as music. Armstrong’s *Swing That Music*, three years before, had included a hasty, semi-technical appendix written by Horace
Gerlach and dealing sketchily with such topics as "Introduction to Swing," "Armstrong in the Upper Register," "Rhythmic Counterpoint," "Swing Interpolation," "Melodic Counterpoint," "Rhythmic Obbligato," "Melodic Obbligato," and examples of swing on ten instruments (written music transcribed from improvisations was included in the last section).

The need for the two new technical books was apparent. One was Winthrop Sargeant's *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, the advantages and limitations of which have already been briefly discussed in Chapter I. The other, *American Jazz Music*, by Wilder Hobson, was a fit companion for *Jazzmen*, since it offered the best technical study of some of the music yet done. Hobson was carrying on in a subdued way the tradition of literary pioneering in American musical criticism. If not exactly a literary figure, he was and still is a journalist of note. A 1928 Yale graduate, he worked for *Time*, then for *Fortune*. A lifelong Jazz devotee, and musician, he had given Jazz a hearty shove in the direction of national prominence with his 1933 *Fortune* article on Duke Ellington. Later he became a free lance writer, and thus must be classified as a professional writer by choice, whatever literary pretensions he may or may not have. In *American Jazz Music* he spoke of such things as the deliberately variant attack, the non-classical effects, and the vocal quality of Jazz tone color; he dealt with the need for ear-training to appreciate the rhythms developed subtly around the basic beats of Jazz; he stressed the improvisational artistry and compelling variety of moods offered by great Jazz musicians; and
he discussed specific recorded examples which supplemented his analysis. The book was technical, but it was interestingly and pleasantly written. Significantly, Chapter III, "The Jazz Language," appeared as a selection in the Gay, Boatright and Wykoff Freshman Prose Annual, published by Houghton Mifflin Company in several editions and used as a freshman English text on many a college campus. Literature continued to spread the Jazz gospel.

Soon after, in 1942, appeared a book which does not bear on the Liberal Romantic literary expression of Jazz, but which should be mentioned in passing in order to fill out the critical half of the critical-historical survey offered by this chapter. This was Charles Edward Smith's The Jazz Record Book, which attempted some brief, technical introductory material followed by over three hundred pages of data on and discussion of individual Jazz records.

Although not technically American literature, the next critical-historical volume to appear in America, Robert Goffin's Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan, is important here for two reasons: first, in its digging for Jazz roots it quotes extensively from both Cable and Hearn, illustrating their contribution to modern study of Jazz; secondly, Goffin's book is an ideal example of the contribution of literary men to Jazz criticism in that Goffin borrows openly from modern literary critical theory and uses literary analogies freely in trying to explain Jazz. The attempted explanation is made in literary terms:
In order really to understand the evolution of jazz as a parallel to, or better, as one result of, classical music, the most intelligible thing that can be said is that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, music experienced an evolution which was common to all the arts. . . . At the beginning of the present century there was a sort of qualitative change in artistic feeling. Up to that time the canons of beauty were based on clear, logical, and reasonable concepts which were under control of the intelligence. A whole sphere of human activity, the subconscious, had been ignored; man acknowledged the importance only of logical clarity. If one examines the fields of activity which had been reserved for art, one perceives that the creative work of our ancestors was under the impulse of a harmonious equilibrium between reason and sentiment. This conception was overwhelmed by the discoveries of Freud, and art was quickly modified thereby.29

Some suggestion of T. S. Eliot's "divided sensibility" idea is here, as is the older tradition of the French symbolist poets, from which Eliot himself sprang. Goffin, who had written books of French literary criticism concerned with this school, employed his literary background for analogy:

All modern poetry in the tradition of Arthur Rimbaud and Lautréamont can be truly estimated only by the yardstick of this modification. Masterlinek, Blaise Cendrars, Guillaume Apollinaire, James Joyce, Archibald MacLeish, Wystan Auden, and all the surrealists have collaborated in this realization of a new aspect of human grandeur. . . .30

Louis Armstrong, it will be remembered, said that an artist must either know all the traditional background, or none of it. This bears a relationship to Goffin's theory whether or not one chooses to accept the baggage of the subconscious that Goffin appends to it. New Orleans trumpeter Joe (Mingy) Manone produced an autobiography in 1948

29 Goffin, Jazz, op. cit., p. 5.
30 Ibid., p. 5.
which offers, in the bizare, lusty language of the musician, yet another approach to this matter:

It was the music that counted—the chance to play that solid stuff that us New Orleans boys got inside us. It had to come out, whether we got paid or not. . . . 31

The . . . teacher I had was a nice old Italian professor, Vincent de Corte. He gave me a few lessons, but I caught the kind of music I really wanted to play from the colored boys up on the river.

"Joe, you'll never amount to anything, playing that low-down kind of music," the prof used to tell me. "You'll never be anything but a second-rate musician unless you forget about that jazz."

But that kind of music sounded solid to me. I kept goin' across the levee to hear it, and tried it on my horn until I got it. . . . 32

I knew what I wanted when I was ten years old. 33

Manone's father caused him to leave home because of the boy's love of Jazz, insisting that Wingy enter the banana business. Years later Wingy made a triumphant return to New Orleans:

"Joe," he said to me one night, "I was wrong about you never amounting to anything as a musician. I'm glad you didn't listen to me." Then he laughed and told me: "I guess you wouldn't have made a very good banana checker, anyhow. You can't keep that rhythm still long enough."

Man, I wonder what happened to all those bananas I missed counting? 34

But from the scholarly viewpoint, Goffin offers more literary analogies in his attempt to explain Jazz:

I have brought up this comparison of jazz and the other arts only to show exactly where I stand as a critic of this new artistic

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33 Ibid., p. 16.

34 Ibid., p. 137.
phenomenon, and also to demonstrate the sheer stupidity of attempting to oppose jazz and music. One might as well ask whether modern poetry is better than Shakespeare, Milton, or Racine, or whether surrealism is as good as Rubens, Rembrandt, or Raphael. One must seek not the opposition, but the sense of continuity and the new contribution.

The discoverer’s lot is not a happy one. When the modern poetry of Walt Whitman or of Rimbaud was being born, not even the most highly qualified persons understood its message. Even today the great surrealistic endeavors of Breton, Eluard, and others are misunderstood. This is because a new art generally breaks with the existing rules, and, as there are no standards upon which to base criticism, it can be studied only with difficulty. It is only when this art has attained its full vitality and gradually won popularity that it can be successfully codified.

Thus after twenty years a form of poetry which was derided as unintelligible has won its way into the theater and music hall. Similarly, the window dressers of Fifth Avenue have rounded the cape of surrealism. And jazz, which only yesterday was a source of ridicule, has today won its struggle — a victory which is acknowledged by all save the older generations whose minds are still in the past.35

Goffin offers the interesting information that Edna Ferber, for her novel Saratoga Trunk, drew New Orleans background material from the account of the origin of Jazz offered in Herbert Asbury’s The French Quarter, which has Jazz originating entirely from the children’s Spasm Bands in New Orleans. That this account is spurious has been more than proved by the critical histories of Jazz. The popular writer, as might be expected, has stubbed more than one toe on Jazz.

Goffin’s material on the early days of Jazz was interestingly documented. He was and is broad in taste, appreciating many facets and styles of Jazz, and he offered a rare chapter on “Jazz in Europe,” a subject on which he is unusually well qualified to write, since he has personally observed much of the development of Jazz in Europe from

35 Goffin, Jazz, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
the time of the arrival of the Louis Mitchell band during World War I.

In 1944 *Esquire* began what is called *Esquire's Jazz Book*, a yearly publication devoted entirely to Jazz and run in connection with the annual selection of the *Esquire* All-American Jazz Band. The first three editions, 1944-45-46, were edited by Paul Edward Miller with introductions by *Esquire* editor Arnold Gingrich. The 1947 number was edited by Ernest Anderson. Taken together, these books offered both useful factual and mythical material as well as presenting Liberal Romantic elements.

The 1944 issue included articles by Goffin, Leonard Feather of *Metronome* magazine, and others, as well as bio-discographies of outstanding musicians. Editor Miller included "How To Listen to Hot Jazz" and a "Historical Chart of Jazz Influences," beginning with hymns, spirituals, work songs, quadrilles, marches, ccoon songs, and the Blues, then moving on to Ragtime and the introduction of the term Jazz. All of the *Esquire* Jazz Books together reproduce many of the outstanding photographs of Jazz musicians in existence.

Historical essays, criticism, and information on musicians and records continued to make up a majority of the material offered by the *Esquire* Jazz Books until the 1947 issue, when the policy changed, bringing in a large number of short articles by active Jazz musicians. Most of these men wrote of incidents in their lives and of the musical regions and styles they represent. To explain its abandonment of critical writers, editor Anderson quoted one of Jazz's most famous
connotative definitions, one which is entirely based on Jazz as subjective Romantic emotion.

Fats Waller’s expression on the subject is good enough for us. Once, when asked by a culture-conscious matron, "Mr. Waller, tell me, what is Jazz?" Fats replied, "Lady, if you've got to ask, you ain't got it!" 36

Among the articles was one by the best-known "Jazz painter" Stuart Davis entitled "Friends, It's Here to Stay," which begins, "Since the time I began to study painting at the Henri School of Art I have been addicted to hot music." 37 Davis' essay is particularly interesting for two reasons: he comes out strongly for an idea of modernism in all twentieth century art, a position that is suggestive of Liberal Romanticism and is similar to Geffen's in Jazz:

From the Congo to the Metropolitan (Davis mentions France specifically as his artistic Mecca); and he employs the language of the Jazz musician authentically and naturally.

At the time I left art school I had the immediate need to get straight. My objective was to make paintings that could be looked at, while listening to [a Jazz] record at the same time, without incongruity of mood. I looked in vain for substantiation of this desire in the work of the contemporary American painters of the period. When I did finally find a school of painting that was really jumping, I had to dig it by remote control. It was located in Paris, and was known under the generic term of "Modernism." Various considerations made it impossible for me to go there and get direct inspiration from these International cats who were giving out in art. I continued to get my kicks locally from jazz. I leaned on it heavily since it was the only thing I could find where creative ideas were somehow being expressed. American painters in general were messing around with the Old Masters. It was like living in some screwy community where the

36 Esquire's 1947 Jazz Book, p. 4.

37 Stuart Davis, "Friends, It's Here to Stay," Ibid., p. 27.
service station attendant filled your tank wearing a sixteenth-century court costume. After wiping your windshield, he would hand you a tract on the philosophy of Leonardo Da Vinci, plus the technique of under-painting and glazing. Nothing intrinsically unsound in the jive, but too anachronistically square.

Finally, I did get to Paris in a fairly hip stage of development where painting was concerned. In the artistic climate engendered by the righteous cats who were giving out there, I got some new ideas. In fact, I am still using some of them because they wear well. I came back to America... But when I took time out to dig what American painters were up to, a rude awakening took place, as the saying goes. The "American Scene School" was carrying the ball and bringing the Old Masters up to Rural Standard Time. ²⁸

Davis goes ahead to say that today art in Europe is also dead except for the few innovators of forty years ago who are still living. "Nor," he says, "do we get any music from there. On the contrary, they import it from us. They import jazz." Whether one chooses to go along with the general esthetic advanced by Goffin and Davis, Davis¹ own words on Jazz are stirring, particularly so since they come from an outstanding American painter:

Since we have this authentic art in America, it proves that any suspicion that the place itself is poisonous to creative expression is unfounded. I say this in full knowledge that jazz is constantly being chiselled at by cosmetic arrangers, larcenous adapters, and gigantic disemboweling promotions. But we still have it... Popularity polls will always show a "trend" toward "sweet" music. Future Lombardos will own a fleet of rocket ships. But that is no reason why we can't have art too. ³⁹

Davis¹ attack here on the artistic debasement of Jazz is in step with the Liberal Romantic insistence on a certain high standard in art itself.

²⁸Ibid., p. 28
³⁹Ibid.
The critical-historical books of Jazz continued to appear steadily. The next crop arrived in 1946. Rudi Blesh's fine *Shining Trumpets*, was the best of this group. Quotations from *Shining Trumpets* appear in enough quantity in these chapters to indicate its importance with regard to early Jazz history and the roots which formed the music. Blesh is a Liberal Romantic in an avid way. He shows extreme sensitivity to the commercial inroads on his high standards for Jazz art, and he is adamant on the subject of social injustice to the Negro, as both human being and artist. The Blesh quotations which have already appeared also illustrate these points. Blesh's failing within the Jazz critics' fraternity - and each man must be allowed one - is that he is the incurable artistic purist, just as some of his critical foes are equally dogmatic modernists. This, one supposes, is what art lives on. If either side destroyed the other's music the listener would suffer. It is Swift's battle of the books all over again. The extreme dogmatism of both sides is quite unnecessary, because time takes care of all these matters; but on the credit side, each school has produced its share of worthwhile critics. Taken together, both schools and the neutrals have produced a sizeable and worthwhile body of Jazz criticism from which the listener can choose according to his interests. Blesh's own major fallacy appears in its most concentrated form in one sentence of *Shining Trumpets*. Objecting to changing Jazz trends in general, and the Memphis Five in particular, he says: "Where hybrid styles exist, confused taste exists."\(^40\) This kind of absolutist

\(^40\) Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
Artistic judgment is refutable by examples from every sort of artistic endeavor: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is neither acceptable Old English style nor acceptable Renaissance style; Skelton stood even more alone, but is pleasant withal; Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* is neither acceptable Japanese music nor pure Occidental music. Illustrations of this type are endless. Each "style" itself is a hybrid to begin with. Both a refusal to accede to dynamism and an attempt to isolate oneself from the past seem equally trivial positions when viewed in the spirit of history.

Also in 1946 an English book in the critical-historical category gained some headway among Jazz students in America, although it was never printed in this country. Written by anthropologist Ernest Borneman, it was entitled *A Critic Looks at Jazz* and consisted of a collection of many articles Borneman had already published in installments in an American Jazz collectors' magazine, *The Record Changer* (chiefly Jazz-purist in policy). Borneman is also a literary man, having published two novels in England before 1946: *The Face on the Cutting-Room Floor*, and *A Love Story*. He was later to publish another, *Tremolo*, in America in 1948, and it employed a minor Jazz theme.

Like *Shining Trumpets*, *A Critic Looks at Jazz* is both Liberal and purist in its critical position, but also like *Shining Trumpets* it contains interesting scholarship in Jazz history as well as valuable critical study of earlier Jazz forms and styles; however, it is a much smaller book in size and scope. Borneman's Liberal approach to Jazz from the anthropological discipline is evident from his early statement:
"To the anthropologist there are no superior races and no inferior ones." 41 Borneman's documentation of early cruelty to the Negro and his anti-commercialism put him in Blesh's category of Liberal Romantic characteristics.

Also in 1946 came Dave Dexter's Jazz Cavalcade, mis-labeled as "The Inside Story of Jazz." Other than an outstanding chapter on Kansas City Jazz, Dexter's home town, it contains nothing new, but does constitute another good McGuffey's Reader of Jazz, including as it does much general discussion of the form along with discussions of individual records, periods and styles. It is one of several good introductory books on the subject, written in this instance by a former editor of Down Beat magazine, one of the best of the Jazz-slanted musical trade-journals.

In this same year Jazzways, a paper-backed "year-book" (one hundred and twenty pages of magazine size), appeared. Jazzways was somewhat similar to the Esquire Jazz Book series in size and format. It too featured historical and critical articles by recognized Jazz critics: Rudi Blesh, Dale Curran (a literary Jazz critic who has written several novels, two based on Jazz), Frederic Ramsey of Jazzmen, and others. The photography of Jazzways is magnificent, and although the publication never realized the goal of its sub-title, "A Yearbook of Hot Music" - it never appeared again - it already stands as something of a collector's item for the Jazz photography alone. Its sympathetic

photographic documentation of New Orleans’ Negro Jazz world, in all its poverty, carries a Liberal air.

In 1946 came *Jazz: A People’s Music*, by Sidney Finkelstein, an interesting book which approaches Jazz as a living folk art of the greatest importance to America:

A land does not take its life and character from those who own its property, or who speak for it. A land is given its real life and character by those who live and labor on it. Just as American history, economic life and civilization are to a considerable extent the creation of the Negro people, so American culture is to a considerable extent a creation of the Negro people.\(^{42}\)

Although he is Liberal to a highly social-conscious extreme, Finkelstein does not bother with anthropological tracings from Africa or the process of acculturation, as do so many of the purists. He is not a purist anyway, insofar as his musical tastes are concerned, but belongs in the general broad school of Jazz criticism along with Dave Dexter, Goffin and Ulanov. Finkelstein has carefully observed classical music, and has some ideas about its relationship to Jazz:

... Our concert music has become predominantly "classical," meaning of the past. If we were to judge from the symphonic, solo concert and operatic programs given in America during the past two or three decades, we would conclude that the art of music was one produced by dead men; that music was not an art in which the listeners expected a communication from a living contemporary.\(^{43}\)

The seeming division we find today between the "classical" and "popular" is a recent development in the art. Great composers like Bach, Handel, Purcell, Mozart, Schubert and Verdi wrote songs and dances as well as opera, concerto, cantata, symphony and oratorio. They were delighted when their music was taken up and sung or danced to by people in the streets. A Schubert symphony is a

\(^{42}\) Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 21.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 13.
more massive and admirable achievement than a Schubert song, but a Schubert song is infinitely more alive than a four-movement symphony or a three hour opera by some composer who is now forgotten because he had nothing to say.

Sheer size or nobility of intentions has nothing to do with the value of a work of music.44

Finkelstein, along with most critics with broad jazz taste, sees continuity in all jazz:

Modern jazz is much different from New Orleans. It has to be. Yet we find its germ in New Orleans music. The blues have always been a vital part of jazz, as they are now. The basic beat of New Orleans blues and stomp jazz, the 4/4 beat, is still the basic beat of jazz. The various intensifications of beat that came later can be found hinted at in New Orleans music. We can find the "jump," beat, the two strongly accented and delayed off-beats to the bar, dominating the melodic line, in such works as Morton's "Beale St. Blues," Armstrong's and Ory's "Savoy Blues" and "Twelfth Street Rag." This beat became predominant in later Kansas City and large swing band jazz. The double-jump, or "eight-to-the-bar" beat, may be found in the hop-scop blues, the walking bass, and several other New Orleans dance patterns. Even the rapid sixteenth note solo, familiar to bebop, may be found in New Orleans music. The play with chromatic figures, the series of dizzy modulations to distant keys and return home, a feature of the most modern jazz, may be found touched upon in New Orleans jazz. An amazing example is Omer Simeon's solo in the Morton tric record, "Shreveport."45

Finkelstein presents a very thoughtful argument for keeping jazz on the "amateur" basis demanded by the Liberal Romantic. The ravages of commercialism in jazz have long since tempted "purist" Liberal Romantic critics to similar positions in their attempts to maintain Romantic artistic standards:

... jazz reasserts the truth that the creation of art is a social function; that music should be made for the people to use. ... Jazz reasserts the fact that music is something people do, as

44Ibid., p. 10.

well as listen to; that art is not to be limited to a specialized profession, but should be in the possession of everybody. It restores the "amateur" creation that must be part of every culture if it is to be a healthy one. It restores creative music and musical creation to the people, and how great are their creative resources.

Jazz is therefore, historically a music of the greatest importance. Thanks to its appearing in an age of the phonograph record, it is the first "unwritten" music that can be studied and known. . . . It helps us to reconstruct what must have happened in centuries long ago when people also created their own unwritten music, which proved to be so horrifying to some theorists and so exciting to fresh thinking composers.

He is insistent upon high artistic standards and individuality, both Romantic traits. Finkelstein at one point even argues that Jazz is expressive of the desire of a mechanical society to produce something individualistic, and in this argument he runs interestingly close to some of the theories of William Morris, whether or not he intends to.

In 1949 Leonard Feather's *Inside Be-Bop* offered the most thorough book-length study that has yet appeared on Bop style and history. It is largely technical and biographical, but shows great sympathy with this much-maligned Jazz style.

In 1950 came Rudi Blesh's definitive book on Ragtime piano, *They All Played Ragtime*. I have already quoted several passages from this excellent work, which is both technically sound and written with a myth-building Romantic feeling. Along with the almost unknown story of Ragtime, go very moving stories of several human beings and the era they created. There is a poignant slice of Missouri folklore, that had

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never been realized previously, in the story of Scott Joplin, greatest of the Negro rag writers and theorists who developed his music in Sedalia, Missouri, under the sponsorship of a white music publisher named John Stark, a man who saw in his darker brothers an American musical genius that he did his best to promote up until the day he died. Scott Joplin died long before Stark, having broken himself because he was insistent on developing his art in a direction that did not coincide with commercial demands.

Scott Joplin, the short, black-skinned quondam itinerant from Texarkana, was a stubborn as well as a dedicated man. Until he died he persisted in believing that his syncopated music belonged with the European classics.48

And Blesh is certain that it does:

Power is one thing, its use another. When Ford and General Motors decided to give the public Bach and Beethoven, hiring the finest artists and conductors to broadcast classical music over vast radio networks, even to tiny hamlet and lonely farmhouse, the American taste for classical music developed with a speed and to a degree hardly short of amazing. Unfortunately at this time it might be hard to convince advertising executives and public-relations men that the American Negro has ever created anything that might lend prestige to the vast, serious business of making and selling motor cars.49

Blesh's crusading spirit for both the Negro and his music is in the best Liberal Romantic tradition. Joplin's death, in 1916, is feelingly described:

Before the funeral Lottie remembered a request that her husband had made years before. "Play Maple Leaf Rag at my funeral," he had said. But when the time finally came she said no. "How many, many times since then," she says, "I've wished to my heart that I'd said yes."50

48Blesh and Jans, They All Played Ragtime, op. cit., p. 145.
49Ibid., p. 220.
50Ibid., p. 250.
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Joplin's music is thus shown to have become the symbol of his life's meaning. And John Stark, the white man from Missouri, carried on some ten years more, publishing rags by the best Negro writers, braced against the rising tide of popular trash by Tin Pan Alley whites that claimed the name of "rag" and finally surfeited the public on the idea. Then, too, rags were hard to play, as Rupert Hughes still emphasized in 1950.

John Stark, the anti-materialist with Romantic artistic ideals, was described in this way by Joseph Lamb, another great Negro rag writer and pianist: "John Stark always impressed me more like a Western farmer or ranchman. He did not look like a music publisher. He was an honest man." Stark, who died at 86, never relinquished his integrity as a music publisher. The end of the story comes with Stark's death. As Blesh puts it:

There was still the classic of all ragtime classics. Scott Joplin wrote it, and for John Stark it was a flaming sword, and together, Negro and white man, they fought the good fight. Surely it is no more than the small part of justice that the Maple Leaf Rag should outlive them both.

Blesh's literary contribution has added an entire new world of meaning to this one song and to Ragtime in general. He does not stand alone as an approving critic, but has merely done much, through literature, toward completing the story of and giving meaning to an art that was singled out and lauded in the same terms by Rupert Hughes. Literature has, in a sense, particularized Ragtime and offered this phase of Jazz

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51 Ibid., p. 239.

52 Ibid., p. 268.
as an art in itself. Literature has also vested Ragtime with something of the mantle of myth that it has given to other developments in Jazz.

In 1952 came A History of Jazz in America, by Columbia English professor Barry Ulanov, whom Thomas Merton writes of as a magazine editor friend of his in The Seven Storey Mountain, though Ulanov is not connected in the book with Merton's own taste for good Jazz. Ulanov is a tolerant critic, and his book is another contribution to the critical-historical volumes of merit. His chapter on Storyville is unusually colorful and amusing in its use of direct quotations from the local publications of the pleasure houses of the time – those houses which often furnished the only livelihood for the Negro musician, who was looked down upon by the upper castes of New Orleans, and thus refused employment in decent surroundings. Ulanov's chapter, "The Jazz Age," is the first attempt to touch directly on the influence of Jazz in literature. His research is outstanding in several instances, such as in his sections on minstrelsy and early American popular and folk music. Despite his open liberal sympathy with the Negro, Ulanov, for some reason, has felt compelled for several years now to deny African influence on Jazz as strongly and as publicly as possible. When pressed, he has admitted that it is there – that Congo Square had a part – it seems to be the matter of degree that disturbs him, and he wages an incessant single-handed war against the anthropologists (and hence many Jazz purists). An early section of this book is devoted to an attack on the anthropologists, rather unnecessarily it would seem. Yet his feuding is no more unnecessary than that of many of his opponents:
Borneman, Blesh and even Dr. Esman, the psychoanalyst, feel that Jazz stopped with the advent of Swing, and deny all Jazz except New Orleans school styles, apparently since that is the variety they prefer to hear. Ulanov is tolerant enough to admit value in all Jazz schools.

Actually Ulanov seems to be fighting the result of an acceptance of African roots because of his fear of the effect of such acceptance on popular taste:

... it confirms the average man's impression of the Negro as a jungle-formed primitive whose basic expression is inevitably savage; it sits well with the editors and readers of the country's chi-chi magazines.  

This, of course, is a two-cushion shot aimed at the Liberal Romantic goal of helping Jazz find acceptance at all levels in America, but it does not attempt to correct the prevailing American assumption of the "superiority" and "inferiority" of different cultures. Then, too, African tribes of today do not play Jazz; the American Negro does; the two are not identical. No race can be assumed to be "inevitably savage" according to truth as we know it in the twentieth century. Instead of giving in to the public's impression of the Negro, would it not be more rational and ethical to allow the public to find its own way to Jazz gradually through its cultural leaders, and to learn, coincidentally, the truth about the Negro? Twain, Hearn and Cable, those early Liberal Romantics, were not bothered by the Negro's African origin. They loved his music and they somehow knew how to withstand assumptions of racial

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53Ulanov, op. cit., p. 9.
music by critics who are largely literary themselves. They continue
the tradition established by Hearn, Cable, Twain, and later writers
as well as continuing the overall tradition of the development of
American music criticism by American literary figures of Liberal Ro-
manic tendencies. They are colorful historical writings about some
of the most interesting periods and places in modern American history.
Literature has performed a myth-building service in collecting and
expressing Jazz values. Professor Stearns, in his introduction to
Resiner's bibliography, had the following to say about the cultural
importance of the kind of Jazz study that literature has furnished:

This extensive bibliography of jazz literature is the first
in the field... it fills a long-standing need, for it has
become clear that jazz, broadly defined as a fusion of European
and Afro-American music in the United States over a period of
three hundred years, plays a vital but neglected role in our
culture. A scholarly study of jazz can give us an insight into
our popular culture and the American character...

Perhaps the only other social phenomenon that spread as
widely and became as intimate a part of as many people's lives is
the tobacco habit - which had a head start. At home, many of
our classical composers have said that jazz gave them a feeling for
sharper rhythms. It is estimated generally that seventy per cent
of our popular music has been influenced by jazz. If one goes
dancing in any city of the world, one is probably attempting some
sort of muscular co-ordination with rhythms that were virtually
unknown to our dance music fifty years ago... 54

The critical-historical genre in Jazz literature, which has
been shown to be a general expression of the Liberal Romanticism of
its authors, has done and is doing its part toward acquainting the
public with Jazz - especially the younger public. These books, while
creating myths and indicating the Liberal Romantic values of the Jazz

54 Marshall Stearns, Introduction to Robert Resiner, The
world, at the same time tell an interesting, exciting story in a very readable way: they are appearing more and more often each year in public, university, and high school libraries. Let anyone who doubts their impact first ask a high school teacher of English, or a public librarian whether any noticeable number of high school and college students today are doing term papers on Jazz and Jazz history, and secondly let him inquire into the circulation of these books in a school or public library—their rate of withdrawal compared to that library's average. It would appear that a good deal of Liberal Romanticism is being taken in by adolescents along with their Jazz history and criticism.
CHAPTER IV

JAZZ IN AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Howard Griffin: What would you give as an example of a good society?

W. H. Auden: A jam session. There the number of instruments and the improvisatory element are important. If a society cannot exercise improvisation (creative politics) it dies.

from "Conversation on Cornelia Street, IV: A Dialogue with W. H. Auden" 1

The literary attractions offered by biography today are still the same as they were in Franklin’s time: social values, with vivid pictures of history as a direct literary function; cultural values; and the values of pleasure and inspiration offered by any well-written literary form. The biographies and autobiographies offered by the world of Jazz fulfill these qualifications uniquely in several instances. These books offer as well the rare record of a group of Liberal Romantics who have lived out their beliefs amid the alien world of the twentieth century.

The biography and the autobiography are inseparable in the literature of Jazz, because the outstanding productions have been autobiographies by Jazz musicians who in all but two cases have had the assistance of collaborators. In most instances, however, the

1 Howard Griffin, "Conversation on Cornelia Street, IV: A Dialogue with W. H. Auden," Accent, XII, 1 (Winter, 1952), 60.
sturdy, brash flow of the ideals and the language of the world of Jazz has come through undisturbed, grammatical tendencies included. The language is as singular and as colorful as any found in America today. There are reasons for this, reasons which are to be learned from the autobiographies themselves.

The flow of these books has been a steady, new Liberal Romantic freshet in American biographical literature for some fifteen years now. Several have endured more than one printing: Milton Mazzr ow's Really the Blues is now appearing in somewhat diluted form as a pocket-book edition nine years after its first printing. Other of these books have not fared so well, but are perhaps no less artistically successful.

