Composing Resistance in Contemporary French and Francophone Jazz Novels

By

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ABSTRACT: Composing Resistance in Contemporary French and Francophone Jazz Novels

This dissertation explores jazz as a means of resistance in twentieth- and twenty-first century French and francophone novels. It focuses on Christian Gailly's *Un Soir au club* (2001), Tanguy Viel's *Le Black note* (1998), Pascal Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine* (1994), and Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* (1981). Written after jazz music had evolved into a respected genre, these works each illustrate a different interpretation of jazz, what it entails, and the communities and contexts in which it plays a part. Each of these novels portrays jazz as resistance in a distinctive way, spanning cultural, social, and political resistance.

Drawing on intermediality and narratological close readings, I analyze how these authors transform jazz into literature. Technical and conceptual jazz elements inform the content and style of these works, and in the process, jazz influence reveals and emphasizes instances of resistance as well as the obstacles and shortcoming this resistance faces.

These four novels show both the potential and the limitations of jazz as a form of resistance. In their quest for freedom, characters become alienated from family and society. At the same time, jazz gives characters a means of self-expression and it enables the building of communities and relationships. Studying jazz in this context leads us to consider how we view music and literature as self-expression – alone or in groups, in harmony and in resistance.

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INTRODUCTION: Resistance in Contemporary French

and Francophone Jazz Novels

"Je ne connais rien de plus révolutionnaire que cette musique qui dépasse nos paroles…"

Toussaint Louverture in L'Isolé soleil *by Daniel Maximin*[1]

In 1964, black American jazz musician Nina Simone wrote a song, "Mississippi Goddam!". It was a heartfelt reaction to the American Civil Rights movement, written on the heels of the June 1963 assassination of black rights activist Medgar Evers and, three months later, the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four black children. Simone's song was censored; some radio stations refused to play it and several states in the South banned it entirely, rejecting not only Simone's language, but also the messages of frustration and desire for racial and gender equality that her song represented. But still, the song became legendary as Simone cursed to all of America. As a musician and as a writer, she encapsulates the frustration and despair felt by black people and (black) women of her time, creating a music whose effect transcends words to help inspire a social movement for change.

Simone's song is part of a large tradition of music with important political or social implications, but it captures with particular poignancy the mix of emotion and rebellion that has made jazz such a widespread symbol of resistance throughout its hundred-year existence. Resistance has become an important cultural element of jazz, and it provides a lens through which to study jazz's emergence and progression in society and in the arts that it has shaped and inspired.

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[1] Maximin *L'Isolé soleil* 250.

Musicians are not alone in mobilizing jazz as resistance or as inspiration. Across the arts, jazz has motivated numerous artists. For example, Harlem Renaissance[2] painter Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) brought attention to African American artists at a time when racial discrimination was rampant. Douglas' paintings, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, depicted the black experience of the time with inspiration from lynching, segregation, and jazz[3]. Visual artists such as Piet Mondrian, Henri Matisse, Stuart Davis, and Jackson Pollock were influenced by structures and techniques of jazz like its organization of time, intervals (rhythm and meter), and improvisation. Lena Karpinsky[4] and Leonid Afremov[5] created vibrant and colorful jazz scenes in their modern, impressionistic paintings. Theater, too, is part of the literary jazz tradition. Many jazz standards came out of musical theater, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century. Pieces such as George Gershwin's "The Man I Love"[6] and "I Got Rhythm,"[7] Vernon Duke's "April in Paris,"[8] and Cole Porter's "All of You"[9] come from musicals and have become recognizable jazz standards[10].

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[2] The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic and intellectual movement in Harlem, New York, from about 1918 to the mid-1930s. It placed new emphasis on Africa-American thought and art. For this reason, its effects were felt worldwide in the work of black writers, academics, and artists.

[3] Glenn Jordan's 2011 article entitled "Re-membering the African-American Past" *Cultural Studies*, 25:6, 848-891, discusses how Douglas' work illustrates the black experience and past of racism and slavery. Douglas is also discussed in greater detail in Amy Kirschke's work, including her *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race and the Harlem Renaissance*, Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1995 Lastly, Douglas is discussed in the *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*, Ed. Cary Wintz and Paul Finkelman, NY: Routledge, 2004, 50-52.

[4] Karpinsky is a contemporary Russo-Canadian painter; she primarily paints abstract landscapes, flowers, and musical instruments, including multiple jazz scenes on canvas with acrylic paints (Karpinsky np).

[5] Afremov (1955-present), born in Belarus and living in the United States, is a painter who favors painting abstract work that illustrate emotions rather than events. Notably, he paints with a palette-knife, usually used to clean old paint off canvas. He paints a wide variety of subjects, including landscapes, cityscapes, seascapes, and musical instruments (Afremov np).

[6] From the 1927 *Strike up the Band*, with lyrics by Gershwin's brother Ira. It was first written as "The Woman I Love" for the 1924 satire *Lady, Be Good*.

[7] From the 1928 musical *Treasure Girl,* with lyrics by Ira Gershwin.

[8] From the 1932 musical *Walk a Little Faster*, with lyrics by E.Y. Harburg.

[9] From the 1954 musical *Silk Stockings*.

[10] Jazz theater and especially poetry have inspired much critical scholarship. For example, the relationship between jazz and theater is explored in Omi Osun Joni L. Jones's *Theatrical Jazz: Performance, Àṣẹ, and the Power of the Present Moment*, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015; Charles Sengstock's *Jazz Music in Chicago's Early South-Side Theaters*, Northbrook, Ill. : Canterbury Press of

Writers have also found a muse in jazz. The English and French worlds both have a long tradition of jazz poetry[11] that started shortly after jazz music itself began circulating. Among the most recognized jazz poets figure Langston Hughes, Jack Kerouac, Philippe Soupault, and Jacques Réda[12]. Jazz-inspired novelists include Jean-Paul Sartre, who explored freedom from emotional apathy in *La Nausée* (1938,) and Boris Vian, who structured his *L'Écume des jours* (1947) around jazz themes, characters, and style. More recently, Patrick Modiano expressed that jazz brings him inspiration[13]. Across the decades and across media, jazz, with all its styles, has become a potent cultural and creative force of artistic motivation, self-expression, and even protest.

Literary representations of jazz as resistance form the focus of this study as I explore how and to what extent jazz is mobilized in contemporary French and Francophone novels and how it informs literary writing. To this end, I examine four jazz novels, i.e. novels that include jazz concepts and techniques in their structure and form: Christian Gailly's *Un Soir au club* (2001), Tanguy Viel's *Le Black note* (1998), Pascal Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine* (1994), and Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* (1981). All these novels draw on jazz as a powerful tool of self-expression and opposition against social constraints or inequalities. They show the power of music, for the individual and for society. Gailly's *Un Soir au club* and Viel's *Le Black note* represent jazz

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Northbrook, 2000; and David Savran's *Highbrow/Lowdown : Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009. Scholarship on jazz and poetry includes Sasha Feinstein and Yusef Komunyakaa's *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991; Sasha Feinstein's *Jazz Poetry : From the 1920s to the Present*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997; and Erik Redling's *Translating Jazz into Poetry: From Mimesis to Metaphor*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

[11] Barry Wallenstein's article "Poetry and Jazz: A Twentieth-Century Wedding," *Black American Literature Forum*, 25.3 (Autumn 1991): 595-620, discusses in detail the tradition of jazz music in English-language literature.

[12] For example, their jazzy writings include Hughes' poem "The Weary Blues" (1925), Kerouac's "Mexico City Blues" (1959), Soupault's "Georgia" (1926), and Réda's *L'Improviste: Une lecture du jazz* (1980), analyzed along with other of Réda's pertinent jazz-influenced works in Eric Prieto's article "Paris à l'improviste: Jacques Réda, Jazz, and Sub-Urban Beauty," *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2009, 89–112.

[13] Modiano stated this in an interview, as discussed in Sylvain Bourmeau's "Patrick Modiano: 'Je travaille comme un somnambule'," *Libération*, 9 May 2013.

as a form of personal and social emancipation and expression. Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine* and Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* explore jazz from a politically focused angle, placing it in the contexts of international influence, Americanization, and democracy. Maximin's novel portrays the intersectionality of jazz, race, gender, and power in a postcolonial context. Together, these four works offer a multi-faceted approach to jazz as a medium of resistance.

Yet jazz's influence can be ambivalent because resistance remains a constant challenge in which jazz is both liberating and alienating. As an example of art's potential and limitations, jazz musicians' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement illustrates the emancipatory drive of jazz music. But America's history of segregation – which extends to jazz, whose clubs and the music industry itself were racially divided – tarnishes and limits this genre's reputation as a symbol of freedom. The goal of this dissertation is to analyze the struggles and limitations linked to jazz as a means of expression in the quest for freedom and, more generally, to reflect on the power of art as a force for change, expression of identity, and literary creation.

I. The twentieth century: a century of jazz resistance

In the words of Christian Béthune, jazz was the "première musique globale, la grande aventure culturelle du vingtième siècle" (Béthune 316). The result of this worldwide dissemination and influence of jazz was the development of a jazz culture that is linked with and has become symbolic of race – especially blackness – and Otherness, modernity, sexuality, and Americanization, in both positive and negative respects.[14] These associations are closely tied to how jazz developed, musically and culturally, throughout its history in the twentieth century.

[14] Robert Bennett calls this phenomenon "jazz-as-culture" in his article "Songs of Freedom: The Politics and Geopolitics of Modern Jazz." *Mosaic*, vol. 42, no. 1, Mar. 2009, 55.

From its very beginnings around the turn of the twentieth century, jazz has entertained close links with resistance[15]. Historically, many musicians and writers have linked jazz to greater struggles for freedom and social justice. Since the earliest forms of jazz, members of the African American community recognized it as a powerful political force (Stewart 90). During the 1920s and 1930s, jazz took on a cultural role as rebellion against social and musical traditions in rhythm and dance by diverging from established norms.

Later, in the middle of the 20th century, jazz was increasingly exported throughout the world and its musicians adopted polemical stances, which gave political and cultural undertones to its reputation as a genre of resistance. As such, jazz became a potent form of advocacy against issues like racism, advocating for social justice and civil rights, and featuring in ideological battles such as the confrontation between capitalism and communism[16].

Later yet, as jazz joined the canon of accepted and respected genres in the second half of the 20th century, it presented a counterexample to popular and rock music, whose musicians aimed to differentiate themselves from jazz while imitating some technical and formal aspects of it. Throughout this time, jazz musicians even rebelled against each other and their predecessors as the genre developed. In the 1940s and 1950s, bebop aimed to add artistic virtuosity and legitimacy to the earlier swing by including complex rhythms and demanding riffs. The free jazz of the 1960s rejected by then-established norms of rhythm, instrumentation, and structure. Post-1970s

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[15] The historical link between rebellion and jazz has been studied, for example in Paul Lopes' article "Signifying Deviance and Transgression-Jazz in the Popular Imagination," *American Behavioral Scientist,* 48.11(2005), 1468-1481.

[16] The development and cultural/political implications of jazz are discussed in books such as Stuart Nicholson's *Jazz and Culture in a Global Age.* Boston: Northeastern UP, 2014; Mervyn Cooke and David Horn's *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002; and Lisa Davenport's *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War*, Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2009.

postmodern and fusion jazz pushed the genre's boundaries ever further with new styles and instruments.

Jazz's link to resistance is an important part of its interpretation for all four of the authors in my corpus, but it is not the only one. Jazz history also informs the cultural and musical associations these authors reference. At its outset, jazz developed in the United States as a popular music (Lopes *Rise* 6). It has roots around the turn of the 1900s in the American South primarily as a black and lowbrow genre (Cooke and Horn 21-8); with ties to blues and gospel music, jazz began in the urban, lower social ranks (Mouëllic 65, 97). Despite these well-acknowledged facts regarding jazz's origins, its definitive roots are unclear. Jazz critic Hugues Panassié places its geographic and socio-cultural beginnings in New Orleans (Tournès *New Orleans* 72-83). This is a widely-accepted theory, though others like James McCalla argue that jazz "coalesced in various parts of the United States at roughly the same time (if in different ways in different areas)" (McCalla 1, parentheses original). What is certain, however, is that jazz arose in the United States and it was played predominantly by black musicians for integrated audiences as a form of popular entertainment. White audiences saw jazz as a black genre, clearly amusing as evidenced by its popularity, but nevertheless a music of the Other. Black audiences did not share this view as for them it was their own music, but the concept of jazz as Otherness remains important in this dissertation because three of the four authors (and their respective protagonists) are white.

In the second half of the twentieth century, jazz's initial reputation as a lower-class, sexualized and racialized music reversed and jazz came to be known instead as an elitist genre (Nicholson 18). With the development of journals such as *Jazz Hot* in the 1940s followed by the 1960s' free movement, jazz became more musically sophisticated and intellectual than its earlier iterations. With bebop and then free, jazz became harder

to understand and more demanding on both the player and the listener because musicians consistently pushed the limits of what jazz is, their playing growing increasingly intellectual, theoretical, and virtuosic in the process. By taking this new music seriously, some musicians sought to earn a place in high culture. For example, saxophonist Archie Shepp regretted the lack of respect for jazz; his long-term goals included "prestige, respect, and the freedom to pursue musical projects without the oppressive label of 'jazz'" that imposed expectations and relegated his music to the popular entertainment (Piekut 228). Likewise, singer and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (Lopes *Rise* 1), among many others, worked toward gaining recognition for jazz creativity and virtuosity in high culture[17]. Because of these stylistic changes, jazz grew less accessible to the general public, a progression that gave it a reputation of snobbery and obscurity (Nicholson 18). This status continues today as jazz sales are among the lowest in the music industry[18], evidence of a decline in mass interest. But jazz remains an intellectually and critically-acclaimed genre, demonstrated by Grammy awards given to Norah Jones between 2003 and 2008, and Esperanza Spalding in 2011 and 2013, even in non-jazz categories (Recording Academy np).

These different and sometimes conflicting representations of jazz share a common emphasis: jazz can be perceived as a music in opposition to the mainstream. As such, it has transcended music to become a pervasive symbol of resistance worldwide. For example, jazz aided in creating a counterculture in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia

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[17] The high-art turn in jazz is the focus of multiple scholarly works. These include Amiri Baraka's (aka Leroi Jones) *Blues People: Negro music in white America* , N.Y.: W. Morrow, 1963*; Charles Nanry's American Music: from Storyville to Woodstock, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books; distributed by E.P. Dutton, 1972;* and Lewis Erenberg's chapter entitled "Things to Come: Swing Bands, Bebop, and the Rise of a Post War Jazz Scene" in *Recasting America: Politics and Culture in the Age of the Cold War*, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 221-45.

[18] According to the 2014 Nielsen year-end music report. http://s0.thejazzline.com/tjl/uploads/2015/03/nielsen-2014-year-end-music-report-us.pdf.

and it helped to spread Americophilia to Soviet countries through State Department-sponsored tours. These activities made it a symbol of post-WWII Americanization abroad, including in France. But in this context, jazz also led to counter-Americanization. Its links with segregation and racism brought about condemnation for the culture that created jazz. As Ludovic Tournès writes in his article "La réinterprétation du jazz : Un phénomène de contre-américanisation dans la France d'après-guerre (1945-1960)", jazz's status as a minority music led it to be interpreted "comme la résistance d'une minorité opprimée face à l'Amérique impérialiste aussi bien à l'intérieur de ses propres frontières qu'au-delà des océans" (80). The result of this reinterpretation is that jazz, despite being an American genre itself, also took on symbolism as resistance against American influence abroad. It gained symbolism as resistance against the very ideas it first represented.

An additional factor in jazz's development and reception lies in its roots in black music and culture. Musically, certain aspects of blues and gospel music resonate within jazz, including repetitive call-and-response progressions. Culturally, jazz's association with black culture has also strongly informed its history as musicians and listeners alike faced racism and racialized, primitivist stereotypes. Many jazz musicians participated in the fight for civil rights, and both throughout the Civil Rights Movement and more recently, musicians have pushed back against racist stereotypes, asserting a jazz identity for themselves outside of the standard conceptions. Notably, for the purpose of this project, though jazz music itself has continued to develop beyond these stereotypes, it is the time that these conceptions most allude to – i.e. the years of bebop and free jazz – that the novels in my corpus most depict. For this reason, I am focusing my study of jazz history and conceptions primarily on the years leading up to and including the 1960s, when jazz was especially associated with resistance as music in its structural and

sonic innovation; as culture with its symbolism of America, even abroad; and as a tool to fight racism and to express identity.

All the novels in my corpus illustrate a unique conception of a jazz lifestyle that stems from the general concept of a jazz culture; the novels refer to certain stereotyped jazz associations such as excess and moral depravity in Gailly's and Viel's works, Americanism and counter-Americanism in Quignard's novel, and black culture and identity in Maximin's text. Moreover, the representation of these associations in the four texts of my corpus raises the question of appropriation: do these authors go beyond depicting a particular culture and appropriate it for their own purpose instead? While the characters may use jazz to express their identity and thus their resistance against an organization or concept, if the authors appropriate jazz and its stereotypes, their characters' resistance risks being restricted because it relies on the same prejudices against which the characters are resisting. An exploration of identity further nuances both the appropriation and resistance; in these novels, expressing one's voice, one's identity, becomes a method of cultural or personal resistance.

II. Jazz novels: an overview

> *"Passer d'un genre à l'autre n'est-ce pas, paradoxalement, par ce jeu des images parfois radicalement autres, donner littéralement à voir dans son étrangeté l'image même de l'œuvre qui est l'objet de ce passage ? Toute transposition agit donc, dans toutes les acceptions possibles de ce terme, comme un révélateur"* (Ponnau 25).

These words, which Gwenhaël Ponnau writes about the process of transforming one literary genre into another, also apply to the transformation of one artistic media to another. The re-creation of a work in another medium reveals key characteristics of the original while preserving a sense of its distinction and novelty. As literary adaptations of music, jazz novels show this intermedial transformation in practice because they

serve as a spotlight for jazz, shedding light on its main elements. And as "révélateurs," jazz novels mirror the authors' own vision and understanding of jazz as a musical and cultural force.

As I have suggested, jazz novels are novels that include or allude to jazz in their content or composition. We can identify four subgenres, depending on the role attributed to jazz itself within these works: Jazz Age novels, jazz biographies and autobiographies, jazz crime novels, and literary jazz novels.

Jazz Age novels are those written during the Jazz Age of the 1920s and 1930s that express the mainstream attitudes of the time regarding social norms and music including, of course, jazz. The most famous is perhaps F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) with its scenes of large, boisterous parties fueled by jazz and drink. Other novels of this category include Raymond Queneau's *Le Chiendent* (1936), where one of the main characters is a saxophonist; Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938) in which jazz becomes an antidote to existential ennui; or Michel Leiris' autobiographical novel *L'Age d'homme* (1939) where the protagonist recounts his fascination with jazz upon his first exposures to the genre.

Much like the name implies, jazz biographies and autobiographies are works, sometimes in fictionalized form, that express the lives and histories of either jazz musicians or of the genre itself. Michael Ondaatje's 1976 novel *Coming through Slaughter*, for instance, gives a fictionalized account of the life of musician Buddy Bolden and his descent into insanity. *Le Roman du jazz* (1991) by Philippe Gumplowicz is another example of a semi-fictionalized jazz tale. Over three volumes, Gumplowicz provides a novelistic account of the history and development of jazz music. His dialogues are fictional, though his places and characters are historically accurate. Yet

another example of such a work is Laurent de Wilde's *Monk* (1997), which traces the story of legendary and controversial 1940s jazz pianist Thelonius Monk.

Jazz crime novels include *polars,* or mystery novels, that reference the dark underworld of the jazz music scene, taking advantage of its connotation as a sinful, immoral music with connections to crime, drugs, and promiscuity. Its depraved reputation and link to sinister locations makes jazz appealing to mystery and crime writers, and the list of jazz *polars* is long. For example, Guillaume Musso's *Central Park* (2014) incorporates the stereotype of the seedy and violent jazz world to lend credence to a psychiatrist's underhanded scheming and shady connections. James Ellroy's *White jazz* (1992) alludes to the dark crime world and the racism often associated with jazz in a *polar* context, setting the stage for this novel with its crime, violence, and racism. Lastly but importantly, the Revue Alibis provides an extensive catalogue of over a hundred jazzy crime novels[19].

Literary jazz novels are those that incorporate jazz motifs and musical or cultural elements into their structure, themes, and literary style. They include the four novels which form the object of this study: Gailly's *Un Soir au club*, Viel's *Le Black note*, Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*, and Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine*. Other examples include Boris Vian's *L'Ecume des jours* (1947), a classic literary jazz novel and one of the first. More recently, Leonora Miano's *Blues pour Elise* (2010) puts a contemporary and real-life spin on the genre, suggesting jazz pieces to accompany the chapters, which are themselves based on jazz by incorporating musical elements and techniques. This category of jazz novels presents a particularly rich focus for my research because it incorporates jazz on multiple levels – formally, structurally and conceptually. Such a

[19] The Revue Alibis hosts a catalogue on the subject, listing over a hundred titles. It is entitled *Polars et Jazz*: *(Revues Alibis 21).* http://www.revue-alibis.com/dossiers/polars-et-jazz-revue-alibis-21/; a shorter version of this list was published in *Alibis* 21(2007).

multi-leveled combination provides a developed view of how jazz reveals and enables resistance.

III. Methodology

Two main theoretical approaches inform my research. First, I draw on the observations of intermediality, which addresses the passage of an artistic work or idea from one medium to another. This approach traces how authors "transcode"[20] jazz from its original musical forms into literature.

Intermediality is rooted in Werner Wolf's 1999 book *Musicalization of Fiction.* Wolf distinguishes two methods that identify musicality, including jazz, within a text:

- *thematization*[21]: the explicit mention of a work from another medium which serves as a "guide to reception;" one could describe it as "telling" or overtly alluding to an external influence (Petermann 22), and
- *imitation*[22]: a technique in which aspects "of the medium that is materially present are used to metaphorically suggest the presence of a foreign medium" (Petermann 24). Imitation is an implicit reference to another work through reproducing its key identifiable parts.

Building on Wolf's thematization and imitation, Regina Schober adds a third element to the intermedial repertoire:

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[20]Josué Harari uses this term in discussing Jean Starobinski's article "La littérature, le texte et l'interprète." Harari writes that "the interpreter-critic, according to this definition, assures the passage of a message from the language of the text into another, critical language; and during or through this passage, he is responsible for preserving what Starobinski calls the "integrity"—the nature, quality, tone, direction—of the message… The operation of passage, of transferral, of conversion, from the language of the text to the language chosen by the critic (a language borrowed from another domain, another field, or another medium, i.e., another code) is an operation of transcoding" (24). While Harari is talking about literature from an earlier era, the same principle applies when authors interpret musical elements in literature while keeping the original recognizable and consistent.

[21] Discussed by Wolf in *Musicalization of Fiction*, 55; and Rajewsky, cited in Emily Petermann's *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction*, 22.

[22] Discussed by Wolf 57, Rajewsky cited in Petermann 22, 24, Petermann 24.

- *translation*,[23] which Schober defines as the appropriation of important aspects from a work into a different medium in a covert process of transfer among media (Schober, in Ellestrom 166).

The implicit reference that is translation involves an analysis and interpretation of the original work by the author of the later one. It surpasses thematization and metaphorical imitation by creating its own version of another work's or genre's fundamental aspects; the concept of creating a new work, separate from the original, is key. As Schober points out, modernist writers especially introduced this idea of creating a new work as they blurred the lines between the original text and the new, translated one; the product of an intermedial translation then is "not the medium itself, but [it] is an 'imagined' version of the medium" in which "there is always a certain degree of modification and change;" intermedial translation differs from its linguistic counterpart in that it is not based on fidelity to the original text; it is instead a variation on translation studies' increasingly "expanded and metaphorical understanding of translation" (Schober 165).

These three concepts of intermediality all feature in my analysis. Thematization and imitation aid in identifying technical jazz elements and analyzing the structural and formal composition of the novels in my corpus. Translation informs my analysis of the interpretations of jazz culture in these novels and the different contexts in which they depict resistance. In this way, the three aspects of intermediality work together to illustrate and reveal how these authors convert a wide array of jazz elements into their literary works.

[23] Regina Schober, in Lars Ellestrom's *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, pp 163-66.

To further study the multifaceted roles of jazz elements in these novels, I rely on a narratological close reading of the texts. This close reading focuses on the four features that render a piece "jazzy" and that define what Laurent Cugny calls a *pratique commune du jazz* (Cugny 25): harmony, form, rhythm, and an acoustic instrumentation intended to create a specific and unique sound. There is great variation in how authors interpret and represent these elements, yet all their interpretations share common techniques. These include elements such as voice and polyphony, repetition, literary devices like polyptoton/asyndeton and epanorthosis (self-correction), and the structure of the novel itself. Jazz form, predominantly rhythm and structure, also guides these novels' organization and style, from the free-wheeling, rambling improvisation in *Le Black note* to the concise, alliterative improvised dialogue and repartées in *L'Isolé soleil*.

My research arises from important scholarship that has been conducted on the links between jazz and literature. Three especially relevant works on jazz and novels are Emily Petermann's *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction* (2014), Aude Locatelli's *Littérature et musique au XXe siècle* (2001), and her *Jazz belles-lettres: Approches comparatistes des rapports du jazz et de la littérature* (2011). Petermann's work applies intermediality to jazz novels as she seeks to identify what it means for a novel to be musical. She discusses in detail how jazz elements can be converted into fiction, especially through the lenses of intermedial thematization and imitation. Locatelli, in turn, offers a history of the relationship between music and literature throughout the twentieth century. Then, focusing specifically on jazz, she identifies three major types of literary jazz novels: roman de formation, roman historique, and roman de voix (*Jazz belles-lettres* 81). Additionally, she discusses stylistic, formal, and thematic jazz effects on literature,

following them through a selection of texts – French and not – that illustrate the breadth of jazz history, from New Orleans jazz to free.

Edwin Hill's *Black Soundscapes White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* (2013) is also fundamental to understanding the links between jazz and literature, especially in a global context. Hill's work studies how the trans-Atlantic black soundscape has evolved, examining the construction of gendered and racialized musicality and textuality in the twentieth century as it relates to black Atlantic experiences[24].

My dissertation contributes to the current body of scholarship through its focus on jazz and its role as a medium of resistance. I show how these texts portray jazz as a powerful method of self-expression, community-making, and empowerment in social, musical, and political contexts. In so doing, I examine the challenges and limits of the quests for freedom, inspired or expressed through jazz, that the novels in my corpus depict.

IV. Chapter organization

The first chapter of this dissertation, "Jazz Representations and Resistance in the Twentieth Century," provides a general historical overview of the links between jazz and resistance, both in the United States and in France. This initial chapter introduces the cultural, political, racial, and musical jazz elements and extra-musical associations that form the foundation of the novels discussed in subsequent chapters, and that inspire these authors' understanding of what jazz is and does.

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[24] Other important relevant scholarship includes Christiane Chaulet-Achour's *La Trilogie caribéenne de Daniel Maximin: Analyse et contrepoint* (2000), in which she analyzes the exchanges between the polyphonic voices, stories, history and modernity, femininity, and geography in Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* (1981)*, Soufrières* (1987)*, and L'Ile et une nuit* (1995). Also, many scholars have written articles on jazz and literature, including, among others, Edmund Smyth, Elin Tobiassen, Monique Gerwers, Warren Motte, Nick Nesbitt, Jason Herbeck, and Martin Munro, whose works are especially pertinent to this project. Specific references to their work are in this dissertation's bibliography.

Chapter 2, entitled "*Le prix des choses*: Jazz, Mainstream Culture, and Desire in Christian Gailly's *Un Soir au club*," analyzes jazz techniques and structure in Gailly's novel and how his use of irony challenges common cultural conceptions about jazz. Gailly's main character, Simon Nardis, struggles with the constraints of living a typical, mainstream life with his family and he longs to resume playing jazz. When he meets American jazz club owner and singer Debbie Parker, Simon's life is again dominated by this music. Through Simon's experience, Gailly explores jazz as a form of resistance against mainstream culture and he promotes jazz as a method of self-expression. At the same time, his novel subverts a strictly binary view of the jazz and mainstream worlds and casts an ironic light on Simon's quest for emancipation.

Chapter 3, "Resisting Trauma and Creative Melancholy: Jazz in Tanguy Viel's *Le Black note*," explores the challenges of artistic creativity. The narrator suffers trauma that stems from his experiences in a jazz group, particularly the rampant drug abuse and the fire that burned down their house and killed their leader in the backstory leading up to the novel's beginning. Though the narrator's account is marked by failure and insanity, the novel itself is an allegory for the writing process and the successful overcoming of artistic intimidation before the works that others have already created. In the process of reflecting on the difficulty of creating an original artwork, Viel draws on jazz elements to emphasize his narrator's key characteristics and to develop his own literary voice.

In Chapter 4, "An Ugly Illumination: Jazz's Ambivalence in Pascal Quignard's *L'Occupation américain*e," the scope of jazz resistance expands to the political realm. Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine* is what Bruno Thibault calls a "roman mécontemporain," or a novel that proposes "une réflexion critique sur la modernité, sur la politique de l'oubli et sur la dépression mémorielle, sur les enjeux de la temporalité,

ainsi que sur les jeux de la narration historique" (Thibault 115). To offer this type of critique and call to reflection, Quignard presents an ambivalent look at jazz. Here, jazz simultaneously offers freedom and confinement, hope and threat, depending on the affected individual. Through an inter-generational struggle between parents and youth in post-World War II France, Quignard shows France on the cusp of change between past and future, nostalgia and hope. In this setting, jazz is an enabler and an effective tool of soft power for the Americans as Americanization spreads throughout France and the world. But conversely, jazz also gains importance as a method of expressing anti-Americanization as the main protagonist takes the freedom and individuality he learned and developed through jazz to renounce all things American.

In Chapter 5, "*Une Résistance Improvisée*: Creating Connections through Jazz in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*," I further broaden the context of political jazz resistance, extending the borders beyond continental France to the French Caribbean. As a francophone text and a historiography of the French Antilles, *L'Isolé soleil* delves into questions that the other three novels do not such as race, collective identity and memory, and solidarity across space and time with focus on black Antillean women. Maximin's novel traces the French Antillean journey from slavery and the 1802 rebellion to departmentalization following World War II, doing so by giving voice to black Antillean women over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *L'Isolé soleil,* music enables and activates geographic, social, and political connections in a codified and politicized world where the language one speaks and the music one plays reveal much about his or her socio-economic standing. In this context, corporeality has a unique importance in both expressing identity and the search for freedom, a phenomenon that jazz and black music emphasize. Jazz resistance becomes political

given the novel's colonial and post-colonial setting, and personal as music enables black (and often female) solidarity across time and space.

Importantly, for all four of these authors, jazz holds a unique and different meaning; each author has their own understanding of what jazz is and represents as well as their own goals for their respective novels. For example, Gailly's and Viel's novels are published with Les Editions de Minuit. This publisher is particularly known for publishing provocative and experimental works, stemming in part from its foundation as part of the resistance to the German occupation of World War II and its publication of *nouveau roman* authors' works. As part of this tradition, Gailly and Viel bring an eye toward nuance and ambiguity; in both of their novels, jazz has both a positive and a negative impact, and strong influence on writing style and structure. Quignard, too, represents jazz as an ambivalent influence, but he also assimilates it into his own preference of how he writes music, emphasizing its physicality and sexuality. Moreover, in *L'Occupation américaine*, Quignard portrays a clash of cultures between post-World War II France and America; accordingly, he interprets jazz in an international, albeit stereotyped, context more than Gailly and Viel do. Maximin also shows jazz as an international and American cultural phenomenon, but for him, jazz's influence is more political than cultural. In Maximin's novel, jazz is part of a greater musical tradition that shows how the main characters struggle with the tension between politics, poetics, and assimilation, particularly complicated given the novel's postcolonial context.