One most unusual quality permeates all these books to some degree; with most of them it approaches obsession: they share their concept of social values. The Jazz man's values, the Liberal Romantic ones, are so important to him that he lives them. They offer an outline of what has become a sort of art-religion to him, but it is neither an empty Greenwich Village bohemianism nor an ascetic concept. It is more like the Greek religion in that it is a happy religion in an unhappy world, and in that it is based on belief in art. By and large it makes its own world, and somehow maintains that world against all sorts of temporary inroads. The music is the thing.

The only two books in this area that do not burst out of their very covers with the sheer joy of the music are The Kingdom of Swing and The Trouble With Cinderella, written, interestingly enough,
by the two men in the group who most succumbed to the idols of the market, clarinetists Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. But the Liberal Romantic set of values is terribly there in Shaw, and it is peering at the reader from behind every curtain of Goodman's discreet world.

Perhaps the reasons behind this entire value structure lie in the cultural role of the very music itself. In the words of psychiatrist Aaron Esman:

Jazz is . . . a music for those who seek liberation and individuality. It has played the role of a forbidden impulse in the psychology of American culture, and it has required vigorous defense mechanisms to keep it from disrupting the equilibrium of conventional society. On the other hand, in France, where a more rational morality prevails, and where there has always been less resistance to innovation, jazz was greeted and is still entertained with enthusiasm. And in this country, so long as there are people who are young, dissatisfied with the repressive forms of the culture, and eager for new experience, hot jazz music will remain an active force on the edges of American cultural life.  

These same reasons, it might be added at this point could explain the appeal of Jazz to the intellectual, and hence its appeal to the literary mind. Esman elaborates in the following manner:

American intellectuals are trapped in an almost hopeless conflict between their devotion to human individuality, intellectual freedom, and artistic spontaneity, and the commercialism, philistinism, standardization, and all-too-prevalent suppression of intellectual freedom that characterize much of American culture. Because of the universal human need for group identification and solidarity, this conflict remains unconscious to many of them. They achieve, at the cost of independent judgment and spontaneous response, a large measure of security in social integration, accepting most of the essential elements of culture, and overlooking others . . . But for many others this is impossible. Aware of the paradoxical nature of their position, they feel alienated and isolated. 

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3 Ibid., p. 8.
The literary mind may have a personal reason, then, for its apparent attraction to the Liberal Romantic values that find perhaps their best expression in the biographical and autobiographical books in this chapter. It is an intriguing idea and was given effective expression by S. I. Hayakawa, who made the following remarks in 1953 at a Chicago Seminar conducted by the Institute of Jazz Studies.

The passage is quoted from an exchange between Hayakawa and Richard Waterman, of the Northwestern University Music Department:

**HAYAKAWA:**

There is a place, talking about your inter-disciplinary approach, where a number of people trained specifically in literature and literary criticism ought to be called into this. It's interesting to me that so many people who are professors and instructors of English are among those interested in jazz. Now, I have a theory about that. The prevailing literary styles are at the present time under the influence of Eliot and Allen Tate and other such people who all go in for an extreme degree of tightness of discipline and compression of statement. Well, the prevailing literary climate is such as to discourage any kind of expansiveness, any kind of openness and warmth. And in a sense, if you are expansive like Carl Sandburg, you just don't rate with the prevailing literary opinions. There is, nevertheless, a certain expansive and Dionysiac element necessary in any kind of art. If the literary people can't express it in poetry and in their criticism, then maybe jazz finds an audience among literary people because it gives expression to some of the elements that contemporary literary fashions don't leave room for. . . . If Vachel Lindsay were writing today, everybody would jump down his throat in the prominent literary journals. I mean he'd never get a break in all those literary quarterlies, because he simply bubbles over too much, and the prevailing literary fashion is for tightness, form, constriction, discipline; it's like binding Chinese women's feet.

**WATERMAN:**

Or in this case, binding heads. ⁴

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Professor Marshall Stearns seems to be in general agreement with Esman over the cultural role of Jazz, and his observations should serve as a less scientific and perhaps more general introduction into the non-conforming world of the devoted professional Jazz man:

In essence, jazz seems to be an anti-Puritan force leading from rigidity to mobility in many ways. In the 1920's, for example, it was adopted indiscriminately as part and parcel of a general social revolt. It still communicates an impulse to cut loose, to transcend rules and regulations, to get out of the rut. The gestures of the jazz dance, the Charleston, pantomime this impulse precisely. Perhaps this is why the totalitarian countries have always opposed it. The shaping spirit of jazz is inimical to regimentation.

More generally, jazz offers a common ground upon which the conflicting claims of the individual and the group may be resolved. For the jazzman, the dancer, and even the sympathetic listener can express himself and, at the same time, participate in a creative whole. This conflict, which increasingly vexes our times, is solved momentarily whenever folk dances are held, but it is solved nightly and en masse at such places as the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem.

Perhaps the growing and wide-ranging appeal of jazz can be explained by the fact that it expresses something of the attitudes of a minority group in the United States. For we all have blue moods and none of us is wholly free.5

These suggestions of the social and cultural effects of Jazz up to the present time should go a long way toward preparing anyone for the lively, fresh world of the Jazz autobiography, the spirit of which breathes the vitality of artistic and intellectual change that is always so necessary to any concept of human progress. This spirit has been called by many names: to the literary mind it most nearly seems to fit one of the most valuable parts of Romantic concept, the Liberal ideal. The equipment of this ideal is the human imagination; the belief of this ideal is in the eventual perfectibility of man.

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If one may discount Armstrong's 1936 book, *Swing That Music*, which claimed to be a musical history (although it contained excellent autobiographical material), the first real attempt at autobiography in the world of Jazz was Benny Goodman's book, *The Kingdom of Swing*, which appeared in 1939 at the height of the swing phase of Jazz. Irving Kolodin, the newspaper man, interpolated several chapters on Jazz history into the book, and got credit for collaboration as an author. Goodman's picture of the real world of Jazz was cautious when compared to what was to come in later books. For one thing, Goodman has always been a withdrawn figure somewhat comparable to Artie Shaw. There are reasons for this. Goodman's childhood was one of crushing poverty in the vast jungle of Chicago, and his feeling for his family seems always to have been a cornerstone in his approach to life. The Goodman family had to stick together to survive.

Goodman's name in the Jazz world is B.G. The B.G. is especially accurate, because he is the business man of the Jazz fraternity. He is shy, kind, and retiring; but somehow he plays good Jazz. And he has always been the steady one—the realist: he pays the bills when his buddies die and there is no money to bury them, as he did in the case of Bunny Berigan. He offers jobs to those who are trying to get back on their feet, as he once did in the case of Gene Krupa, who was carrying the stigma of a jail sentence at the time. He was not afraid to introduce Negros Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton as performers with his band when no one else was doing this sort of thing. But he has paid the price for his basic air of caution and his level-
headedness; he has had to be an introvert to survive the role of liaison man between the world of Jazz and the world of the marketplace. If he lacks warmth, if he is somehow still afraid that the Chicago slums may yet gobble him up in a bad dream some night, yet many a famous musician owes his career to B.G., the half-boy, half-executive.

And B.G. was weaned on the right Jazz gods: "My idea of a great clarinet player . . . was Leon Rapallo, who was playing at the Friar's Inn then with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and I did my best to sound like him." B.G. shared the thrills of the young Jazz men in Chicago:

. . . I'll never forget the first time I heard Bessie Smith, the great blues singer . . . Bessie was a great big woman with a voice that was bigger than she was, and a heart that was bigger than both. When she sang the blues, it took you right out.

His basic early musical position is made clear as he speaks of New York in the Twenties:

None of us had use for what was known then and probably always will be, as "commercial" musicians. If a fellow happened to be a good legitimate trumpet man or a swell straight clarinet player, he might get credit for being a fine musician who could read a part upside down at sight, but we didn't pay much attention to them. The saddest thing, always, was a recognized hot man who went in for that sort of work because he made good dough and got steady work around the studios. But whenever you met him you could tell that the work bored the pants off him, and I have seen more than a few fellows crack up for this one reason.\(^8\)

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\(^7\)Ibid., p. 42.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 101.
This is Isham Jones' "frivolous" jazz musician of the Twenties speaking. Integrity in a period of national materialistic debauchery like the Twenties only illustrates that the real drama of the "Jazz Age" - the part that lasted - was played out in cubbyhole rooms by musicians who fathered an artistic movement possessing the kind of vigor so often growing out of periods of ferment and decadence.

B.G.'s picture of Bix Beiderbecke, who is the Jazz world's symbol of Romantic revolt and artistic idealism, is a quiet, sane one. It sets the stage for the symbol by stating the musical facts about the man - by estimating his position in the mainstream of the art:

The one white musician of the day to exert an influence, among these Chicagoans, comparable with that of the best Negroes, was "Bix" Beiderbecke. Perhaps that was because he was one of the first white musicians not merely to flatter the Negro by imitation, but, even more importantly, to absorb the qualities of such playing and reproduce it through his own style and feeling. "Bix" was an enthusiasm among this group of Chicago musicians - both in his personal performance and on records - when the rest of the nation was still concerned with "The Rhapsody in Blue" as an unassailably authentic outpouring of the jazz spirit.\(^\text{9}\)

A solid reason for the Beiderbecke mythology appears here. Bix was the first white to hold out real hope for the whites in the colored man's art. To do this, incidentally, he deserted a good family and a staid background of security in that conservative spot in the pit of the nation's breadbasket - his home town, Davenport, Iowa. Bix was a living picture of Liberal Romantic values, as will be clearly seen. Bix had something to reject, too; he left a probable financial

\(^{9}\text{Ibid., p. 53.}\)
and social future of ostensible value behind him in Davenport when he made the break.

Goodman seems to be consciously trying to make his music and its players acceptable to the public in keeping with the spirit of Kolodin's introductory remark about the place of Jazz: "That it is a learned occupation need not be contended; but that it is a serious one, to many of those engaged in it, can hardly be denied."

Intimate views of the world of Jazz are offered only in odd flashes. One is a very brief description of a completely illogical trip from Chicago to Detroit with a group of musicians "to see Bix," who happened to be playing at the Greystone Ballroom there with Gene Goldkette's orchestra. This necessitated deserting their own jobs for a day or two and losing their own salaries for that time as well as undergoing the expense of the trip. It cost each of them about a hundred dollars apiece.

Jazz humor, the Comic Spirit in Jazz, is based on a deliberate Romantic bravado. The Jazz man pretends that the world revolves around Jazz, and tries to maintain the illusion as often as possible in order to create his humor and make his life bearable. It is the attitude of, "Those people think jobs and money and industry are important, but we know what really makes the world go round, don't we?"

The Goodman book offers such an illustration. One night the Goodman band was running behind schedule on a cross-country tour and a train had just delayed its schedule for several minutes in order to give the musicians time to load their equipment:
There were only a couple of pieces left when another train rolled into the station behind this one, and two men with flashlights in their hands jumped off the first car and came running up.

"What's the delay?" barked one of them. "What's holding things up."

Leonard [B.G.'s band manager] explained that they had to get this stuff loaded and there were no porters around to help them. But . . . one broke in:

"You can't hold us up. We've got the President there" - and flashed a badge.

"Sorry," said Leonard with a grin. "We've got the King."

The Goodman band underwent the trials by fire faced by any good Jazz unit. To B.G., his swing band was carrying on musically in the Jazz tradition:

It's been my contention right along that there is nothing essentially new in what is now called swing - it is just the same jazz that bands like the Original Dixieland and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and Louis and Jimmy Noone used to play. Of course it has been altered somewhat by the use of bigger bands with more instruments, playing arrangements instead of jamming all the time . . .

But the most important element is still improvisation, the liberty a soloist has to stand up and play a chorus in the way he feels - sometimes good, sometimes bad, but still as an expression of himself, rather than somebody else who wrote something for him. If you want to put it this way, it's something that is genuinely American, because it's the expression of an individual - a kind of free speech in music.

There was one time when the band faced success or dissolution as the result of a cross-country tour to California. The story of the tour itself was one of disaster. In Denver the band "laid an egg" because it played a dime-a-dance location, Elitch's Gardens, in which its arrangements ran too long to suit the manager. He was losing money if any song lasted over three minutes. Goodman had to

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10. Ibid., p. 224.

11. Ibid., pp. 337-38.
temporarily junk his hot arrangements by the talented Fletcher Henderson, which represented the soul of the organization. The band barely made it to California for a last stand at the Palomar Ballroom. The story of that opening night is one that is famous in Jazz history. In fact the story of the entire tour has been used thoroughly by novelist Annamarie Ewing in fiction, and forms one of the climaxes of her novel, *Little Gate*. Goodman's version offers a good picture of a phase of life in the world of big-band Jazz:

The news about the kind of a job we were doing in Denver got around in the business pretty quick, and the office in California wanted to cancel us out of the Palomar. But we managed to stave off that calamity, and struggled along with a few more bookings that took us into Salt Lake City, and then across the mountains into California. ... It was about then that I really got a load of the worries that go with running a band. ... I spent most of the time figuring the angles on the job ahead of us — whether we should lean backwards a little and play down our big stuff, go along with the crowd maybe, and try to break them in gradually to what we were trying to do.

That was the frame of mind I was in when we hit California. ... There was a nice crowd in the place when we came onto the stand ... and I was certainly anxious to please them. For this reason, I guess, we took things kind of easy with the opening sets, playing some of the sweeter tunes and sticking to the softer arrangements. Some of the kids congregated in front of the band stand, and they seemed to know what to expect of the different musicians, but the crowd as a whole didn't seem very responsive.

This went on for about an hour till I decided the whole thing had gotten to a point where it was make or break. If we had to flop, at least I'd do it in my own way, playing the kind of music I wanted to. For all I knew this might be our last night together, and we might as well have a good time of it while we had the chance. I called out some of our big Fletcher arrangements for the next set, and the boys seemed to get the idea. From the moment I kicked them off, they dug in with some of the best playing I'd heard since we left New York.

To our complete amazement, half of the crowd stopped dancing and came surging around the stand. It was the first experience we had with that kind of attention, and it certainly was a kick.
That was the moment that decided things for me. After traveling three thousand miles, we finally found people who were up on what we were trying to do, prepared to take our music the way we wanted to play it. That first big roar from the crowd was one of the sweetest sounds I ever heard in my life—and from that time on the night kept getting better and bigger, as we played about every good number in our book.12

The financially successful Goodman, who at the time of his authorship of this book could easily have afforded to pass out lavish praise, has an interesting attitude toward the music business. It is the realistic, hard-biting attitude of the Jazz musician's literature. It is things as they are.

I guess I was still pretty suspicious when I went back to M.C.A. to see Alexander. Most of the people I had come in contact with in the music business are pretty hard-boiled, with not much interest in anybody except to figure out how much they can make on them. Least of all, they don't as a rule have any real interest in music or any enthusiasm about it—except when they are selling a band to some promoter or hotel manager.13

There is here a criticism of American social values with regard to art, and it is presented fearlessly by a man who has been materially successful in selling his art. His are the standards of art and behavior required by the Liberal Romantic values of the Jazz world.

Seven years after the Goodman book, really a quiet performance, came the first bombshell in Jazz autobiography, Milton Mezzrow's 1946 book, Really the Blues, which sold well here and took France by storm. Mezzrow had the collaboration of Bernard Wolfe. The first sentence on Random House's dust jacket is an unusual one: "This is the damndest book." And the book justifies it.

12Tbid., pp. 197-99.
13Tbid., pp. 50-51.
been color blind, but by that time she had lost so much blood that they couldn't operate on her, and a little later she died. 

That was how the lonesome road ended up for the greatest folk singer this country ever heard — with Jim Crow directing the traffic. 17

Bessie has her part in the Jazz myth: she is a martyr in this art-religion. But Bessie was important as a recognized artist who was appreciated outside the immediate Jazz fraternity. Upon the tenth anniversary of her death Carl Van Vechten, the novelist and music critic, did a commemorative article for the Jazz collector's magazine, Jazz Record:

Bessie Smith . . . made a profusion of records and I was very early aware of these. I had boxes and boxes of them which I played and played in the early 'twenties and everybody who came to my apartment was invited to hear them. As a matter of fact, musicians arriving from Europe called on me especially to listen to these records. Eventually I deposited them with the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters which I founded in the Yale University Library, together with the records of that other great Blues singer, Clara Smith, and the early records of Ethel Waters. 18

Bessie visited Van Vechten's apartment upon a number of occasions to sing for his friends and to be photographed.

Mezzrow's first band sported a name that challenges the fiction based on the Twenties: Milton Mezzrow and his Percolatin' Fools. In fact, his own observations on the Twenties offer in several instances an enlightening social and historical record.

The Jazz man could hope to find work only in the gangster-controlled night clubs of the Twenties, regardless of where he might prefer to play. Society relegated him to this level, just as it had

17 Ibid., p. 116.

forced him to earn his living in the red-light district of New Orleans. If a man chose to play the music he loved, that was the price he paid; and in addition he was a social outcast insofar as no one understood his values anyway. Mezzrow, something of a philosopher, realized this:

If you could catch a couple of cats that just met each other talking about certain musicians they know or humming a riff or two to each other, before you could call a preacher they'd be practically married. Don't forget that in those days our music was called "nigger music" and "whorehouse music" and "nice people" turned their noses up at it. Jazz musicians were looked down on by these-called respectable citizens as though they were toads that crawled out from under a rock, bent on doing evil. We could roam around a town for weeks without digging another human who even knew what we were talking about. 19

The life the Jazz man had to live, though, made him close witness to some of the most publicized aspects of the Twenties. All Jazz men, it seemed, who played in Chicago, New York, or Detroit, had to work at one time or another for the local "syndicate": Capone's, the Purple Gang, etc. The Chicago bunch worked for Capone. Mezzrow's eye-witness description of Burnham, Indiana, the town Capone "owned," offers a kind of live sociology that is not found in textbooks. A small part of it follows:

Burnham was a small town on the Illinois boundary line, not far from Hammond, Indiana, a hop and a skip from Chicago. If the census man ever counted up all the dishwater hair and Tinkin rear ends that swung around that place, he would have found more whores per square foot than in any town in the good old U.S.A. The houses they worked in never played shut-eye, and they did more business than a free-lunch counter on the Bowery, with about two hundred girls who worked eight-hour shifts on weekdays and twelve hours straight on Saturdays and legal holidays. The town was better known to tourists than Niagra Falls - it was a kind

19 Ibid., p. 61.
of Niagara Falls, strictly the one-night-stand type — and important visitors from every state in the Union dropped around to snag a honeymoon between trains. Pimps and simps would fall in from here and there and everywhere, grabbing thousand-dollar advances from the madames and leaving their lady friends in pawn. The girls stayed put until they ground out the thousand or got a slap from Mr. Clap. 20

Mezzrow's experiences while working for Al Capone are symptomatic of the way a Jazz man had to make his living in the Twenties; he was between two unsympathetic groups — the "booboisie" and the hoodlums. Indicative of his compromising position is Mezzrow's lightly-told version of an incident that took place in the Burnham days. Capone's younger brother, Mitzi, fell for a girl who worked for Mezz when he was managing a cabaret in Burnham. Capone wanted to break up the romance, and asked Mezz to fire the girl:

"Fire that girl," he told me. "Get her out of here. If I hear any more stuff about her and Mitzi you're booked to go too."

I should have had my head examined — all of a sudden I got interested in talking it over. "I won't fire her," I said. "She's one of the best entertainers we got around here. Why don't you keep Mitzi out of here, if that's the way you feel about it?" I was so hot under the collar, I forgot you need something to wrap a collar around.

"She can't sing anyway," Al said.

"Can't sing," I yelled. "Why you couldn't even tell good whiskey if you smelled it and that's your racket, so how do you figure to tell me about music."

All of a sudden I remembered that I was talking to Mr. Fifty Caliber himself, and lockjaw came on. I began to wonder how many bounces my head was going to take crossing the street.

Five or six of Al's henchmen were standing around and they began to laugh. I guess I managed to put up a kind of feeble grin myself, while I waited for their typewriters to begin pounding out their farewell notes to me. Might as well go out smiling, I figured. Happy as the day is long. Die laughing.

Al busted out howling himself. "Listen to the Pro-fes-sor!" he said. "Hah! Hah! The kid's got plenty of guts." But then he got serious again, and so did I — it was funny how my moods began

20 Ibid., p. 59.
to run right after his.\footnote{Ibid., p. 64.}

Mezz, led by his complete belief in the Jazz world, developed some remarkable social attitudes. He followed Jazz across all racial as well as social boundaries:

Most of the famous and up-and-coming performers of the day — Ted Lewis, Sophie Tucker, Benny Davis, Eddie Cantor, Dolly Kays, Al Jolson . . . — were hebs, and the boys had the feeling that we should all stick together and not knock the big names of "our" race. I didn't go for that jive at all; being a Jew didn't mean a thing to me. Around the poolroom I defended the guys I felt were my real brothers, the colored musicians who made music that sent me, not a lot of beat-up old hamfats who sang and played a commercial excuse for the real thing. I never could dig the phony idea of a race — if we were a "race" — sticking together all the way, even if it meant turning your back on what was good or bad.\footnote{Ibid., p. 49.}

Like the frustrated hero of Melville's hectic novel,\footnote{Ibid., pp. 109-10.} Pierre, Mezz deliberately cut himself off from what social support he could normally expect through birth and environment: like Pierre he was dangerously open about his beliefs, ideals and aims. He realized that he was in revolt, that all of the Jazz men were. It was an important event to Mezz when drummer Dave Tough introduced him to The American Mercury:

It was little Dave who gave me a knockdown to George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken . . . Dave used to read The American Mercury from cover to cover, especially the section called "Americana" where all the bluenoses, bigots, and two-faced killjoys in this land-of-the-free got a going over they never forgot. That Mercury really got to be 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 . . .
As Hayakawa suggested in the roundtable discussion with Waterman, a new freedom of expression was experienced and accepted. The Austin High Gang, whose Bible was *The American Mercury*, were certainly doing their part in the war against Babbitry, in their case the Babbitry of the very district which spawned them. Mezz fills in another page of their folklore, already begun by *Jazzmen*:

There was a revolution simmering in Chicago, led by a gang of pink-cheeked high-school kids. These rebels in plus-four huddles on a bandstand instead of a soap-box, passed out riffs instead of handbills, but the effect was the same.

These upstart small-fries were known as the Austin High Gang, and gumption was their middle name. It was on Chicago's West Side that they started hatching their plots, way out in Austin, a well-to-do suburb where all the days were Sabbaths, a sleepy-time neighborhood big as a yawn and just about as lively, loaded with shade-trees and clipped lawns and a groggy-eyed population that never came out of its coma except to turn over. In all their scheming these kids aimed to run out of town the sleepy, insipid, yes-we-have-no-bananas music of the day, which seemed to echo the knocked-out spirit of their sleepwalking neighbors.

The Jazz revolt was an ethical and spiritual one, not the Capone kind of revolt against humanity itself. Mezzrow became disgusted, and almost physically ill for a time, over his forced association with rampant gangsterism. The surface of the Twenties was not a pretty thing to him:

*It looked to me like the whole continent was being drowned in a bath of blood, from coast to coast. The nation was committing mass suicide — it was like a slimy snake blowing its top, writhing and wriggling with the fits, beginning to chew up its own tail. Sure, I was surrounded by a race of gangsters running amuck, a hundred million blowtops, born with icecubes for hearts and the appetites of a cannibal. "They devour one another, and cannot even digest themselves."* Nietzsche said that. "See them clamber, 24

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these nimble apes! They clamber over one-another, and thus scuffle into the mud and the abyss." They were sure clambering some in the U.S. of A. Nobody was safe in this funky jungle. It was all one great big underworld, and they'd put their dirty grabbers on the one good thing left on earth, our music, and sucked it down into the mud with them.\textsuperscript{25}

The Jazz man had no choice: he either joined the Babbitts or the Capones. The middle way was social suicide, but they nearly all took it, nevertheless, and at great personal cost.

Why didn't they find their utopia in classical music? Their attitude here is interesting, and Mezzrow well expresses it:

Get this straight, we pure-and-simple jazzmen didn't scoff the "serious" composers exactly, but they weren't in our school, they didn't express our feelings and ideas and we didn't want to change. . . . One thing about symphony music that really tickled us, made us bust our coaks laughing, was the way the pompous director posed up front with his stick, as ungraceful and mechanical as an epileptic metronome, especially when he'd break out during a heavy overture and put on a frantic scene, his long hair fluttering up a breeze and his arms pumping like he was a pitcher winding up to shoot a spitball over the plate. . . .

Once, back in Chicago, a bunch of us went over to the Wurlitzer store and there in the window we saw our whole philosophy on display. They had a kind of animated-doll symphony orchestra set up there, run by some hidden electrical clockwork - the leader was planted up on the rostrum jerking his arms like they were twin windshield wipers, the violinists pumped back and forth like they were sawing wood, and all the other musicians bobbed and twitched the same way, with the clipped military precision of a goose-stepping army.\textsuperscript{26}

Mezzrow goes ahead to make a purely Romantic statement about the freedom of the Jazz man. To these Romanticists "Symphony means slavery," as Mezzrow puts it. There is no animosity here, only the romantic revolt against authority. In fact, Mezzrow is proud to tell about

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., pp. 184-85.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp. 124-25.
Maurice Ravel's trips to "The Nest," a Chicago nightspot, to hear Jimmy Noone, the great New Orleans clarinetist: "'Amazing,' Ravel would say to his pal, and the guy would answer 'Incredible,' and they seesawed back and forth on their unbelief like that until the joint closed up. Ravel spent hours writing down Jimmy's riffs as he played..."27

If the Jazz men were isolated from society there was a warmth in their companionship in the Twenties that few human beings ever know. Mezzrow describes a typical evening:

A paper bag was wrapped around the overhead glimmer to curb the brightness, and then we all hunched over my old hand-wound victrola like a committee of voodoo witch doctors in confab over some herbs. The incantations came fast and furious. "Did you hear that?" one guy would whisper when he heard some extra-special riff, and another would exclaim "Get a load of that - let's put it back!" We were always jumping up and putting the needle back to play a good passage over. Every time there was an explosive break in the music we'd all raise our arms high, like a calisthenics class, then bring them down in unison, yelling "BAM!" so loud the whole house shook. We must have looked like a gang of Arabs in shirt sleeves and suspenders bawling and salaaming towards some Decca-Mecca.28

These men were the best white Jazz musicians in Chicago at the time. Most of them became famous in their field later: Krupa, Teschmacher, Bix, and so on.

Rudi Blesh has said that the most impressive thing about the Chicago school is that they are somehow eternally boys. The same might be generally said of Jazz musicians in the Twenties; the enthusiasm and surety of youth was always there, as was the crusading spirit of the Romantic. Their attitude toward their neighbors is

27 Ibid., p. 115.

28 Ibid., p. 117.
indicative. The neighbors inevitably triumphed; the only question was, how long would it be before they put a stop to the music?

Every time we got the victrola under way, a strong rhythm section would start jumping in the background, beat out on the walls and ceilings with broom-handles and shoes by our greggy neighbors. We didn’t mind their horning in that way but it sure as hell bothered us that they couldn’t keep time better than they did — early risers just never seem to have any get-up for music at all. To stop their corny andil chorus we’d take the needle off and play the records with our fingernails, leaning over so close to catch the riffs that we were all practically inside the machine. . . . Those early birds always scrambling to catch that worm really puzzled us. Man does not live by worms alone. 29

The literature of Jazz autobiography offers as confident an antipuritanical statement as might be found anywhere in the fear-ridden American literature since the Twenties. There is great suffering in the Jazz autobiography, but seldom any fear at all. It is a literature of free choice; it is a literature of the music, which is dynamic. It is a counter-revolution by a group of Romantic individualists.

Mezzrow describes one trip to California by himself and three other musicians, made for little reason other than their love of adventure and their zest for life. The renaissance of wonder surely exists here:

California look out, here we come — with more tricks in our pate than grandma had at eighty-eight! We were all set to bust open that Golden Gate, as we started out with twenty-five bucks between us, plus a couple clean shirts, our horns, and a tube of toothpaste. All day and night we had a ball, singing Louis’ Heebie Jeebies and Muskrat Ramble while Bud Freeman played on his tenor and the other guys beat time on the side of the car. 30

29Ibid., pp. 117-18.

30Ibid., p. 131.
Mezz's two idols, Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, come off with indelible portraits. In a few words, Mezz offers the humble Louis' tolerant philosophy of life and music: "He always looked at the humorous side of life and if he saw anybody angry he'd look the situation over and say gently, 'Well, he hasn't dug life yet but he's a good cat at heart.'" One keenly chosen illustration shows not only what Louis could do with limited material, but it also gives insight into the very attitude illustrated above. Mezz was sitting in on a recording session Louis made for R.C.A. Victor:

The next number was called Hobo You Can't Ride This Train, and it really taxed all of Louis' genius. Here he was handed a corny lyric he'd never heard nor seen and told to ad-lib it on a record. While the band played through the arrangement, Louis stood there trying to match the simpy words to the music. "Mezz, come here," he said. "Now what am I gonna do with this? I don't know nothin' 'bout no hoboes, any mere'n this song-wroter [sic] did." That was where my hoboing stood me in good stead. I started to buzz fast in Louis' ear, telling him that A-Number-One was the greatest hobo who ever lived, hoboes ride the rods, blinds and tops of trains, it's the brakeman who throws freebie passengers off, and stuff like that. Then one of the musicians scraped a curtain rod across a washboard, imitating a steam engine starting up, and I rang a train bell, and Louis was off.