Despite these differences, the main characters in these four novels all use jazz as a path to freedom. Behind this freedom lies a desire for self-expression and a search of identity, which in turn leads to resistance against societal norms, political pressures, and the restraints they pose. But the pursuit of freedom is a treacherous path full of

obstacles: alienation, addiction, trauma, discrimination, helplessness, even subjugation. Jazz can be a potent means of expression, but it is not unlimited; resistance comes with risks and some of these are harsh, as these novels show. Yet notwithstanding these limitations, jazz remains a form of personal and political empowerment that can build communities. And for authors, jazz can have a formidable formal and thematic influence that leads to the unique literary styles and developments that this dissertation explores.

CHAPTER 1: Jazz Representations and Resistance in the Twentieth Century

Jazz music has been an influential means of expressing resistance and identity since its origins in the early 20th century. As jazz gained influence in music, politics, and culture, its effects on all these areas also multiplied and popular culture came to associate with jazz certain "extra-musical" elements – at times including stereotypes and common perceptions – that in turn gave it additional musical, cultural, and political capital (Lewis 218). Illustrating this phenomenon, the four authors of my corpus – Christian Gailly, Tanguy Viel, Pascal Quignard, and Daniel Maximin – portray and engage with extra-musical jazz representations and associations in their novels. By showing jazz together with the cultural and political concepts associated with it, these authors create their own interpretations of jazz, conveying various forms of identity and resistance in the process. Moreover, these novels reveal the ambiguity that can surround jazz and jazz resistance: as an American music, jazz is at once a democratic, progressive music of freedom and an oppressive music and symbol of American imperialism, depending upon one's context and viewpoint.

The authors in my corpus each connect with jazz music, history, and stereotypes in their own ways, but regardless of their approach and setting, in all the selected works, jazz plays a key part in expressing or enabling resistance. It brings people together and gives voice to the self-expression that is part of fulfilling the quests for identity and freedom in these novels, quests that transcend music to inspire artistic and literary creation. To accomplish this, all four novels refer to several aspects of jazz history and representations in the United States and in France. We can loosely identify 4 major categories of jazz characterizations that these authors depict and that this

chapter explores in more detail: sexuality and substance abuse, race and blackness, Americanism, and primitivism. Through their representations of these associations, this group of novels displays both jazz's potential and limitations as an American music; its complex, fundamental, and nuanced relationship with race, especially blackness; and its ability to bring people together for musical, personal, and political purposes.

However, before delving into the novels themselves and how they portray and interpret extra-musical jazz concepts, it is important to first establish a baseline for what these authors mean by jazz, followed by an exploration of the histories of the different jazz associations to which these novels allude, and how these experiences and ideas vary by country and time period. This inquiry will help us gain deeper understanding of each novel's nuances and of its critical and literary goals. Because jazz's cultural and musicological history is such a rich and complex topic, this chapter does not seek to provide a complete musicological overview or definition of jazz, its history, and cultures. Instead, it seeks to highlight the aspects of jazz history – especially pertaining to expressions of resistance or identity – that are particularly relevant for the selected novels. Notably, all of the topics examined in this chapter are represented in the selected novels.

The style of music considered to be jazz is notoriously difficult to characterize because the music itself has changed throughout its history, with each iteration or subgenre unique and musically different from the others. For example, the main American jazz trends shifted from swing in the 1920s to 1930s big band, bebop in the 1940s and 1950s, and free jazz in the 1960s. Other, later styles include cool, fusion, and latin jazz. There are important differences between all of these styles, including variations in instrumentation, song structure, and rhythm. The variety of jazz interpretations and associations within this corpus represents jazz's versatility and its

specificity to time and place. Because these authors eschew musicological analysis and detailed musical references in their novels, I do not seek to define the complex notion of jazz. Rather, I aim to identify what these authors understand by jazz - a musical style that has had multiple iterations over the twentieth century and that entails specific musical and cultural elements and associations.

Certain jazz characteristics and references are common to all the authors in my corpus. All four identify rhythm as a fundamental and influential aspect of jazz. They also recognize the cultural and socio-political role that jazz can play. Particularly with mid-century bebop and free, the jazz world saw both real and stereotyped associations with excess and substance abuse. Some of these stereotypes were closely tied to race and racialized assumptions, and their selected novels highlight jazz's close ties to race, especially blackness. Also, crucially, jazz has a reputation as an American genre due to its foundations in America.

Musically, the jazz elements most important to these novels are rhythm and improvisation. From the swing that dominates early jazz, rhythm – frequently played on a drum kit, which also separates early jazz from other concurrent musical genres – is fundamental to jazz. Later styles, notably bebop and free jazz, experiment widely with rhythm beyond the syncopation that marks swing. But rhythm and rhythmic manipulations, both prescribed and improvised, remain an especially notable aspect of jazz.

Like rhythm, improvisation is a key component of jazz. Similar to most other jazz elements, improvisation is not inherently new; performers have been improvising since the Middle Ages. But over the centuries as music was written down and recorded, improvisation became less frequent and less important, surpassed by an emphasis on virtuosic play and the complexity of the composition itself. With jazz, improvisation

becomes a fundamental skill and a central part of this music's appeal. The audience listens for the performer's own take, presented through improvisation, on a known melody or theme. This emphasis on improvisation within jazz harkens back to the genre's African roots because "jazz concepts of form are derived from African music, where improvisation happens within a rhythmic cycle" (DeVeaux and Giddins 23). Moreover, improvisation can intimately affect the group itself and how they interact; Daniel Fischlin writes that

> by definition, [improvisation] invokes collective interchange that is potentially transformative. Improvisation turns opposites into dialectical syntheses. It balances competing claims and interests. Improvisers need to counterpoise imagination with discipline, ego with empathy, and self-assertion with self-effacement" (xiii).

Fischlin observes that improvisation can serve both aesthetic and political functions through its role in social movement mobilizations (143). In this way, improvisation provides a bridge between music and politics, and between art and resistance. It is ingrained in the very structure of a jazz piece and, likewise, in the structures of the texts I study in this dissertation.

I. American cultural and historical jazz associations

Much of these novels' jazz inspiration comes from early and mid-twentieth century America. This was a time when the emergent jazz trope "represented a strange double consciousness of romantic rebellion and potential danger" in which jazz signified rebellion against dominant norms by expressing aspects of race, class, and urbanity, for example (Lopes "Deviance" 1468). Central to what jazz represents in these novels is an understanding of its symbolic association with resistance in many contexts and forms: these authors posit jazz as a music of the youth, of blackness, and of immorality in

relation to tradition. Importantly, the cultural conception that links jazz with blackness and immorality is related to racialized perceptions and stereotypes that dominated popular understanding of early jazz and that are particularly salient in the time periods to which these four authors allude in their jazz references: the American 1920s through 1960s. Ingrid Monson asserts that the "associations of blackness… with pathological sexuality, blackness… with madness, and madness with artistry have taken divergent forms but are nonetheless of very long duration in the historical imagination of the West" ("Problem" 412)[25]. As a result, jazz and its race-based associations can be inscribed in a long cultural history in the western world – a history that permeates both musical and literary jazz representations. But though Monson's associations are important, they are not the only racial and cultural connections common to the jazz world; the literary jazz representations explored in this dissertation also find inspiration in this music's American history as a modern genre closely linked with excess and sexuality in contrast to mainstream American norms.

Ia. Perceptions of jazz in America: modern, transgressive, sexual, and black

As with so much around jazz, its precise roots are unclear and difficult to define, but it is accepted that jazz developed in the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. Some critics argue that early jazz began in New Orleans, including Hugues Panassié[26] (cited in Tournès *New Orleans* 72-83). Meanwhile, other critics and scholars assert that different styles of jazz developed more or less simultaneously

[25] As discussed in Sander Gilman's *Difference and Pathology*, chapters 3-6, and cited in Monson's "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse."
[26] Hughes Panassié (1912-1974) was an influential French jazz critic. In 1932, he helped found and was an early member of the Hot Club de France, an organization of jazz enthusiasts. Panassié also published numerous books and articles on jazz, including in the magazine *Jazz Hot*, which the Hot Club de France began publishing in 1935. Panassié was musically and ideologically conservative, not considering bebop and later styles as jazz, and writing for conservative journal *Action française*. Panassié's ideological and musicological differences with Delaunay over jazz and bebop caused a schism in the Hot Club de France in 1947.

throughout the United States (McCalla 1). Regardless of location, early jazz had a reputation as a music of urban, black, and lower social ranks (Mouëllic 65, 97). The 1920s Harlem Renaissance further helped jazz gain popularity and gave its musicians and fans increased pride in their black artistic community. Additionally, jazz's status as a uniquely American music accompanied its reception throughout the world and played to both cultural and political influences.

As jazz became popular in the first decades of the twentieth century, it presented a sharp and contemporary contrast to earlier traditions, especially in terms of societal values, technological developments, fashions, and behaviors that deviated from the mainstream like sexual freedom and substance abuse. To be sure, such behaviors were in no way unique to the time, but they are a symptom of how jazz and the culture that accompanied it brought and represented new mores. Together with its status as a black music, jazz's novelty gave it a reputation for rebellion.

Ib. Jazz and modern culture

Jazz's arrival on the American musical and cultural scenes came at a time that saw a shift in values and taste. After the end of World War I, the Raging 20s were marked by an escalation of excitement for pleasure and for life itself, seen through a loosening of morals that is not infrequent following times of difficulty or restriction (Edele 38). In the United States, Prohibition was in full swing, but drinking was still common, as were dancing and bold fashions. Society was changing, especially driven by the younger generation rebelling against their parents' rules and norms, and jazz was their music.

In postwar 1920s America, jazz also became a symbol of resistance through its relation to modernity, recognized as a trendy music and a symbol of the avant-garde. Jazz rhythm symbolized the new and frantic pace of life that economic success and new

technologies were ushering in during the opening decades of the 20th century. Jazz also became linked to technology, especially radio and recording. Live performance was always crucial to the jazz experience and to the music itself as that is where its signature improvisation took place; however, jazz gained much of its popularity through dissemination on the radio and at home via gramophones in the United States and especially in Europe. As a result of its links to technology and to musical innovation through new sounds, arrangements, and improvisation, jazz gained a reputation of novelty.

Jazz novelty transcended technology to include important influence on fashion and dress. As jazz became more widespread and jazz dances more popular, the earlier restricting, floor-length dresses became increasingly antiquated. Instead, shorter skirts, backless dresses, shift dresses, and boyish silhouettes dominated, facilitating sport and movement for women (Thornton 38). Dresses grew more revealing than previous styles had been, suggesting a more adventurous morale. The looser, shorter, more masculine and highly accessorized women's look of the 1920s indicates stark resistance to earlier notions of femininity and feminine dress. Underclothing that favored a more masculine figure, such as the bust bodice which flattened a woman's chest, replaced the corset that had previously accentuated a feminine silhouette (Thornton 39). This new style – appropriately called a *garçonne* in French – welcomed a physically liberating fashion for women, one that mirrored the rise of a new persona in mainstream culture and in 1920s jazz history: the flapper.

Flappers were young, trendy American women. They were interested in the latest styles, music, and movies, and were mostly popular among 1920s youth. This is an important element to note because jazz was, overall, a generational phenomenon that

attracted the young, pitting them against their elders[27]. In some ways, jazz music was a catalyst for this generational divide because it enabled dancing that was provocative at the time. While jazz attracted fans of all ages, the importance of youth to jazz culture's early spread and its reputation as a rebellious and immoral one is central. As the flappers of the 1920s aged, jazz would no longer be perceived as culturally rebellious, and it would no longer be new.

Ic. Deviance from the norm: substance abuse

In the mid-twentieth century, images and stereotypes of excess were common in the popular perception of jazz, dominated by opinions on and assumptions of drug abuse. This link between substance abuse and jazz was founded in reality[28], but it remains problematic in its generalizations.

Not all jazz musicians adhered to (or continue to live) a lifestyle of drug abuse, but particularly during the heyday of bebop in the 1940s, many did. Though their reasons for turning to drugs were numerous and varied, the association of jazz and drugs is an important one to the public's perception of this genre and its fans (Smith 50); Merrill Singer and Greg Mirhej explain that "it is impossible to tell the story of jazz without reference to the subplot of drug use and its impact on the lives of jazz musicians and singers" (Singer and Mirhej 2). Drugs – notably marijuana, cocaine, and heroine – were an important part of some musicians' lives and personas throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, jazz was often played in nightclubs, bars, and similar places where

[27] As discussed in Pascale Cohen-Avenel's *Jazz, pouvoir et subversion de 1919 à nos jours*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2014.
[28] Merrill Singer and Greg Mirhej's article "High Notes: The Role of Drugs in the Making of Jazz," describes in detail the history of drug use in jazz, including how widespread it was throughout the twentieth century.

money was made primarily from the sale of alcohol (Becker 111). As a result, the mainstream public associated jazz and its fans with alcohol and substance abuse.

Yet the motivations for jazz musicians' drug abuse were often more complicated than a reputation for debauchery implies. Emphasizing the nuance of substance abuse in jazz, Singer and Mirhej write that drugs in jazz are not a pathology but rather an "unhealthy condition that is molded by the implementation and enforcement of laws, by the character of class and racial relations in society, and by the efforts of the oppressed to cope with (or even transcend) the hidden and not so hidden injuries of racism, classism, and other forms of social bigotry and structural violence (35). In other words, substance abuse provided a means to cope with the pressures of racism and the social, political, and economic framework it created that disadvantaged black musicians. Drugs also provided a means of bearing the consequences of this racism upon black musicians' incomes and the grueling schedule that it required to earn a living and musical respectability. Lastly, an emergence of a "rebel-musician addict" drove some to imitate such abusive behaviors to prove their total commitment to their music (Singer and Mirhej 34). For these reasons, drugs were sometimes, though not always, a part of the bebop routine. Despite the concerning motivations for musicians' drug use and their indications of systemic troubles, this widespread habit gave jazz a dangerous and rebellious reputation.

Not all jazz musicians and fans participated in substance abuse. And, as we have seen, those who did partake were not always driven by a desire for rebellion but rather for escape and for a means of coping with systemic and existential, race-based difficulties. Further, this generalization also implies that only black jazz musicians used drugs. However, some white members of the jazz community also abused drugs, such as trumpeter and vocalist Chet Baker, for example. Drugs and alcohol were undeniably

present on the jazz scene. This generalization that all musicians, particularly black ones, were drug addicts led to a stereotype that distracts from the musicians' skill and from the systemic and cultural issues they faced.

Id. Sexualizing early American jazz

The assumed immorality that marks jazz stereotypes extends beyond substance abuse to sexuality. Early jazz stereotypes related the genre to sexuality primarily through its history as black music and the reputations of the social milieus in which it was played. Early American jazz – especially in New Orleans – first gained popularity in red-light districts, resulting in an assumed link with promiscuity. In fact, some of the many potential etymologies for the word *jazz* come from this link, referring to the *Jezebels* that were the prostitutes in the red-light districts of New Orleans and the sex – through words like *jizz* and *gism* – that permeated these places and interactions (Gabbard np; Jarrett 81). As with drugs, however, not all in the jazz community participated in or were represented by the over-sexualization that surrounded some early jazz.

Race is also a significant factor in motivating the sexualization of jazz. Because early-20th-century society viewed black people as less civilized and thus morally and culturally inferior, mainstream representations linked black identity to a certain savageness (as interpreted by whites) that emphasized black physicality and sexuality[29]. Works like Norman Mailer's 1957 essay "The White Negro," illustrate how the sexualization of jazz music extends to its musicians, laced with primitivist notions and racism; Mailer writes that "the Negro… could rarely afford the sophisticated inhibitions of civilization, and so he kept for his survival the art of the primitive…

[29] Paul McCann discusses this trend in his article "Performing Primitivism: Disarming the Social Threat of Jazz in Narrative Fiction of the Early Twenties," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 41.4 (2008): 658-75.

relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body… for jazz is orgasm" (Mailer 279, cited in Monson "Problem" 404). This type of description illustrates the perception of jazz and its black musicians as hyper-sexualized and intellectually unsophisticated. Such conceptions present a significant symptom of the important and, at times, heavily stereotyped link between jazz and African American communities.

Ie. Jazz as African American music

Race – specifically, blackness – is fundamental to jazz history. Jazz has roots in black music and strong historical connections to black culture and community. These race-based connections informed the genre's musical style, for example through blues influence, and they also led to racialized, sometimes racist cultural implications.

A white-centered imposition of black identity and expression has long dominated jazz history, emphasizing the difference between the black and white communities and their relative powers in society. Until the mid-1960s, the music business was "astonishingly segregated" (Monson *Freedom* 29). Though the majority of jazz musicians were black, white men dominated musical criticism and the music industry itself, reflecting their own values with the products and music they endorsed (Dunkel 2). Further, the industry was stacked against musicians in multiple ways. The copyright system rewarded songwriters and publishers instead of performers because it protected compositions and not performances; a genre as performance heavy as jazz was particularly impacted, because improvisation happened live and each live recording was different, yet the composition gained royalties and not the performance (Monson *Freedom* 29). Also, recording contracts allowed for artist royalties, but they did not include advances, "taxes, duties, and percentages for packaging and breakage;" as a result, it was not unusual for jazz artists to receive bills instead of checks for royalties

(Monson *Freedom* 30). At a time when segregation was legal and racism was legally institutionalized, the music business favored white executives, whose opinions and preferences dominated the business in a racial division that was also a division of power, rendering the black musicians Other and exotic. White men directed the recording and release of jazz music, which in turn increasingly fed artists' diffusion and commercial success[30]. Through this racial divide between musicians and corporate direction, black jazz players were demoted and artistically ostracized within their own industry as white men's tastes and preferences determined their careers.

The stereotypes that jazz musicians and fans have faced are largely race-based, as many are aimed not toward the music itself but rather toward those who play it. Especially in the early twentieth century, the stereotypes surrounding jazz viewed it as a black, primitive, and lower-class genre. In the context of this history in black culture and racial segregation – including the divisions in the music business and in society at large – certain jazz musicians fought back against the stereotypes and even fetishizations of the jazz world and the (black) people in it. They used their music to promote civil rights while their lifestyles and words countered the opinions others projected onto them. For example, Ingrid Monson writes of trumpeter Roy Eldrige as a family man, and she describes how multiple musicians she interviewed emphasized discipline, responsibility, and the importance of family (Monson "Problem" 418, 420). These values are starkly in contrast to the depraved reputation and lifestyle image that has followed jazz. For black musicians, the "politics of respectability" were a way of subverting primitivist assumptions of black culture coming from white mainstream

[30] Tyler Stovall's chapter "Paris, Blackness, and the Avant-garde" discusses the tension between black jazz and white spectatorship. Amy Absher's 2014 book *The Black Musician and the White City: Race and Music in Chicago, 1900-1967*, also analyzes the development and complexities of race and segregation in the production and presentation of music, including jazz, in the first half of the twentieth century.

culture and opinions, (Higginbotham, cited in Monson "Problem" 418). At the same time, this very behavior is a dual form of rejection. It can simultaneously be interpreted as rejection of stereotypes that focus on immorality and substance abuse, and as rejection of black culture via assimilation to white culture by adopting mainstream white, middle-class values of what respectability entails: family, faith, moderation, responsibility. This behavior is both resistance and conformism. Here, too, as with so much around jazz, nothing is simple. However, the main point stands, particularly in relation to jazz: African American jazz musicians participated in American politics, responding to the political trends and issues that dominated black communities; jazz music was a means of serving the goals of African American musicians and activists.

If. Politicizing jazz through civil rights

The rise of jazz in popularity and artistic recognition brought its musicians to prominence, giving them a role that some used to further their own social and political interests and to resist against cultural and racial stereotypes. Some black American jazz musicians fought against stereotypes with their music, demanding racial equality while asserting pride as African Americans. For example, in the American Civil Rights Movement, numerous jazz artists wrote and recorded political songs and performed at festivals to promote freedom and equality, especially in a racial context. Jesse Stewart writes in his chapter "Freedom Music: Jazz and Human Rights" that for many African American musicians, jazz has also been an important means of resisting oppressive political, social, and economic pressures. In response to these types of oppression, the jazz world has produced its share of explicitly resistant political works. In the American Civil Rights movement in particular, many musicians gave their works politically suggestive titles and wrote liner notes dealing with social and political issues (Stewart 93).

The list of prominent black American artists who wrote and played politically motivated music that furthered the Civil Rights movement is long, including Sonny Rollins, Max Roach, Charles Mingus, Archie Shepp, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, and Nina Simone, among others. Through their music, these artists supported the creation of a social group that sought "to consolidate a cohesive self-identity and collective project" which, in this situation, was the fight for equal rights (Somers and Gibson, cited in Lewis 227). A closer look at two important black jazz musicians shows different but complementary ways in which they participated in the black American fight for civil rights. Max Roach and Nina Simone drew on music and lyrics to depict their black experiences – including references to African American history, from slavery to freedom and beyond – and the violence that seems omnipresent, from slave drivers to racially-motivated aggression leading into and during the civil war era (and that continues today). These aspects of Roach's and Simone's music are particularly relevant to this dissertation because they illustrate the black experience – including during slavery, the civil rights, and afterward – in musical and at times violent terms. Roach and Simone put in music what, years later, jazz-influenced authors express in literature.

If.1 Max Roach's We Insist! and the scream as communication

In 1958, Sonny Rollins recorded his *Freedom Suite* with Max Roach on drums. *Freedom Suite* is a mix of old and new, featuring the eponymous opening song as well as Rollins' own take on the standard "Till There Was You." In 1960, Roach continued Rollins' political expression with his own version of a freedom suite, a collection entitled *We Insist! Freedom Suite*. Collaborating with Abbey Lincoln, Michael Olatunji, and Coleman Hawkins, among others, Roach wrote and recorded this series that traces American black history from slavery to the then-contemporary fight for civil rights and equality. John Litweiler writes that "the quest for freedom…appears at the very

beginning of jazz and reappears at every growing point in the music's history" (quoted in Stewart 90). Rollins' and Roach's suites illustrate this historical struggle musically.

Roach's *We Insist!* has five parts: Driva Man, Freedom Day, Triptych: Prayer, Protest, Peace, All Africa, and Tears for Johannesburg. "Driva Man" opens the album with a recounting of the African American experience in the American South during slavery and emancipation (Saul 93). Its lyrics are graphic: "Driva' man he made a life / But the Mamie ain't his wife … Keep a movin' with that plow / Driva' man'll show ya how … Better make your hammer ring / Driva' man'll start to swing… When his cat 'o nine tail fly / You'd be happy just to die / Runaway and you'll be found / By his big old red bone hound / Pater oller [patroller] bring ya back / Make ya sorry you is black" (Roach, "Driva' Man"). Written in unique 5/4 meter, "Driva Man" is a critique of white jazz musician Dave Brubeck's song "Take Five," which is written in the same meter. Brubeck's use of 5/4 time garnered critical attention, a fact that was not overlooked by black musicians, including Thelonius Monk, Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey, and Roach himself, who had all recorded in 5/4 time in a manner that, in their view, was more deserving of critical attention than Brubeck (Monson "Revisited" np; Monson *Freedom* 179).

Following "Driva Man," Roach continues building his version of black American history with "Triptych: Prayer, Protest, Peace," a musical illustration of the frustration that Roach and Lincoln suggest is emblematic of the black experience during the Civil Rights Era. The piece is a non-lyric vocal and drum instrumental, notably with Lincoln screaming during "Protest." Her screams are a key part of the album, with great symbolic significance. Lincoln is presenting a new and analytic way of listening to the music because her screams simultaneously recall the pain of the slave experience and subjugation, the violence they lived, the language they communicated with, and the

complicated relationship between power and desire (Moten 22-24). In his book *In the Break*, Fred Moten explains Lincoln's reference to Frederick Douglass and his Aunt Hester's screams while she is brutally whipped, as described in *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, following her white master's discovery that Aunt Hester had been spending time with a black male slave. This episode illustrates the complex relationship between white master and black slave, including the master's possession of his slave, his violence, and his jealous sexual desire for her. "Protest" captures the violence and desire of the moment, even ending in a near arrest; Lincoln has stated that while recording, she and Roach ended in the police station because hearing her scream, someone thought Roach was killing her (Moten 23). Additionally, the scream was a form of communication for slaves because when speaking is forbidden and language is determined and policed by a white master, including the very language used to communicate, screaming becomes a form of discourse (Glissant, cited in Moten 7). Thus, the duo of Roach's speech and Lincoln's scream in "Protest" are highly evocative of the difficult past they share as African Americans. Moreover, in this scream, Roach and Lincoln reject Martin Luther King's philosophy of non-violence by unleashing the anger that has been compressed into fear for so long that catharsis can only come through lashing out and bitterness (Monson *Freedom* 178). That this song is associated with free jazz further accentuates the power relationships at play.

The following piece of the Triptych, entitled "Peace," brings heavy breathing that ends in one lyrical line: "I need peace" (Roach "Triptych"). Importantly, Lincoln's observation, even demand for peace implies that peace is not yet achieved. Instead, the song is tired, Lincoln's voice evoking "exhalations of fatigue" (Saul 95) and melodic phrases that do not achieve closure (Saul 96). Lincoln and Roach imply that peace is

desired but there is work to be done and progress to be made. The happy end is not yet fulfilled.

After the Triptych, with the final two pieces of the suite Roach creates a link between American black communities and their African counterparts, highlighting their shared struggle for freedom. The cumulative outcome of the suite shows the psychological effects of the struggle for racial equality, one that other black jazz musicians experienced and expressed as well, including Nina Simone.

If.2 Nina Simone, feminism and violence

Simone was one of the rare female musicians to reach fame and recognition as a writer, singer, pianist, and activist. Her lyrics often acknowledged her black identity and culture. Though she did not consider herself a protestor at the outset of her career[31], through concerts for black organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People[32] (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee[33] (SNCC), Simone used her music to support black activism. When, on September 15, 1963, four young black girls died in a Birmingham, Alabama bombing, Simone's career trajectory changed as she gained new purpose. Her song "Mississippi Goddam" quickly gained notoriety for its blatant disgust with the insistence on gradual integration by whites ("but that's just the trouble – 'do it slow' – desegregation – 'do it slow' … reunification – ' do it slow'… but bring more tragedy"), the suffocating violence and racial tension ("Can't you see it/ Can't you feel it/ It's all in the air/ I can't stand the

[31] As discussed in A. Loudermilk's "Nina Simone & the Civil Rights Movement: Protest at Her Piano, Audience at Her Feet," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 14.3 (2013), 124.
[32] A bi-racial civil rights group formed in 1909 to ensure equality in political, social, educational, and economic spheres, and to eliminate racial discrimination. The NAACP has both adult and youth sections. It offers litigation support and engages in initiatives, political lobbying, and publicity efforts.
[33] The SNCC was a civil rights organization that formed in 1960 and largely disappeared by the 1970s. It promoted participatory democracy and voting rights, racial and gender equality, and worked against discrimination. Over the decade of the 1960s, they became increasingly associated with Black Power.

pressure much longer/ Somebody say a prayer"), and its recognition of unjust treatment of black people throughout American history ("Don't tell me / I tell you / Me and my people just about due") (Simone, "Mississippi Goddam"). The clear distinction between *us* (black people) and *them* (white people) unites the black community around their cause.

Simone's music also depicted the violence that she and those around her saw and experienced. In the song "Pirate Jenny," Simone describes a deathly black freighter on which the singer is a maid ("You people can watch while I'm scrubbing these floors / And I'm scrubbin' the floors while you're gawking") that goes rogue and, "in that quiet of death," gives the order to kill the men aboard the ship "'right now. Right now!'/ Then they'll pile up the bodies / and I'll say / 'that'll learn ya!'" (Simone, "Pirate Jenny"). The revenge is clear: for their gawking and disrespect, the men in this song are killed in a metaphor for racially motivated disrespect and violence by white people. Simone was conscious of her message, her time, and her role within it as witness, commentator, and unapologetic messenger of a call to change: "And now we got a revolution / 'cause I see the face of things to come / yeah, your Constitution / well, my friend, it's gonna have to bend / I'm here to tell you about destruction / of all the evil that will have to end / … singin' about a revolution" ("Revolution").

Decades after the Civil Rights movement, jazz still held appeal as a music of political resistance. When the United States was about to invade Iraq following the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, several musicians played concerts entitled "Jazz Against War"[34], which took place in New York City in 2003 and 2004 to protest the impending invasion. Thus, as jazz has evolved from its very beginning into recent times,

[34] The event included, among others, Benny Lackner, the Jazz Passengers, Marc Ribot, Gutbucket, Maroon, and the Ralph Alessi Quintet.

it has continued to reflect and articulate a search for freedom, doing so within the bounds of changing social and musical constraints (Stewart 90). For Roach, Simone, and others, jazz is a means of expressing resistance in their search for emancipation and musical, social, and political respectability. In literature, we see this same phenomenon: both professional and amateur musicians express their search for freedom – that is, their resistance against external pressures, systems, or expectations – via jazz. As the discussions above illustrate, jazz elements like structure, lyrics, and historical references provide a medium through which musicians express resistance as they seek to create and express identity and gain freedom.

If jazz in America has been a potent symbol and means of expressing resistance and individuality, its status in France is simultaneously similar and yet very singular. Jazz in France shares several characteristics with its American counterpart and inspiration, but it is also a unique genre with its own associations, history, and contexts. To better understand these differences and how they affect jazz in French and francophone literature, it is important to also explore the singular aspects of jazz's history and extra-musical associations in France.

II. Uniquely French: jazz, primitivism, and imperialism

Like in the United States, early jazz in France was a youth phenomenon, associated with progressive fashions and lifestyles and, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, a desire for musical and political resistance and freedom. But the history and culture of jazz in France also differ from their American counterparts; French colonial history and its links to race-based, primitivistic ideas provides a distinctive context and viewpoint through which to view the French and francophone jazz scenes (Schmeisser 97).

Additionally, French jazz has a singular and complicated status because as an American music, it represents the contradictions and geopolitics of the United States. Jazz symbolized Americanism (and Americophilia), presenting the United States as a technologically advanced country of freedom. At the same time, America was an oppressor that did not provide this freedom to all, as evidenced by segregation laws and the need for the Civil rights movement and continued racism, even to this day. This juxtaposition of freedom and discrimination is important to French jazz, especially in the early twentieth century; in this social and political context, underscored even more by the conflicts of World War II and the Cold War, jazz was perceived as both a rebellious music and a symptom of cultural imperialism.

Throughout its history in France, jazz has held this complex status, full of ambiguity and contradiction. Matthew Jordan summarizes the origins of jazz's complicated place on the French societal and musical scenes:

> If the construction of cultural identity is a product of the discursive movement between self and other, jazz was *l'autre* and threatening on many counts when it was first heard in France in 1918. Played by black American soldiers, it was culturally and racially different. The nature of this difference was initially conceptualized by way of two poles or *topoi* which emerged in the discourse. On the one hand, it was described as *ultra-modern*, because it entered France during a technological war and was disseminated through modern media (radio, phonograph, cinema); on the other, it was called *primitive*, because the rhythms of the music reminded Frenchmen of orientalist dreams of drums from the savage jungle and overwhelmed many of them with a powerful desire to dance (Jordan 189).

Jordan notes how in some ways, French jazz culture mimicked its American models. In France, too, jazz was a symbol of modernity; when "African American jazz made a spectacular entry into the cultural life of the French capital" around World War I, it became "in short order a cherished symbol of the post-war avant-garde" (Stovall 20). Paris became an important center for a burgeoning black diaspora, and jazz provided a fitting accompaniment because just like "Paris was a city that combined rich local cultures with world pre-eminence, so did jazz triumph as both roots music and cosmopolitan rhythm" (Stovall 30). Importantly, Tyler Stovall emphasizes that "neither black politics nor black music was uniform, and both involved debates about the meaning of racial identity and modernity" (30). In this setting, jazz spread as both "exciting" and "savage;" it was simultaneously a "liberating" and a "brutish" genre that represented the "hypermodernity of America and the primitivism of Africa" (Stovall 32-33).

Jazz's American roots and America's influence on the development of this music in France are notable. French jazz musicians imitated their (black) American counterparts. Styles of dress changed as women's fashions became more audacious and revealing, and young men grew more fashion-conscious than those of previous generations had been. Even among the working class, young men were more inclined to present themselves as better groomed and attired with ties, well-creased pants, well-made shoes and faces cleanly shaved, as was the American trend (Haine 466). In 1920s Paris, jazz developed into an influential force on multiple aspects of everyday life.