Mezz, what he did with these lyrics. With nothing but the phrases I breathed in his ear to go on, he let his inventive genius run wild and this is how he started off:

My my my, listen at that rhythm train boy,
Boys I'll bet all them hoboes are all set under them rods,
Even A-Number-One and all them cats, he ha, yeah man. . .
All aboard for Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, oh all the burbs,
Hobo, oh hobo, you can't ride this train,
New hobo, oh hobo, hobo you can't ride this train,
Now boy I'm the brakeman and I'm a tough man,
I ain't jokin', you can't ride this train. . . .

And on the last chorus he finished up with

Now listen here boy, you, you, you ain't so bad after all.

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31 Ibid., p. 213.
You all right with me son, I think I will let you ride, heh, heh, heh.

After five shows, two broadcasts, and a couple of hours of recording, Louis was still going strong. You just couldn't down old Pepe.32

Along with the autobiographies of Eddie Condon and Hoagy Carmichael, Mezzrow's offers one of the best Beiderbecke portraits in literature. The first meeting with Bix, the golden boy, is a moment every old Jazz man remembers:

There was a dead-serious, concentrated look on his face that I got to know later as his trademark - I've never seen such an intense, searching expression on anybody else. . . .

Bix was a rawboned, husky, farmboy kind of kid, a little above average height and still growing. His frog-eyes popped out of a ruddy face and he had light brown hair that always looked like it was trying to go someplace else. In those days he had an air of cynicism and boredom about most things, just sitting around lazy-like with his legs crossed and his body drooping, but it wasn't an act with him. Even in his teens he had worked out the special tastes and interests that he carried all through his short life - his shying-away from things showed that what got most people worked up left him completely cold.

Not that he was dull or sluggish; nothing like that. That kid could get as lively and hopped-up as anybody you ever saw, but it took something really stirring, something really good, to get a rise out of him. Music is what did it mostly. When something got him all tense and aroused he would keep chuckling "Ha! Ha! Ha!" deep down in his throat and his arms would fly around like a windmill. Music was the one thing that really brought him to life. Not even whisky could do it, and he gave it every chance. The kid must have been born with a hollow leg, the way he gulped the stuff down. But he always had a tight grip on himself, until some music came along that made him want to relax and let go.33

The pleasure of playing along with Bix was the nearest thing to complete artistic fusion in Mezz's experience. The following passage clearly illustrates how his music became an entire philosophy of life, and art-religion, to the Jazz man of the Twenties:

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32 Ibid., p. 257.

33 Ibid., p. 79.
Playing with Bix was one of the great experiences in my life. The minute he started to blow I jumped with a flying leap into the harmony pattern like I was born to it, and never left the track for a moment. It was like slipping into a suit made to order for you by a fine tailor, silk-lined all through. When two musicians hit it off like that right from the start, a fine glow of ease and contentment creeps over them. They've reached a perfect understanding through their music; they're friends, seeing eye to eye. Maybe there's a parable here for the world. Two guys, complete strangers, face each other, and while one takes off on the lead the other feeds the accompaniment to him, helping him to render his solo and making the solo richer, spurring him on and encouraging him all the way. One feeds harmony while the other speaks his piece on his horn, telling the world what's on his mind... It's like a congregation backing up the minister's words with whispered "Amen's" at the right places... That's how it is when you play music with a man you understand and who understands you... You speak the same language, back each other up. Your message and his message fit together like pie and ice cream. When that happens, man, you know you've got a friend. You get that good feeling. You're really sent.\textsuperscript{34}

A new set of values follows such an experience, such a belief.

Hearing and knowing the golden boy, the symbol of jazz, the man who died for beauty, left each of Bix's friends with the warm feeling that there was something between just him and Bix. A worldly man like Mezz suddenly becomes very solemn:

It's hard to put into words, but my friendship with Bix was one of the fine things in my life... Once in a million years somebody like Bix comes along and you know the same millennium is upon him too, it's the same with him as it is with you. That gives you the courage of your convictions - all of a sudden you know you aren't plodding around in circles in a wilderness.\textsuperscript{35}

One summer Bix was playing at Hudson Lake, Indiana, and all the Jazz men in Chicago then seem to have been able to spend a good part of the time there with him. Jazz musicians who knew Bix could always manage to be with him if he was within a few hundred miles:

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 82.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 83.
They told me this place was called Hudson Lake because there's a body of water somewhere around there. I must have gone out there twenty times to see Bix, but I still have to see anything that looked like a lake — there was always so much excitement in the air, and so much drinking and jamming and fooling around, that the time flew by like in a dream and we hardly knew the world existed outside of the greasy shack. Maybe we just weren't the outdoor type. 36

Bix and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell shared a squalid shack through choice during that musical summer. Their living conditions were barbaric, one of many illustrations of the fact that Bix was the music itself stripped of all extraneous circumstances. His artistic devotion was similar to that Malcolm Cowley describes in Joyce. Such devotion is one reason for Bix's role as the symbol of Jazz in the eyes of his white contemporaries:

Pee Wee and Bix shared a small room off the kitchen that would have made any self-respecting porker turn up his snout and walk away. They slept in their clothes most all the time. . . . Whenever you tipped into their room you had to pile through big stacks of empty sardine and baked-bean cans; those two canned delicacies made up the entire menu in this establishment. And the back porch was loaded with thirty or forty quarts of milk, some of them over a month old. Every day the milkman left two quarts and sometimes the boys would remember to drink a bottle but most of the time they forgot. 37

Eddie Condon, in his own book, verifies the fact that the boys owned a 1926 Buick. Mezz offers the most significant picture of it, however:

The back yard held the overflow from the junkpile. . . . When they shaved they just set up a mirror on the fender of an old Buick, or something that was rumored to have been a Buick once, that stood out there developing more sage and alums each day. That rattle-trap was rigor mortis on wheels, and there was a story behind it. One day, it seems, Bix and Pee Wee decided

36 Ibid., p. 123.
37 Ibid., p. 122.
they needed some rubber, so they bought up this struggle-buggy for thirty-five bucks. It wasn't running then — so far as any of us knew, it never did run — but those two Barney Oldfields weren't stumped. They pushed it all the way out to their cottage and there it squatted forever after; nobody even tried to budge it again. It made a good sturdy shaving rack, though, and the boys were happy with it. They figured to live right in the country you had to have a car. 38

What Mezz sees as a weak gesture at conformity to a materialistic society was made into an act of the Comic Spirit. The joke was good for years. Long after Bix's death, Pee Wee Russell and some other musicians were traveling through Indiana and stopped out of curiosity at the Hudon Lake cottage. Eddie Condon describes the scene in his autobiography. The car was still there, and Pee Wee pointed to it, saying, "I own half of that."

The release of a particularly good Louis Armstrong record was an occasion of crucial significance in the Jazz world of the Twenties. Abandoned celebration and heroic deeds were the order of the day at times like these. National holidays might pass unnoticed, but an outstanding record by Louis would not. Louis was the fountain-head. Mezzrow describes such a crisis brought about by the appearance of Louis' record of "Heebie Jeebies":

This record of Louis' took all of Chicago by storm as soon as it was released. When I brought a copy of it down to union headquarters it caused a stampede to the Okeh office, and inside of a week the copies were all sold out. For months after that you would hear cats greeting each other with Louis' riffs when they met around town — I got the heebies, one would yell out, and the other would answer I got the jeebies, and the next minute they were scatting in each other's face. Louis' recording almost drove the English language out of the Windy City for good. 39

38 Ibid., p. 122.
39 Ibid., p. 120.
It is important to note that "Heebie Jeebies" and the other Armstrong records adjudged outstanding by the Jazz musicians of the Twenties are still considered Jazz classics by collectors, Jazz scholars, and even the commercial record companies who occasionally reissue the better early Jazz performances.

I brought the record home to play for the gang, and man, they all fell through the ceiling. Bud, Dave and Tesch almost wore it out by playing it over and over until we knew the whole thing by heart. Suddenly, about two in the A.M., Tesch jumped to his feet, his sad pan all lit up for once, and yelled, "Hey, listen you guys, I got an idea! This is something Bix should hear right away! Let's go out to Hudson Lake and give him the thrill of his life!"

A scramble was on and it was most mad, old man. Bix was fifty miles away, but we were all halfway down the stairs before Tesch's chops got together again. We dove every whichway into that green monster of mine (that's what the boys called my chariot) and started off like gangbusters for Hudson Lake. . . . All the way there we kept chanting Louis' weird riffs, while I kept the car zigzagging like a roller-coaster to mark the explosions. . . .

That morning, as soon as we grabbed these cats out of their pads and played Heebie Jeebies for them, they all fractured their wigs. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Bix kept chuckling as the record played over and over, and his long bony arms beat out the breaks, flailing through the air like the blades of a threshing machine. He never did get over Louis' masterpiece. Soon as it was over he grabbed it from the machine and tore out of the house, to wake up everybody he knew around Hudson Lake and make them listen to it.40

The kind of wild enthusiasm shown by the Jazz men of the Twenties - their willingness to act on impulse - is reminiscent of the F. Scott Fitzgerald attitude, but there is one tremendous difference: the Jazz men had something to believe in. Fitzgerald and "all the sad young men" were looking for something and never found it. Their action-on-impulse pattern was based on nothing better than the idea of revolt

40 Ibid., pp. 120-22.
societies of their times. On the other hand there were and are both poets and Jazz musicians without any of these vices, lest we forget.

Mezzrow's attitude toward marijuana is very similar to that of Aldous Huxley toward mescaline. Mezz compares its effects to that of drink and finds that the latter is more socially dangerous in every way. His personal, empirical observations on the question of whether marijuana is habit forming are so unpopular as to cause them to be deleted from a recent edition of *Really the Blues*. But not all Jazz musicians are Mezzrow, and no other one has tackled the subject from his angle. Whether Mezz is right or wrong in what he has learned from his experience in these matters is quite unimportant to this estimate of the value of *Really the Blues*.

Mezzrow holds up his opium addiction as the most horrible experience of his life. He warns the reader repeatedly of the ghastly nature of this experience. The story of this period of his life is highly singular in that he is one of the few addicts to this drug who were ever able to carry through with a complete self-cure. The kind of courage required to do this is one of the rarest varieties found in mankind. Mezzrow states frankly that one goal only was important enough to enable him to go through this hell-on-earth: his determination to return to Jazz as an able musician and arranger. The story of his cure is told in a masterful way. During one stage of it he had a dream that appears to have been a turning point in his recovery. His description of the experience should be interesting to anyone who concerns himself with literature, psychology, medicine, or perhaps
even sociology:

In the middle of the night I woke up yelling "Murder! Murder! They're killing me! You're a murderer!" and the neighbors heard me through the brick walls and called the cops. Legs Diamond and Babyface Coll and Dutch Schultz and Scarface and Louis the Wop, along with a gang of other mugs I couldn't quite recognize but still their murderous leers were sort of familiar, had been chasing me all over the Milky Way somewhere, and it was wet and slippery, gory so I kept sinking and sliding, and they were all hugging enormous diamond-studded opium pipes close to their ribs like Tommy guns, and they kept pelting me with hand grenades that thudded against my body with a sickening sticky softness because they weren't metal at all but great big overgrown yen pox, and I ran and ran, hearing a wailing weeping horn blasting away in my ears, and I knew if only I could find that horn Louis would be behind it and I would be saved but Louis wasn't anywhere, not behind any of the tremendous glistening diamonds that were planets, and when I got closer I saw that all those planets were diamonds and they were all set in tremendous opium pipes that stretched clear across the sky and out of sight, and behind each one was the evil leering face of Legs Diamond or Babyface Coll or Dutch Schultz. . . . In the morning I had the awfuldest feeling of my whole life. I'd yawn for fully a minute, my mouth stretching wide open, and the hinges of my jaws hurt so bad I could hardly close my mouth again. Tears gushed out of my eyes and my nose ran like Niagara Falls, no blowing or nothing, just a steady stream down over my lips. The sheets were all soaked, and I couldn't control any of my functions. The muscles of my legs hurt so bad I just laid there kicking like a bike-racer on the seventh day. I screamed till poor Bonnie [his wife] had a fit. 41

Among the more interesting literary aspects of this experience of Mezrow's are his remarks about Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*:

Laying back in the bed, all I could see was the opium layout dancing in front of my eyes. I thought of Louis waiting for some arrangements from me, and I started to sweat. Then I remembered Thomas De Quincey. Once before, when I went to break my habit, I had bought a copy of *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, but that guy's experiences sounded so different from mine that I never bothered

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41 Ibid., pp. 274-75.
to finish it. Now I remembered that he spoke about all the pains and body troubles he had when he broke the habit, so I sent Bonnie downstairs to get the book, and this time I read it from top to bottom.\textsuperscript{42}

Mezz later had occasion to return to De Quincey:

I went back to De Quincey, but the best he could tell me was to drink some ammoniated tincture of valerian, which he took because he had such awful pains in his stomach. That cat had got himself a belly habit, which didn't apply to me.\textsuperscript{43}

On the subject of his final choice of residence in Harlem, on the matter of his desertion of his race for that of the Negro, Mezz is adamant. Just before he left for Harlem he was working in the pit band of a Minsky burlesque theater in New York City. His observation of American society from this vantage point is a latter-day slice of the American Mercury of the Twenties. Mezz is not satisfied that the crusade for a realistic set of workable social values was ever satisfactorily finished:

I felt like I wanted to take all the "clean living" people, Brother Sanctimonious and Sister Full-Boozed and their whole congregation of paralytics, down to Minsky's to get a good look at those rows of heated-up faces and frustrated maniac grins and bulging eye-balls every time the strip-teaser heaved her middle. Then let them tell me that their kind of "morality" produced a race of healthy human beings. People of "culture" couldn't live loose and carefree like my Harlem friends? Sure, you got culture, plenty of it. A culture where all your dreams dangle from a G-string. Take a good look around Minsky's. In our "culture," between the urge and the act come the footlights, or anyhow a movie projector. It's culture, maybe, a culture of masturbators... Up in Harlem a dancer had to have real talent, make wonderful graceful steps with her feet and do delicate things with her body, really express something, before anybody applauded. Tongues didn't hang out at the sight of a torso with the palsy.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., pp. 274-75.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 277.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 205.
offers an entire section of dramatized jive talk, with translation, and then proceeds to explain why it is untranslatable to those outside of Harlem:

In the snatches of viper conversation up above, and in the bits of jive scattered over some other pages of this story, you don't get the full flavor of this street-corner poetry. This lingo has to be heard, not seen, because its free-flowing rhythms and intonations and easy elisions, all following a kind of instinctive musical pattern just like Bessie Smith's mangling of the English language, can only hit the ear, not the eye. Besides, if I wrote the hip language straight, most everything I said would sound like plain gibberish. . . . This jive is a private affair, a secret inner-circle code cooked up partly to mystify the outsiders, while it brings those in the know closer together because they alone have the key to the puzzle. The hipster's lingo is a private kind of folk-poetry, meant for the ears of the brethren alone.  

There is a difference between the Harlem linguistic approach and that of the Southern Negro: " . . . I think you have to make a big distinction between the Southern Negro's strictly cautious and defensive private lingo and the high-spirited, belligerent jive of the younger Northern Negroes." The Northern Negro has different aims for his dialect:

Back off a thousand miles and look for yourself—what's the mark of the upper-crust American, the lawyer, the doctor, the financier, the politician? It's his command of the King's English, the way he spouts his high-powered jive so glib and smooth, . . . Well, if talk shows your worth in this world the colored kids never made, then they sure aim to talk some too—not because they believe in it, but just to show they can do it. . . . You got to talk, man. . . . And in some ways it turned out richer and more human than the ofay's. It was just as complicated and specialized, just as subtle and roundabout, as any lingo the whites ever thought of. And less artificial too, more down-to-earth, alive with a deep-felt poetic sense and a rich imagery born out of Nature, jammed with the profound wisdom of the streets.

47 Ibid., p. 220.

48 Ibid., p. 221.
And all the while, as I could guess from the oblique kind of humor in the language, from the comic nature of its symbols and images, there was a great bellylaugh hid away in it. 49

You know who they were, all these fast-talking kids with their four-dimensional surrealist patter? I found out they were the cream of the race - the professionals of Harlem who never got within reaching distance of a white collar. They were the razor-witted doctors without M.D.'s, lawyers who never had a shingle to hang out . . . diploma-less professors and scientists minus a laboratory. . . . Spawned in a social vacuum and hung up in mid-air, they were beginning to build their own culture. 50

The Mezzrow opus is a human document of a moving, disturbing nature. It has found disfavor among a few readers because of its purist Jazz attitude, and among a few others because of its "distorted" picture of the Negro; however, this book apparently represents what the Music and the Race meant to one man's life, and his correspondence to the general pattern of the Jazz world of the Twenties keeps him from being anything too unusual to that world. As Eddie Condon said, you just can't do anything about Mezz. To Mezz, the music was life itself.

In 1946, the year of the Mezzrow book, English professor Barry Ulanov published a biography of Duke Ellington. His statement of the purpose of his book is strikingly Liberal, one which should be somewhat embarrassing to American complacency:

To musicians all over the world, Duke's contribution is enormous; it is revered by jazzmen, respected by traditional musicians. His music is adored by millions of fans from Irkutsk to Indianapolis, from Hollywood to The Hague. Unfortunately, in his own country the pressures of prejudice have consistently crushed ultimate commercial achievement: appearances at the top hotels (with one or two exceptions), a fat movie contract, a

49 Ibid., p. 224.

50 Ibid., p. 226.
sponsored radio program. There are those who argue that the Duke is successful enough, that any additional traffic with commerce would destroy his musical integrity. But Duke's intense devotion to high standards is not so easily dissipated. The integrity which is at stake is that of the American people, who have been a good deal less than equitable in their recognition of their own colored great. One of the purposes of this book is to call this malfeasance to the attention of my countrymen.51

The book is full of facts. There is, for instance, the fact that a whole unit of apartment buildings in England is named after Ellington—a matter which fits in with Ulanov's suggestion that America has some cause for embarrassment in its lack of recognition of its own musical genius. There are thorough sections on the Duke's first trip abroad with his band, his first trip through the South, and his first stage production, an anti-Uncle-Tom affair called Jump for Joy that deserves a notable place in the annals of the Negro theater in America.

There is one passage in Duke Ellington which somewhat clarifies Paul Whiteman's position in the real Jazz world of the Twenties. It reveals the man's own tastes in music, which are a far cry from what he offered to the public as "jazz." It is damning to classical-conscious, uplifting Jazz reformers of the Twenties who saw in Whiteman a respectabilizing influence—a hope for bringing Jazz up to the level of "culture." The time is the Twenties; the place is the Kentucky Club, New York City, where Duke's band, then the Washingtonians, played one of its most successful stands of that decade:

Lots of noise at these dances. Lots of heat, generated by closely packed crowds. Drinking. Much corking and uncorking

of hip flasks. An occasional fight. A great sense of high life. Pulses seemed to double time. You floated rather than danced. The Washingtonians mixed well with the luminaries; they were readily accepted by them, particularly by the musicians. Paul Whiteman, having ascended the jazz throne, was a very welcome friend, a flush nightclubber, a lush patron. He would come down to the Kentucky, bringing his own home brew with him ("much better 'n your stuff"). He'd plunk a centry note on the piano ("just a note of appreciation"), sit down and grin all night with pleasure ("That's our Pops," his musicians said).\(^{52}\)

This is a valuable portrait of the genial, lovable man Whiteman really was, and it indicates where his heart really lay artistically. Hoagy Carmichael offers a similar picture in his autobiography. It is clear that the Jazz men did not hate Whiteman, nor envy him his success. He was their good friend, and he appreciated their message and their music. It was just that he was more businesman than artist himself; his personal roadmap was different. Jazz men knew that band leaders like the Whitemans and the Isham Jonees were good men to have on their side - that they were sometimes necessary buffers between the public and Jazz. In this light, Jones' Etude statement and some of Whiteman's remarks in a 1926 book, Jazz, on which Mary Margaret McBride collaborated, are hard to reconcile today. The personal tastes of the musicians in the Whiteman band were not variant from their leader's, either:

The Whiteman organization, deep in strings and brass and singers, a behemoth of a musical family, was a block away at the Palais Royal, 48th and Broadway. The guys came over to the Kentucky all the time. These white musicians, at the top of their profession, liked good jazz and good jazzmen. They drew no color line. They were "ofays," but "ofays" who were friends, not enemies.\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 39.

\(^{53}\)Ibid.
The straight Jazz biography has never yet come off as successfully as the collaborative autobiography insofar as communicating the real world of the Jazz man is concerned, but Ulanov comes through from time to time with flashes of insight into Duke's character and into the character of the Ellington band. The inevitable importance to the Jazz man of maintaining the strongest possible sense of humor is evident in the portrait of Bubber Miley, The Duke's great trumpet man:

Bubber laughed a lot, and had strong lines of laughter cut across his face. His eyes danced when he smiled, and as they percussed, so did his music. "He was completely uninhibited, irrepressible," Otto Hardwick recalls. "Nothing at all for him to stop in the middle of a chorus, remembering some nonsense, double up in hysterics, nothing coming out of his horn but wind!" 54

The Ellington band has always been a band without discipline. That is the way the Duke works, and there may be a lesson in cooperative effort for civilization here. The esprit de corps of the Jazz band is a most difficult thing for a writer from the outside to express, but Ulanov occasionally reflects it successfully. There was the death in 1942 of Jimmy Blanton, the man who revolutionized bass playing in Jazz. He has been termed the greatest Jazz bassist of all time. Jimmy died at twenty-four of tuberculosis. The Duke's great tenor sax man, Ben Webster, along with arranger-pianist Billy Strayhorn, left the stand of the Hotel Sherman in Chicago, unable to go through the motions of playing that night: "Don't let it hit you so hard, Uncle Benny," Billy suggested. "He was just too great, that's all." 'That's

54 Ibid., p. 47.
right,' Ben said. 'But that's not right.'"55 The simple, direct language of the Jazzman can often be very expressive.

In addition to the Mezzrow and Ulanov volumes, the year 1946 produced Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust Road*. This small book belongs with Mezzrow's, Condon's, and Manone's as a composite biographical expression of the white Jazz world of the Twenties, the real "Jazz Age." Since the Twenties Carmichael has been a very successful song writer, has performed effectively character parts in several movies, has had his own radio program, and by and large has fulfilled the American success story replete with Hollywood mansion and swimming pool. Yet his autobiography, *The Stardust Road*, deals only with the Twenties. It closes with the death of Bix Beiderbecke, at the turn of the Thirties. It is a surprising, sentimental, and often tender book that breathes the very spirit of Romanticism, for it is obvious that Carmichael considers the associations of the Jazz world of the Twenties the most important influence on his subsequent life. The book is dedicated to Bix and to Bill Moenkhaus, a college chum of Hoagy's. It is replete with such sentences as the following. "Back to 1920 ... that's an easy time to go back to, for actually I've never gone very far away from then."56

Hoagy, an Indiana boy, fell hopelessly in love with Jazz at an early age, and though his talent as a pianist has always been limited, he is an unusually able song writer, and there are few limits


to either his appreciation or understanding of the Jazz world. He studied law at the University of Indiana, but spent most of his time leading a cult of Bix worshippers, leading a college band, and helping Bill Moenkhaus lead a highly intelligent group of young men of insane behavior who called themselves "The Bent Eagles," and who stood for the unusual values expressed in so much of the literature of Jazz.

His story is one of conflict between good, respectable, solid things and the Romantic concept symbolized by Bix and Monk (Moenkhaus). Bix is the same symbol to all who knew him, and needs no explanation. Monk was similar in all the important ways — he even died very young, as the Romantic symbol so often does — except that he was not a musician. The son of a professor, he casually recorded straight "A's" while spending most of his time in the college hangout, The Book Nook, living his role as poet-laureate of the Bent Eagles. As Hoagy describes it:

Let me take you gently by the hand and lead you into the Book Nook on a normal afternoon. That little guy, over there, flogging the piano — that could be me. . . . And the large freckled youth with the saxophone, the one making those long blue notes, that's Batty De Marcus. The high-cheekboned unshaved youth perched yonder in a booth, that's Moenkhaus, composing a poem, perhaps, for we hear his weird coyote-howl laugh even above our efforts. . . .

Hooters, thou knowest no Heaven
Hooters, thou knowest only us
Bugs, men, whores and fowls —
They are the children of Heaven.

There are wild yells. Wad Allen shrinks his appreciation. I hear in my ear a voice. The voice of a non-Bent Eagle. It is a plaintive voice, timid with query.
"What does it mean?"
I turn and smile pityingly. This poor guy doesn't know what
those immortal lines convey.

"It means just what it says," I hear Wad Allen say. "Just exactly what it says." 57

This is neither the sterile T. S. Eliot kind of revolt, which Monk actually parodies with his deliberate inanities, nor is it the aimless Scott Fitzgerald revolt, because here there was Jazz to believe in.

It is also normal for the Book Nook to be nearly deserted and for Sneekhaus and Wad Allen and myself, and Harry Hostetter too, to be there. We talk of things we are puzzled about. We confess bewilderment and doubts and fears and we never laugh at each other. We wonder where we are going.

"I'm going to be a lawyer," I say firmly. "Jazz is okay, but -"

Harry interrupts. "Thanksgiving comes but once a dozen," he says, looking at Monk. "But what we call jazz comes but once." 58

Hoagy became a lawyer, but did not remain one. Jazz led him into his present career, though he could not become a great musician himself.

The music that did these things to us was called "Jazz." Jazz had been born early in the century, as had we. Jazz was groping its way through the early Twenties as we were groping ours.

The first World War had been fought, and in the backwash conventions had tumbled. There was rebellion, then, against the accepted, the proper and the old. Woodrow Wilson had not so long before declared: "... everything for which America has fought has been accomplished. ..." The shooting war was over but the rebellion was just getting started.

And for us jazz articulated. I was a jazz pianist. "Hot piano," we called it then. I was trying to create jazz. It said what we wanted to say. ... 59

The last suggests Mezz's statement that Bessie Smith's music answered all the questions he had been asking for years. All through the book

57 Ibid., pp. 35-36.

58 Ibid., p. 36.

59 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
Carmichael lets the reader know that this was living, not existing. This period formed the working basis of his life.

Monk's poetry as recorded by Carmichael often unconsciously adopts either the grand experimental, jingly, or self-conscious rhythm of some influential poetic attitude of the time. In the following "play" note the similarity between the structure of the poem recited by the Women's Compound Tonsil Union and the then popular "In Flanders Fields":

It was another work from the pen of Monk. Wad read it to us aloud. As he read it we rocked with the silent glee that bound us because we loved each other.

Thanksgiving Comes But Once a Dozen

Scene:
Somewhere between a large hotel. Perhaps there is a fire. People are snowing themselves under and the heavens are threatened with lard. In the background are firemen selling small pears.

Enter:
Women's Compound Tonsil Union singing:
"On glands and wheals the bakers roar,
As Harper's chickens, four by four,
Leap across the bathroom floor.
Amen."
(Cheers by Mrs. Baker)

First W.C.T.U.
"Friends, cannons and Thursday!"
(Louder cheers by Mrs. Baker who is affectionately called Old Aunt Cancer in her home town of West Hawkins, Nebraska)

Second W.C.T.U.
"I am from Roaring Fork, Idaho. I favor neither beer near the keg, nor beer near keg near beer."
(Old Aunt Cancer loses control and has an attack of chetherweg)
After the "Flanders Fields" episode, Monk worked over the pretentious oratory of the day, popularized by the Chautauqua circuits; the dry rot of the Gopher Prairie philosophy; and the kind of political nonsense that led to a Harding administration. Hoagy mentions that they all talked about the Harding fiasco a good deal. But chiefly they talked about Jazz:

If castor oil removes a boil
And Oscar rows a boat
Don't use your feet on shredded wheat
Inhale it through a boat.

Monk and I were sitting in the beat-up Chevrolet and he handed me the poem...
"I inhaled it all right," I said.
"What?" Monk asked.
"The Chicago style of jazz," I said. "George Johnson—he's from Chicago... He says only a few are doing it—the New Orleans Rhythm Kings at the Friar's Inn in Chicago. It makes me weak, thinking about a whole band playing that rhythm."
"A lot of things make you weak," Monk said comfortably. "Tell me more about him... I can get it when you tell it." 61

After meeting Bix, which was the millennium for Carmichael as for all the rest, Hoagy left school to go to Florida in order to join a band that was supposed to be taking Bix along as a performer.


It was vital that Monk and Bix understand each other; it was as important as those things are to youth. Somehow one never finds time for taking care of such important matters in later years. This, of course, is one of the important things about Romanticism and about the Jazz-influenced concept of life: one retains forever to some degree the constructive part of adolescence that defies the strait-jacket of unquestioned convention, or unquestioned authority; that is able to construct and maintain a personal world of sounder values than the values of the herd. Responsibility, too often imaginary responsibility, and the bumps and bruises brought about by bucking the machine inevitably rob most Americans of the constructive qualities of adolescence. The class reunion and the office party are pathetic evidence of this. There is more in the air than lost youth; there are lost ideals. Anthropologists tell us that there are few nations who worship youth as America does, which could well be an indication of a basic need for certain values which were lost along with each man’s loss of youth. Carrmichael knows what those values were in his case, and is not afraid to say so:

I remember trying to explain Bix to Monk. I remember trying to put Bix together for Monk, so that he would see him and hear him and feel him the way I did. It was like the telling of a vivid dream and knowing that it wasn’t making sense. 63

There are many episodes with Bix, who came down to the Indiana campus some ten weekends in one year to play dances. There are crucial conversations:

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63 Ibid., p. 51.
The Wolverines had played a dance on the campus... and Bix and I were lying in front of the phonograph early in the morning. We were playing the "Firebird" music of Stravinsky...