Jazz also guided leisure activities. Early French jazz could be found above all in two types of locations: dance halls and cabarets. Jazz dominated the dance halls (and in contrast, was largely absent from concert halls), where, as in America, predominantly young people danced new and increasingly physical dances like the Charleston and the

lindy hop. To help accommodate these new movements, women shortened hemlines and bobbed their hair *à la garçonne*. As Martin and Rouëff explain, the *garçonne* was a "jeune femme émancipée, c'est-à-dire débauchée … [qui] pratique et contrôle sa sexualité 'comme les hommes'" (Martin and Rouëff 96). She is reminiscent of American flappers and the new social persona they embodied.

Moreover, when black American jazz musicians came to Paris, they found a city that was becoming an intellectual center of black thought and freedom. The city hosted the Pan-African Congress in 1919 with W.E.B. DuBois, among others. In the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance's art and influences extended to Paris and in the 1930s, important black thinkers came to Paris to study, including Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas. Racism certainly existed then and unfortunately continues now, but nevertheless, Paris provided particularly fertile and welcoming ground for black artists and art, including jazz. This phenomenon set the stage for a different experience of blackness than that of the United States, where the Jim Crow laws were still in full effect until 1965.

IIa. Race, primitivism, and early jazz in France

The racial connection, including its ties to primitivistic beliefs regarding black art and culture, has been a fundamental aspect of jazz's identity and culture in France, as in the United States. France was one of the first countries to which jazz was exported and it was among the first to legitimize it through critical discourse and analysis; significantly, the French public viewed jazz, especially at the outset, as a definitively black genre. Early French jazz critics disagreed on the role of whites in this music – Hughes Panassié argued that true jazz could only be black, while Charles Delaunay argued that whites, too, could swing – but they did not question the importance of black musicians in jazz. Further, American policies of segregation and the Jim Crow laws were

well-known abroad. As a result, French critics and the public alike saw jazz as an influential music of the minority, marginalized in its own country of origin (Tournès *Réinterprétation* 73). This was more than a matter of perception; despite the overwhelming popularity of jazz in the first half of the twentieth century, it still struggled for legitimacy as serious music with a place in high culture. Not serious enough for classical music and too serious for rock'n'roll (once it came about in the post-World War II years), jazz was socially popular but critically panned by classical and mainstream cultural critics. In the first half of the twentieth century, jazz did not belong to a greater musical and cultural niche other than its own marginalized and racially charged one.

Jazz's role as a genre of the minority was crucial to its diffusion and reputation and, as a result, to the development of jazz culture and resistance in France. In France, the fight against racism and American segregation became a crucial part of jazz culture (Tournès *Réinterprétation* 74, 77). Some French and francophone scholars and artists shared a consciousness of racial and black identity, seen by the Pan-African Congress of 1919 for example. This consciousness was a forward-looking one; as Pap Ndiaye writes, "il ne s'agissait pas de revenir aux civilisations anciennes mais d'inscrire l'africanité culturelle dans le monde moderne" (Ndiaye 78). This was part of the burgeoning scholarly and artistic landscape into which jazz arrived. Such a point of view illuminates certain fundamental elements of what would become French attitudes regarding jazz: it links black identity to Africa; it recognizes the old traditions that are inscribed in key components of black music (and eventually jazz) such as call-and-response, among others; and it maintains its focus on the contemporary world and modernity, an association vital to jazz culture.

Jazz offered an important connection to black identity and African tradition, but some mischaracterized, even caricaturized, these associations; as Christian Béthune notes, from the moment it emerged "le jazz [a] toujours permis à une partie du monde occidental de projeter ses propres fantasmes sur un imaginaire nègre mythifié" (Béthune 320). This projection and interpretation could take a negative turn, such as when cultural projection of black identity was responsible for the emergence and widespread depiction of black people – and thus jazz musicians – as inherently primitive. This stereotype runs rampant throughout early considerations of jazz, sometimes despite well-meaning attempts to elevate the genre because both positive and negative interpretations of black musicians reflected racialized beliefs.

Jazz's status as a black musical genre inspired its links to primitivism. In the early twentieth century, primitivism – a "tendance créatrice" that was based on race rather than formal characteristics – was an important artistic and aesthetic movement, notably among surrealists but its influence spread across the arts and artistic movements (Gorge 8). 20th-century primitivism offered a Eurocentric view of art, inspired by the lives, cultures, and works of so-called "primitive" peoples, appealing to the primeval, subconscious, and irrational in human nature (Gorge 13, 64). Primitivism was also a form of cultural relativism, maintaining that the "sauvage" was the opposite of the "civilisé" because the "sauvage" had no reasoning or logic (Gorge 41). Applied to 1920s jazz, primitivism posits that white culture was more culturally developed and thus more civilized, while black culture was of "cultural and moral inferiority" (McCann 662). Artistic primitivism in the 20th century was founded on a Eurocentric vision of artistic and moral superiority (Gorge 80). It was a form of interpreting the relation between Self and Other and a revivification of the trope of the noble savage; the Self was the European and the Other was a lesser, uncultivated, and exotic foreigner (Perchard 34).

This Eurocentrism of primitivist art and discourse is crucial to jazz's interpretation as a primitive music because in accordance with primitivist conceptions, jazz, as a foreign and primarily black music, presented a threat to the existing social order (McCann 659). The popularity of what was deemed a less culturally developed musical genre with its associated lifestyle and presumed immorality menaced traditional, high-brow European culture.

Gender is also an important factor in primitivistic perceptions. Marianna Torgovnick claims that "gender issues always inhabit Western versions of the primitive;" indeed, she posits primitivism as a colonial effect and a power structure seeking to maintain modern masculinity (17). The sexualization of black bodies in jazz illustrates this phenomenon; in a power play between subject and object, those who view black jazz bodies, both male and female, as primitive fetishize them by focusing upon the bodies' stereotyped and presumed natural abilities such as a proclivity for rhythm or a tendency toward sexuality, with an eye toward maintaining the superior (within this viewpoint) white culture and beholder in a position of social and political dominance and advantage.

Dancer and singer Josephine Baker epitomizes the representations associated with jazz primitivism of black women because her fashion choices, erotic choreography, and the public reception of her performances embody primitivistic ideals. Dancing to jazz, she simultaneously propagated, benefitted, and suffered from the stereotypes surrounding black cultures; her erotic costumes and moves reflected the notion that sexually expressive cultures were more primitive (Monson "Problem" 405) and that black people were "oversexed and correspondingly intellectually inferior" (Stovall 34). Baker herself illustrated some of these stereotypes. She was known for costumes such as her banana skirt – a revealing skirt made of bananas – that emphasized her African

roots, her body, her movements, and her nudity. Her choreography was often sexualized; her moves were playful, suggestive, and accentuated her curves in a strong contrast to the standards of dance spectacles of the time that were primarily ballet. Baker's songs also portray primitivistic notions. For example, when she sang "J'ai deux amours," Baker expressed her love for Paris and for "mon pays" which the song does not name, but which Baker describes with the phrase "ma savane est belle" (Jules-Rosette 33). This reference to a savanna suggested that Baker was alluding to Africa as her homeland rather than her native United States. Consequently, Baker's image, reputation, and some of her work illustrated primitivistic ideas, but they did so through a colonialist lens rather than a black American one.

Even positive interpretations of jazz and black musicians can emphasize primitivism. For example, considering black jazz musicians as purer, unspoiled by civilization or in touch with nature also promotes a simplistic and Eurocentric view of black culture, even if it is intended in admiration rather than condescension (Monson "Problem" 403; Stovall 34). American clarinetist and saxophonist Mezz Mezzrow was known for this; himself a white man, he mythologized African American musicians as superior jazz artists due to their natural genius (Monson 403). While well-intentioned because such a view is driven by admiration, it nevertheless remains an essentialist and stereotypical view of primitivism and racial identity.

In the first half of the 20th century, jazz gained popularity and influence in France but it remained an American import. This status gives it a dual symbolic role: for some it represented freedom, especially when tied to civil rights or viewed through the lens of musical freedom and expression via improvisation; for others, it was the music of an imperialist country. This duality persisted in German-occupied World War II France and

worldwide the Cold War; jazz simultaneously represented freedom and imperialism, expression and constraint.

IIb. Jazz in Vichy France

The years of the World War II German occupation of France have proven significant in the development of French jazz, both in terms of making the genre more Frenchified and in reinforcing its reputation as a music of resistance. There is some discussion among scholars and historians on the Nazi reaction to jazz; some maintain that the Nazis disliked jazz and censored it on moral grounds (Sweets 53), while others argue that jazz was never outright forbidden (Jackson 191). French Vichy authorities viewed jazz "with some suspicion" as a foreign genre representative of freedom and excess (Lane 128). Nevertheless, jazz continued to find success in concerts and on radio airwaves. Despite distrust of jazz among their ranks, some French collaborators, Vichy supporters, and occupying Germans were also passionate supporters and fans of jazz (Lane 129). As a result, jazz maintained a fan base throughout the Occupation, including among the youth subcultures like the French zazous, or youth dissidents who challenged the conservative mores of their time (Jackson 192). The zazous occupied a unique role; they were not explicitly part of the French Resistance but they "acted as dissident citizens, using protests to express their rejection in a non-democratic environment … made outcasts by Vichy, the German occupiers and the collaborationist press, [the zazous] employed dissidence to express their opposition to the occupying power" (Roberts 84). Importantly, a central element of zazou culture was jazz.

One method that gained popularity as a means of playing and supporting jazz despite the ban on American music was to Frenchify it. The German and Vichy suspicion toward jazz led to a "widespread practice of giving jazz standards French titles and presenting them as French folk songs in order to facilitate their performance and

broadcast," though this approach was not systematic (Lane 128). By making jazz appear innately French, critics and musicians were able to appeal to nationalistic Vichy sentiments.

Indeed, throughout the Occupation, French critics continued to write on and explore jazz. Hughes Panassié, Charles Delaunay, and André Coeuroy, among others, continued to debate various aspects of jazz, including its main characteristics, how it should sound, and where it comes from. Their links to the Vichy government are complicated; their writing during this time shows both support for jazz music and an acknowledgement of new Vichy norms and preferences for traditional French culture. For example, Delaunay led the Hot Club de France during the Occupation, organizing concerts while promoting jazz as a French genre to appease the Vichy regime. Coeuroy's work helped with this endeavor; his controversial *Histoire générale du jazz* (1942) emphasized the French influences on this genre and New Orleans in general to promote jazz as a French music. A year later, Panassié published *La musique de Jazz;* this work discusses jazz characteristics while also quoting the Bible, Catholic idioms, and Pétainist phrases to make it more acceptable to Vichy readers. These three critics continued publishing articles and debating jazz – with each other and with other musicians and fans – throughout the war period in magazines like *Jazz Hot*[35].

While they walked a fine line with representing Vichy values, these critics are not necessarily considered collaborators because during the Occupation, jazz remained politically dangerous, which made it all the more potent as a symbol of resistance. As Matthew Jordan observes, the "more the Vichy voices, at least publicly, railed against the enjoyment of jazz and swing as a symptom of cultural decadence, and denounced

[35] *Jazz Hot*, a French jazz magazine first published in 1935, was key in innovating scholarly discussion of jazz and jazz criticism, especially in the years following World War II.

jazz fans as degenerate Frenchmen, the more jazz, in all its forms, became the rallying call for an authentically French resistance" (207). Jordan's observation pointedly describes jazz's status during World War II: jazz was by nature subversive, but it was also appreciated, including by members of the Vichy government. Because it was viewed as dissident, Vichy did not generally support jazz. Nevertheless, the appreciation that some Vichy officers had for jazz led to it being tolerated if not encouraged, at the crossroads of rebellion and popular culture.

The conversations around jazz during the German Occupation of France reveal a deeply ambiguous interpretation of jazz. It simultaneously represented resistance through its American origins, and tradition because some critics emphasized jazz's link to France through French influence in New Orleans and through the genre's links to emerging trends in turn-of-the-century French music, like that of Debussy[36]. In this way, jazz was simultaneously American and French, foreign and familiar, cultural and political, menace and entertainment.

IIc. Jazz during the Cold War 1950s and 1960s

Following World War II, the Cold War pitted the United States and capitalism against the Soviet Union and its socialism, but the political and cultural battles between these two political ideologies that marked the Cold War also played out in France and elsewhere. The ambiguity that accompanied World War II-era jazz perceptions in France continued into the 1950s and 1960s, in other ways: jazz's close ties to America and Americanism, free jazz music and the African American fight for civil rights, and jazz's status as music of both cultural and political freedom and imperialism.

[36] For example, Debussy wrote a cakewalk piece, "Golliwog's Cakewalk," in 1908. Cakewalk is a slave dance from American plantations, and also a syncopated type of music that influenced ragtime and, perhaps, eventually jazz.

Jazz's reputation as an American music was central to its reception abroad. The Cold War further politicized jazz, an already political genre at times, to reinforce its ties to America and its culture and policies. Because of the ambiguity around jazz – that is, its dual identity as a symbol of American freedom and democracy but also American imperialism – it became an apt means of exerting American soft power throughout the world. The United States State Department-sponsored international jazz tours were an important method of spreading Americanism through jazz[37]. The tours lasted over a decade and included many well-known jazz artists traveling throughout Africa, Asia, and Europe to play jazz and to promote American culture and politics[38].

The State Department tours sought to further democracy and favor for the West throughout the world, particularly in communist countries, but they also brought the spotlight to America's race troubles. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights movement was in full force, and many of the jazz musicians representing America were black. The international attention on and controversy around America's racial politics led to important conversations on the international stage around these issues, and they also highlighted one of the country's major shortcomings in the equality that they touted and promoted[39]. As a result, the Cold War added another layer to jazz's already complicated and ambiguous reputation, both at home in the United States and abroad, presenting this genre as American but also international with universal appeal, cultural and political, local but also imperialistic.

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[37] For more information, see Lisa Davenport's *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era*, Jackson MS: UP of Mississippi, 2009.

[38] See annex for a list of the musicians and destinations involved.

[39] Ludovic Tournès writes in "La réinterprétation du jazz: un phénomène de contre-américanisation dans la France d'après-guerre (1945-1960)" that "[l]'antiracisme devient alors une valeur fédératrice du milieu du jazz" in France as French jazz musicians and enthusiasts gain greater knowledge of the racism rampant in the United States at the time (77).

III. Illustrating jazz concepts in literature

The four novels that I will discuss in the following chapters offer a variety of jazz interpretations that together show how jazz can unite for personal, political, and social reasons. They also explore jazz's political and personal ambiguity, stemming from its links to American imperialism and its complicated ties to race. More broadly, all four novels illustrate several of the aspects I have highlighted in this brief overview of jazz history and jazz representations in the United States and in France.

Christian Gailly's *Un Soir au club* refers largely to bebop. His novel posits jazz music as a contrast to classical music and takes up – and breaks down – the stereotype that a jazz lifestyle is the opposite of a more traditional, mainstream life, complete with alcoholism and promiscuity. Tanguy Viel's *Le Black note* does not directly depict jazz, though in his search for freedom and self-expression, the narrator makes numerous references to musicians and sometimes jazz pieces, largely to the free jazz era and John Coltrane. Viel explores the implications of race and substance abuse on jazz creativity. Pascal Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine* takes place in 1950s France, showing jazz as a powerful American music that means simultaneously freedom and oppression, Frenchified but nevertheless linked to American imperialism. Lastly, Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* illustrates jazz in the racial and political contexts of French colonialism; Maximin demonstrates how jazz can promote resistance by building communities in France, in the French Antilles, and across the black francophone diaspora.

Together, these authors critically engage with jazz, its history, and its stereotypes to promote their own quest for identity. In so doing, they reveal and develop the tensions and ambiguities that we have seen in jazz history itself. And, importantly, they also engage with the race-based, even racist stereotypes that have haunted jazz from its beginnings. Sometimes perpetuated, other times challenged, the

themes that form the basis of jazz stereotypes – including substance abuse, sexuality and sexualization, primitivist notions, and racism – are part of the different jazz worlds that these four authors create in their narratives. In addition to the influence from historical background and cultural associations and representations, jazz rhythms and compositional structures impact these novels' formal organizations. The result is a diverse corpus of novels that illustrates both the gamut of jazz influence on literature, and jazz's associations – and their nuances – with resistance.

CHAPTER 2: *Le prix des choses*: Jazz, Mainstream Culture, and Desire in Christian Gailly's *Un Soir au club*

In his 2001 novel *Un Soir au club,* Christian Gailly[40] presents a nuanced view of the typecast disparity between jazz and mainstream worlds. He portrays the two as opposite at the novel's outset, only to then use irony and jazz-inspired style and form to challenge this binary interpretation. Ultimately, Gailly's novel suggests that it is not jazz that is dangerous – as common conceptions would imply given its associations with drugs and excess – but rather that risk is intrinsic to any artistic undertaking. To this end, Gailly paints a world in which "art has to take primacy" (Smyth 124); in this worldview, for those for whom art is a vocation, all that matters is "la priorité de l'art et peu importe le reste. L'art au péril de sa vie" (Gailly 75). Gailly's story becomes a cautionary tale against oversimplified assumptions, such as the jazz-mainstream dichotomy, while also depicting the struggles one can face in finding and fulfilling – or not – their vocation. In all of this, jazz provides the setting, the structure, and the main character's mode of expression to convey his resistance to mainstream culture and jazz stereotypes alike.

Un Soir au club tells the story of the anonymous narrator's friend and a former jazz pianist, Simon Nardis. As the novel begins, Simon is an engineer based in Paris, living a settled life with his wife Suzanne. Their adult son Jamie lives nearby with his fiancée Anne and their cat Dingo. The novel tells the story of a weekend when Simon is

[40] Born in France, where he lived all his life, Christian Gailly (1943-2013) began his career as a saxophonist before switching to psychoanalysis. Despite this change, the arts remained his calling – his vocation perhaps, a theme that he explores in *Un Soir au club* – and in the late 1980s Gailly began publishing novels. A decade later, he found critical success with *Nuage rouge*, which won the 2000 Prix France Culture. *Un Soir au club* won the 2002 Prix du Livre Inter and inspired a 2009 movie of the same name, adapted by Jean Achache. Gailly published exclusively with the Editions de Minuit.

far from home on a business trip to a small coastal town, where a coworker takes him to a jazz club. It is a significant outing for Simon because he has just spent ten years away from jazz. This distance was an effort to avoid noxious effects on his life and relationships from the drugs, alcohol, and infidelity in which the jazz setting encouraged Simon to partake; as the narrator observes, "le jazz n'incite guère à bien se tenir" (Gailly 11). At the club, Simon drinks alcohol for the first time in a decade. He plays the piano and eventually performs a duet with the club's American owner, Debbie Parker[41]. Then, Simon repeatedly chooses to miss his train back to Paris, his wife, and his mainstream life in favor of remaining with Debbie that evening and the following day. They experience an idyllic afternoon in the coastal town together, playing jazz, shopping, and making love on a secluded beach.

Throughout this affair, Simon consistently thinks of his wife and occasionally calls her. When he misses yet another train, Suzanne understands that Simon is falling into his old ways and decides to drive down to rescue him from jazz and all it entails, as she apparently did countless times before. But she never arrives. Suzanne dies in a car accident *en route*, which frees Simon to eventually marry Debbie. Through Simon's story, Gailly presents, nuances and critiques clichés of the jazz life. With irony and both formal and conceptual representations of jazz, Gailly shows how jazz offers Simon an alternative to his steady and settled Parisian life. Simon experiences a rediscovery of his style and of himself as he seeks a fulfilling and creative life in this novel that is rich with jazz elements.

[41] An allusion to American jazz legend Charlie Parker, whose name loosely rhymes and matches Debbie's. Unlike Debbie and the band playing at her club that night, Simon's nationality is never given. His Parisian life implies that he is French, but he and his family (Simon, Suzanne, and Jamie) all have names that could be American as well.

I. Suzanne and Simon: turbulence and desire at the intersection of jazz and the mainstream

Many of Simon's troubles at the start of *Un Soir au club* stem from the contrast between mainstream society and a jazz-based lifestyle, a contrast based on historical jazz stereotypes that Gailly's novel nuances and questions. The most common of these considers jazz an American genre with close ties to sexual immorality and excess, particularly in terms of drugs and alcohol. *Un Soir au club* portrays these common conceptions; all the jazz musicians except Simon[42] are Americans, Simon is unfaithful to his wife, and there are multiple allusions to his past substance abuse when he played jazz. But Gailly's novel shows the shades and inaccuracies of these stereotypes. In the process, *Un Soir au club* breaks down the dichotomy that opposes jazz music to classical music and jazz-influenced lifestyles to mainstream society.

In the novel's beginning, restriction and obligation characterize the mainstream life, while the jazz life that attracts and seduces Simon offers him individual freedom. During his years as a settled, married man, Simon "avait beaucoup changé, il faut dire. Il avait grossi, la vie rangée… plus grand-chose à voir avec le jeune pianiste novateur" (Gailly 50). But Simon's reintroduction to jazz disrupts the order and calm of his life with Suzanne. The image of a group of pencils on Simon's desk at home and Suzanne's reaction to them upon hearing from her husband represent the chaos this change brings. When Simon calls Suzanne to let her know he missed the train, she "tripotait les crayons qui traînaient sur la table de Simon. Chaque fois que Suzanne utilisait ce téléphone, Simon retrouvait ses crayons rangés dans un certain ordre. En éventail ou en

[42] Though Simon is likely French, his name is culturally ambiguous. It could be American, and his last name (Nardis) contains a couple important jazz references: it alludes to a jazz composition by Miles Davis of the same name, and it also shares its name with a record company founded by American jazz musician Ben Sidran (whose last name is Nardis backwards).

épis. Toutes les pointes, mine, bille, feutre, attirés par le même centre. Elle commença de les ranger quand Simon commença de lui expliquer" (60). As Simon explains that he will not come home that night, Suzanne hears in his voice "l'alcool, la femme, une femme, une tentation, l'amour nouveau d'une femme, pour une femme, c'était pas la première fois" (61). She knows what is coming, and when the phone call is over, Suzanne "bouleversa l'ordre parfait des crayons sur la table de Simon…qui, lui, dans l'oubli de ses crayons, de toute sa vie d'alors, sortait de la cabine téléphonique" (62). This interaction illustrates the contrast between mainstream and jazz lifestyles and their apparent incompatibility. Where one brings stability and fidelity, symbolized by the pencils' structure and Suzanne's ordering of them, the other brings chaos and temptation, as Suzanne implies when she scatters them, having realized their domesticity is broken and Simon is, again, suddenly oblivious in the presence of jazz and all that it entails.

Further dividing these two worlds is the attribution of a different musical genre to each. The narrator and Simon both present classical music as traditional and beautiful; it is "l'autre, la belle, la grande, la classique, la savante" (Gailly 26). In contrast, for Simon, jazz is a visceral and physical music, characterized by swing and emotion. Moreover, Simon's physical displacement accentuates the difference between jazz and classical music and their respective worlds. By leaving Paris, he geographically and socially travels to the periphery. As Simon observes when finding their distant corner on the beach, "personne n'a le courage de marcher jusque là" (98). At the club and at the beach, the jazz realm is secluded, a characteristic that symbolizes its distance from the mainstream.

Suzanne is providing order in contrast to jazz's turbulence, and she is also the crossroads at which the jazz and mainstream worlds meet. She began her relationship with Simon while he was a jazz musician, but she is the one whom Simon married and

with whom he shared a settled life. As the meeting point of these two worlds and lifestyles, it is not a coincidence that her relationship with Simon is fraught with tension. Throughout the novel, Simon reiterates his unhappiness in his marriage. He consistently thinks of his wife and feels responsibility toward her, but he does not prioritize her once Debbie enters the picture and while Simon and Suzanne are together, their life appears to be one of submission and constraint. In the opening chapter, the narrator writes that "Suzanne dirigeait" (15). And while he refers to her employment here, this statement also applies at home, where Suzanne kept Simon from jazz and its influence because for her, "l'ennemi c'était le jazz. Il avait failli tuer son mari" (15). Suzanne's wish to control Simon and keep him safe overrides his desires to play jazz; she sets the terms and Simon accepts that he cannot be healthy with jazz in his life – an assumption that his relationship with Debbie ultimately questions.

Simon and Suzanne's first phone call of the novel reveals the tension in their relationship. During this call, Simon lets his wife know that he will be late returning to Paris. To the news, Suzanne replies "…et puis tâche de ne pas le [i.e. le train suivant] rater, celui-là, n'oublie pas qu'on s'en va" to visit her parents (18). This is their first interaction in the story, and from the beginning their relationship puts limits and boundaries on Simon. Without her, he would have died because of the jazz lifestyle he lived (18), but with her, he is "ramené, enfermé, soigné" (18). With Suzanne, Simon is physically healthy, but he is also restricted, lacking a creative output, and denied agency in his life as Suzanne encloses him in a safety net.

The portrayal of Suzanne and Simon's marriage does not change even as the novel progresses and her death nears. Simon remains "contrarié" by her insistence on coming to bring him home again (117). Returning to Paris and his wife is not what he desires, suggesting that the ten years with Suzanne were not all happy. Even Suzanne's

act of seeking Simon at the beach is telling; she was going "pour le [Simon] ramener chez elle, le protéger, le garder, pour elle…" (152). In this sense, the narrator implies that the marriage is characterized by possession; the house is Suzanne's (*chez elle*), and she is Simon's protector.

But Suzanne's behavior is more than a quest for control; it takes on new meaning in relation to Simon's addiction to alcohol and jazz. Like so many other jazz musicians, Simon is vulnerable to "ce mélange mortel, mortel pour lui et quelques autres comme lui: nuit, jazz, alcool, drogue, femme, jazz, nuit" – a chiasmus of the jazz life with drugs and women at its heart (Gailly 149). Gailly presents a dangerous image of what it means to be a jazz musician: day is absent, morality too, and the body does not sleep because on this dangerous and even mortal path, it apparently does not need to. Breaking down this chiasmus, we see that it puts alcohol and women on the same plane, and drugs are at the midst of it all. Gailly's plot mirrors this equation as alcohol facilitates the initial meeting and interactions between Simon and Debbie. Psychological alteration, caused not by drugs but by jazz, continues the budding relationship. Additionally, the observation that this "mélange mortel" is only effective for Simon and "quelques autres comme lui" sets him apart from the majority and situates him on the social periphery; the jazz lifestyle is so dangerous for Simon because he is not like the others, he is an addict with a jazzman's soul[43], making him doubly susceptible.

Alcohol is certainly a factor in Simon's addiction, but it is arguably secondary to jazz, a conclusion supported by the logic of the above chiasmus. During his decade away from jazz, Simon and Suzanne avoided "les lieux où il y a de la musique [jazz]. Les lieux où l'on boit. Ce sont souvent les mêmes" (23). This coexistence suggests that both jazz

[43] The narrator observes that "Simon n'était pas un quelconque amateur, il était de ceux qui le font, le jazz, l'ont fait, l'auront fait" (31).

and alcohol are problematic. In Debbie's club, Simon drinks alcohol but he becomes intoxicated from the piano and, by metonymy, the jazz it plays: he is "un peu ivre avant même d'avoir bu il regardait le piano" (33). When Simon then sits at the piano to play, his hands tremble, another sign of withdrawal and addiction (41). Further, the club itself is a dangerous place, one dominated by "l'odeur du jazz… une lente et longue inspiration toxique" (63). Given Simon's addiction, the very scent of jazz – that is, the slightest suggestion of its presence – can be dangerous. This description shows that Simon is feeding his addiction through all five senses: taste, sight, smell, touch, and sound.

In this scenario of addiction, Suzanne's behavior holds added significance. For Simon, freedom requires either avoidance of his triggers – alcohol and jazz – or a measured and careful return. Both approaches imply constraint. Consequently, Suzanne's role is not just one of selfish control but also one of generosity and care as she seeks to keep Simon healthy and alive, tempering his addiction.

Un Soir au club suggests that addiction's primary danger lies in desire, in particular Simon's desire to play jazz; as Warren Motte notes, "it is not so much jazz itself that is dangerous as it is the desire that is cathected on it" (Motte 202). Throughout the text, Simon struggles with destructive desires. In one of the novel's darkest moments, Simon acknowledges that he "[a] souhaité la mort de Suzanne… souhaité qu'elle se tue sur la route et [il] n'[a] jamais regretté d'avoir eu cette pensée" (Gailly 151). Desire in this instance is both representative and performative because Suzanne crashes and dies at about the same moment when Simon wishes for her death. In Simon's view, there is a logic to this coincidence because Suzanne's death is "le prix des choses" in order that he may continue making art (166). In his world, art occupies a central and unforgiving position. Suzanne becomes the victim while Simon experiences

a revival that allows him to continue fulfilling his vocation of creating music. Without this fulfillment, his life would remain a "semblant de vie, [un] semblant d'être, l'âme morte" (Gailly 75). To live, Simon – as an artist – must create.

The artist is not the only one who experiences strong desires in *Un Soir au club*. All the novel's main characters (Simon, the narrator, Debbie, and Suzanne) experience desire in some way, and for all of them that desire entails negative consequences. Simon's desire to be with Debbie and to fulfill his vocation by playing jazz leads him to infidelity. Suzanne's desire to protect Simon from his addiction and its consequences as well as to preserve their marriage leads her to pick him up, which ultimately results in her accidental death. Debbie's desire to be with Simon further complicates their relationship as well as Simon's relationship with his wife, and it leads Debbie to guilty feelings that she apparently struggles with for a long time afterward (87). Lastly, the narrator's desire to be as successful and attractive as Simon imbues their friendship with jealousy, and it underlines the differences between their experiences, capabilities, and knowledge. No one is safe from desire, and no one escapes untouched by its consequences, regardless of whether they live primarily in the jazz or in the mainstream world.

II. Une mort qui libère: nuancing freedom through jazz

In *Un Soir au club*, fulfilling desire entails searching for freedom. Many musicians and scholars have underscored the deep ties and long-standing historical association between jazz and freedom in a variety of cultural, social, and political contexts[44]. In

[44] The link between jazz and freedom has elicited much critical discussion. For instance, Ludovic Tournès explores nuances of jazz, blackness, and (counter) racism in France and in the US in his " La réinterprétation du jazz: Un phénomène de contre-américanisation dans la France d'après-guerre (1945-1960)". Similarly, Scott Saul explores jazz, freedom, and social change in his *Freedom is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties.* Stephen Crist analyzes jazz and freedom through a democratic and political lens in "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics," as does Lisa Davenport in her book *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era.* Kevin Whitehead discusses the liberating

Gailly's novel, freedom is interpreted as an openness to cultural cosmopolitanism and as liberation from constraints and external influences. As Motte notes, what Simon "longs for, more than jazz, or drink, or sex, is freedom" (Motte 202). Of all Simon's desires throughout *Un Soir au club*, his desire for freedom is the most complex.

References to time, rhythm, and temporal structures articulate the challenges associated with Simon's quest for freedom. The events recounted take place over the course of three days, during which the reader is consistently reminded of the exact time. While numerous and consistent, there is no apparent interval between the temporal references. Instead, they are based on the times of Simon's possible reunion with Suzanne, either via train or later her arrival in the anonymous seaside town. For example, Simon is aware that "son train… était à 22h58. Quand les musiciens ont fait la pause, il était 22h40. Il [lui] restait dix-huit minutes" (47). But though he is very conscious of the passing time, Simon misses the train. The next day, Simon goes to the beach at 11h20, knowing that his train isn't until after 13h (98). When Simon misses this train as well – or rather, as the narrator points out, deliberately decides not to take it – Simon's temporal obsession turns from the train timetable to Suzanne's anticipated arrival (106). At 13h45, Simon realizes that Suzanne will be there around 18h or 19h; Debbie responds by exclaiming "[c]hic, ça nous laisse quatre heures, peut-être même cinq" (121). It grows increasingly clear that the temporal references are linked to the impending end of Simon's brief relaxed, idyllic, jazz-filled co-existence with Debbie.