"Guy used to be a lawyer."

"Who?"

"Stravinsky." 

"Why don't you write music, Heagy?" Bix asked softly...

"You write yours different every time."

"What's wrong with that?" Bix asked. "I like it different. Like Rimsky-Korsakov. He heard this Stravinsky, told him to give up the law..."

"Stravinsky study law?"

"Sure. Young guy like you. He studied law then Rimsky — ah, hell, you know who I mean — he told him to write music. So he wrote this. They dance to it."

"Dance to it?"

"Sure," Bix got up and did an entrechat, fell down and lay where he fell... "Music kind of hits together in your head. Hurts you across the top of your nose if you can't blow it out..."

"But you can't blow it all out."

"You can try," Bix.

The next mornings were reality, but the dream was not destroyed:

Wake up, though, spring of '24. That fine year, the year of the yellowest moon, the greenest grass, and the hottest music. And who is that guy across there, sleeping in his underwear? Why, it's Bix. Nothing immortal about a pale blond guy needing a shave sleeping in his underwear with his funny mouth open.

"Bix."

"Yeah. Go away..."

"Get up."

"My mouth is stuck together. Get me some water. Go away."

"Get up."

"I'm trying," Bix said. He gets up and looks around helplessly.

"Clothes..." "Jesus. Where'd you get that whiskey?"

"I dunno. Good, wasn't it?"

Slowly we walk downstairs and out into the sunlight and all at once it's fine....

We wander up to the Book Nook... Monk lolls at the front. Watching the scene, his eyes different windows for a different brain. A man is driving by in his car. Monk looks at him and drawls, "Look at that guy riding around with his kidneys."

We look at the man in the car and suddenly for an instant we see him like Monk sees him...
Bix at the piano was nearly as impressive to those who heard him as was Bix at the cornet:

But right now Bix and I have a hangover and he has just played the piano. Monk missed his class on account of that, so he sat down and did some scribbling.

"We'll have a class of our own. Here, Hogwash, read the questions. It's the Wheatena Test," and as I read it he stared straight at Bix.

Bix twisted his mouth into a distortion of approval and I read:

1. Spell Wheatena in four different directions.
2. What horse when it rained.
3. Define freight luner, and amelia.
4. Tell all you know about vetter.
5. Tell all you know about the defeat of New Mexico.
6. Write a short diary about skates. Leave out page three.

This agonized us and finally Bix's voice came up softly, putting his own strange phrase of approbation on the test. "I am not a swan," he said.

The friendship founded there between Monk and Bix endured to the end. Bix, the inarticulate kid, who played the wonderful horn. Monk, the surrealistic intellectual who looked at the world through a glass that threw it into a hopeless distortion.

... They were friends. They understood.66

Another part of the Romantic symbol which lived in Bix was his complete lack of sophistication with regard to his music. Like Robert Browning stopping to play with toy soldiers, or Shelley with paper boats, Bix's actions showed a wide-eyed wonder that was always present. Hoagy describes his nightly attendance at Casino Gardens, where Bix played one summer:

Bix would hunt me up during intermission and by way of taking a breather we would find a secluded corner where we could doodle Riverboat Shuffle or Copenhagen without interference. I'd doodle the melody and Bix would pump the bass and imitate cymbal licks.

Doodling was a favorite pastime of ours. And what is "doodling?"

66 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
Why, it's what the Four Mills Brothers introduced years later and made a fortune doing. We didn't think it was commercial. In fact we didn't think. It interfered with our doodling.67

A similar illustration concerns Hoagy's efforts to learn to play the cornet: "But that is what Bix would do to you. You heard him and it threw your judgment out of kilter." Bix was in Indianapolis with Hoagy and offered to take him along on a recording date at the Gennett studios in Richmond the next morning:

"When do we leave?"
"Oh, three or four," Bix said, the idea of sleeping never entering his head. He looked at a clock that showed midnight. "Let's go over to the Ohio Theatre and jam awhile." ... We got to the theater after closing and took our places at the grand pianos in the pit. There, all alone, we banged out chorus after chorus of Royal Garden Blues. ... When we finally wore out it was time to leave.

We started for Richmond. ... Bix is dead now, and you'll have to take my word for it, but on that night I hit the peak. We were halfway to Richmond, of a cold dark morning, when we stopped and for some reason Bix took out his horn.

He cut loose with a blast to warn the farmers and to start the dogs howling and I remembered that my own horn, long unused, was lying in the back of the car. I got it out.

Solemnly we exchanged A's.

"Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," Bix said. ...
And then Bix was off. Clean wonderful banners of melody filled the air, carved the countryside. Split the still night. The trees and the ground and the sky made the tones so right.

I battled along to keep up a rhythmic lead while Bix laid it out for the tillers of the soil. He finally finished in one great blast of pyrotechnic improvisation, then took his horn down from his mouth.

"Hoagy," he said thoughtfully, "you weren't bad."68

There is the vivid description of the thrill of hearing the King Oliver band in Chicago in 1923, the thrill they all remember clearly. There is the thrill of a new Armstrong record: "Louis Armstrong's latest record releases, with the beautiful trumpet passages and the

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67Ibid., p. 81.
68Ibid., p. 74.
gutbucket vocals, kept our hearts pounding."  

The final turning point in Hoagy's life was also determined by Jazz, its denial of the mundane, and its private set of values. He had gone ahead, got his law degree:

Men, no longer boys, out in the cold, cold world. H. Carmichael, Atty. . . . Remember that letter you and Harry wrote applying for a job once? You might use part of it, circularize the town and get some clients.

. . . I would like to handle your case. I once shook hands with an Indian and I'm a close friend of the Spanish-American War. I haven't any experience but my mother has. . . . She used to comb my hair and pass me the potatoes. I studied Bleechers and represented a line of hog farms, frog arms, iron dogs, foghorns and frog ponds. Since then I haven't been six years old.

Yours Respectfully,
H. Carmichael, Atty.

P.S. I have a dog named Fred.

But, Hoagland, you got to get away from that stuff, honest fellow, you got to quit that. You are liable to need a lawyer yourself if you don't leave that stuff alone.

He ended up in Florida practicing law until one day when he heard a record of one of his songs which had been made by Red Nichols without Hoagy's knowledge. Hoagy charged wildly out of the law office never to return. He ended up in New York, writing songs and working at a clerical job to fill in.

The world of the Bent Eagles was created by the same quality which drew them to Jazz, which nourished the Jazz man himself: the Liberal Romantic view. They created their own ironic world as a huge joke, just as the language of Harlem mocks the often-empty oratory

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69 Ibid., p. 130.

70 Ibid., p. 102.
and professional jargon of the whites. The amazing thing is that they were finally strong enough to believe in their world, and to allow its courageous attitude to shape their lives. The effect of that world on Hoagy Carmichael (and it was demonstrably a part of the Jazz world of the Twenties, as he so carefully pointed out) is the unusual, brave story of *The Stardust Road*. The book has several faults. There is little chronology in it. In Carmichael's own words, "The course of a wandering mind and an unreliable memory is erratic. The path of this piece is helplessly jagged from an absence of chronology."\(^7^1\)

As Edward Nichols said in his *Jazzmen* chapter on Bix, they are all vague about dates and places, but hell, you should have heard that horn!

In 1947 Robert Goffin published a Romantic, but quite artistically unsuccessful biography of Louis Armstrong. Full of a number of expectedly interesting items of information, it nevertheless falls very flat through overwritten and the strategy of building around imaginary word-by-word conversations even from Louis' early youth. Amusingly, the American translation has Louis returning joyfully to his native America at the end of the story; the French version, *Le Roi du Jazz*, finds his lasting sympathies with France. Actually, Louis has made it clear that he has room for both in his very sizeable heart.

Eddie Condon, guitar, and Wingy Manone, trumpet, are the prime examples of one very important phase of the world of Liberal Romantic values expressed in Jazz literature: they represent the indestructible

Comic Spirit in Jazz, without which the musicians who make the music could hardly have survived. Condon, whose autobiography (with an assist by Thomas Sugrue) appeared in 1947, is the articulate one, the ready ad-libber who has been the "front man" for traditional Jazz for some years now. His humor has a universal quality and his choice witticisms are often quoted by newspaper columnists in New York City. Joe (Wingy) Manone, the one-armed trumpeter from New Orleans, is, on the other hand, a musician's humorist. His sense of humor, much of which comes through in his 1948 autobiography (in this case with an assist by Paul Vandervoort II), is a wild kind of comic-sense that almost belongs to the music. Wingy's sayings ("Why man, don't you know everything's the blues?") are legion among Jazz men.

Condon's book, We Called It Music, carries a half-cynical, never completely serious air which is the very soul of the man himself to those who have seen, heard, or spent some time with him. His book fits the by-now-established pattern of Bix-worship, of early love of Jazz, of completely individual social values, but does it with perhaps the most successfully expressed humor in Jazz literature.

The Condon's were a very large, very musical Irish-Catholic family from Illinois. Eddie's life was something of a scramble from the beginning, but his small-town youth in Momence, Illinois, allowed him enough freedom to escape the feeling of being hunted and strangled that affected Benny Goodman and others. At least there was basic material security, though no plenitude. There is no sentimental family portrait in Condon's pen, however. His approach to his family and
boyhood is not unlike James Thurber’s, and carries the same general brand of irreverent, rich and permeating humor:

My first real job was at Melby’s combination furniture store and undertaking parlor. I had a shoe shine stand outside and I watched the stiffs for Mr. Melby while he was away. We had a lot of interesting bodies; they floated down the Kankakee, especially in good weather. Once we got several from an automobile wreck, which in those days was an uncommon event. "They must have been swell people," I reported to Ma. "There’s silk underwear all over the place." With my first earnings I went to Clegg’s and ordered a pair of English shoes. Nothing else would satisfy me. Pa took one look at the pointed toes and said, "I know what those shoes are for — kicking a snake in the behind."72

And Condon’s associations are as bizarre as Mezzrow’s. The first band he joined was Pevey’s Jazz Bandits. To the Jazz men Condon’s nickname is "Slick," which he always has been:

How to make money was a continuous problem. A man we called "Rags" had a junk yard down by the river; there was so much stuff scattered around that he never knew how much or what he had. One day on the river Jim and I pushed a few solid pieces off the bank into our boat. Then we rode to the bridge, carried the junk around the corner, and presented it to Rags. He bought it, carried it out back, and set it down again. Whenever our backs were strong enough we picked it up and sold it to him again.73

On the subject of his cultural environment his humor still retains its quality of brevity and punch:

The Catholics in town were mostly French-Canadian. . . . We had religious instruction at home. There was an old family crucifix heavy as a lead pipe, with a small skull and bones at its base. One day Ma took me in her lap, put the crucifix on the table, and told me about Jesus. When she was finished she said, "Is there anything you would like to ask me?" I pointed at the skull and crossbones. "Who’s that little fool down there?" I said.74

73 Ibid., p. 54.
74 Ibid., p. 38.
There are two particularly good incidents which illustrate Condon's relationship to his mother as well as the strategy of his brash approach to even the aspects of life that are automatically sentimental to most steady citizens.

Sisters are harder to manipulate than mothers; I could always get around Ma, or at least I thought I could. She tricked me once in a moment and I didn't realize it for a year. I went to her one day and said, "I never get to do anything. Yesterday Leo Barsaleau almost got to go to Kankakee on the wagon." Ma said, "Well, maybe I have been a little hard on you. I don't think Leo Barsaleau should have something that you haven't got. Tomorrow you can almost get to go on the wagon to Kankakee." I was completely satisfied.  

Upon the other occasion Condon's mother was ill:

Shortly after we moved to Chicago Heights Ma had a stroke. She was in bed for a few months; then she began to get around in a wheelchair. Every afternoon I pushed her to church and waited while she said the stations of the cross and lighted a votive candle. I could usually get enough out of her to support me at a candy store while I waited; I put the bite on while I was lacing her shoes or pulling her corset tight -- the corset was a good touch for movie money, too. One day we got all the way to church and I was still broke. "I suppose you haven't got a dime?" I said. "No," she said, "I haven't." "How about the candles you light?" I said. "They cost a dime." "I have a charge account," Ma said.

We got along very well together. She had lost her sense of smell, so she couldn't check on my breath for evidence of cigarette smoking; and I was deaf in my right ear, so I couldn't hear certain things she told me not to do.  

This ever-brash, Menckenesque refusal to take anything but The Music too seriously is an attitude that is maintained throughout the book. It is the Jazz man's protection from a world that will not take his values seriously either. At one time after he had become a reasonably successful professional musician, Condon nearly died from

75Ibid., p. 64.

76Ibid., pp. 55-56.
pancreatitis. Somehow he made a miraculous recovery, but his comments on that black dead-end in his life are a real test of his philosophy:

... I was bent over like a horseshoe. At the hospital I was placed on a table and six doctors tried to diagnose the trouble. "Please, Doc," I said... "operate here" — I drew a finger across my throat.

... It was decided to operate immediately. I was put behind a screen. Someone asked me my religion. An orderly came with a dull razor and shaved the hair from my chest and abdomen; he could have peeled the skin from me with less pain. Then a priest came and touched my forehead. "This may be your last confession," he said. "What do you wish to tell me?"

I can't go through all that now, I thought. Bless me, Father; I disobeyed my parents, I disobeyed my sisters, I disobeyed the nuns, I disobeyed you, Father. Say seven Hail Mary's and the stations of the cross and go home and wash your face. "I can't be put in jail for anything I've ever done," I said. "You'll have to settle for that."??

For a time even the hospital had to put up with the eager, off-center attempts of the Jazz gang to pull Condon through:

... Such cases had a 99.9 per cent mortality; in his fifty years of surgery Dr. McGrath had operated on five; all had died. No one held any hope for me.

When the operation was finished I was wheeled into the deathroom, a small cubicle where a man can pass out without bothering his fellow ward patients. My temperature went to 106 and I began to sink. Slovak [a doctor] was in charge of my exit; he called McKenzie and told him I needed a blood transfusion. Red arrived with Joe Bushkin, Bud and Artie Freeman, and Mike Gould. Joe was ruled out as a minor; it was all right for an eighteen-year-old boy to walk in a night club but he couldn't give blood to a friend. None of the others was the right type. "We'll have to use a professional donor," Slovak said. Bud, who had a bank account, put up the money. While this was going on I thought I was at Decca making a record and kept shouting for Harry Kruse. I woke once and saw blood on the linen and a transfusion apparatus. It must be bad, I thought. Then I went back to Decca. I still couldn't find Harry.

The fever lasted for three days and three nights. I was rubbed with whiskey and wrapped in hot blankets. When McKenzie found out about the whiskey massages he brought a bottle from the Famous Door.

"What's that for?" Miss Roach, the nurse, asked.

77 Ibid., p. 243.
"It's to rub Mr. Condon with," McKenzie said.
Miss Roach sniffed. "We only use bonded whiskey!" she said.
McKenzie stared. "To rub a guy with?" he said.
He opened the bottle and he and Berigan and Bushkin drank it. 78

The deathroom furnished one more rare moment, involving Mezzrow this time.

I remained in the deathroom until the day before I left the hospital. . . .
"I don't like this little room," McKenzie used to say. "They still must be betting on you to blow the race."
The day I was moved to a ward Mezzrow came to see me; he brought a box of Persian dates. The door to the deathroom was shut. Thinking I was sleeping he opened it slowly and looked in. He saw a figure covered completely by a sheet - the tenant who succeeded me died in a hurry. Mezz backed out, dropped the dates, and turned to run just as Miss Roach came along.
"Are you looking for Mr. Condon?" she said. "He's down the hall in the ward." She helped him pick up the dates and led him to my bed.
"Perhaps you ought to get up and let your friend lie down for a while," she said to me.
Mezz dropped the dates again, this time on my stomach.
"I b-b-b-brought you something," he said. "Thanks for not being dead." 79

That Condon's unquenchable humor is centered on the realistic outlook of these twentieth century Romanticists, the Jazz men, is quite evident. It is evident in the things that he reveres. It is evident, for instance, in what he says about Bessie Smith's singing. "She was still the great Bessie; hearing her magnificent voice complain about the sadness of living made life a lot easier to bear," 80 There is no sweetness-and-light philosophy at work here. Nor is there in his tenderly humorous portrait of Bix, which is one of the best written in

78 Ibid., p. 244.
79 Ibid., p. 245.
80 Ibid., p. 241.
any book. Condon, the bad boy who is never afraid to thumb his nose at idols, is also under the spell of Bix:

I was the happiest kid in the world. Every night I played with Bix at the Alhambra; when I heard his horn nothing could possibly bother me. Often at six o'clock in the morning I tried to get him out of bed to play the piano for me. "Please, Bix," I would say, "just for a little while. Then you can take a nap." He was as amiable as a pup. He would sit at the big grand piano and play by the hour—Eastwood Lane's Adirondack Sketches and MacDowell's things. He played his own way, with his own phrasing. The way he voiced an ordinary 7th chord was the joy of my life.\textsuperscript{81}

This Bix, of course, was the man who had turned from the other world after having conquered a good deal of it, and after having had many of its advantages. And this must have been part of the mystery of him. He could reassure and often amaze the Mezrows and Condons who had not had his background musically or intellectually. Condon, for instance, while playing at a Wisconsin lake resort, was disturbed by some college students discussing Proust. This led him to attempt an educative program:

My school was located on the north side. It was the home of Mrs. Reid, a retired Northwestern University professor, who occupied herself with tutoring and whose credits were accepted at Northwestern. She had half a dozen boys and girls in addition to myself; I was due at nine in the morning and I had to take a bus to get there. It was grim, but I had something to find out—who was Proust? I began with French, English, mathematics, and some other stuff. I never got time to sleep. I arrived at nine o'clock with my eyelids taped. When the questions were asked and the other students began writing their answers I sneaked into the kitchen, lighted a cigarette on the pilot of the gas stove, and looked out of the window. What the hell am I doing here, I asked myself. I can stay home, get some sleep, and be just as stupid. But I kept going. Somewhere ahead of me was Proust.\textsuperscript{82}

He found his answer, of course, from Bix:

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p. 86.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 119.
He sat down at the piano. "By the way," I said, "who is Proust?"
He hit a chord, listened to it, and then said, casually, "A French
writer who lived in a cork-lined room. His stuff is no good in
translation." I leaned over the piano. "How the hell did you
find that out?" I demanded. He gave me the seven veils look.
"I get around," he said.\textsuperscript{83}

Bix had been there and seen the other side of the mountain, and yet,
in Condon's words, "Sleep, food, and women, were things he never al-
lowed to interfere with music."\textsuperscript{84}

The utterly naive fearlessness, the sudden determination to
conquer anything in existence that needed conquering - like a Shelley
going out to sea, or sending up fire balloons, or mixing a chemical
stench in the basement at college - these were the further charming
qualities of this incurable Romantic, Bix, this believer in the mil-
lenium. Condon tells how Bix had spent the better part of his salary
every night during an engagement in Syracuse learning to play a ski
ball machine, and that he ended up with two boxes of chocolates and,
somehow appropriately for a boy who never escaped the renaissance of
wonder, a teddy bear. At another time in Chicago:

One Monday night we lost Bix in the revolving barrel at White
City. Most of us had managed to crawl or roll or fall through it.
"Watch me," Bix said. "I'll show you how to walk through it with-
out even losing my balance." He plunged in and fell flat. We
waited, but the more he rolled and crawled the less progress he
made. Finally the attendant had to stop the machine and go in and
drag him out. Undaunted, he went on to the roller coaster, the
shooting gallery, and then ski ball. "This is one thing I can
always beat," he said to me. "Remember how I learned in Syracuse?"\textsuperscript{85}

Bix, even though in the big money after he hit New York, was the same

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 121.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 140.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., pp. 137-38.
kind of youngster who had "doodled" with Hoagy Carmichael under any circumstances in the Wolverine days:

The Whiteman band was in Brooklyn at the moment; we jumped in a subway – it was my first ride in a sewer – and went to visit Bix. We found him in his dressing room. Three hundred dollars a week hadn’t changed him; he still needed a suit that would fit him. We had a few drinks and played a little – Bix found a saxophone for Bud and a cornet for Jimmy; I played drums on the dressing table with two empty pint bottles until one of them exploded. "That was a wonderful effect," Bix said. 36

The Condon book treats, too, the frantic days at Hudson Lake, Indiana, where Bix and Pee Wee Russell had their cottage during the summer Mezzrow describes. On their way to get some whiskey from three old-maid boot-leggers who lived down the road, Bix and Pee Wee stalled in the famous Buick (although Mezz thought it never ran) which later became a shaving rack. This made them quite late for their job that evening with Charlie Horvath’s band. The band, though managed by Horvath, was owned by Gene Goldkette. Pee Wee and Bix, after working on the jug while parked in the stalled car, arrived at work at eleven-thirty, a bit under the weather:

A surprise awaited them. Goldkette was there; he had chosen this one night of the whole season to visit the band at Hudson Lake. "Is this the way things always go – the cornet and clarinet players drunk and mad and missing with your wife?" he asked Horvath. "It’s their birthday," Horvath said. He could think of nothing else. 37

The Condon book is a story in which every day is somebody’s birthday. It is Bud Freeman’s birthday when he breaks out laughing with sheer joy in the middle of his solo on a recording job and ruins the master. It must be somebody else’s birthday when Bud and Jimmy MacPartland,

36 Ibid., p. 168.
37 Ibid., p. 139.
having just discovered Texas' Jack Teagarden, the great trombonist, call Condon and Red McKenzie long distance to have Big-T play trombone over the phone for them:

I listened for a while, then handed the phone to McKenzie. He passed it on to Tesch. Tesch gave it to Krupa. When we had all listened and Bud was back on the other end of the wire I gave him the consensus, "He doesn't bother us," I said. "Put a brand on his stomach and bring him in."88

There is a frantic recording session with Fats Waller, and there is the story of Condon's selective service examination. Of all the comic descriptions of the machinations of the U. S. Army in World War II, perhaps none has any more of the sense of irrelevance utterly triumphant than Condon gives his. In spite of pancreatitis effects, one ear without a drum, and other major defects, Condon seems headed for the army until he takes his psychiatric examination in a climax that could only happen on somebody's birthday:

The psychiatrist had been looking through my papers. He leaned back in his chair, smiled again, and said, "Mr. Condon, I see that you drink. How often?"
"Every day," I said.
"Why?" he asked.
"I work in a saloon," I said. "I'm a musician. My employer is a fellow named Nick. His place is in Greenwich Village and he sells whiskey" — you've been there, I thought to myself; I can tell by the look in your eyes — "and his customers drink. I can't stand the customers when they're drunk if I'm sober, so I drink too. It creates a mutual tolerance."

He nodded. "How many highballs do you drink every day?" he asked.
"I don't count the highballs," I said. "I occasionally check on the cases or barrels, but that's all."
"Hold out your hand," he said.
I stretched my right arm toward him, with the palm of my hand down and my fingers held together. Fairly steady, I thought; this isn't going to be so bad.

88 Ibid., p. 171.
"Spread your fingers," the psychiatrist said.
I did, and the dance was on.

"Doctor," I said, "I worked until four o'clock this morning. I haven't had a drink, I haven't had a smoke, I haven't had anything to eat since I came in here.

He bent over my papers and wrote a single line on the final sheet.

As soon as he had gone I looked to see what he had written on my papers. The single line was in a bold, clear hand:

This man needs a drink right now.\(^8\)

Condon, at about this time, was busy with a radio show, "Eddie Condon's Jazz Concert," which won first place in both the European and Pacific GI popularity polls. "Johnny O'Connor, Fred Waring's manager, rammed us down the Blue Network's throat. We used the Network's electricity and studios, nothing else."\(^9\) The fate of Condon's contribution to the war effort is interestingly told, and told in the inevitable and mature tragicomic sense of those Jazz men of the Twenties who are still with us.

It ran for forty-eight weeks; then some new executive blood was poured into the Blue Network and it was decided that something had to be done about the program. Its rating had picked up; soldiers everywhere preferred it to the "Hit Parade," which they voted second, and "Command Performance," which was their third choice; its mail was sensational. The soldier letters all said the same thing, "Your music is the next best thing to a trip home."

Ernie Anderson and I met with representatives of the sales and script departments, and with the new executives.

There was a lot of talk. Finally one of the executives said he thought the name of the program ought to be changed.

"What do you suggest calling it," Ernie asked.

"'Saturday Afternoon Senior Swing,"' the executive said.

"Why," Ernie asked.

"The present title is too long," the executive said.

Ernie looked at me. I was counting on my fingers. "Eddie Condon's Jazz Concert" contained twenty-three letters; "Saturday Afternoon Senior Swing" had twenty-eight.

"These guys are real executives," I whispered to Ernie. "Watch

\(^8\) Ibid., pp. 287-88.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 2.
out." ... 

There was more talk and then the ultimatum was delivered - we could accept a new format for the show, including a comedian, or we could quit. ... 

"We don't need a few days," Ernie said. "We can give you our answer now. It's no in italics." 91

A friend to whom Condon told the story of his radio career remarked, "I was afraid I was going to have to change my opinion of radio when they let you play jazz without doing anything to louse it up ... I'm glad radio hasn't changed. It gives me a feeling of security." 92

Condon's book illustrates the sense of the comic as the Jazz man's defense against life. The goal is music; all other matters simply have to be put up with. Life is lived for music; whatever else happens along the way is examined for "kicks."

Wingy Manone, an excellent New Orleans trumpet man, and the court jester of Jazz, further illustrates this same attitude. He drifted away from his Italian family early in life. There being no place in society for the Jazz musician, he must form his own society and his own outlook. Manone has probably had more "kicks," more birthdays, than anyone else, and the musicians admire his ability to mold life into his own comic pattern so successfully. His deeds, remarks, and aphorisms are common material in every autobiography by the Jazz men who have been associated with him. He is the almost completely spontaneous comic mind, and the humor associated with him has a quality that is difficult to analyze; in a way it defies gravity, because with his naturally hoarse voice, Wingy sometimes makes things

91 Ibid., p. 4.
92 Ibid.
funny that aren't supposed to be. Musicians and many entertainers (Bing Crosby is one great admirer) find him one of the rarest personalities alive. Wingy's book, Trumpet on the Wing, carries some of the punch of his humor through its employment of a good deal of his exact language. It is merely a book full of music and incidents, but it preserves some of the quality of this humorist's humorist, who lives in his singular way one phase of the philosophy of those who play Jazz in America.

Wingy is the irresistible object in many respects. He accepts the terms of society, but once he lays hands on them they come out forever twisted into his own personal pattern. World War II, for instance, brought about a number of Manonisms which threaten to become a part of Jazz folklore. Feeling that he must make some contribution to the war effort, the one-armed Wingy wrote a song. Paul Vandervoort recalled it in a 1947 column for Jazz Record: "Wingy, who warned civilization during World War II, with his tune "Stop the War, Them Cats is Killing Themselves," is waxing prophetic again. Says if we have another war it will be the fault of a bunch of War mongrels."

Condon recalls that when he was playing with Manone, Wingy would ask, "Did I ever tell you how come I have not got two right hands?" They would always say no, because the answer was always different.

George Wettling, a top-notch Dixieland drummer who has played in groups with Wingy for years, could not wait for Wingy to write a book,

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but recorded some Manoniana in an article for Esquire's 1947 Jazz Book:

There are a number of legends about Wingy's ability to read music. Personally I have always felt that Wingy never found much music worth reading since he could pick up the trumpet and play practically anything he ever heard. One time he told me, "George, I can read 'em, but I can't divide 'em."

I remember when we got back to New York to make records for Bluebird after our New England tour, the music publishers all sent a bunch of new tunes around hoping Wingy would record them. One publisher sent a girl piano player along so that she could play one tune for us. One of the songs was orchestrated in G flat. Wingy looked at the signature and then asked the girl what key it was in. She told him six flats. Wingy said, "Man, this signature just looks like a bunch of grapes to me."[94]

Though many Jazz musicians use the word "man" freely, Wingy's use of it approaches Dr. Johnson's use of "Sir" to preface his most profound statements.

Wingy himself offers a further chapter to his adventures with the more formal elements of music:

I made some records for ARA, while I was workin' at the Gay Inn. Stokowski came on one of my dates, when we were doing "Tin Roof Blues" and "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight" with Kay Starr and myself on vocal. Boris Morros invited him.

"You think you got something," Morros told him, "come see what I got. Come see Wingy Manone and his band." So Stokowski came down. He said that three-part harmony was his favorite.

Well, when Stokowski saw me directing that band with my shoes off, and my hat on, and no baton, it amazed him. He wanted to know how those guys could grab the beat from me. He didn't know I was droppin' the left shoulder for the one count, and droppin' the right shoulder for the second. And when I started struttin' on the third count, the red light lit up and that was the tempo.

When we did the vocal... before Kay started to sing, we modulated right down into her key. Stokowski was re-amazed that we got right into her key. He wondered how we could do that without any arrangements.