These temporal references mark an apparent contradiction: they are at once a symbol of jazz rhythm that loosely but consistently structures the novel, and they are also a constant reminder of the absence of freedom that Simon feels around Suzanne.

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effects of jazz in his survey of the genre entitled *Why Jazz?* Lastly, Alphonso McClendon discusses the cultural and fashion influence of jazz in *Fashion and Jazz: Dress, Identity, and subcultural Improvisation*.

This conflict underlines the novel's jazzy writing. In jazz, rhythm provides structure and order – that is, constraints – while allowing the musicians to improvise, which is also reflected here. The temporal references provide the novel's structure as it progresses through its development, and they symbolize the constraint that Simon feels with Suzanne, without stopping him from improvising and continuing along another path.

Two elements underscore the connection between Suzanne's burdensome presence (and its anticipation) and Simon's hyperconsciousness of time: for Simon, considering the hours consistently evokes thoughts of Suzanne, and the narrator's repetition of temporal references emphasize the symbolism of time and regularity as routine. When Simon and Debbie first play jazz together, temporal reminders interrupt the flow of improvisation: "à court de paroles, [Debbie] en improvisa. Pour [Simon] qui à son tour improvisa des variations pour elle et tout se termina, pour eux, dans une sorte de joie. Il était 23h15. Le train roulait vers Paris" (54). Even as Simon is taking his first steps away from his ordered life and toward his affair, the narrator recalls the time. He follows this with an immediate mention of a train leaving for Paris and thus for Suzanne, a train that Simon chooses to miss so he can remain with Debbie. Simon's opportunity to return to a normal life has passed without him. What started as a typical work delay has now become a jazz-motivated delay and Simon has skipped an opportunity to return to a non-jazz life. Later, when Simon does not take the afternoon train, Debbie absents herself for a moment and Simon decides to call his wife: "Je vais appeler Suzanne pendant ce temps-là, je vais en profiter pour l'appeler. Il était 13h" (110). Again, Simon's thought of Suzanne is linked to the hour and to a sense of responsibility.

The consistent references to time and Suzanne's impending arrival create an insisting rhythm that weighs heavily on Simon, lasting until 19h15 on Saturday evening.

At this point, suddenly "l'heure n'a plus d'importance" because Suzanne has crashed and died (162). In retrospect, the temporal references prove to be a type of countdown that drive the novel through its progression until the moment when Simon and Debbie can be together freely. With Suzanne's death, time loses its significance because Simon is now liberated. He is no longer reminded of the daily routine and responsibility that Suzanne symbolized. He no longer needs to know what time it is or where and with whom he should be.

Having learned of Suzanne's death through his son Jamie, Simon's reaction is mixed as he is "abattu par la mort de Suzie, assommé de liberté" (164). The asyndeton between these two clauses emphasizes Simon's predicament as the relationship between the two opposing sentiments is unclear. Simon's reaction is later, while driving to see Suzanne in the morgue. At this moment, he dreams, "depuis près de quinze ans, de jouir de nouveau d'un piano. Eh bien voilà, c'est possible. Et Suzie dans tout ça ? C'est le prix des choses… sa théorie du prix des choses" (166). Simon's realization of his own freedom to play music, even as he is going to visit his dead wife, makes clear Simon's chosen response. He chooses freedom; he can again express himself through jazz and experience a relationship that encourages jazz. Only Suzanne's death frees Simon, a death which is "une mort qui règle tout, qui libère tout le monde" (151). By dying, Suzanne releases her hold on Simon. Her death is as symbolic as it is literal, showing Simon's liberation from the constraints of mainstream life to a life of self-expression and creativity. Further, Suzanne's death partially absolves Simon of charges of immorality; as a widower, he is free to marry Debbie and is no longer actively unfaithful.

When rhythm is no longer important, the novel reaches an evolution toward the next musical and cultural development: the post-rhythmic jazz world. This development reflects jazz history, when the rhythm-heavy swing and bebop developed into free jazz.

This transition occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, which is also the same time from which come most of the jazz references in *Un Soir au club*. Free jazz was an attempt to alter or entirely break down jazz conventions, often accomplished through doing away with fixed chord progressions and rhythm. By no longer emphasizing the insisting temporal references that had informed the novel's progression toward Suzanne's death, Simon is imitating the openness and chaos that came with free jazz.

Simon's search for freedom motivates his departure from his routine life. But he is also a recovering addict whose relationship to jazz is a form of addiction; as a result, his quest for freedom and his desire to resume his jazz life are complicated by the threat of redescending into excess and abuse. To regain his musical voice, Simon must stay in a structured and controlled aesthetic environment. Jazz usually involves a similar mix of individual freedom and structured patterns: to improvise with a group, a musician must respect the harmonic rules that the piece and the group's pre-determined lengths of improvised sections set. Anything is acceptable if it fits the limitations. Simon's quest for freedom and its constraints mirror the constraints of the bebop jazz he plays. Further, his desire for freedom as well as the obstacles he faces are emphasized throughout the text with jazzy and literary techniques, of which a crucial and widespread one is irony.

III. Revealing jazz style with irony

Irony is central to many of Gailly's texts, offering escape and distance. Gailly himself explains that irony was, for him, "une espèce de remède contre l'anxiété, à l'époque où il était encore en train de chercher sa voie" (Bricco 70). *Un Soir au club* is a deeply ironic text; Simon, Suzanne, Debbie, and the narrator all desire something they do not have, and they all search for a remedy to their lack in their own ways.

Irony forms the foundation of *Un Soir au club*'s stylistic and conceptual development. Much has been written about irony, and it is important to understand its

critical elements in *Un Soir au club*. Irony is, most simply, the saying or showing of something that is not what that person, character, or situation explicitly says or shows. Irony happens in interpretation – in this context, the reader must recognize and interpret the ironic statement or setting as well as understand the implied ironic meaning. Irony occurs in the difference between expression and understanding; Linda Hutcheon explains that "it is the making or inferring [by the interpreter] of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated [by the ironist], together with an attitude toward both the said and the unsaid"[45].

Irony is an individual and subjective phenomenon. Each reader can interpret the discrepancies between what is said and meant (or what is described and what occurs) in a different way. Irony is based on implication and suggestion, a "form of indirectness in situations when direct communication is to some degree inhibited, either socially or psychologically" (Barbe 43). What makes irony so unique, then, is its reliance on a shared background between the writer (or the narrator) and the reader to discern and understand the difference in what is said and intended (Barbe 44). Ironic statements are particularly challenging as "they need to be detected by the audience" (Barbe 67). Moreover, irony is born in contradiction; as such, it is closely tied to resistance because it establishes an oppositional structure and its counterargument. Jia Zhao, in *L'Ironie dans le roman depuis 1980*, explains that irony results when "deux ordres entrent en conflit, l'un représente la norme et l'autre l'écart qui conteste l'ordre établi par la surprise" (44). Because it highlights opposition between contrasting factors, Gailly's irony opposes and equates jazz and mainstream culture, and reveals the potentially devastating consequences of desire in this world. Irony is a powerful literary tool for

[45] Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London: Routledge, 1995, 11.

Gailly. As Hutcheon notes, it can only "complexify," but never "disambiguate" (13). Gailly's text is nuancing and complexifying questions of stereotypes, vocation, artistic style, and desire, and revealing all this through jazz; it is fitting that it should widely employ a similarly nuanced literary technique.

Irony is common in postmodern and post-nouveau-roman novels, and keeping with this trend, Gailly's use of it is plentiful (Nicol 13, 32). In *Un Soir au club*, irony informs the text's content and form. For example, there is irony in the fact that a rebellious musician who cheats on his wife is also constantly thinking of her. But irony surpasses individual scenes and becomes significant in Gailly's critique of jazz stereotypes: it blurs the lines between jazz and mainstream lives, undercutting the stereotypical dichotomy of these two worlds.

Irony's relation to jazz makes it a particularly apt technique for this purpose. Zhao notes that "l'ironie est le principe d'une … littérature jazzique. Au gré de sa fantaisie, tantôt elle casse les syntaxes régulières, tantôt elle enchaîne des propositions entortillées, ou encore elle ouvre le texte vers un ailleurs. Elle introduit de l'imprévisible, de l'irrégulier, du discontinu aussi bien dans le tissu du langage que dans l'unité de la composition romanesque" (211-212). Both irony and jazz writing function in a similar way by breaking with expected rhythms and norms. They both determine the structure and style of Gailly's writing, on a macro scale (the novel as a whole) and a micro scale (individual passages) as Gailly's novel swings – like jazz – between strong downbeats and soft upbeats, and through multiple themes: "la vie et la mort, l'ordre et le désir, la contraction et la détente, l'angoisse et l'espoir" (Zhao 227).

The presence of irony in key moments of the novel's development points the reader toward crucial questions that the text is exploring. For example, irony is at work when Suzanne is packing for her trip to pick up Simon because she thinks of all the

items that he would need: pants, t-shirt, underclothing, swimsuit, razor (Gailly 127-8). This is a banal task that many wives would carry out, and the discussion of it distracts both the reader and Suzanne from the emotional situation in which Suzanne finds herself. But there is irony here because these are the precise items that Simon did, in fact, need, and the same items he found with Debbie. Through this ironic turn, Gailly creates equivalency between the jazz and mainstream worlds as both require the same mundane objects, and both women (Debbie the jazz singer and club owner, and Suzanne the businesswoman) are circumspect enough to think of them. This passage also creates complicity with the reader because he or she is simultaneously aware that Simon needs these very objects and that those needs have already been met with Debbie, a fact that Suzanne does not know. With the irony in this scene, Gailly's text creates a critical distance from the novel's events, a distance that causes the reader to question a reading of the novel in binary terms. Irony accomplishes the same task as jazz by resisting against dualistic cultural conceptions.

Irony also plays the important role of keeping emotions at bay. Elisa Bricco writes that "ironie [est un] dédoublement intérieur et la mise à distance des sentiments" (71). Gailly himself acknowledges this, confirming that "l'ironie permet de s'échapper quand l'émotion est un peu trop envahissante" (cited in Zhao 10). By keeping emotions at a distance, irony softens the blow of otherwise harsh developments, events, or realizations. One such example is the novel's exploration of a simple but important and relatable question: "comment vivre une vie qui ne répond pas aux espérances les plus profondes de son protagoniste?" (Gerwers 124). This question – how to live a life that does not respond to a protagonist's most sincere hopes – echoes throughout *Un Soir au club* and reflects the destructive effects of desire. Simon wants to play jazz, but he also loves Suzanne. Suzanne loves Simon, but she does not want him to play jazz and drink.

Debbie loves Simon too, and for this reason she does not want him to be with Suzanne. None of these characters is fully living a life that they hope to live, so they are all facing Gerwers' question. And yet, in an ironic development Gailly never makes them decide or resolve this question because Suzanne's death concludes it for all. Irony allows Gailly to pose a complicated question without providing a definite answer; it invites the reader to reflection.

Irony lies at the heart of the relationship between the narrator and Simon. The narrator is open with his admiration for Simon and his success and choice of career. An amateur painter, the narrator expresses an unfulfilled desire to be a musician, and he is jealous of both Simon's artistic and romantic successes (apparently unrestricted devotion from Suzanne and unconditional love from Debbie) (Motte 204). Moreover, he admits admiration for Debbie, finding her sexy and intriguing. Next to his friend, the narrator is a failure and interrogates himself on both his lack of success and the difficulty that he has in writing and in relating to Simon's accomplishments. The situational irony that Gailly creates through a narrator that struggles to fulfill his role raises a crucial question in *Un Soir au club*: what happens if one misses their vocation? The narrator's situation is especially relevant because he is not a successful musician like his friend and like he wants to be. Though the narrator and Simon remain friends, their differences tinge their relationship. Between Simon and the narrator, there is a gulf that they cannot cross, created by the irony of an unfulfilled vocation and jealousy. The narrator covets Simon's career and personal successes, but his is an ironic envy because "le moi du narrateur ne peut jamais s'identifier parfaitement à l'autre" (Zhao 115). Simon has experiences and successes that the narrator cannot understand, as he has never been in similar situations. Instead, their relationship – described as a close

friendship (Gailly 36) – is still marked by betrayal and deception because "l'autre [i.e. Simon] n'est pas ce que cherche exactement le moi [du narrateur]" (Zhao 115).

Where Simon has a unique and influential jazz style and his own contribution to the jazz scene and perhaps jazz history, the narrator knows no such experiences and he is conscious of this difference. While listening to the young American pianist who imitates his style, Simon experiences the feeling that "un écrivain ressentirait en lisant un livre dont le style serait la parfaite imitation du sien. Je [i.e. le narrateur] n'en sais rien" (Gailly 35). The narrator cannot sympathize, explaining that "je ne sais pas ce que je ressentirais devant une peinture qui serait la parfaite imitation de l'une des miennes, ça ne m'est jamais arrivé" (34). Simon's jazz experiences and successes separate him from the narrator in style and skills, which renders the novel's narratological situation intensely ironic: a non-omniscient, self-conscious and insecure narrator is telling his friend's story, recounting events which he did not always witness and to which he cannot relate. Since the narrator cannot identify with Simon and his experiences despite coveting them, his perception of Simon – the very perception that he envies – is a projected illusion. He is not truly envious of Simon himself but of his successes, as he perceives them.

Irony introduces and guides Gailly's exploration of artistic and creative style. Style is fundamental to jazz because musicians simultaneously replicate stylistic elements of legends while infusing their play and their improvisation with their own trademarks and touches. Indeed, expressing a unique style is central to jazz, and *Un Soir au club* shows awareness of this. As the narrator insinuates, Simon abandoned jazz because he felt that his style had become banal and irrelevant even though it was, in fact, influential. Self-doubt led Simon to abandon jazz (Gailly 35). In taking it up again, Simon reconnects with his former style; one of the young American jazzmen at Debbie's

club comments that "ce qui m'étonne surtout, c'est qu'il arrive à reproduire des trucs de Nardis que moi-même je n'ai jamais réussi à imiter, des trucs qui tiennent à la respiration, au rythme intérieur[46]" (50). Even with the time away, Simon's rare individual style remains accessible, identifiable, and reproducible for him.

But Simon's old doubts return. He thinks to himself that "les jeunes musiciens jouent de mieux en mieux et de plus en plus tôt. Du coup, de l'avoir pensé, il se sentit de nouveau le moral à zéro. La musique n'a plus besoin de moi, pensa-t-il, les jeunes la font très bien" (66). Crucially, it is at this moment that Simon realizes why he had given in to his desire and why he is there, playing jazz. He expresses this realization in a polyphonic conversation with himself:

> Je voulais démontrer quoi en piratant ce piano? Je peux répondre, se dit-il. Alors réponds. Je vais répondre, se dit-il. Je t'attends. Oui, oui, je viens. Je voulais savoir si ma vie était finie. Et alors? Je voulais croire qu'elle ne l'était pas. Et puis? Maintenant je sais qu'elle l'est. Au fond, je n'avais pas envie de jazz, encore moins de musique, j'avais juste envie de vivre, une minable petite envie de vivre (66).

Without jazz or the deep desire to play it – and consequently, without his own style and identity – Simon's life as he knows it is over. This realization inadvertently opens the door to Simon's affair; with his life over, he can begin again.

Style also plays an important role in the narrator's writing. He is a hyperconscious narrator who reflects on his work and progress with such metatextual comments as "moi qui vous parle, qui suis en train de vous raconter la courte histoire de Suzanne et de Simon…" (34) and later, more conflicted, he states that "j'hésite à relater

[46] It is worth noting that the most unique and notable element of Simon's style is rhythm, which further underscores the importance of the novel's temporal references as a jazz interpretation and as a form of jazz infiltrating Simon's daily life and experience.

… je me demande surtout comment le faire [relater] sans vulgarité… Bref, ça fait une heure que je suis là en train de me demander comment je vais m'y prendre" (106). Through such comments, the reader can see that the narrator has difficulty fulfilling his role. His vocation and talent, apparently, do not lie in writing any more than they do in music. The irony is that, in this jazz novel, few appear in their comfort zone or vocation except Simon once he finds Debbie and returns to the piano. Jazz, then, also resists against the false vocation that engineering would have been for him[47].