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Man, I heard her talk, that's all I needed to know. The band didn't know what chords I was gonna use to get there, but they listened so closely they followed me right through. I guess Stokowski and his orchestra never used head arrangements.\(^95\)

After recalling the year when Joe Venuti sent Wingy one cuff-link for Christmas, Wettling closes by describing Wingy's prowess as a trumpet man:

Wingy and I were out touring someplace and we stopped into a night club in the colored part of some town. A terrific little band was playing on the stand. The leader saw Wingy's instrument and invited us to sit in. Wingy played about eight choruses without stopping. The trumpet player on the job looked at Wingy in amazement and this is what he said: "I don't know who yo' is, but yo' sho' is."\(^96\)

Wingy's has been no easy life, of course. His anger is aroused only when someone tries to help him accomplish some task seemingly impossible to a man with but one arm, such as fastening a shirt cuff. His unostentatious determination has conquered for him the major problems of living. A good baseball infielder makes the tough ones look so easy that a spectator tends to underrate his worth. So it is with Wingy and the problem of living in a realistic world.

New Orleans is Wingy's home town, and his stories about it well illustrate his sensitivity to the comic muse, wherever he finds her. He tells about the tenacity of the clam peddlers in his youth:

"No, I don't want to buy any clams," she said.
"Does your mama want to buy any clams?"
"My mama ain't here."
"Does your brother want to buy any clams?"
"My brother don't like clams."
"Does your papa want to buy any clams?"
"My papa's dead."
"Well, if your papa was livin', would he want to buy any clams?"
These kind of kicks went on all the time.\(^97\)

\(^{95}\)Manone and Vandervoort, op. cit., p. 200.  
\(^{96}\)Wettling, op. cit., p. 39.  
\(^{97}\)Manone and Vandervoort, op. cit., p. 12.
There was, too, the alcoholic goat:

Or go out to Jefferson Parish to see the beer-drinkin' goat. This goat was a smart bastard. Every afternoon at five he'd come trottin' in from wherever he hid out in the river and head for the trough behind the saloon, where the beer slop run out. He'd get drunk and go staggerin' back over the levee.98

New Orleans is pictured as the kind of improbable town in which anything is possible to a Jazz man whose world comes through the lens to him upside down anyway. For a while, according to Wingy, New Orleans will accommodingly turn itself upside down too:

A bunch of us were serenading some friends one night, and the law picked us up. But we didn't stop playing once during the ride to jail in the Black Maria. And when we got there we kept on playing for the judge, and played ourselves right out of the can. Even the law in New Orleans is hipped to that righteous music.99

Another time New Orleans held a Wingy Manone Handicap in honor of one of Wingy's trips back home. He was asked to blow "call to the post" on his horn to suit the occasion:

But instead of playing before they took the nags to the post, I waited until they got 'em in the starting gate. Then I started to play a legitimate bugle call. Man, that didn't last long though. After three bars I started to swing it and went right on into "Bugle Call Rag." The starter flipped the gate and those horses flew out of the barrier and tore down the track.

I was so excited I kept on blowing 'em right around the track. Well, one of those groovy dobbins could dig my jive. I had a twenty-five-dollar win bet on his nose, and he came in and paid 6 to 1.100

Wingy's American trait of exaggeration makes life sound exciting under ordinary circumstances, but when something out of the ordinary happens, when the world occasionally turns upside down of its own accord,
then the Jazz man with the saving sense of humor goes right ahead as though things are as they should be, taking full advantage of the situation:

At that corner there was a drugstore which specialized in a frozen cream cheese dish that was out of seven worlds. Every time I was in that neighborhood I stopped in for some of that mellow cheese.

But that corner always worried me. It was a dangerous intersection, and more than once I made the prediction that some driver would make a bad turn there, someday, and smack into the drugstore.

Well, Pops, I was the one who did it. While trying to miss another car one day, I jumped the curb with my hack, smashed through the plate glass, and tore right up to the drugstore counter, before I could get stopped.

The owner took a minute to recover his senses and then said to me, "Well, now that you're here, what are you gonna have?"

I was beat right down to the bricks, but I flipped right back: "Just hand me some of that frozen cheese, Papa."101

The wonderful thing is that occasionally Wingy's value structure affects the sanest kind of citizen. Wingy knew a medical doctor in New Orleans for some years before he found out one day at a jam session that Doc Rando, who was always hanging around music, could play a very worthy Jazz clarinet. Stunned, Wingy asked to meet him after the session.

And after it was all over I told him I thought he ought to give up all that doctor stuff and come on East with me.

"Before you start talking any further, Mr. J. Wingston Manones, I want to show you my setup down here. And why I'm not a professional musician," he said.

The next day I was at his office.

"You want me to give up all this and go with you? Take a look."

He had about four thousand dollars' worth of equipment, four rooms, a receptionist and an assistant doctor. To think that I had guts enough to break up all that stuff and have him go play clarinet.

"You think I could do better with a clarinet than all this?" he

101 Ibid., p. 24.
asked me, "Man, you must be crazy. My folks would kill me. Doctors would degrade me and put me down in the gutter for life."

"Well, Doc, I told him, "the way you play that clarinet, I don't think you got no business being a doctor.

"Are you getting your wallops and your kicks? Are you enjoying life?"

Finally he said, "I'll have to go talk to my friend, Ray Benitez." Benitez was a dentist who had graduated from college at the same time as Doc. He was a fine bass player.

"If you can convince Ray to give up all his stuff," Doc told me, "I'll go, if you take him."

And when I heard Benitez, he knocked me out, too, and I found a bass player.

In a week's time I had them and Sharkey Bonano on the biggest train that ever left New Orleans, the New York and New Orleans Limited.102

It is important to the story to add that after Wingy's band broke up, Doc Rando joined Bob Crosby's band, which at the time was packed with top-notch Dixieland musicians. When on the West Coast one time, Wingy was asked why none of the other boys in town sounded like the New Orleans musicians, and answered, "Man, they just can't get that stuff over the mountains."

In the Romantic tradition of the direct approach to life - the approach based on empirical results rather than preconceived, artificially created values - Manone's wildly half-logical answers often unconsciously parody the elaborate systems with which society has surrounded itself in its "pursuit of happiness."

The Jazz concept of life as voiced in literature is based on no ivory-tower philosophy. Manone is no different from his fellow musicians in this respect. He has faced as much as they have. He spent his younger days traveling from job to job riding the rods in his one suit, a tuxedo, covered with overalls tied at the legs to keep

102 Ibid., p. 149.
out dirt.

He has no illusions, either, about the commercial world — even the musicians' union, in which Jazz musicians have never been able to command reasonable representation because of their minority position and necessarily nomadic existence because of the inevitable scarcity of locations featuring Jazz:

When the president of the union . . . found out I was in town, he invited me over to the musicians' club and put on a big party for me. The club is one of the best I have ever been in — it didn't look like a musicians' club.

I was shocked at the president giving me a party, because union presidents were always down on us jazz guys. My usual experience with presidents has always been trouble.103

Some of the funniest situations Wingy has carved out for his kicks were brought about by the hardships of his life. He once had to play in a vaudeville band composed entirely of Indians. Disguised as an Indian himself, he was not allowed to give his nationality away off the job. Keeping the New York Jazz musicians from finding out about it put him in double jeopardy. Another time he played in a Chicago Chinese restaurant that furnished him with a variety of fertile situations. Again Wingy was stranded in a hotel room without enough to pay his way out. His tactics of wearing two suits at a time and smuggling his records out in a baby carriage saved the day. At another time his band drove all the way from Chicago to Miami for a promised job:

The place I had signed to play for in Miami was the Tropical Jungles, a night club on the outskirts of town. I was sleeping on the back seat of the car as we drove up to the place. I heard one of the guys say: "My God, don't tell Wingy, or

103 Ibid., p. 228.
he'll kill us."

I opened my eyes quick. We had just made a turn in the road, and there ahead of us was Tropical Jungles, with a big sign out from, "Wingy Manone and his Orchestra." And the joint was merrily burning down.

Well, we just drove by without stopping.104

The Jazz man is imbued to failure; even bad fishing luck doesn't spell his day entirely:

First we threw a big fishing party on Mobile Bay, to celebrate. We really pitched a ball. But the fishin' was a bust; we didn't catch one stinkin' fish. Finally we got so disgusted at our luck that we started throwing rocks at the fish and wound up heaving in our reels and tackle too.105

Even Wingy's infirmity is taken in the Comic Spirit:

I picked up Snoozer Quinn in Bogalusa. We getting Snoozer for this band was the cause of a practical joke being played on me by Eddie Connors.

Snoozer only had one eye, but he could play a mess o' guitar, and nobody ever paid any attention to his lamp. However, in the same band there was Loycane, with a cork leg, and me with one wing, and a few other cats with parts missing. Altogether, I had nine men.

Man, those guys could play more music, though, than a set of Siamese twins.

But Connors laid for me, after looking those guys over. Things were rough, and we were in there at bottom scale. He was payin' me for just so many men.

So at the end of the week I went to get paid, and he handed me the dough. I counted the money, and there was a man short. I only got paid for eight instead of nine.

"Where do you get that jive at?" I asked Connors. ...

Then he told me: "Just look around among you. Among the nine of you, there's a whole man missin'. Here's your salary for eight men."106

The facts of Wingy's life are strange enough. What he makes out of them artistically can only be ascribed to the Romantic revolt — the desire to mold life itself. Wingy's times in Chicago were the same

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104 Ibid., p. 86.
105 Ibid., p. 43.
106 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
memorable times that all the Jazz crowd created for themselves in the
Twenties. Wingy knew all the crowd, as had Goodman, Condon, Carmichael
and the rest. "The Victrola was going all day and all night long,
When one batch of guys left another bunch would come in to say hello,
and never leave."\textsuperscript{107}

The prowl car used to stop by once a night in the wee hours
in the morning, when all the other joints in Chicago were closed.
The cops knew they could stop there, get a little entertainment,
and meet all the guys, see who was who.
Instead of telling us to shut up, they'd park the prowl car
and come on up. And listen to the records and get their kicks,
and then jump in the prowl car and drive off.
Nothin' was against the law in those days.\textsuperscript{108}

And of course Bix was there:

We were walking downtown one day when a dog jumped on me and
got my pants dirty. I blew my top, and Bix thought I was crazy
for getting one about a little dirt on my pants. He never wore
any collar or tie, or worried how he looked.
He was all music.\textsuperscript{109}

For plenty of nights Bix and I went down on the South Side and
 jammed with King Oliver and Louis Armstrong in places like the Sun-
set Café.
The best jamming was on the blues. Louis would start it off
by taking a chorus, and give it to Bix. Then I came on for one.
All this time Papa Joe [Oliver] would be sitting there, finger-
ing his horn and itching to get up there and blow. And then,
when he did get up and blow, he blew us all down.\textsuperscript{110}

Wingy and the great colored pianist Earl "Father" Hines played together
on a Chicago radio show for a time.

\ldots We both had black raccoon coats. When we would come in the

\textsuperscript{107}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{108}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{109}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{110}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 62.
station, people didn't know which was Hines and which was me, on account of we talked so much alike.

Earl would play introductions so great that I was afraid to raise up my horn, because nobody could follow that.

He'd say, "Go ahead and play, don't worry about me."

"Man, nobody wants to hear this cornet after you crowding me with all that piano."

All this talkin' went right out on the air.

When I started doing these shots with Earl he wanted to know where I lived, so he could pick me up.

I told him, "A white house with green windows."

He said to me, "Man, I can't see no green windows at night time."

So I fixed up an American flag by the porch light, and told him to keep driving till he saw a flag.\textsuperscript{111}

His friendship with Louis Armstrong has meant as much to Wingy in both human and musical terms as such a friendship meant to Mezzrow, Bix, and the rest: "Man, when Louis dies, I die. There won't be anything worth listening to when Louis stops playing his horn."\textsuperscript{112} Wingy was passing through Albuquerque one time in the Twenties when he discovered Jack Teagarden, the great Southwestern trombonist, playing in a cowboy band. Wingy stayed, for kicks:

We used to play records a lot, including those great platters by Louis. They sure used to knock Jack out. He was gone on one record particularly, a tune called "Oriental Strut."

When I played that for Jack he thought it was the end. He decided nobody else could ever top that, and said we ought to put it away someplace to preserve it for posterity.

We had heard that if you buried things out there on the mesa they would be petrified like all the old trees and stuff that had turned to stone.

So one day Jack and I took Louis' record of "Oriental Strut" and drove out on the mesa with it. We dug a big hole and laid that record away, and as far as I know it is still there today.\textsuperscript{113}

Even in far-off Albuquerque it was a national Jazz holiday when Louis turned out an exceptional record. For his own part, Louis seems to

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Tbid.}, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{Tbid.}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Tbid.}, pp. 68-69.
have enjoyed Wingy's company and his brand of humor as much as anyone. Wingy tells of an immortal day they spent in New York together, doing the town. Both great dressers, they met fully adorned. A Jazz man, being a Romantic individualist, can dress as he wishes. It is one enviable compensation left to him.

We stood outside the Plymouth Hotel, looking each other over. Louis had on a pearl-gray suit with white pin stripes, a John B. Stetson hat, and Florsheim shoes. I was wearing a green sport suit, green hat, and tan shoes.

After walking around eyeing each other, we laughed like hell and agreed it was a tie.

Then we started hoofing up the street. We happened to meet Irving Mills walking with two beautiful girls.

Irving hollered at me to meet them, and as I didn't want to stop and kill time by saying "Hello" to each chick, I hollered back, "How do you double do."

Louis laughed so hard he fell into the street and almost got hit by a taxi. During our walk we decided to go to a show.

"What do you want to see, man?" I asked Louis.

"How about us diggin' Dracula, Pop?"

We hadn't been inside more than twenty minutes before Louis got scared and ran right out of the theater, me after him.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 129-30.}

The deceptively naive Wingy Manone has done a nearly perfect job of reconstructing the world to his own dimensions; his book and his position in the Jazz folklore verify this. Bing Crosby's words in the introduction he wrote to the book are more than a mere puff:

\footnote{Bing Crosby, Introduction, Ibid., p. 6.}

I have enjoyed this book . . . for its humor, for its revelations of inside jazz, for its homely philosophies. I am sure anyone, even those to whom jazz represents the school of music with a "business man's bounce," will find of interest this autobiographical account of the life of a most unusual personality.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 129-30.}

The fact that John Barrymore's death prevented the most universally praised of American actors from fulfilling his intention of appearing
in a radio series with Wingy illustrates further the extent to which Manone's completely American sense of humor affected men of practiced judgment. The humor is like Condon's, romantically, wildly unbelievable in its bold brushes with life. The pose is always maintained; the American trait of exaggeration becomes, for Wingy, reality, and a little of this wonderful reality rubs off on those who are close enough to Wingy. That is undoubtedly why they like to be close to him, and why they like to repeat so many stories about him. It is comforting to know that such an improbable man can exist in the twentieth century. Trumpet on the Wing verifies the full nature of his existence and suggests the flavor of the man's personality.

In 1950 Alan Lomax, of the U. S. Library of Congress, published a book called *Mister Jelly Roll*. It is not exactly a biography, but a study based on some records made by pioneer Jazz pianist Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton for the Library of Congress. For several days Jelly quietly talked about Storyville and Jazz while he interspersed his conversation with illustrative piano solos. Much of *Mister Jelly Roll* is simply a verbal transcription of this amazing documentary recording of one man's version of the development of Jazz. Most of the rest of the book tells of Lomax's adventures in New Orleans while checking Jelly's story through interviews.

Jelly showed an original, powerful, and poetic use of the English tongue:

You should have seen one of those sports move down the street, his shirt busted open so that you could discern his red flannel undershirt, walking along with a very mosey walk they had adopted
from the river, called shooting the agate. When you shoot the agate, your hands is at your sides with your index fingers stuck out and you kind of struts with it. That was considered a big thing with some of the illiterate women - if you could shoot a good agate and had a nice highclass red undershirt with the collar turned up, I'm telling you [sic] were liable to get next to that broad. She liked that very much.

These days, myself, I thought I would die unless I had a hat with the emblem Stetson in it and some Edwin Clapp shoes. But Nert and Nonny and many of them wouldn't wear ready-made shoes. They wore what they called the St. Louis Flats and the Chicago Flats, made with cork soles and without heels and with gambler designs on the toes. Later on, some of them made arrangements to have some kind of electric light bulbs in the toes of their shoes with a battery in their pockets, so when they would get around some jane that was kind of simple and thought they could make her, as they called making um, why they'd press a button in their pocket and light up the little-bitty bulb in the toe of their shoes and that jane was claimed. It's really the fact.116

Alan Lomax adds to the interest of his book by humanizing into literature his research. This man is established and respected as a leading folk music authority in America, and needs no real attention drawn to him here. **Mister Jelly Roll** is as authoritative a volume as Lomax's previous books on folk music.

**Mister Jelly Roll** teams with valuable historical, sociological and folk material as well as including excellent musical notation. Jelly's remarks about the New Orleans bad men (including the ballads written about them which he plays and sings) are of typical interest. The old Jazz man's story of the Robert Charles riot in New Orleans at the turn of the century is vivid historical and sociological material.

Rudi Blesh devotes a section to Jelly in **They All Played Ragtime**, quoting also from the Library of Congress records, which have

now been issued by Circle, Blesh's Jazz record company. The records themselves include much of Jelly's repertoire as a Jazz pianist, and he was one of the greatest.

Dave Dexter, in his *Jazz Cavalcade*, offers an intriguing picture of the last days of this expressive Romantic individualist:

Morton, in spite of his eccentricities, could back up almost everything he claimed. The last time I saw him was in August, 1940, in New York's Harlem. He was sporting a vivid green suit which featured a myriad of vertical yellow stripes. He puffed on a black cigar butt as he awaited his "chauffer's" arrival in the Morton automobile. Mr. Jelly Lord probably had no more than a dollar in his pocket; his attitude, however, reflected prosperity, sophistication and an intense interest in world affairs, with emphasis on Adolf Hitler's attempts to bomb Great Britain into terrified submission to Nazism. "That cat can't last," Jelly direly predicted. "It's against the laws of God to do what he's doing."

A year later Mr. Jelly Lord was dead.

The origin of the Mr. Jelly Lord title lies in the lyrics of a song Jelly once wrote. It expresses the need for a new social structure that is found in so much of the literature of Jazz. The facts might even be true, and if they are not, no matter. At least, they express the half-legendary quality of self-adopted dignity in a great artist:

> In foreign lands across the sea,  
> They knight a man for bravery,  
> Make him a duke or a count, you see,  
> Must be a member of the royalty.

> Mister Jelly struck a jazzy thing  
> In the temple by the queen and king.  
> All at once he struck a harmonic chord.  
> King said, "Make Mister Jelly a lord!"

The literature of Jazz is varied, though it follows traceable...
patterns. Though it may seem a far cry from Morton to swing band leader Artie Shaw, their books appeared within two years of each other. In 1952 Shaw published *The Trouble With Cinderella*, subtitled "An Outline of Identity."

Artie Shaw is the full-blown intellectual of the literature of Jazz. He did it the hard way, though, for he was a poverty-stricken Jewish boy whom society finally forced into an attitude of shame toward both his family and his background. At this time he was too young and afraid to do other than follow society's standards of, as he puts it, success. Tormented by poverty and racial intolerance, he turned to music as a quick way to fulfill a life which had money and fame as its goal. He soon discovered that these were not enough, and began to educate himself by means of a voracious reading program coupled with night classes. At last he hit the top of the music business as a popular entertainer just beginning to earn some twenty thousand dollars a week. Then, being the remarkable man he is, and realizing what was happening to his personality, he deliberately threw over the whole structure of success; he walked off the bandstand one night at the Hotel Pennsylvania and left the next morning for Mexico, alone, with lawsuits buzzing around his ears. He never came back; he has dipped into commercial music only often enough to keep eating and only because that is the only trade he knows. He has, of course, never been able to play profitably the kind of music he would prefer, although he has tried several times. It is hard to say how great a Jazz figure he would have become had he, from the beginning, taken the road of the Manones, Condons,
and Beiderbeckeres. The unusual thing about him is that he did not, that he played the commercial game to win, broke the bank, and then ended by offering a strange message to readers of his book. Shaw has found his own way slowly, painfully, and when being didactic he writes deliberately and simply.

The whole point of this book I've written, the principal purpose of all the stuff I've told you about myself, the only thing about it that can possibly have any meaning to anyone outside myself - is this:

Any man who sets out to achieve a goal is apt to end up right where he started, unless one thing is straight. The one thing is the nature of the goal he sets out to achieve.

If the goal is static, if it is money, $ucces$, fame, "security" - there's no use. For, whether you get money or not, whether you do or don't $ucceed, whether you achieve fame or not - the one thing you can't find anywhere on earth unless you find it in yourself is "security." Money isn't security - although it'll help you to find yourself, if you use it to eliminate, rather than procure distractions. Fame won't do it either - for the famous man is almost invariably far more insecure about hanging on to his fame than the man who never achieved fame. The $uccessful man is almost never secure - for, having climbed to a high pinnacle of $ucces$, he is for the most part far more worried about falling and breaking his neck than the guy who was never able to climb that high to begin with. And so forth and so on.

Well, then - what kind of goal is left? What is there to aim at that does make sense?

Just this:

Anything at all, providing it gives you a chance to go on growing and developing as a human being. Anything at all that interests you and absorbs you creatively - whether it is writing a book or building a better mousetrap, whether it is painting pictures or constructing model airplanes - anything at all, just so it does not have an end. Just so it doesn't lead to a final stop. Just so you can keep on with it, keep on working at it, keep on perfecting yourself in whatever you're doing.

Very well, so there is nothing new here. All college professors have been exposed to this sort of thing. So has anyone who has read widely.

enough. And Shaw's book is didactic, and literature is said to be
seldom great when it is too didactic. But all literature is not neces-
sarily aimed at the Ages. Shaw's philosophy, apparently a compound
of, most recently, semantics, James, Peirce, and Emerson, and of course
many others, has not been gained entirely in the classroom by any means.
The book is important for this very reason if no other. What other
business man of national-idol proportions, earning twenty thousand dol-
lars a week, has turned it all aside only to write a book based on
both academic philosophy and experience, and exploding the whole Ameri-
can philosophy of $ucces$$? - the Cinderella myth? The people who
read Shaw's book because of the entertainment value of his name are in
for the shock of their literary lives; and of course they are the very
people who are least likely to have a previous knowledge of what he is
telling them. Although he quotes freely from a variety of writers such
as Kierkegaard, Charles Fort, Arthur Bills, Rousseau, Seneca, Henry
Adams, Ibsen, Romain Rolland, Emily Dickenson, Shaw draws even more free-
ly on his own experience. His fondness for using such terms as Shakes-
peare's "sea change" in his own writing style is also revealing. His
philosophic concept is the dynamic universe of William James and of
semantics: "The process through which I finally arrived at a set of
temporary answers; the premature and blundering efforts I had to make
before I could finally learn the important lesson that there are never
any answers but temporary ones . . ."119 Shaw, arriving in Iowa City
to play a dance one time, was interviewed by a reporter, but insisted

119 Ibid., p. 240.
on asking the first question himself. All he wanted to know was how he could go about getting to meet Professor Wendell Johnson, the semanticist.

The Trouble With Cinderella reveals no startling departure in musical taste from other autobiographical Jazz literature. Shaw feels good Jazz deeply:

I could go on and on about this difference between the needs of the customer and the needs of the musician himself, especially when the musician happens to take his work seriously, as many jazz musicians do. Out of this serious need on the part of the jazz musician there has grown up — and is still growing — a rather impressive, if sub rosa, type of American music, an idiom which has become one of the few truly original contributions this country has ever made to any art form.²

Where Eddie Condon had to find out from Bix who Proust was, Shaw has found out for himself. Shaw can sometimes write especially well. His chapter describing a typical band rehearsal is as effective a piece of writing as has probably yet been done on that subject: it is professional and it is sensitive.

Shaw has been closer to the businessman, the night-club owner, the radio world, the really promotional side of the music business, than other writers in this chapter, because he played more commercial music. He resolved to be a professional success while attempting to be as artistically successful as possible. He found the secondary aim impossible of any realization as long as he persisted in following the primary resolution.

What's the matter with a business that enables a fellow to

²Ibid., pp. 147-48.
earn that kind of money?

One big thing. For me, that is. Simply that there is far more business connected with it than there is music—or self-satisfaction. Market-place values dominate to such an extent that musical ones finally cease to exist. 121

Shaw is bitter and convincing when he writes about club-owners:

"Why the band's beginning to sound better than it ever did. I can't understand what you're talking about when you tell people we're doing a bad job."

I was so indignant he had to cut me short. "Listen," he said. "You're telling me about music. I don't give a good goddamn about music. I'm paying you to play so we can get some goddamn customers in the joint and make some dough. What the hell do you think I'm running here—a goddamn concert hall or something?"

I tried to break in, but he was going like a house on fire. And what he said next was the thing I have remembered.

"You listen to me! . . . Your problem is to get people in here. And if you want to take your pants down on that goddamn band—stand every night and take a crap up there, and if people'll pay to come here and see you do it— I'll pay you to take a crap up there every night. That's how much I give a good goddamn about what kind of music you're playing—you hear me?" 122

Or when he writes about radio:

The work I was now doing had a lot more to do with selling soap than with music. On most of the programs I did, there was little or no room for any sort of individual musical expression. Radio music is run by a stop watch. Musical phrases are metered out in terms of minutes and seconds, rather than in terms of musical feeling or anything connected with musicality. 123

He describes rehearsing Wagner for a radio show. The piece included a Grand Pause:

"Hey—what was that long silence?" came the booming voice of the production man from inside the sound-control booth.

The conductor stopped the orchestra. "It's a Grand Pause," he

121 Ibid., pp. 384-85.
122 Ibid., pp. 305-06.
123 Ibid., pp. 256-57.
yelled into the microphone.

There was a short lull. The production man conferred busily with the agency man and the sponsor’s representative. Then — ”Cut it,” he spoke up into his microphone.

Some of the men in the orchestra snickered. The conductor glared them down. He made one more attempt to maintain the musical proprieties. ”It’s Wagner,” he shouted. ”The music is marked ‘G.P.’ We have to pause. I’ll cut it as short as I can, but we’ve got to pause or it won’t make sense.

”Hold it,” came the Voice of God from the control booth, More conferring. Finally the voice came booming out again. ”No pause.”

Like Mezzrow, Shaw found his best friends in Harlem in the days when he was in his worst trouble: ”For with these people I felt a warmth and enthusiasm and friendliness, and a sense of life that had been completely lacking in most of the relationships I had ever had with members of my own race.”

Like Mezzrow: ”... on the few occasions when I was forced to realize I was a white man, I used to wish I could actually be a Negro.”

And today:

These friends were real, and true, and warm, each in his own way, and throughout the years, every time I have ever run into one of them, there has been that strange and subtle bond between us, that deep feeling of mutual understanding that exists between human beings who remember a long way back to a time when their paths crossed, back to a time when things are different... back to the days when there was time for kindness and laughter, understanding and sympathy, and the kind of friendship nobody can ever have too much of in this present world we all have to try to live in together.

Shaw’s attitude toward his several marriages sounds as startlingly
candid as the tone of his entire book. He is clear in stating that they were caused by a basic loneliness and that he was trying to solve it within the culture pattern in which he exists. He says all his divorces made very good sense, and that he can see nothing particularly funny in a man's wanting to be married in order to live a normal married life, and being unable to do so.

The story of the crass life of a big-time band leader is rarely told. Shaw explains that he was a national figure: it made no difference how well his orchestra played; all he had to do was appear on the stage. Music was forgotten in the rush of autographs and clothes-tearing. He was a celebrity, and he could not eat out alone without being pointed at. He could not eat with the men in the band any more, because they feared ostracism from their fellow workers on grounds of seeking favoritism. He ate, finally, alone in his hotel room.

This insanity went right on . . . . Meanwhile, I went around the country in my own private fish-bowl, developing the loveliest set of paranoid symptoms you ever saw in your life. The plain truth of the matter is that throughout most of that year I was scared out of my wits! . . . Nothing makes any sense at all. For you still feel more or less like the same guy you were a week or a month ago, when you were just scuffling along trying to keep things going. 128 . . . And along the way I began to understand what a fellow I'd once read - a quite unsuccessful guy named William Blake - had meant when he said, "You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough." 129

The book is a grand explosion of the American success myth by a man who knows, and perhaps its most memorable climax comes at the turning

128 Ibid., pp. 342-43.

129 Ibid., p. 346.
point of the whole business, brought about by Shaw himself, a "good cat who just hadn't dug life yet," as Louis would have said. He had got into music for business reasons, which may be why he got onto the wrong road. But he finally had the courage to build his own set of values at the height of his fame:

In the end I had to take matters into my own hands. This I did one night at around eleven o'clock in the middle of an engagement, . . . at the Pennsylvania Hotel. . . . I walked off the bandstand, went up to my room and called my lawyer. When I got him on the phone I told him I was leaving:

"What do you mean, leaving?" he asked. "You've got a contract, you can't just walk out."

"I can't, eh? Well, that's just what I've just done," I told him,

"Hold it, don't do anything till I come down, will you?"

I promised I'd wait for him.

He arrived in an astonishingly short time, considering that he lived all the way out in Great Neck, Long Island. Still, I suppose that was the first time he'd ever had to deal with a client who'd suddenly gone berserk.

He came up to my room and tried to reason with me. I listened to him, and I must say he was quite good. . . . When he was all through, my face must have shown him how little impression he'd made. At that point he asked if he could order up a few drinks. . . . By the time the drinks came up my agent showed up too.

He came storming and raving into the room. He is and was then the head of a large talent agency, and is usually a fairly calm man. But I've never seen him like he was right then. His face was red, his hair was all mussed up, and there was a mad glare in his eyes. . . . He went into a tirade that lasted some ten or fifteen minutes before he came up for air. He stormed and stamped up and down the room, pleading his case like a great criminal lawyer, pulling out all the stops, leaving out nothing; and the gist of it all was that if I did this crazy thing I was threatening to do, I'd - I'd - well, I'd be cutting my throat at the absolute least.

"It's my own throat," I reminded him.

That only set him off again.

The final hope to which this rational, confident, successful theatrical

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agent turned in his greatest need suggests about as clearly as a brief incident can the intellectual poverty in areas at the top of the American entertainment world:

The whole session lasted a long time—the rest of the night. There was one time when my agent begged me to allow him to bring up someone he swore by, who, he assured me, would bring me to my senses if anyone on earth could. However, when I learned that this "person" was a woman who performed her miracles with the aid of a mixture of Christian Science and astrology, I decided I'd have to draw the line.\(^{131}\)

Shaw's biography is a story by a man without illusions. He, unlike most Jazz men, has seen the other side of the coin as clearly as anyone can, and he has come back after having nearly lost his sense of humor, his Comic Spirit. In these ways he differs from the Jazz personality as displayed in Jazz biography and autobiography. But his is a valuable contribution, and it fills out the empiric determination of the Liberal Romantic set of values that is displayed throughout this genre of Jazz literature. Furthermore, Shaw is in a position, because of his name, to reach readers whom the ordinary Jazz man could not hope to touch. Shaw's ethical message is a product of the ethical Pragmatism of American philosophy, and the highly practical illustrations taken from his own unprecedented experience would probably find approval with the Peirce, James, Dewey school.

In 1954 Louis Armstrong offered *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* to the growing list of Jazz autobiography. Louis' part of New Orleans was the dangerous part: "Whether my mother did any hustling, I cannot

\(^{131}\text{Ibid., p. 352.}\)
say, If she did, she certainly kept it out of my sight." 132 At the same time his mother emerges as a real and fine person who meant a great deal to his personality. "She never envied anybody. I guess I must have inherited this trait from Mayann." 133 One of the most effective passages in the book concerns the night Louis and his mother, Mayann, went out on the town of New Orleans; she wanted to be along when he officially learned to handle his liquor.

Louis' experiences with Jim Crow were no fewer than any other Southern Negro's:

We were the first colored band to play most of the towns at which we stopped, particularly the smaller ones. The ofays were not used to seeing colored boys blowing horns and making fine music for them to dance by. At first we ran into some ugly experiences while we were on the bandstand, and we had to listen to plenty of nasty remarks. But most of us were from the South anyway. We were used to that kind of jive, and we would just keep on swinging as though nothing had happened. Before the evening was over they loved us. We couldn't turn for them singing our praises and begging us to hurry back. 134

To contrast with this little episode of Christian whites being given an object lesson in Christian practice, there is Louis' very interesting reaction to the matter of his mother's "conversion."

Across the street from where we lived was Elder Cozy's church. He was the most popular preacher in the neighborhood and he attracted people from other parts of the city as well. I can still remember the night mama took me to his church. Elder Cozy started to get warmed up and then he hit his stride. It was not long before he had the whole church rocking. Mama got so happy and so excited that she knocked me off the bench as she shouted and

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133 Ibid., p. 9.
134 Ibid., p. 189.
swayed back and forth. She was a stout woman and she became so excited that it took six of the strongest brothers to grab hold of her and pacify her. I was just a kid and I did not dig at the time. I laughed myself silly, and when mama and I reached home she gave me hell.

"You little fool," she said. "What did you mean by laughing when you saw me being converted?"

After that mama really got religion. I saw her baptized in the Mississippi where she was ducked in the water so many times that I thought she was going to be drowned.135

There is a certain restraint in the way these two passages are written that leaves a great deal about conformity unsaid, and that fits the general pattern of the non-conformist philosophy of the Jazz musician as expressed in his autobiographical writings.

The kind of tolerance Louis Armstrong developed in his youth is illustrated by the following incident. His cousin, Flora Miles, was a teen-age girl who was a member of his immediate family for a time.

While Flora was going around with those strange kids she got into trouble. Through an old white fellow who used to have these colored girls up to an old ramshackle house of his. I do not need to tell you what he was up to.

My cousin Flora Miles became pregnant. I was just a youngster and neither I nor any of the rest of us knew what to do about the problem. All I could do was to watch Flora get larger and larger until a fine little fat baby arrived. Flora named him Clarence. 136

Everybody told old man Ike Miles, Flora's father, to have that old man arrested. But that did not make sense. He was a white man. If we had tried to have him arrested the judge would have had us all thrown out into the street, including baby Clarence. We put that idea out of our minds, and did the next best thing. There was only one thing to do and that was a job for me. I had to take care of Clarence myself and, believe me, it was really a struggle.136

Louis has this to say about "white folks." "I have always loved my

135 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
136 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
white folks, and they have always proved that they loved me and my music. I have never had anything to be depressed about in that respect, only respect and appreciation."137 There is a mature acceptance here that makes one able to understand why the Negro in the novels of William Faulkner seems to offer some of the very little hope Faulkner holds out for the South.

Louis' attitude toward Bix, the white idol of Jazz, is extremely interesting, because it fits our pattern perfectly. It must be added that the fit is surprising, too, because Louis himself is the other idol. Bix worshipped with the others at Louis' shrine; Louis apparently worships with the others at Bix's:

After the first trip to Saint Louis we went up river to Davenport, Iowa, where all the Streckfus boats put up for the winter. It was there that I met the almighty Bix Beiderbecke, the great cornet genius. Every musician in the world knew and admired Bix. He made the greatest reputation possible for himself, and we all respected him as though he had been a god.138

This quotation completes the picture offered in the Jazz autobiography of a racial brotherhood existing in Jazz long before such a thing was even dreamed of in America. America has not lived up to it to this very day.

Carl Van Vechten, one of the few men who still seems to retain the expansive, exploratory spirit of the Twenties, was listening one evening in New York City to a young English professor who is also an avid Jazz pianist. The year was 1951. Carried away with his subject,

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137 Ibid., p. 195.

138 Ibid., p. 209.
the speaker became unusually enthusiastic and forceful. During a pause, Van Vechten sat back and blandly said, "Why Ed, you surprise me. I thought all the young people today were born dead."

Like Van Vechten, one is occasionally tempted to wonder at the young people of today who seem to assume that all of the social and ethical reforms suggested during the Twenties have actually taken place. The ever-present threat of curtailment of academic freedom, the antics that still go on in business and advertising under the guise of bettering America, the cultural insolvency of most service clubs, perhaps even the national pronouncements from all quarters that America has the right hand of God, and certainly the continuing success of quacks of all varieties—all these are still not too far from Gopher Prairie.

It would seem to some, who are wary of binding feet and binding heads too, that it may already be time for a Neo-Twenties movement. The rapidly growing literature of Jazz seems at times to offer evidence of the cultural need for such an artistic development in American literature. Jazz may well be bringing this about already in American music; and there is such a thing as a climate of thought. The rapidly growing literature of Jazz and the interest in Jazz from literary quarters might be auspices. It is yet possible that Eliot, Tate, and company do not offer, after all, the end and all of literary criticism—of life attitudes.

The genre of biography and autobiography in the literature of Jazz in America has made a worthwhile contribution to American literature. Social values are abundant in the authentic and rare pictures of
the Twenties offered in these books by Jazz men who were forced to earn their livings in the most bizarre quarters of the social structure of the Twenties. Social values exist also in the revelation in these books of a racial brotherhood and an inter-racial ideal that are as yet unknown to American society at large. They exist also in the daring Liberal Romantic pattern of social values that exists in the Jazz world; valuable suggestions lie here. Cultural values parallel social values in most of these instances as well as existing alone in other instances, as in these writers' effective literary expression of opposition to materialism and prejudice as factors in determining artistic and cultural worth in America. Further cultural value lies in the literary record of a new art and of its development as a permanent part of our culture.

The values of pleasure and inspiration are present in these books, as they should be in all good biography and autobiography. Among other attractions, there is the vivid and poetic language of the Jazz world in which these stories are told. There is also the inspiration of a new individualism, art, and ethics that have existed in America's Jazz world. It is a philosophy based on art, brotherhood, and humor, with a functional awareness of reality as its basis.

As a literary movement, these biographies offer a Romantic revival in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The best parts of the Romantic nature are expressed here: reality combined with ideals. There are no illusions about business, the entertainment world, or any of the other fierce actualities of America. There is, in addition,
no sentimentality, but instead a strong Comic Spirit combined with an inherent belief in the perfectibility of mankind.

These beliefs are combined in the two human symbols of the aims of this Romantic world. One is white: Leon "Bix" Beiderbecks, the young man of high social environment who chose to desert the accepted social values of his time in order to follow his genius. The other is a Negro: Louis Armstrong, who, springing from the opposite social environment, has attained international artistic acceptance. These men represent a racial brotherhood far in advance of even today's social standards, an artistic perfection unattainable to but a few, and tolerance combined with the Comic Spirit in their attitude toward life.

This genre offers a positive belief in contrast to the prevailing current of literature in America. It stands too as a revival of Romanticism by practicing Romanticists who see life, through the medium of their art, as a rich and worthwhile experience. The zest for living expressed here is unique in the literary experience of the last twenty-five years in America.

Although other, contrary attitudes have developed in the Jazz world since the Twenties and Thirties, they have not as yet been expressed in biographical or autobiographical literature.
CHAPTER V

JAZZ IN AMERICAN FICTION

You see, when the jazz musicians play, it is an expression of themselves as musicians. It takes great originality and spirit to improvise. And when a composer writes down, he is working with the intellect, consciously, with the intention that others should follow his instructions, and in so doing, re-create his music. In this, the composer is the individual, in the romantic tradition of European music. That is why, also, the classical musician cannot approach the jazz musician - he simply cannot do the things a jazz musician can do with his instrument, any instrument!

Hector Villa-Lobos - in an interview with Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

Three demonstrable trends have become apparent in the treatment of Jazz by American fiction since the Twenties, when Jazz became a national social force to be reckoned with. The first concerns the quantitative increase in Jazz subject matter; the second concerns the development of a consistent Liberal Romantic treatment of this subject matter by authors, concomitant with a growing accuracy in their treatment of Jazz as an art form. Although various types of popular music had appeared in literature for many years previous to that time, the early and middle Twenties constitute the first era in which Jazz began to be treated as subject matter in the American novel. Since Jazz did not reach the East, traditional bailiwick of American writers, until nearly 1920, there is little question of its having appeared before that time in the American novel, except in its root forms:
the work song, spiritual, Creole song, and Blues. The appearance of such Jazz roots in the fiction of Mark Twain and George Washington Cable has already been pointed out. As might be expected, writers of the Twenties continued to employ the Negro work songs, spirituals, and Blues as had these predecessors. Examples are found in the work of such recognized writers as Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson.

Miss Cather's *My Ántonia*, published in 1918, includes an episode involving Blind d'Arnault, a traveling Negro pianist of great talent. The importance of his visit to the small Midwestern town in the novel is so great that his artistry becomes very nearly a symbol of all art: "There was only one break in the dreary monotony of that month..." D'Arnault had been brought up as a slave on a Southern plantation. The fact that his music was not in the European, or classical, vein is made clear:

Several teachers experimented with him. They found he had absolute pitch, and a remarkable memory. As a very young child he could repeat, after a fashion, any composition that was played for him. No matter how many wrong notes he struck, he never lost the intention of a passage, he brought the substance of it across by irregular and astonishing means. He wore his teachers out. He could never learn like other people, never acquire any finish. He was always a Negro prodigy who played barbarously and wonderfully. As piano-playing, it was perhaps abominable, but as music it was something real, vitalized by a sense of rhythm.

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1 The term "blues" goes back to a time behind the music. It has always meant a mood of depression. Note the section on Emerson in Lowell's "Pable for Critics": "[Carlyle] gives nature and God his own fits of the blues." In the color symbolism of the songs of the American Indians, blue carries the same significance.

that was stronger than his other physical senses — that not only filled his dark mind, but worried his body incessantly. To hear him, to watch him, was to see a Negro enjoying himself as only a Negro can. It was as if all the agreeable sensations possible to creatures of flesh and blood were heaped up on those black-and-white keys, and he were gloating over them and trickling them through his yellow fingers. 3

The Jazz historian becomes immediately aware of the fact that Miss Cather must at one time have heard one or more of the many itinerant Jazz pianists from the New Orleans or St. Louis area — men like Jelly Roll Morton, James Scott, Tony Jackson, Scott Joplin, Albert Wilson — who played throughout the Midwest. It is obvious that Miss Cather greatly enjoyed the music, "something real," although she had a bit of difficulty avoiding the air of gentle racial superiority suggested by such phrases as "enjoying himself as only a Negro can." But it must be remembered that contemporaneously, hers was a liberal attitude. Her sturdy attempt to describe emotionally and account rationally for the music is proof in itself of the impression it must have made on her.

Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter*, printed in 1925, employs Negro songs in a New Orleans setting. Bruce Dudley, the newspaper man, had left his job and Bernice as well; New Orleans represented the dream of escape and freedom from the mechanistic Northern world. On several different occasions he hears "An' I ain't go'na give you none of my jelly roll," 4 part of the lyrics from a tune which has been recorded by a number of New Orleans and Chicago Jazz men.


4 See chapters X and XI of *Dark Laughter*. 
As the Twenties moved on, however, Jazz itself, now becoming recognized as an entity, began to appear as a separate music in American fiction, most often for purposes of establishing a mood or atmospheric effect. In most of these novels there naturally was a good deal of musical overlapping between Jazz and the popular dance music of the day. The reader is often not sure just exactly what he is supposed to be hearing when the author refers to "jazz"; however, it soon becomes apparent that most of it is meant to mean the treacly dance music of the Twenties (still played by Guy Lombardo) which had borrowed its very novelty by introducing Jazz percussive patterns, a freer vibrato suggested by Jazz, and other such stylisms. The New Orleans music which had remained the fountainhead, which in fact nourished all this, was seldom heard in the North and East. A loose division must therefore be made between Jazz used for atmospheric effects and popular dance music used for atmospheric effects. Examples of the latter are plentiful, of course, but examples of the former began to appear also in the late Twenties and early Thirties in such novels as Nigger Heaven, Of Time and the River, and Mamba's Daughters.

By the late Thirties the world of the Jazz musician himself began to appear as setting and background material in novels like Young Man With a Horn and Piano in the Band. Broader uses were being found for this fresh material. It had already come to represent in certain novels a symbol of the artistic ideal to both the professional and non-professional sympathizer. This was inevitably in keeping with the growing recognition given to Jazz as an art form by the intellec-
tuals and literary people who were contributing books in the critical-
historical Jazz genre as well as articles in such magazines as Harper's
and Atlantic.

By the Forties Jazz had become a factor in the racial novel,
symbolizing always a common meeting ground for black man and white,
where prejudice was abandoned in the glow of artistic fusion which is
so adequately described in several instances in the autobiographies
of Jazz musicians. Without Magnolias, a 1949 racial novel which won
the third George Washington Carver Award, is one of several examples.

At the same time writers were developing Jazz material as
never before. Jazz is a significant symbol in James Jones' From Here
to Eternity, in Henry Miller's The Colossus of Maroussi, and in Ralph
Ellison's The Invisible Man. It played an important part in a racial
and historical novel, Jehovah Blues, by "popular" writer Marguerite
Steen. Harold Sinclair, already a historical novelist of experience,
produced Music out of Dixie in 1952, a book built entirely around
what is known of the Storyville days. Jelly Roll Morton plays a pro-
minent fictional part in it.

Along with the quantitative increase in the use of Jazz material
in fiction, came a corresponding qualitative improvement. No longer
does a writer dare employ the word "jazz" in his work without meaning
just that: Jazz. The novels of the Forties and Fifties never confuse
Jazz with the "tenor band" type of music which is a holdover from the
Twenties. Jazz is now treated according to Liberal Romantic values,
and as an art form of unrecognized significance in nearly every use of it in fiction. Literature came of age with regard to Jazz before the American public or even the record companies recognized it as an art form. Literature has had the most to do with bringing about this recognition.

Of course the music itself has added new developments, phases, and styles down through the years. It has always been a dynamic thing, progressing from New Orleans style to Chicago style to Swing to Bop to Progressive styles like that of Dave Brubeck. Naturally the literature has dealt with these various styles and the varying schools of musicians who produced them as well as some of the varieties of individuals which were attracted to them: adolescents, Negroes, intellectuals, and so on. The new BeBop, or Bop Jazz style which rose in the Forties was particularly important to the development of Jazz, and therefore received its due treatment in literature. Its pattern of philosophy as expressed in literature, although mainly in the Liberal Romantic tradition, offers some variations from those found in the Jazz autobiographical writings already discussed. Bop was adopted by certain characters in novel and short story as a musical satisfaction existing in a society they detested. These fictional figures are drawn from real life, as lived today chiefly in certain areas of Harlem and Greenwich Village, and representing the "hipster" or "cool" milieu. The Harlem branch of this group is nursing the understandable revolt of the at least partially educated Northern Negro who has been promised equality and does not possess it in actuality. The white Greenwich
village group of non-musicians which refers to itself as the "beat generation," or the "dragged generation," is more difficult to understand, and appears to be a post war revolt of the same empty nature suggested by Scott Fitzgerald in the Twenties - a revolt of disillusioned intellectual dervishes trying to follow their senses to nirvana. They seem to be attracted to Jazz just as any group in revolt, whether with or without new bases, is attracted to this music of individuality which offers so perfect an artistic example of group belonging (the band) ideally balanced with individual action (the soloist). Professional musicians invented and developed Bop in Harlem; these men had considerably better reasons for their dissatisfaction. Many of them were and are understandably neurotic, and they poured into their music their entire effort to create beauty and meaning in their shattered existences; it is the best part of them.

From the discussion which has been pursued to this point, the following divisions emerge as different uses of Jazz in American fiction: Jazz used for atmospheric effects, for setting and background: as a theme or symbol of the artistic ideal, as a symbol of this same ideal to the non-professional, and as a factor in the racial novel.

Atmospheric Effects

Although atmospheric effects inspired by Jazz are natural and frequent in any novel or story based on Jazz, there was and still is fiction in which Jazz is employed only in special instances for certain effects.
Carl Van Vechten has already been cited as a notable Liberal Romantic critic of the Twenties who recognized Jazz for the force it was to come to be in American music. His interest in Bessie Smith has been stressed, but he was equally well acquainted with the talents of a myriad of Negro Jazz musicians, and his knowledge of the Harlem of the Twenties was unquestioned. He has been attacked by E. Sims Campbell, Barry Ulanov, and other Jazz writers, for his glorification of the Negro because these men feel that Van Vechten was insincerely following a belief in the "jungle" fad which offered to the sad young men and flappers a promise of primitive (id) releases. Whatever else he may be accused of, Van Vechten was not insincere. The fact remains that his musical taste was unimpaired by any fads he might have started or become involved in. He interested himself in a number of Jazz musicians who have in the short span of years since become Jazz immortals. His statements about Jazz are nearer to the truth of today than the wild writing about Jazz that went on in the Twenties. In the words of Edward Lueders' recent book on Van Vechten:

The difference was that Van Vechten not only thought about the Negro's music and wrote of it, he felt it and understood it. He had lived close to it for ten years when he wrote in his valedictory to music criticism in March, 1924, "Jazz may not be the last hope of American music, nor yet the best hope, but at present, I am convinced, it is its only hope."6

His 1926 novel, *Nigger Heaven*, offers an early example of the use of Jazz for atmosphere. The reader can be reasonably certain that it was Jazz because (1) Van Vechten knew his Jazz musicians, and (2)

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the scene are set in Harlem, which was the main hotbed of real Jazz
in New York in the Twenties. The following passages are typical:

Couples were dancing in such close proximity that their bodies
melted together as they swayed and rocked to the tormented howling
of the brass, and the barbaric beating of the drums.7

The drummer in complete abandon tossed his sticks in the air
while he shook his head like a wild animal. . . . The band snored
and snorted and whistled and laughed like a hyena.8

The idea of primitive emotion suggested here is carried further
in another passage dealing with Mary's self-analysis with regard to
her racial feeling:

Savages! Savages at heart! And she had lost or forfeited her
birthright, this primitive birthright which was so valuable and
important as an asset, a birthright that all the civilized races
were struggling to get back to - this fact explained the art of
a Picasso or Stravinsky. To be sure, she, too, felt this African
beat . . . this love of drums, of exciting rhythms.9

The reference to Picasso offers some basis of artistic comparison for
what Van Vechten feels in the primitive emotion expressed by Jazz.

What appears to be condescension based on racial prejudice in other
writers does not seem to apply to Van Vechten's statements about "savages"
and the primitive emotion of the Negro for one reason alone: Van Vechten
approved of both the Negro and his emotions, whatever their true nature;
Van Vechten, adopting the anthropological view of no inferior cultures,
thought we could learn from the Negro, and subsequent developments
toward a more non-Puritanistic moral code in America have certainly

7Carl Van Vechten, Nigger Heaven (New York: Avon Publishing Co.,
1952), p. 15.

8Ibid., p. 16.

9Ibid., p. 63.
proved that the force of such belief has not been lost.

Byron and Mary, in the same novel, dance at the Charity Ball in Harlem to the music of Fletcher Henderson's band (the Jazz collector wonders whether Louis Armstrong was playing in Henderson's trumpet section at the time). The book closes on the same primitive note Van Vechten has employed in creating his Jazz band atmosphere.

In the final chapter a Jazz band plays a background for Byron's drunken decision to kill Randolphi Pettijohn, the Bolito King: "The music shivered and broke, cracked and smashed. Jungle land. Hottentots and Bantus swaying under the amber moon. Love, sex, passion ... hate." 10

When Van Vechten writes of the Blues, however, in the same novel, it is with an entirely different emotional effect in mind:

"Bottle it, Howard," Olive cried, yawning. "I've heard enough of this lecture for one evening. Let's listen to Clara Smith." She wound up the phonograph and put on a record. Soon the meaning wonder of the Blues singer's voice sounded in the little room:

Ah wants to hop a train an' Go where duh town is clean. Wants to hop a train, Lawd! Go where duh town is clean, Folks roun' heah is so low-down an' mean.

The tears were streaming down Mary's cheeks. The others were sitting in solemn, dejected silence.11

Clara Smith was one of the outstanding Blues singers of the Twenties, and her records are revered by Jazz collectors today.

When Van Vechten's characters are serious or dejected he tends

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10 Ibid., p. 184.

11 Ibid., p. 39.
to employ a blues or spiritual singer as scenic background. Mary
reflects at one point in the book on the faith of the people who wrote
and sang the spirituals. There is another scene centered around the
emotion provoked in a small-minded audience (the Albrights, and Or-
ville Snodes of the Y.M.C.A.) by "Ezekiel Saw The Wheel," sung by the
unschooled Webb Leverett.

Du Bose Hayward, the Charleston author who collaborated with
Gershwin on *Porgy and Bess*, employed spirituals for atmospheric effect
in somewhat the same manner as did Van Vechten, but one passage in
*Mamba’s Daughters* suggests, in spite of the odd instrumentation of the
Southern band involved, that Jazz was being played and that it had a
tremendous and worthwhile emotional effect on the listener:

Charlie rejoined the party just as the music flung its uni-
fying rhythm into the discordant babel. They elbowed their way
through the press and entered the hall.

... There were eight men in the orchestra, and Lissa noted im-
mediately with the color snobbery of the Broaden set that they
were all full-blooded negroes. There were two guitars, two banjes,
a fiddle, a cornet, and trombone, and a man with drums and traps.
The sound was unlike anything that the girl had ever heard. Strive
as she might, she could not recognize the tune. As a matter of
fact, it was not an orchestra in a strict interpretation of the
term, but merely a collection of eight individuals who had taken
some simple melody as a theme and were creating rhythm and harmony
around it as they played. Her immediate sensation was one of shock
at the crude and almost deafening uproar. Then, as she stood listen-
ing, a strange excitement commenced to possess her. Music had
never moved her like this before. It had made her cry - and it had
shaken her with delight, but this seemed to be breaking something
loose deep within her - something that seethed hot through her veins
and set her muscles jumping.12

12 Du Bose Hayward, *Mamba’s Daughters* (New York: The Literary
Guild, 1929), pp. 231-32.
One of Heyward's favorites among his own poems was "Jasbo Brown," which was about a mythical Negro Jazz pianist:

... and he would yearn to shout
Over broken measures that his soul flung out
Of some recess where joy and agony
Whirled in a rhythm that could feel and see

... Fingers conjured music
From the ivories
Into swaying bodies,
Into flexing knees.

However, with the arrival of the Negro girl Lissa at the Metropolitan Opera House as a singer, Heyward brings about a climax in *Mamba's Daughters* that seems to suggest the symphonizing of Jazz in the Gershwin manner as the great hope of the Negro's music. It has been remarked that this attitude was a popular one in the Twenties.

There is actually some indication that European authors of the Twenties and the immediately preceding years may have taken the Jazz-popular music mixture they heard more seriously than did their American colleagues. Hermann Hesse, Germany's great Nobel prize-winning novelist, offers a Jazz saxophonist, Pablo, as a reincarnation of Mozart in the remarkable German novel, *Steppenwolf*, which certainly does not seem to have received the acclaim due it in America, incidentally.

In Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel* there is a brief employment of vocal Jazz to help fill out the character of Pearl Hines. Helen and Pearl sang together at moving picture theaters in country towns:

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"Pearl Hines was a heavily built girl with a meaty face and negroid lips. She was jolly and vital. She sang ragtime and nigger songs with a natural passion.\textsuperscript{14} Wolfe describes how Pearl's "happy and vital sensuality" and the gusto with which she sang occasionally led men to make passes at Helen and Pearl, at which times Pearl was wounded and disappointed. Wolfe does suggest in Pearl's attitude a quality in "nigger music" that can be appreciated without debasing the listener.

In Of Time and the River Captain Nicholl and some of his companions form a little band for their own entertainment:

They played nothing but American jazz music or sobbing crooner's rhapsodies or nigger blues. Their performance was astonishing. Although it was contrived solely for their own amusement, they hurled themselves into it with all the industrious earnestness of professional musicians employed by a night club or dance hall to furnish dance music for the patrons.\textsuperscript{15}

Wolfe goes on for a whole page to describe the intensity of their playing. Their efforts at the blues are sincere but hopeless, for they do not feel the music as did Pearl Hines. They are simply trying to escape from an inner emptiness by "mouthing the words of negro blues . . . and with an obvious satisfaction, with an accent which was remarkably good, and yet which had something foreign and inept in it."\textsuperscript{16} Wolfe seems puzzled by the extent of their need for this music, but, omnipotent observer that he was, he recorded it, and created an effective

\textsuperscript{14} Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward Angel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 249.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 626.
scene with it.

John O'Hara, who consistently uses Jazz as a symbol of the artistic ideal in his novels, has also employed it at times in order to create a desired atmospheric effect. This takes place in O'Hara's 1938 novel, *Hope of Heaven*, when after Peggy's brother, Keith, is tragically killed, Jimmy Malloy takes Peggy for long rides to help her recover from her grief:

Then we formed another habit, that of going to a late spot that I know of, where the fellows from the dance orchestras would meet after work and have jam sessions. Nobody knew Peggy. Nobody wanted to. The life of the place was the jam session, and non-musicians went there under sufferance.17

The unique atmosphere of the jam session, where the music alone matters, is just the right place for Peggy, and O'Hara makes a point of it. Jazz, like any valid art, can be consoling as well as stimulating.

In *The Farmer's Hotel* O'Hara employs a semi-jazz orchestra from the annals of music history to help characterize an old colored trombone player named Charles: "I went overseas as a trombone player. I played trombone with Lieutenant Jim Europe's band, the 369th Infantry Band."18 John Steiner, long a Chicago Jazz authority has described Jim Europe as "something of a composite early-day Ellington and a colored Horace Heidt with a dash of Paul Whiteman."19 Charles later gets out

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19 John Steiner, "Jim Europe's Discography," *Jazz Record*, No. 60 (November, 1947), 18.
his trombone and duplicates Tommy Dorsey's popular rendition of "Getting Sentimental Over You." O'Hara has effectively marked him as more of a "popular" dance musician than a Jazz musician.

Since the coming of Bop in the Forties, a number of New York writers have employed this new music to establish atmosphere. Although its impact has been nation-wide - it has even affected popular dance band scoring - only the most spectacular extracurricular aspect of it - its "cool" hangers on, the "hipsters" - has been employed to any extent in fiction, with one exception. Although the writers use the music to set atmosphere for rather degrading human activities, they themselves seem to appreciate its inherent worth as music aside from the unhealthy atmosphere in which it usually flourishes in fiction.

This situation might be somewhat comparable in real life to the development of New Orleans Jazz, whose best performers could find employment only in the most unattractive and vice-ridden sections of New Orleans. Bop, like New Orleans Jazz in its beginnings, has a limited audience. So far it has been chiefly a musician's music, and only through their appreciation of it has it lived and developed into a tremendous influence on even popular arrangers. Its odd intervals, unusual chord extensions, vibrateless tone, uncommon percussive approach consisting of steady "high hat" cymbal rhythm with added off-beat snare and bass drum accents, new demands on technique, and fresh solo style have revolutionized much of Jazz. Bop has since evolved into the style known as "cool," featuring reduced tension and added "progressive" effects.
Go, a 1952 novel by Clellon Holmes, one of the Greenwich Village group of chroniclers of the "beat generation," offers examples of Bop for mood and atmospheric effects. Hobbes, the chief protagonist in the book, explains to a girl the music that she is hearing in a club called "The Go Hole," which is undoubtedly a pseudonym for Birdland, an actual night club which is the chief outlet for Boppers in New York City:

"When the music is cool, it's pleasant, somewhat meditative and without tension. Everything before, you see, just last year was 'crazy,' 'frantic,' 'gone.' Now, everybody is acting cool, unemotional, withdrawn. . . . What can one designate the moment that comes after 'the end,' after all? I suppose it's complete passivity, oblivion . . ."20

At one point, however, Holmes makes a hopeful, rather than negative, artistic connection between the "cool" musician and the listener, without pretense, who sincerely appreciates the music. As a matter of fact, the picture Holmes paints here shows the young listeners as needing the music to give them a sense of "belonging" in a society dislocated by World War II:

These restless youngsters, finding a passion in this music that belonged defiantly to them, were part of a spectacle that was offered for curious outsiders, come to experience a new diversion. The faithful themselves, jammed like immigrants into a cattle car, closely watched by the angry bouncers, laughed at by those who could afford drinks and tables, were oblivious to this, however, and they became willingly transported when cued by the musicians, who played only to them and remained bitterly indifferent to the noisy parties at the tables in between . . .

In this modern jazz, they heard something rebel and nameless that spoke for them, and their lives knew a gospel for the first time. It was more than a music; it became an attitude toward

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life, a way of walking, a language and a costume; and these introverted kids (emotional outcasts of a war they had been too young to join, or in which they had lost their innocence), who had never belonged anywhere before, now felt somewhere at last.21

This passage serves to illustrate the continuing use of Jazz by American writers in the Fifties. Jazz is still used to create special moods and atmospheres as well as to better delineate human character and motives.

Chandler Brossard, another chronicler of the "beat generation," published in 1952 a novel, *Who Walks in Darkness*, which deals with the same general village background and setting as *Go*. Henry Porter, the unscrupulous novelist who is a leading character, plays the bongos occasionally (they were introduced into Jazz units in the Forties by Dizzy Gillespie and others). Brossard deliberately uses up-tempo Bop musical backgrounds occasionally to set the mood for the equally fast-paced and searching qualities of the lives of his characters.

I looked away from the Rouault and listened to Denny Blue. He was blowing all by himself now, without the orchestra, blowing on and on and up and up, blowing one variation after another variation on what he had been blowing, getting hotter and faster, more alone in what he was doing, until I thought he was going to come right off the record. A real junkie. He was loaded with heroin on this record. He flipped his wig when it was finished and they took him to a sanitarium.22

The very obvious reference here is to Charlie Parker, the great Bop alto saxophonist who experienced one climax in his almost completely tragic life when he suffered a breakdown brought on by narcotic addiction


after a record performance on the West Coast. This Parker Dial Record Company side, unlike Brossard's record by Danny Blue, shows clearly that Parker was in no fit condition to play in the first place. The short story, "Sparrow's Last Jump,"\textsuperscript{23} although much more idealistic in approach, is based on this same Parker incident. The association of Harlem Bop musicians and narcotics is accurate; however, music itself is amoral. The moral, if there is one, would seem to lie in the conditions in this area of the world of the Jazz musician today which bring about this state of affairs. Bill Coss, of \textit{Metronome Magazine}, who is working on a Ph.D. in sociology, has done an unpublished sociological study of what he calls the young, modern "pure" Jazz musician, who plays the music he wishes and who therefore most often plays some strongly Bop-influenced music. A brief look at part of it can clarify the conditions which lead to this narcotic Bop Jazz world pictured in the literature of today. Coss knows most of these musicians personally, having conducted scores of interviews for his magazine. He finds that most of them come from a racial minority group, as well as from low-security and limited educational backgrounds. Their working conditions are summarized by Coss in the following manner:

\begin{quote}
\ldots He is faced with three main problems: his popularity may vanish overnight; he must travel, because there are few jazz clubs throughout the country and engagements are generally short—he has a great deal of competition too; he may suddenly for one reason or another find himself physically or mentally unable to play. \ldots
\end{quote}

Imagine, if you will, a life where one goes to work at nine-thirty in the evening (to work until four the next morning). The owner of the club is a gangster. . . . Imagine that you play, off and on, for six hours, smelling smoke, perfume and alcohol. That, as the customers inhale more and more of these three ingredients, they become even less interested in what you are doing. . . . (perhaps you have even seen how gamsels handle musicians; you have certainly felt the ignominy of being bought by petty people of whatever kind). . . .

Imagine that you are perceptive enough, and the jazz musician has brilliant flashes of intuition, if not actual perception, to see that excitement — sensual excitement — is what you are selling. That your employer has absolutely no regard for you, and does, upon occasion, squash your friends or people whom you know. That hardly anyone wants what you can do. . . . Imagine, then, that you are a creative artist who is being forced into the position of a common entertainer; an artist who has something which he wants desperately to say with no one to whom he can speak. Then you take a friendly drink with a friend or an unfriendly drink by yourself, and then another and another. And if you do this often enough you will have really complicated your life. And with the help of the wrong companions, you will develop even worse vices such as heroin, and you will find that alcohol does soothe, that there are dozens of girls who seem irresistibly drawn to musicians. In the combination of all these things, you will violently settle down to self-destruction. 24

Brossard describes these lost musicians and their music at a Greenwich Village party at another point in the novel, combining both for the same general effect of decadent atmosphere.

References to popular music, rather than Jazz, for purposes of creating mood and atmosphere have been used down through the years in the American novel. However, these lose a good deal of their punch when whatever particular style in popular music that is described has lost its novelty and is no longer played. This is not true of Jazz, because no Jazz style has been lost. Each has remained as another phase of the music and is still being played both on records and co-
occasionaly in public. Young bands like Lu Watters¹ and Bob Wilbur’s have even continued to use the earliest instrumentation, including banjos and tubas, to obtain an effect close to that of the King Oliver band of the early Twenties.

Popular music used for effects is seldom if ever mixed with Jazz by writers like John Dos Passos, Scott Fitzgerald, and Maxwell Bodenheim. But once in a while a writer like Michael Arlen will stumble onto what seems to be a Jazz form and find that it affects him, however diluted it may be. Such was the case depicted in a Paris Scene in Michael Arlen’s popular novel of 1924, *The Green Hat*:

They call this rhythm the Blues. It reminded you of past and passing things. It reminded you of the days when people over forty had still enough restraint not to crowd out every ballroom and night-club with their dancing in open formation. . . . It reminded you of the scent tangled in the hair of she with whom you had last danced to that rhythm. . . . You mourned the presence of the dead. You mourned the memory of the living. They call this rhythm the Blues. It reminded you of regret.²⁵

Although popular music is employed somewhere in every book Fitzgerald wrote, there are few passages that suggest Jazz. One occurs in *The Beautiful and Damned*, when Anthony Patch is serving in a South Carolina army camp (Fitzgerald served in Alabama): "He liked Johnston’s Gardens," Fitzgerald writes, "where they danced, where a tragic negro made yearning, aching music on a saxophone until the garish hall became an enchanted jungle of barbaric rhythms and smoky laughter, where to forget the uneventful passage of time upon Dorothy’s soft sighs and

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tender whisperings was the consummation of all aspiration, of all con-
tent."26 Toward the end of The Last Tycoon, his unfinished last
novel, another passage shows that Fitzgerald eventually became acquainted
with the swing enthusiasm of the Thirties and decided to use it for a
similar. Monroe Stahr, the producer, has used the British writer, Box-
ley, to inspire a played-out group of screen writers who are working
on a picture:

Suddenly they were at work again — taking up this new theme
in turn like hepcats in a swing band and going to town with it.
They might throw it out again tomorrow, but life had come back
again for a moment.27

Setting and Background: Jazz as
a Symbol of the Artistic Ideal

Dorothy Baker’s Houghton-Mifflin award novel, Young Man With
A Horn, published in 1938, broke the Jazz ground for novelists who
were to follow in writing about the world of the Jazz musician. She
also set the general theme in keeping with Liberal Romanticism — the
struggle of the Jazz artist to produce his art in an alien world of
commerce. In the words of her prologue:

It is the story of a number of things — of the gap between the
man’s musical ability and his ability to fit it into his own life;
of the difference between the demands of expression and the demands
of life here below; and finally of the difference between good and
bad in a native American art form — jazz music. Because there’s
good in this music and there’s bad. There is music that is turned
out sweet in hotel ballrooms and there is music that comes right
out of the genuine urge and doesn’t come for money.28

26 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned (New York:
Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), p. 338.

27 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon (New York: Charles

28 Dorothy Baker, Young Man With A Horn (Boston: Houghton,
This novel, despite its faults, treats Jazz with greater understanding than any novel written before it. The racial tolerance of Liberalism is here too. Negroes are a tremendous influence on the artistic aims of protagonist Rick Martin. The book is admittedly based on the "spirit" of the music of Bix Beiderbecke, who shows his influence in fiction just as he did in biography. The myth grows.

Here Rick Martin's battle is against the materialism that finally destroys him through Phil Morrison's (suggestively close to Paul Whiteman's in many ways), orchestra. The Negro musicians in the book play Jazz steadily and go hungry, but avoid Rick's tragic end in an alcoholic ward.

_Piano in the Band_, Dale Curran's 1940 novel of the Jazz world, followed Miss Baker's approach to Jazz as material. It is about a bandleader, Jeff Walters, who finds his sidemen in revolt against the limited commercial style which he feels sells the band. The band, led by the "hot" men in it, wants to develop along Jazz lines. One of these outstanding instrumentalists is trumpeter Jay Crabtree. Walters realizes what is going on, and has an appreciation for Jazz himself, but he is afraid of losing his grip on the public:

"You think I don't appreciate Jay and his music. Boy, I know a musician when I see one, and Jay Crabtree is the greatest trumpet player I ever saw. Yes, and I caught Bix, in the great days a few years ago, just before he - he blew up. Well, anyway, just as good."29

Bix continues in the American Jazz novel as a standard of Jazz ability,

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the symbol of Romantic perfection. Louis Armstrong shares this pedestal with him: "Shut your eyes and you'd think it was Old Satch himself." 30

Jeff Walters is honest and realistic in his choice of musical commercialism for his band:

"... For a little while I believed too that we could make the world see this thing, I heard a fine big black man named Oliver play that horn, ... and I saw Bix tear himself to pieces ... And where in the hell did it get them," 31

True to the form of the Jazz novel, a Negro band — this time of pianist Rink Stevens — plays the best music and stands as an ideal for the white men in Walters' band to emulate. There are mixed jam sessions. There is a racial intolerance outside the world of the musicians which embarrasses and angers them.

Disaster finally comes from the conflict between Walters and his men. Walters dies tragically, though at the hands of a non "hot" musician. Toward the end of the novel Walters offers a Romantic ray of hope to the Jazz man:

Jeff Walters shook his head. "Not in my time. Now I begin to see what's the matter with you fellows. You're all younger. ... I'm not a young man any more. ... You hear this music in your heads, this stuff that's got life and a meaning in it. And you want to play it. I hope some day you can, I hope you can make the world see this thing, because it's got beauty in it, the world needs beauty. But I—I've already been licked." 32

This stands as the statement of the defeated Romantic, who retains his ideal of perfection but cannot live up to it. He has also lost

30 Ibid., p. 118.
31 Ibid., p. 29.
32 Ibid., p. 234.
the element of youth that lives on in the Jazz men of biography and autobiography, the strength of non-conformity in the Romantic. Piano in the Band received approving reviews from Clifton Fadiman, Beatrice Sherman, Otis Ferguson and F. H. Bullock, and Curran was to write an even more effective Jazz novel later with Dupree Blues.

**Little Gate**, Annamarie Ewing's 1947 novel, showed the same close observation and appreciation of Jazz as an art form. The same artistic program emerges, and the same racial tolerance is displayed. Joe Geddes, the hero, is a clarinetist who listens to his Negro friends' music in the small Iowa town of his childhood. He encounters the usual social difficulties as a result of his acceptance of Negroes and interest in Jazz. His musical standards are properly high for a Jazz neophyte: "He knew how it ought to sound, but he couldn't seem to make it sound that way. If he, Joe, could just play with some drummer like the guy on those Bessie Smith records, somebody you could feel behind you like a wall."33 Joe runs away to Chicago, and the historical backgrounds of Jazz, presented so colorfully in **Jazzmen** and the other critical-historical volumes, are employed again in fiction: "He knew the names of some of the places where musicians would be. . . . Names like Sunset Cafe, Midway Gardens, Dreamland, the Plantation. Those were the names of places where musicians worked."34

Joe organizes a big band that plays good Jazz, nearly fails, and

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33 Annamarie Ewing, **Little Gate** (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1947), p. 43.

then succeeds at last on the West Coast in a repetition of the famous
Goodman tour. After financial success he allows the music to turn
commercial, and is finally nearly destroyed by the mart to which he
has become a very valuable chattel. He lets his Negro friends (again
the symbol of good Jazz) drift away. Joe comes to his senses at last,
resolving to make good records for the young Jazz-men-to-be. He realizes
that they will learn from his records, just as he did from others. His
responsibility to his art finally comes home to him.

One of the best novels yet based on the Jazz world is Dale
Curran's Dupree Blues, which came out in 1948. It is an up-to-date
version, in novel form, of the story told by the lyrics to "Dupree Blues,"
which has been played by Jazz men for years. In the book, as in the
song, Dupree steals a diamond ring and kills a man for the woman he
loves. The story ends just as the song:

He got into a taxi,
Went to Memphis, Ten-o-see.
Got in a taxi,
Went 'way down to Memphis, Ten-o-see.
When he got there
Detectives was waiting for Dupree.

Now Dupree's gone so far away,
Never gonna see the light of day.

Curran has pictured Dupree as a Jazz trombonist down on his luck and
playing at a small Southern roadhouse. Betty is the band's very attrac-
tive and unprincipled vocalist. Dupree gains her love by the gift of
the ring. For fear of losing her he panics and kills the jeweler when
the latter threatens to repossess the ring after payments run overdue.

Dupree's one friend, a Negro, helps him get away in a taxi, but of course
the escape fails. Curran has followed the words to the song to the letter, and the results are impressive. Dupree is a very sympathetic character whose only escape from a painful stomach ailment is his music—until Betty comes along. Curran’s own preface briefly shows Liberal Romantic values behind his writing of the book: anti-snobbery, appreciation of the Negro’s approach to life through the Blues, faith in the lasting power of art, and something of non-conformity to polite society:

Generals get into the history books, but Mr. Howard and Frankie and Johnny and Barby Allen and Dupree got into the songs and it is very likely they will outlive Robert E. Lee, who only got in because a steamboat was named for him. These people are real, a reality the big iron-pants statues in the park never have had.

The folk-artistry that created the blues had a sharp perception, finding in the little guy’s story the fundamental reality of American life that had to be set down just as it happened. That is the reason for this book, which is only a set of expanded footnotes to a blues theme. This happened to a man living in a town in America; this is the way life was at the time the song got itself written, and I have moved it ahead to today because I believe it might happen that way all over again, may even be happening somewhere while you are reading this. 

Curran, it should be added, was once co-editor of Jazz Record magazine, and the Jazz background material in the novel is as accurate and thorough as one might expect.

Music Out of Dixie, the 1952 novel by Harold Sinclair, since reissued in pocket-book form, is the story of a New Orleans Jazz clarinet genius, Dade Holmes. Dade is a Negro orphan who is brought up by his "respectable" uncle, but who finds musical employment at an early age in Storyville, because he lives only to play Jazz and that is the only
place he can play it for a living. Sinclair, already a historical novelist at the time of this book, is highly accurate in his Storyville background material, and the book is particularly interesting because it includes Jelly Roll Morton as one of its principal characters. Sinclair has attained high accuracy here, because Jelly's speech and opinions are clearly drawn from either the Library of Congress records by him or Lomax's book, *Mister Jelly Roll*, which includes a transcription of his speech from those records. To give an example, Jelly's sense of musical dynamics compared to the amount of water in a glass appears in both the novel and in Jelly's conversation with Lomax. Johnny Dodds, the great clarinetist, also appears in the book in several conversational scenes, and the writing is convincing.

Dade, toward the end of the story, becomes a victim of a drunken brawl staged on a Riverboat by a group of Irishmen and loses one eye when struck by a flying bottle. When one of the Irishmen is later killed, Dade must flee New Orleans to avoid being persecuted because of his race and the desire of the police to pin the murder on someone with a motive. Jelly Roll offers him a job in New York and he escapes the prejudiced South.

Dade, being a Negro, seldom strays from the genuine music, but loses his most popular composition to a conniving group of minstrel show operators who take advantage of his ignorance of legal procedures and his general good nature. The anti-materialism of Jazz and of the Negro remains a main theme in the Jazz setting.

The extent to which the novelist was insisting on the artistic
validity of Jazz in 1952 is well illustrated in this novel. One scene has a touring French concert pianist challenging Dade to a piano duel during the early days in Storyville. Dade was playing this instrument professionally at the time. The Frenchman plays Bach's "Chaconne in A Minor," which Dade repeats after him by ear. Then it is Dades' turn:

Dade took a moment to decide. He had not had anything special in mind. The Bach had been easy enough — perfectly resolved chordal patterns that almost played themselves. This fellow was good and Dade knew it, but he also sensed that, no matter how good he was at his own kind of piano, he would not understand a genuine ragtime beat. Then Dade had it — Jelly Roll's finger-snaring Shreveport Stomp, and he let it roll. In a way it was unfair to classic musicianship, for Jelly made some of his own rules as he went along. When he finished he got up and mopped the sweat from his forehead — he had gone through it with vengeance. "She's all yours, cap'n," he said innocently. . . .

In a way, all things considered, it was not bad and in another way it was murder. Pierre got through the pounding introduction with flying colors, as most mediocre pianists did, but he could not feel the ragtime beat of the first strain, as Dade had guessed, and from there on it got worse. He began to labor as though playing with gloves on, and when he came to the spot in the first strain where Dade (and Jelly originally) had changed clefs three or four times, he begged down completely. He was beaten and he knew it. He struck the keyboard with the flat of his hand and stood up quickly, his face faintly but unmistakably pink.

"Goddam . . . I'm afraid I wasn't paying close enough attention and this piano is just a piece of junk."

The other man grinned behind a hand and winked solemnly at Dade. "Just for the record, Pierre, the piano was all right when he did it."

"But it doesn't make musical sense."

Author Harold Sinclair, himself a musician, dares a scene here that would hardly have been attempted by a novelist of the Twenties or Thirties, despite Rupert Hughes' early remarks about Ragtime piano

technique.

Shelby Foote's 1954 short novel, *Ride Out*, was yet another recent work depending on a Jazz setting. His protagonist, a colored trumpeter named Duff Conway, is a simple, direct man who lives only for Jazz. An urgency to play his music drives him to the exclusion of everything else in his life. A classical harmony instructor becomes his only real friend. When Duff kills a gambler who has disillusioned him in his love for a girl, it is nevertheless the fact that the man dented Duff's horn that triggers him into a passionate action. The classical musician's sympathetic attitude toward Duff, at the latter's inevitable fate, follows the Romantic ideal of non-conformity based on the inner promptings of art:

And now, walking along the Southern street, hearing again the cornet which had become for him the ultimate expression of all music, he thought in a kind of rage: There ought to be two sets of laws, one for us and another for the few like him. It's not right to expect them to follow something set down and codified in books for men who don't even think the way they do . . .

The non-conformity of many of the followers of the art-religion of Jazz to the concerns of orthodox religion appears in Duff's attitude in his cell as the time approaches when he must face the electric chair. Duff plays his horn constantly; he has no other interest. He is doomed to death from tuberculosis anyway, and he has no extraordinary fear of the chair. The turnkey is worried about Duff's attitude: "I can talk to most of them, bring them round before the end. But not this boy. He listens but it don't get through. So you tell him. Tell him . . ."

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to lay that horn aside and get right with his maker."

Like Eddie Condon near death, Duff could not be bothered with all that right now; but unlike Condon, Duff had done something he could be put in jail for. Like Bix, he could not be bothered with whiskey and women when there was music to be had: "Well," the turn-key continues, unswayed, against the roar of the horn, "he can blow it tonight if he wants. Most of them ask for a quart of corn and a woman, but I reckon he'll want that horn..."  

As Duff dies in the chair the executioner adds an extra electrical charge: "Steady, folks; we'll hit him again. Not because he needs it, no, but because the law says do it, and the law is almighty. Yair!"

The law is almighty, although laws change from time to time, but the law is not always just. The Liberal Romantic attitude questions authority on grounds of human justice, not law.

A popular novelist, Marguerite Steen, used a semi-jazz background in her novel, Jehovah Blues. The heroine searches through the entire book for a colored Jazz pianist who had written a song, "Jehovah Blues." Her journey through the musical hangouts of the Twenties offers a good deal of Jazz atmosphere and setting.

The Hot and the Cool, a 1953 novel by Edwin Gilbert pictures the world of the modern Jazz musician. As in nearly all novels of

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38 Ibid., p. 47.

39 Ibid., p. 48.

40 Ibid., p. 52.
Jazz setting, actual names and places are used freely to authenticate the music in the novel, so that there will be no mistaking the author's insistence upon Jazz, not popular music, as the subject of his novel. As his combo begins to improve, Kip, the pianist-hero wonders whether the Jazz critics might come out to hear his music:

... Kip thought, though someday maybe Hammond would be out there, or one of the others, Feather or Ulanov, and maybe if he gave them a real gasser, they'd know what he was trying to do, maybe they'd even help him. Maybe not. You never knew. They all had their own ideas. Whether you went along with them or not, you had to admit they were doing a job. Boswell of Jazz. They'd written their guts out trying to open it up for people, putting it up there, making it stick. 41

Fiction here employs even the crusading critical writers of the Jazz milieu - directs attention to them and gives them credit.

The statement of the Liberal Romantic is implicit in Kip's individualistic attitude toward music and life:

And the man was losing out, the man who didn't want to be pushed around in the mass. He wanted to move free and clear:
So he had to grope for some way of getting it, saying it, some way of protesting:
Look, I'm a man, an individual, a whole separate being.
I want to make my own world, not have the world make me.
Not rebellion. But need. 42

Kip's statement of belief, made as he listens to records, depicts actual Jazz figures and ends with a clear expression of Romantic individualism and the unshakable belief in his art of the Jazz man, both early and late:

Now Benny. Ah, you can still do it, Mr. Goodman. That sextet


42 Ibid., p. 49.
can still do it. Remember swing? But ah, Benny, you're still clean and beautiful. . . .

Come in, Jess.
Now some Hines.
And Teddy. Remember swing? I grew up with it!
Listen and watch hard. The records are stacked in one way, and the concert with the new boys, the piano standouts. No clinkers here, no old coins when you hear these boys:
Mister Marmarosa, you are doing it!
Billy Taylor, you calm refined man you, with the velvet hot-rod fingers.
Thelonious Monk, Keep telling me.
Brubeck. Give it to me, professor! Ah, that Oakland itch, new right off the line!
Tristano. You see it all! You genius in the wilderness, you see it all!
What sonofabitch calls this a fad? Fadism? Sit back and wait. What do you think we're going to do? . . .
But we don't stand still, no now with the sounds around us in the world around us. We're breaking out, reaching for our own something. . . . 43

The American short story, especially in the late Forties and early Fifties, has shown signs of the same increasing and accurate use of Jazz for background that the novel has developed. The short story attitude is also a Liberal Romantic one. Examples include Eudora Welty's "Powerhouse," an excellent story of the tremendous imaginative interplay between the members of a colored Jazz unit. This mutual give-and-take is exhibited musically on the stand, and then conversationally as each man plays his part in their later conversation (based entirely on imagination) in a restaurant. Powerhouse, the pianist-leader, improvises fantastic stories for their entertainment and each man adds his bit to the theme. The story is Jazz lived as life off the stand: the art-religion permeates all phases of the player's life.

43Ibid., pp. 50-51.
Bryant Marvin's "Hath Chams to Soothe," which appeared in a 1944 issue of *Esquire*, is about a fat little Greek clarinettist playing in a dance band who suddenly plays such Jazz variations on Fats Waller's tune "Honeysuckle Rose" that everyone in the room follows him out onto the country club golf course and he becomes a modern pied piper to both the young people listening to him and to the animals of the wood. The Romantic ideal of artistic nirvana is realized again.

"Little Nooley's Blues," a 1951 *American Mercury* story by Freeman Phillips offers another Jazz band setting and poses a problem in the death of the band's star trombonist. The Jazz man's answer to death here is his art: the band finds its only comfort in playing the Blues finally, late at night, over trombonist Buck Manos' grave, and "... it seemed like even the tombstones would have to get up and stomp around."44

"Black Water Blues," which won first place in an *Atlantic Monthly* college short story contest, offers the same theme of the art of Jazz music as an ultimate solution in itself. Here there is threat of racial trouble because of an outraged Negro bandleader, Bump Roxy, whose wife has been raped by two white men. The one white man in the band, The Lion, comforts Bump by his fearlessness in standing by and exposing himself to Roxy when the big Negro is in a frame of mind to kill the first white man he sees. The Lion quietly plays blues piano and Roxy realizes the strength of the musical bonds between them. Once

more, Jazz leads the way to the racial and human amity desired by the Liberal Romantic value structure, just as it had given signs of doing with Cable and Twain in real life.

"Sparrow's Last Jump," by Elliot Grennand, is a story based on the already mentioned breakdown of Bop altoist Charlie Parker during a recording date. Grennand takes the very Romantic viewpoint that "Sparrow," his substitute for Parker, who is known as "Bird" to the Jazz world, is simply trying too hard to achieve his ideal of himself as a musician: "That's the trouble with be-bop. Once you start hearing those screwy chords in your ear and get those offbeats in your system, you can't play any other way. The old way is too straight, too on the nose."45 This is a Romantic attitude toward the non-conformity of the music itself, picturing Bop as a new adventure in art, a daring, exploratory music. That it cannot be put into words is another point of Grennand's: "Jazz musicians don't pop off a lot. Like when you ask them about jazz; they don't trust words to say what they feel, so they dummy up."46 The Romantic faith in the subjective expression of the artist is here too. Sparrow is uneducated; he feels embarrassed when he is called a musical genius, and he does not know how to talk to people; therefore, he thinks that all he has to offer is his music. He thus drives himself to destruction trying to exceed everything that has been done by any Jazz soloist, and adopts any stimulating agent - finally morphine - in a frantic effort to enable himself to live up

46 Ibid.
to his own artistic ideal. This plot is certainly in the Romantic tradition, and Grennard's sympathy with Sparrow is Liberal in its tolerance.

"Struttin' With Some Barbecue," a story which appeared in the second issue of *New World Writing*, is the story of the difficulties encountered by two white Jazz musicians driving to an engagement in the South alone with a colored girl singer who is a member of their band. It stresses the esoteric world of the Jazz musician, based on his Liberal Romantic values - his unquestioning acceptance of the Negro, his sense of humor, the importance of his music, and what he will put up with in order to play it. The two people outside the Jazz world in this story are Southerners, and they are shown to be much less wholesome than the musicians themselves. The man is stupid and lecherous; his wife is mad. The title of the story is taken from Louis Armstrong's record of the same name: "Struttin' With Some Barbecue."

Possibly the best short story yet based on the Jazz world was published in 1953 by Clellon Holmes, the novelist who wrote *Go*. Surprisingly it concerns not a traditional Jazz man, with his more optimistic outlook, but a young Negro tenor sax man who plays Bop. Even more surprisingly it is a story of affirmation, although the hero, Walden Blue, has neither the material comforts of life, nor any kind of security outside of a belief in his art:

Consider that it was four o'clock of a Monday afternoon, and under the dishwater-gray shade (just the sort of shade one sees mostly pulled down over the windows of cheap hotels fronting the seedy elevateds of American cities where the baffled and the derelict loiter and shift their feet), under this one shade... the wizen September sun stretched its old finger to touch the dark,
flutterless lids of Walden Blue, causing him to stir among sheets, a week of daytime lying-down and twilight gettin-up had rumpled. 47

What his music means to Walden is made unmistakably clear:

For on this saxophone Walden Blue made music as others might have made love a kind of fugue on any bed; Walden made music as a business, innocent (because love of it was what kept him alive), just what others might mean by "their business," implying as that did some sacrifice of most that was skilled and all that was fine in them. 48

Walden reaches artistic maturity the night of the story in a jam session, playing against Edgar Poole, the father of Bop tenor style (undoubtedly the Lester Young of reality). Poole is disillusioned and he plays a music of disillusionment, but his technical ability is so great that no one dares challenge him in a "cutting" contest until Walden's belief in himself as an artist causes him to break protocol, shocking even himself:

But he started the next twelve bars nevertheless, keeping a simple tasty line. Edgar, reed still between loose lips, gave him a startled, then slyly amused glance, telling Walden, all in a flash, that for the audacity and the stupidity of the move he would do him the honor of "cutting" him to pieces, bar to bar, horn to horn. . .

Edgar leaped back easily, satirizing Walden's last idea, playing it three different ways, getting a laugh, horn hung casually out of one side of his mouth. . . .

Edgar slouched there beside him, as if playing with one hand, yawning, honking, aping him; and only his beady eyes were alive. . . . 49

Walden wins the cutting contest with his vigorous, validly emotional music, and Edgar grants the victory, having known such belief himself at one time. Holmes performs a remarkable writing job in his depiction


48 Ibid., p. 85.

49 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
of affirmation versus denial through the medium of a jam session. No sudden material triumph comes to Walden Blue at the end. He has simply reached artistic maturity, and must follow the star of the individual musical self which Jazz has given him: "This was his first day in a strange, lonesome country, and one part of it, anyway, was knowing that it could not be postponed any longer."50 Holmes' writing in this story is one fruition of the development of the literary attitude toward Jazz as an art form, and it also communicates clear belief in artistic idealism, at whatever cost.

The use of the Jazz world for setting and background material in American fiction has been consistently in terms of Liberal Romantic ideals: the importance of Jazz as an art form has been stressed; the acceptance of the Negro as an equal and a brother is upheld; the non-conformity of the Jazz musician is almost invariably presented with great sympathy. Fitting the Liberal Romantic pattern as closely as it does, the belief of the Jazz musician in his art may be said to have become a symbol in fiction of a Romantic hope for man - the hope of eventual perfectibility in a very imperfect world.

**Jazz as a Symbol of the Artistic Ideal to the Non-professional Sympathizer**

The Jazz sympathizer who is a non-professional has also played his part in American fiction. Early, there was the work of John O'Hara, who was probably the first to suggest this variety of characterization. The symbol of Jazz to the Jazz appreciator has always been generally

50 Ibid., p. 103.
the same, from the time of O'Hara's use of it in a weakened form; that is to say, it has amounted to the same symbol that it signifies to the professional musician: the artistic ideal.

O'Hara's Julian English, tragic hero of Appointment in Samarra, finally removes himself from the crass, alien country-club world of the small community in which he holds a respected place. All along the way to his doom, little vignettes and suggestions offer semi-commercialized Jazz as a meaningful phenomenon in a world that to Julian is basically meaningless. At the country-club the band, as is to be expected in this negative setting, fails to live up to Julian's musical requirements: "The music stopped but almost immediately resumed. . . . The orchestra was not doing so well with the back-time, and that disturbed Julian, whose ear for Jazz was superb."\(^{51}\) Though Julian loves his wife, she cannot save him. Significantly, his musical standards vary from hers too:

Caroline got up and put Poor Butterfly on the Vic. "That's one of our old records," she said, "but I like it because it's so syncopated." Anything that had the sound of the trap-drummer's wood blocks in it was syncopated.\(^ {52}\)

Julian's farewell act before his suicide is to listen to his records. They include Gene Goldkette and Paul Whiteman performances. These Jazz-influenced popular bands in this setting could indicate either that O'Hara's own preference in Jazz at the time had not exceeded their music or that Julian's own semi-taste in Jazz was symbolic of

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\(^ {52}\) Ibid., p. 86.
his temporality in all things of this world.

_Butterfield 8_, O'Hara's next novel, presents Eddie Brunner, probably the most sympathetic character in the book, as a Jazz collector who "... spent his allowance on collectors items among old Gennett records, and on his girl."53 This record label was of vital importance to early recorded Jazz. In New York, Eddie and his friends from California conduct regular jam sessions. Their musical standards are suggested by the following incident, which occurs when Jimmy Malloy comes in one night with "a beautiful little Jewess" and asks the boys whether she may play the piano:

"She better be good," said one roommate to the other.

Then with her two tiny hands she hit three chords, all in the bass, one, two, three. "Jeezuzz!" yelled the Californians, and got up and stood behind her.

She played for an hour. While she played one thing the Californians would be making lists for her to play when she got finished. At the end of the hour she wanted to stop and they would not let her. "All right," she said, "I'll do my impressions. My first impression is Vincent Lopez playing 'Nola!'" "All right, you can quit," said Eddie.54

At the end of the book Malloy meets Eddie again when they are brought together by Malloy's effort as a newspaper reporter to get a story on Gloria Wandrous' tragic death. Malloy offers to spirit the reticent Eddie away from the other reporters as a friendly act to save him further questioning. Eddie is still grieved and suspicious, and Malloy needs to break through his reserve to regain his trust. Louis Armstrong is the means:

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54 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
"I'll buy you a drink. Jesus, guy, you don't think I like this do you? Have you heard any of the new Louis Armstrong records?"

"No new ones. What ever happened to the little dame you had that played the piano?"

Eddie has been won over.

The importance of Jazz to these young men is pointed up by O'Hara in a paragraph concerning their jam sessions and the professional musicians they admire. Their taste is broad, including some of the popular band leaders of the day, but among the names are Beiderbecke, Goodman, Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, Pee Wee Russell, and Fats Waller, "... and all the names meant something as big as Wallenstein and Flonzaley and Ganz do to some people."

O'Hara's own artistic convictions appear in Butterfield 8:

It is music, and poor old music, whether it's Bach or Car michael, it knows when it starts that it is making a forlorn effort to create or recapture something that it of itself does not possess. Music is synthetic, so how can poor, lovely old music, which is the highest art, have by itself a fraction of the poignancy of an important day ...

We have had long and uncomfortable periods when we built chairs, forgetting that a chair is meant to be sat in. Music, too, is to be enjoyed, and we might as well face it ..."

This attitude is an insistence on music as the nearest artistic approach to the happiest moments of our lives, in other words, to earthly perfection.

O'Hara's later novel, Hope of Heaven, finds Jimmy Malloy suggesting as a standard of character judgment, the kind of improvisational

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55 Ibid., p. 308.
56 Ibid., pp. 101-02.
57 Ibid., pp. 130-31.
piano a man plays:

I bet myself that he played the piano, a sort of fraternity-house piano; competent, unimaginative piano; improvising sounding, but someone else's improvisation. I could all but hear him, playing something like "Easy to Love," which at that time was brand new. Slow, not in any steady tempo, and all chords. That's what those hands were for. 58

The virile Jazz beat is here equated with a kind of desirable masculinity. In the same novel, the much traveled Philip Henderson comes to town and impresses everyone by telling one of the more familiar legends about Bix Beiderbecke. This is the one about the Chicago gangsters who kill him by torture.

Pal Joey, O'Hara's theatrical heel, is characterized sharply by his oft-mistaken statements about Jazz musicians and his misspelling of their names. This is one of the few examples of the Jazz artistic ideal used in reverse to create a humorous and negative effect. Joey's statement about Bix Beiderbecke reveals Joey as the idealistically bankrupt man he is. He remembers but one thing about Bix: "Christ, I knew Bix. I read all this stuff about Bix and how wonderful he was and all I remember about Bix was the article I saw in the Life mag where Bud said he did not wash his feet." 59

After O'Hara came writers who were more explicit in their Jazz taste and even more outspoken in their idealism. To the esoteric and erudite Henry Miller, Jazz represents the one cultural hope of America. His 1941 novel, The Colossus of Maroussi, is a throbbing


sulogy to Greece in which he leaves to America only one tool with which to match Greek culture: the Negro's Jazz. In one impressionistic passage Louis Armstrong becomes even the symbol of hope for civilization:

Louis's back in the land with a horse shoe round his neck. He's makin' ready to blow a fat rat-bustin' note that'll knock the blue and the gray into a twisted torquemada. Why he wanna do that? To show he's satisfied. All them wars and civilizations ain't brought nobody no good. Just blood everywhere and people prayin' for peace.

In the tomb where they buried him alive lies his father Agamemnon. Agamemnon was a shining god-like man who was indeed a god. He gave birth to two sons who traveled far apart. One sowed misery throughout the world and the other sowed joy.60

Before beginning his fable, or song as he calls it, Miller makes the following statement:

I let a song go out of my heart, praising God that the great Negro race which alone keeps America from falling apart had never known the vice of husbandry. I let a song go out of my heart to Duke Ellington, that suave, super-civilized, double-jointed cobra with the steel-fanged wrists - and to Count Basie (sent for you yesterday here you come today), long lost brother of Isidore Ducasse and last direct lineal descendant of the great and only Rimbaud.61

Miller's "song" includes several great Negro Jazz figures:

Agamemnon, seeing that one of his sons had wisdom, bought him a golden torque, saying unto him: "Go forth now and trumpet peace and joy everywhere!" He said nothing about walls or gardens or orchards. He said nothing about building cathedrals. He said: "Go, my son, and riff it through the land!" And Louis went out into the world, which had already fallen into a state of sadness, and he took with him nothing save the golden torque.

Louis soon found that the world was divided into black and white, very sharp and very bitterly. Louis wanted to make every-

61 Ibid., pp. 137-38.
unpublished manuscript
thing golden, not like coins or icons but like ripe ears of corn, gold like the golden-red, gold that everybody could look at and feel and roll around in. ... Louis had by this time made a few friends as he went riffin' his way through the new land. One was a Count and another was a Duke. ... The Duke had been educated in Heaven where at an early age he had learned to play the pearly harp and other vibrafoid instruments of the celestial realms. ... His favorite mood was indigo which is that of the angels when all the world is sound asleep.

There were others too of course—Joe the chocolate cherub, Chick who was already sprouting wings, Big Sid, and Fats and Ella and sometimes Lionel the golden boy who carried everything in his hat. There was always Louis, of course, Louis just like he is, with that broad, million dollar smile like the Argive plain itself and smooth, polished nostrils that gleamed like the leaves of the magnolia tree.62

Joe is apparently Oliver; Chick is Chick Webb, the great Jazz drummer whose deformed body succumbed early to tuberculosis; Big Sid is Sid Catlett, another top Jazz drummer; Fats is Waller; Ella is Fitzgerald; Lionel is Hampton, who plays so many instruments well. And Louis becomes more than the music: the smiling philosophy of the man, expressed as humanity’s hope for eventual perfection. Miller’s entire “song” is very nearly a kind of apogee in the Liberal Romantic tradition of Jazz.

George Sklar’s 1947 novel, The Two Worlds of Johnny Truro, tells of an overgrown adolescent boy of artistic tastes who feels that he has no place in a country at war. He finds himself babied at home, turned down by the army, and accepted on adult terms only by the lonely, artistic wife of a naval officer who is overseas. Johnny’s love of traditional Jazz and his intense feeling for its artists is a big part in his life. Jazz represents both the need to belong as well as the

62 Ibid., pp. 138-40.
need for individual expression to Johnny, and he shares it with Helen, the one other source in his existence from which he draws strength and confidence:

Helen swung her feet off the couch and sat up. She wanted to know the name of the piece, the band, its history. And he told her—about Kid Ory and Papa Mutt and Bud Scott and Minor Hall, about these sixty-year-old men who'd started playing when jazz was cutting its teeth.63

The actual musicians named here were members of Kid Ory's band which played on the West Coast during the World War II years. Johnny's companionship with the Jewish boy, Sol, who is a jazz pianist, and his feeling for these colored jazz musicians fits the Liberal Romantic Jazz ideal of racial brotherhood through the music. The Jazz theme is steady throughout the novel. Johnny's revolt against a world in which he does not fit is the Romantic revolt of the adolescent, some of whose youthful outlook and constructive qualities remain in the Liberal Romanticism of the Jazz musician himself as seen in autobiography.

Clifton Cuthbert's 1945 racial novel, The Robbed Heart, is a story about a white Jazz critic whose sympathy is with the Negro artists he writes about. Although he is a non-professional, he feels just as they do about Jazz: "Denis liked to show, at every opportunity, that there was nothing solemn about his preoccupation with jazz: he sometimes wondered, though, how else it could be described."64 Jazz is the ideal to Denis that it is to its producers: "It was the kind of


noise he liked most of any he had ever heard: the sound of a capable
Negro saxophonist playing inspired variations on some acceptable jazz
theme. 65 And Denis, led by the music to an acceptance of racial
brotherhood, has found his life work in this neglected world.

Jazz plays a surprising role as a Romantic ideal in James Jones' From Here to Eternity. Prewitt, always close in spirit to the Kentucky
tolk ways from which he came (he seems to represent the earthy, endur-
ing quality of the Harlan county people), loves both folk songs and
Blues. The remarks he exchanges with Angelo Maggio are revealing in
one instance. Prewitt is playing his guitar along with Andy and Fri-
day - one of his favorite pastimes because it is meaningful - when
Maggio speaks:

"You know what," he said after a while, "them blues songs
sounds like jazz instead of hillbilly, way you play them. Slow
jazz, real nigger jazz, like they play in the joints on 52nd
Street."

Prew stopped playing and Friday's guitar gradually stopped too.
"They are in a way," Prew said. "There's nobody can tell where
hillbilly leaves off and jazz begins. They shade into each other.
Me and Andy's got an idea for writing our own blues that will be
our private special blues. We been talkin' about it, goin' to
do it someday."

"Sure we are," Friday said. "Gonna call them The Re-Enlistment
Blues. There's Truckdriver's Blues and Sharecropper's Blues, but
no Army blues, see?" 66

The lyrics to Re-Enlistment Blues appear as the last thing in the novel.
They are found on Prewitt's body, and represent the theme of the sig-
nificance of his life: Prew had the Army blues. He loved the Army as

65 Ibid., p. 4.

66 James Jones, From Here to Eternity (New York: Charles Scrib-
nner's Sons, 1951), p. 216.
his only home, but he was pledged by his nature to resist human tyranny wherever he found it, even in the Army, where he would most naturally like to see human ethics as a working principle. The composition of Re-Enlistment Blues, incidentally, is pictured as a group effort in keeping with the ballad tradition. Late one night, sitting around together, a group of Prewitt's friends compose this blues, each man adding a line or two as it comes to him. They are led into this frame of mind by a discussion centered around the great French Jazz guitarist, Django Reinhardt. Django has always been a symbol of unattainable perfection to Andy, who enjoys telling over and over again about hearing him on some records one time. The others equally enjoy hearing the story repeated. On this particular evening a new listener named Slade turns out to be a Blues collector, and Andy immediately asks him about Django:

"No, I mean it," Slade said. "Hell, man, I'm a blues collector."
"You are?" Andy said. "Say, listen," he said ... "have you ever heard of a guy named Dajango? Dajango Something?"
"There!" Andy said to Prew. "You see? You thought I was lyin. You thought I was makin it up." He turned back to Slade excitedly. "You got any of this Django's records?"
"No," Slade said. "They're hard to get. All made in France. And very expensive. I've heard a lot of them though. Well what do you know," he said. "So you know old Django?"
"Not personally," Andy said. "I know his music. There's nothing like it in the world." He turned to Prew. "Thought I was kiddin you, dint you?" he said accusingly. "Thought I was ony makin it all up. What do you think now?"

The famous early Jazz guitarist Eddie Lang is another idol of both Andy and Friday, Prewitt's guitar-playing companions: "Andy was not a

67 Ibid., p. 463.
jazzmen, but Andy knew guitars. The American Eddy [sic] Lang was good, but Django the Frenchman was untouchable, like God. 68 Friday remembers that "Eddie Lang was a Wop. In this country a Wop could go on the stage like anybody else. He bet a Wop couldn't go on the stage in Germany. He practiced furiously, going back and back, and over and over a phrase until he knew he had it perfect, the notes of the fast gay piece disturbing the hot heavy drowse of the noon air insistently." 69 Jazz appears again in its role as mediator to the races. All Prewitt's friends, just as he, are unburdened with racial prejudice, despite their lack of formal education.

The music of Django Reinhardt becomes to these men the ultimate artistic ideal — a never-never land that they all look to as containing the very meaning of their existence. This music defies words, or earthly comparison, and becomes the celestial hope of man's perfectionability. It is immortal, an art above all temporal matters, and as such it epitomizes the almost religious artistic fervor of the Liberal Romanticism of Jazz:

But when it came to describing for them who had never heard it the poignant fleeting exquisitely delicate melody of that guitar, memory always faltered. There was no way to describe that. You had to hear that, the steady, swinging, never wavering beat with the two- or three-chord haunting minor riffs at the ends of phrases, each containing the whole feel and pattern of the joyously unhappy tragedy of this earth (and of that other earth). And always over it all the one picked single string of the melody following infallibly the beat, weaving in and out around it with the hard-driven swiftly-run arpeggios, always moving, never hesitating, never getting lost and having to pause to get back on, shifting suddenly from the set light-accent of the melancholy

68 Ibid., p. 465.

69 Ibid., p. 565.
jazz beat to the sharp erratic-explosive gypsy rhythm. 70

Jazz becomes an artistic or life ideal, representing a hope, a belief, or some kind of lesser goal to a large number of non-professional Jazz admirers who are characters in American fiction. The 1948 novel, Tremolo, by anthropologist and Jazz critic Ernest Borneman offers one example. It concerns an ex-Jazz man, Mike Somerville, who has retired from professional musicianship in order to become a clarinet manufacturer. The Albert clarinet, as played by Johnny Dodds and others, remains one symbol of his aesthetic, and much of his spare time is spent with his old Jazz-musician friends, playing at jam sessions. Interestingly, the epigraph of the book is a quotation from the Jelly Roll Morton Library of Congress record on which Jelly discusses the effective way Buddy Bolden used the tremolo to create musical suspense (the novel itself is one of suspense). This book is spiced with accurate Jazz lore. Mike's prized possessions are his Jazz records, and part of the plot centers around the mysterious and wanton destruction of several of them by a person who is at the root of the evil forces acting in the book.

There are many lesser examples of this partial or complete ideal, or positive force, represented by Jazz in the lives of fictional characters who are not professional Jazz musicians. Robert Paul Smith's novel, So It Doesn't Whistle, the story of the close companionship of four artistic young men, centers their companionship around Jazz records as a symbol of the crux that holds them together. One

70 Ibid., p. 465.
has been a professional Jazz man, but has now become a booker. The
book tells of the eventual dissolution of this close-knit group, but
their companionship has been a highly meaningful experience for all
of them.

George Mandel's story of the Greenwich Village narcotic cult,
Flee the Angry Strangers, includes a young man who is always planning
to learn to play his trumpet well enough to find his way in the out-
side world. The hope Jazz represents to him is never realized. Nel-
son Algren's Frankie Machine, hero of The Man With the Golden Arm,
always hopes somehow to become a swing drummer, and practices constant-
ly with his drumsticks on whatever object is handy when he is at home.
The drums seem to constitute his private little dream, pitifully un-
realistic as it is, of escaping the Division Street world of gambling
and dope addiction. J. D. Salinger's boy without hope, Holden Caul-
field, of The Catcher in the Rye, is cynical about everyone but his
sister, Phoebe, and is cynical about everything but Jazz. When in
New York he searches out the night clubs or hotel bars in which there
is Jazz to be heard, though he is often disappointed when the music
does not come up to his expectations or when uninteresting people
clutter up his time. In popular literature, Bart Spicer has written
detective stories based on a Jazz-loving sleuth, Carney Wilde. Wilde
is a Jazz traditionalist. He is always ready to come to the rescue
when there is trouble in the Jazz world. One of Wilde's adventures,
Blues for the Prince, has to do with the murder of a leading Jazz musi-
cian.
In the literature which deals with the non-professional Jazz follower, Jazz is still treated by writers as a symbol of parts of the Liberal Romantic value cluster. This is perhaps because only those writers who love Jazz ever write about it, and their values appear to be those of the music itself as expressed by its musicians. The specialized Jazz world is clearly not a promising field of fictional raw material to those who have not familiarized themselves thoroughly with the music and its spirit.

**Jazz in the Racial Novel**

It is undoubtedly apparent that many of the novels that have already been discussed under the "Jazz as Setting and Background" section are actually a variety of racial novel also because of the leading parts played by Negroes in the Jazz world. Novels like *Young Man With a Horn* and *Piano in the Band* were early varieties of this new kind of racial novel which approaches racial understanding through Jazz, making the reader sympathetic to the artistic value of the music and aware of its importance to all races. Later examples are to be found in the section already mentioned in such novels as *Little Gate*, *Ride Out*, and *Send Me Down*. There are in addition to these books, however, some racial novels which do not belong in the same category because of the fact that Jazz plays a definitely second cornet to the racial theme itself. The use of Jazz by Du Bose Heyward has already been pointed out as a minor factor in such of his racial novels of the Twenties as *Mamba's Daughters*. Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* is also primarily a race, not a Jazz novel.
**Not Without Laughter,** written in 1930 by Langston Hughes, began to stress for perhaps the first time in a novel the importance of the Blues to the pattern of life of the Negro in this country. Chapter five, "Guitar," is devoted to the Blues. Jimboy Rogers, a wanderer and a good guitarist, returns home one night to serenade the neighborhood from his back yard, though he is playing chiefly for himself and his young sister-in-law, Harriett, who adores the music. Their companionship in this music nearly makes Jimboy's wife, Annjee, a trifle jealous, but she listens also, as does old Aunt Hagar, who says that naturally they would like that kind of music because "None o' you-all is converted yet." She then settled back against the pump to listen some more.71 Hughes offers Blues lyrics as a part of his descriptive writing, and he leaves no doubt about the place of this music in the Negro's value structure:

"All right, sure, I'll be there in a minute," . . . but he went on playing Easy Rider, and Harriett went on singing, while the food was forgotten on the table until long after Annjee had come outdoors again and sat down in the cool, tired of waiting for Jimboy to come in to her.72

The stamp of authenticity has been put on Jimboy's musical talent by W. C. Handy himself (composer of the "St. Louis Blues"): "Jimboy remembered when he was a lad in Memphis that W. C. Handy had said, "You ought to make your living out of that, son." But he hadn't followed it up — too many things to see, too many places to go, too many other jobs.73

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72 Ibid., p. 54.

73 Ibid., p. 57.
The close relationship between the folk blues and later music comes in for treatment by Hughes in one passage:

She swayed toward the footlights, while Billy teased the keys of the piano into a hesitating delicate jazz. Then she began to croon a new song—a popular version of an old Negro melody, re-fashioned with words from Broadway.\(^{74}\)

The Blues as consolation and an artistic belief are presented in this racial novel as a factor in understanding the Negro.

Clifton Cuthbert's *The Robbed Heart*, which has already been dealt with as presenting an idealistic Jazz critic as its protagonist, is most accurately classified as a racial novel; it concerns the love of a white man (Denis Sloane, the Jazz critic) and a colored girl from a socially prominent Harlem family. Both families combine to defeat any hope of marriage, but it is made clear that the love is something of an ideal that the protagonists are not strong enough to realize. Interestingly, it is Denis' interest in Jazz, and through this his acceptance of the Negro world, that has led him to the entire plot—situation with which the novel deals. Actually, Jazz has torn him away from the all too complacent *status quo* of his own family:

Then, in the Negro jazz world where he had found a place—where, as one of the earliest critics in a once neglected field, a place already awaited him—he soon discovered that complete identity was impossible. For, in leaving the family circle, he had given up not only his class but his clan; and, however poorly this had served him, no substitute existed among the loose associations in his new world.\(^{75}\)

Denis is left in midair, not enough of an individualist to follow the

\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 317.

\(^{75}\) Cuthbert, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
Milton Mezzrow of real life, yet too much of an idealist to stay where society has dictated that he be. Jazz is again the link between the races, the hope for a brotherhood which in this case is not fully realized.

Bucklin Moon, a long-time Jazz critic and associate editor at Doubleday, published his fourth novel, Without Magnolias, in 1949 and with it won the third George Washington Carver award, given to books "which illuminate the Negro's place in American life." It is the story of a highly intelligent young Northern Negro who teaches sociology at a Negro college located in a small and highly prejudiced Florida town. It reflects his own war against the expected white elements of opposition, the semi-prejudiced white appeasers who betray the Negro on the vital issues, and the "Uncle Tom" attitude of appeasement maintained by some Southern Negroes.

Eric, the young professor, is a rabid Jazz collector:

One night he had brought home a pianist who was then appearing in a Washington night club. . . . He had then played a boogie-woogie so finely spun and delicate in texture that it seemed to him almost like Mozart.

Too, Eric liked to play blues records, and preferably as loud as possible. This bothered his mother, for though she secretly rather enjoyed them herself, she was worried about the effect it might have on her neighbors, for this was at a time before collecting hot jazz records had become as socially acceptable as it was later to become.76

Eric forms a Jazz club at the Florida college, and at one point it becomes a battle-line between the old, slavish Negro and the young Negro who is asking questions about his constitutional rights in a

democracy. The college president, Ezekiel, clashes with his son over this matter:

"Some of the kids are interested in jazz and we meet up in Eric's rooms and play records. He's got a wonderful collection, all of the old blues singers and a lot of the early New Orleans bands."

"Seems to me the Negro would do better to forget all that," Ezekiel said dryly.

"Why?"

"Oh, it's a part of our past I don't think we can be too proud of. Things like that grew up in pretty rough places, brothels and the like. White folks are always saying we are latently criminal. It seems to me that such things out of our past give them added ammunition for that argument."

"I don't look at it that way," George said slowly. "That same music happens to be our only original art form. I think it's important to keep it alive. It's something in which Negroes should take pride."77

A very recent example of the use of jazz as a symbol of racial idealism in the American racial novel is to be found in Ralph Ellison's The Invisible Man. The hero, who is living on the edge of Harlem in a forgotten basement room illuminated at the expense of the Monopolated Power and Light Company, centers his ideals for his race, and hides his resentment, in the symbol of hope offered by Louis Armstrong:

Now I have one radio-phonograph; I plan to have five. There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to feel its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body. I'd like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing 'What did I do to Be so Black and Blue' – all at the same time. Sometimes now I listen to Louis while I have my favorite dessert of vanilla ice cream and sloe gin. I pour the red liquid over the white mound, watching it glisten and the vapor rising as Louis bends that military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound. Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he is invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music.78

77 Ibid., p. 224.

Louis, and his music, as is so often the case, is used to symbolize everything that is good and lasting and hopeful in living. The justified bitterness of "the invisible man" is answered only in Louis.

Jazz has been written about with increasing frequency in the American racial novel. Always, it has represented a bridge to racial brotherhood as well as, in a larger sense, hope for the Negro and for mankind in general. Thus an art becomes a hope in the Liberal Romantic tradition: man finds his highest expression of racial brotherhood and of human nature in it.

This chapter, by treating each section in generally chronological order, has attempted to illustrate, in addition to the almost invariable Liberal Romantic approach by authors to Jazz, a concomitant development of understanding, accuracy, and appreciation of an art form by American authors. That Jazz has played a steadily increasing quantitative role in fiction should also be clear by this time. An overwhelming number of the books under discussion were printed no earlier than 1938, by which time Jazz criticism was just coming into its own in this country. As to literary quality before 1938, there were no fictional works based on Jazz carrying the punch of Clellon Holmes' "The Horn," or the power of Dale Curran's Dupree Blues.

In all phases of American literature which have dealt with Jazz, the Liberal Romantic values of the music and its world have found expression. This music, coming as it has in a century of materialism, technical emphasis, specialization, and literary constraint, has offered a rare and tiny revolution in American literature. It may
very well be the harbinger of a reaction away from the grim, tight
literature of today into a Romantic expansiveness, idealism, and
individualism that has been lost since the Twenties. Expansiveness
of mood and expression are no longer popular in American fiction or
poetry, probably chiefly because of the trend of disillusionment which
seems to culminate in the critical dicta of the New Criticism in gen-
eral.

The New Criticism may be defined here as possessing the fol-
lowing characteristics: the formal and often precious prose style
which has dictated so much modern critical writing; the desire for
concise statement and often heavily burdened imagery; the desire for
orthodoxy and strong authority in religion and society; the "Southern
agrarian" attitude, with its strong hint of aristocracy and caste
(including the Eliot brand of anti-Semitism); the almost total lack
of humor except for bitter or precious humor; the general lack of
enthusiasm (Edmund Wilson, in his essay on Eliot, said that the
modern convert burns with a low, blue flame); the renunciation, rather
than the celebration, of self; the certainty that mankind does not
progress, but is instead moving backwards from some nebulous peak in
past history; finally a pervading fear of both life and death.

Liberal Romantic writers have never been sympathetic to such
a value structure. They offer instead an acceptance of life on terms
which make it a positive and dynamic experience for them. In Jazz liter-
ature, the music itself becomes a symbol of those terms, and hence of
a meaningful existence. A bold improvisation may well bring new life
to the disencharnted air of a sterile wasteland.
New Critical formality and preconceived form is met with Liberal Romantic informality and earthy, vivid language; the concise, dry statement is met with the extensive, enthusiastic statement of the Jazz writer; the desire for orthodoxy and authority is met with a firm belief in the self-reliance of the individual; aristocracy and caste are met with racial equality and brotherhood; lack of humor is met with the constant presence of the hearty Jazz Comic Spirit; cool detachment is met with an overwhelming enthusiasm for art; renunciation of the artist's self is met with celebration of self-expression in art and life; lack of faith in mankind is met with implied hope for perfection in man; finally, fear is met with confidence in the essential worth of a life approached through art, and the stoical approach to death through art. The literature of Jazz is a reaffirma-
tion of belief in the worth of the individual and his powers of creation.
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