Artistic style and irony are central to Simon's newly rediscovered identity. Once a famous and revered musician, he no longer feels influential when he stops playing. It is only through someone else's imitation that Simon finds his own influential and recognizable style again after a long period of artistic amnesia:

> Dépossédé de lui-même depuis tellement d'années [Simon] n'osa même pas y penser en termes de dépossession. Il a juste pensé : Si à sa place je jouais ça, je le jouerais comme lui. Il n'avait pas joué depuis tellement longtemps. On perd la mémoire de son jeu. On oublie qu'on avait peut-être un style. Mais peu à peu en écoutant le jeune pianiste Simon se rendit compte que c'était lui, l'autre, le jeune, qui jouait comme lui, comme jadis il jouait (35).

It takes an imitation for Simon to find his long-lost self again, a discovery that happens through an ironic representation of jazz style in which the master rediscovers himself via a skilled protégé.

[47] This is a case of art imitating life, as Gailly himself was a jazz saxophonist who left jazz to become a psychoanalyst before returning to music via music-inspired writing (Tobiassen 83-84). Gailly's life trajectory implies that psychoanalysis was a career for him, while jazz and art were his vocation.

IV. Writing jazz: a fragmented mystery

Numerous jazz techniques can be traced in *Un soir au club*, notably rhythm, fragments, and interjections. Gailly also plays on the literary and cultural tradition between jazz and *polars* or mystery novels, of which *Un Soir au club* is a variation.

It is apt that *Un Soir au club* references mystery novels due to their shared emphasis on jazz. Toward the end of the twentieth century, jazz came to be frequently associated with nefarious characters and, as a result, it is often depicted as a malicious element or present in dangerous settings within *polar* novels. Gailly's picture of jazz is far more nuanced; for example, Debbie lives a settled life, owns the jazz club, and is free from apparent, excessive drug use. There is also no malicious criminal activity in *Un Soir au club.* Yet the presence of jazz within the dark and toxic club recalls the stereotypical shady places and faces so frequently depicted in *polars*.

Polars are structured around a systematic revelation of facts. Specifically, they are organized around "l'énigme et la hiérarchisation, une répartition du savoir" (Reuter 76) whose "élucidation [est] faite par le non-dit et le présupposé" (Zhao 172). Although *Un Soir au club* is not a *polar* per se – there are no criminals, crimes, or policemen in the novel – the same principles apply, notably emphasized through the novel's use of irony.

Considering Tzvetan Todorov's definition of a *roman polar* as one that combines a story of crime with that of an investigation (a *polar* "ne contient pas une mais deux histoires: l'histoire du crime et l'histoire de l'enquête"), *Un Soir au club* is an interpretation of a *polar* because it combines the story of Simon's affair with an investigation into what caused it as well as its implications (Todorov 178). Throughout *Un Soir au club*, the narrator progresses through a series of implied questions or problems, eventually showing or hinting at their resolutions. Many of the resolutions are accomplished through suggestion and intimation, reminiscent of "le non-dit et le

présupposé" that Zhao mentions. Moreover, as soon as one problem appears resolved, another arises. The following table shows the main sequence of enigmas or questions that the narrator poses, and the eventual resolutions toward which the narrator leads the reader:

Question (Chapter introduced; page)	Resolution (Chapter resolved; page)
If Simon Nardis was such a good pianist, why did he stop? (1; 11)	Suzanne saved him (1; 18) Health reasons (2; 23) Doubts of his style's influence (3; 35) Addiction (4; 38-41)
Why are things not going well for Simon at home? (2)	Returns to jazz, like a homecoming (5; 6), Differences in expectations with Suzanne (7)
How did Suzanne die ? (8)	Car accident implied (13), imagined description (17)
What is the importance of the cat Dingo? (22)	Suzanne is not alone in the morgue (23)

The novel's opening paragraph introduces the very first question: if Simon was such a good pianist, why did he stop (Simon "cessa de jouer comme Ingres aurait pu cesser de peindre. C'eût été dommage, dans le cas d'Ingres. Ce fut dommage dans le cas de Simon Nardis" (11))? The narrator hints at the answer throughout the chapters that follow, little by little. First, we understand that he was in danger, saved by Suzanne because "Simon aussi l'était, perdu sans elle [Suzanne]. Du moins l'aurait-il été, dans le passé. Perdu au sens de mort. Sans elle il serait mort" (18). At this point, the reader is not fully aware of why Simon would have died, but we begin to formulate an impression

of Simon's former life as hazardous, which in turn implies that he needed to stop his lifestyle and playing music to survive. In Chapter 2, the narrator mentions that Simon quit jazz "pour des raisons de santé," which means he stopped drinking alcohol (23). The following chapter nuances Simon's desertion by adding questions of identity and style. The narrator suggests that Simon quit jazz because he no longer felt needed, explaining that "Simon avait donc un style, et si j'insiste sur cette question c'est que je pense que les doutes de Simon ont largement décidé de sa désertion" (35). The narrator's use of "je pense" here implies uncertainty and assumptions – the *présupposé* that *polars* use to reveal the keys to the mystery, little by little.

Lastly, in Chapter 4, the narrator describes the physical effects of alcohol and jazz on Simon; with vodka in his brain, his heart beats differently and his hands tremble as he is about to play again (38-41). These physical symptoms reveal Simon's addiction, and with it, we gain a fuller picture of why he quit jazz: to avoid his addictive triggers, to save his relationship with Suzanne, and to gain a sense of importance elsewhere, when he felt that his role in jazz was diminishing. This first question – why Simon abandoned jazz – is crucial to the novel and it is resolved in bits and pieces throughout the first four chapters.

As soon as the first two responses come to the question of Simon's desertion (in chapters 1 and 2), the narrator introduces another enigma that he then explores in nuanced references: why are things not going well for Simon at home? While he is at dinner with the engineer, Simon decides against discussing his personal life because "c'eût été se rappeler le temps où tout allait bien pour lui" (24). The past tense in this sentence, together with Simon's refusal to think of it, implies that this is no longer the case, though the narrator does not immediately or clearly reveal why. The reader does not learn the reasons for Simon's difficult home life until chapters 5 to 7, when Simon

plays jazz. His return to jazz is a homecoming, as if he were telling the piano "je t'ai abandonné mais je reviens" (46). When he accompanies Debbie's singing, Simon says it is to see "si vous et moi on est encore en vie" – a statement that equates playing jazz and thus creating art with living itself, a reference to the philosophy of art taking primacy over everything else[48] (Gailly 55). Lastly, the narrator implies a difference of expectations and preferences between Simon and Suzanne. While for Simon the ten years away were, apparently, difficult because he seems new again once he plays, for Suzanne, they were ten years of "paix" (61). Supported by the metaphor of the carefully arranged pencils that stand for order and the *vie rangée*, we can see that for Suzanne, Simon's return to jazz is a disruption or even a destruction of their former calm and neat life. But upon entering the club and playing, Simon, in turn, has already forgotten his former life. The mystery-style format reveals that the two have opposing and perhaps irreconcilable preferences.

The scaffolded, mystery-inspired format also posits the key question of how Suzanne dies. The narrator mentions in passing that "tout de suite après la mort de Suzanne, [Simon] est venu me voir chez moi à la campagne. Il m'a raconté son escapade" (Gailly 76). With this off-hand prolepse, the reader learns that Suzanne dies. Without giving away her cause of death, this knowledge colors the reading of the following chapters because the reader wonders how and when she dies. When Chapter 13 opens with a news reporting, the reader realizes it may be about Suzanne's death, knowing that she is driving to Simon at that same moment: "Vous écoutez France Inter, il est 13 heures. Le journal vous est présenté. Avant d'ouvrir cette édition de la mi-journée. Nous voudrions. Non pas vous gâcher ce qui vous reste à vivre… Mais encourager à la

[48] This statement also refers to Simon's observation that in playing piano again, he just wanted to live. Jazz here, then, is a means to an end. This too removes pressure from jazz itself, as it is not the jazz itself that is as important as what it does – allow Simon (and Debbie) to live.

prudence. Nous apprenons à l'instant qu'un terrible accident" (111). Told in fragments, this reporting raises awareness of a car accident, though this time it is not Suzanne's. Hers comes later, when in chapter 17 the narrator gives his imagined account of how Suzanne died. However, there are no witnesses to her accident and so here again, the account is entirely *présupposé*. In keeping with the gradual and inferred developments of a *polar*, *Un Soir au club*'s narrator also systematically reveals the novel's main questions through hints and suppositions.

The *polar*-like format, alternating between questions and implied resolutions, is infused with irony. Zhao notes that "l'ironie est par nature une énigme," (174), because irony must be interpreted as it relies on the reader to identify and discern it (Hutcheon 6). As a result, revealing irony also relies on the "non-dit et le présupposé" that define the process of discovery and enunciation in mystery novels. Further, Gailly's text is "fondé sur la perpétuation de l'énigme" because it "lance et relance les énigmes afin de faire toujours avancer le récit" (Zhao 175).

In addition to imitating a mystery novel, *Un Soir au club*'s structure relies heavily on fragments to incorporate both jazz and irony. Fragments and other similar "effets de rupture" such as prolepses and flashbacks are crucial elements of jazz-infused writing, as Aude Locatelli notes (145). Their use in Gailly's novel emphasizes, on one hand, the irony of certain situations and, at the same time, it creates a narrative style that recalls Simon's unique jazz expression. The widespread presence of fragments in this novel is a formal application of jazz techniques that emphasizes key moments, and fragments are present in *Un Soir au club* on both small and large scales. For example, there are frequent instances of incomplete thoughts or sentences throughout the novel. To complement this low-level fragmentation, the novel itself can be divided into segments, separated by the narrator's interjections.

The sentence-level fragments in *Un Soir au club* often emphasize important moments in the novel. For example, when Debbie takes Simon to a hotel after their evening at the club, Simon is drunk and exhausted, so Debbie puts him to bed. Assuming the role of caretaker – a role that would traditionally belong to his wife and which thus creates a parallel between Debbie and Suzanne – Debbie watches over Simon's nighttime preparations:

> La chasse d'eau faisait du bruit. A cause du silence de la nuit. Sans doute aussi à cause du joint du robinet d'arrêt. Il faudrait le changer. En parler au concierge. Elle attendit la fin du bruit. Le bruit diminua puis cessa. Tout est calme à présent. Simon dort. Je peux m'en aller, pensa Debbie (85-86).

In this excerpt, third-person narration mixes with a jazzy rendition of Debbie's thoughts. The words expressing her thoughts at the beginning of this excerpt are highly fragmented, with few complete sentences. Instead, as in a theme and variations compositional style, each fragmented sentence adds a thought to the preceding one, and the first two fragments have almost the same alternating rhythm. Every other syllable is emphasized and a rhyme at the end between *bruit* and *nuit* creates a swinging musical effect. *Aussi* takes up the terminal-*i* sound, and the repetition of *à cause de* continues the thought from the previous fragment. Further, the rhyme of *faisait* and *faudrait* suggests equivalency between them, with the two words sharing both the same opening sound and the same terminal rhyme. This equivalency stresses Debbie's role in the story and her implication in the future, as one verb is in the imperfect past tense and the other is conditional, planning a future action that suggests she remains implicated in Simon's surroundings. In this excerpt, it is not until the narrator steps in with observations of the scene (that Debbie awaited the end of the sound and that it slowed then stopped) that a narrative style of complete sentences returns. The jazzy style here has a double

effect. It imitates and thus emphasizes jazz's omnipresence as it creeps into Debbie's speech and thoughts. It also emphasizes this scene by nuancing and layering its development as each fragment builds upon the preceding one, ultimately creating a detailed impression of the scene's events.

Irony and the critical distance created through a polyphonic and fragmented structure each accentuate the other. A prominent example is the contrast in Suzanne's and Debbie's driving styles. Debbie is cautious, such as in the aforementioned scene when she is returning from the shopping trip with Simon at the outset of Chapter 13. Debbie is driving her Porsche and listening to France Inter on the radio, where the newscaster warns about driving safely after a terrible car accident. In reaction, Debbie consciously tells herself to slow down. The narrator recounts her thoughts: "Ralentis… ralentis, ma cocotte, c'est pas le moment d'avoir un accident, tu as trouvé l'homme de ta vie et il t'attend. C'est rouge, arrête-toi" (112). In contrast, Chapter 16 opens with Suzanne driving "le plus vite possible. En s'arrêtant le moins possible. Pas du tout si possible…. Elle oubliait le danger. Simon n'était plus en danger. Ne l'avait jamais été. S'il l'était, elle était là, déjà, là-bas, avec lui" (127-28). The contrast is notable, and it is ironic. Debbie consciously slows to avoid the car accident that Suzanne has a few chapters later for the same reason: both women want to be with Simon as much and as soon as possible. In addition, the more careful driver is associated with jazz, an ironic development given jazz's reputation for chaos and impulsivity. Gailly again challenges traditional expectations associated with jazz and mainstream cultures.

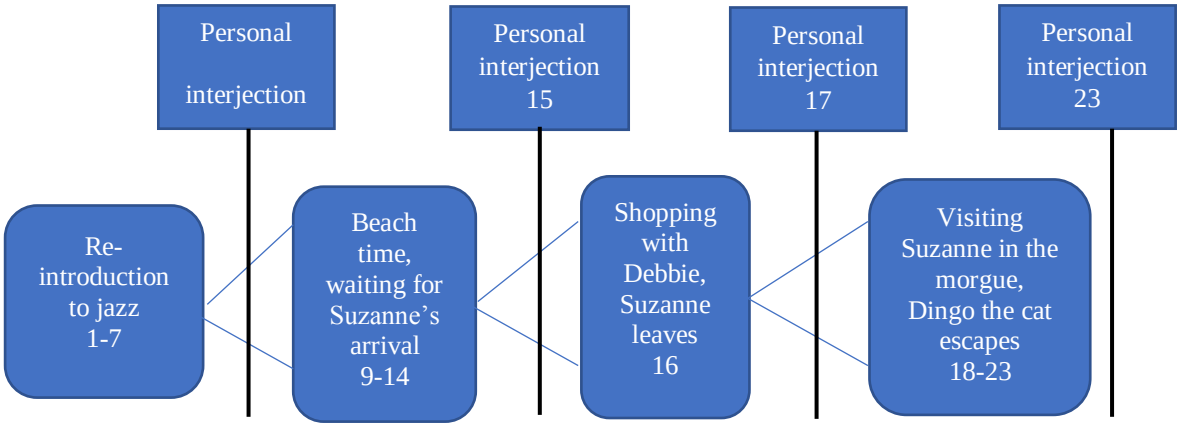
Simon's own feelings complicate the situation. Thinking of Suzanne in the morgue after he learns of her death, Simon feels that "c'est comme si j'y étais" (165). Danger brings him and Suzanne together, though he is simultaneously emotionally invested in Debbie. While Simon feels he is already at the morgue saying goodbye to

Suzanne, he recognizes the depth of the love he has for Debbie, love that she apparently reciprocates ("l'homme de ta vie et il t'attend"). He had dreamed "de connaître avant la fin de ses jours un grand amour. Eh bien voilà, c'est là, ça le regarde, ça lui parle, ça lui dit: On y va ?" as Simon and Debbie prepare, together, to visit Suzanne's body in the morgue (165). Irony underscores these related incidents, expressed in fragmented writing. They are separated by the narrator's critical distance because the characters in question are unaware of the analogous actions and thoughts taken by the others. These thoughts and events are also separated by time because they do not happen simultaneously.

The manipulation of jazz rhythm and fragments is also evident when Simon calls Suzanne from the club to tell her he will not return to Paris that evening. Leaving the phone cabin, "la porte refermée Simon n'était déjà plus le même. De nouveau celui qu'il était depuis dix ans" (57). Simon is back to his original self; he has rediscovered himself and his identity and the way this observation is written underscores its importance. The final sentence is a fragment, a type of Locatelli's "effets de rupture." This fragment shows the sudden change in his identity. It also has a noticeable swinging rhythm: De nouveau – celui – qu'il était – depuis – dix ans; three, two, three, two, two syllables, with stress on the final two words. The rhyme between celui and depuis also emphasizes this fragment's rhythm. Alternating between downbeats and upbeats – stressed and unstressed syllables – Gailly's sentence reads like jazz. Other techniques that accomplish this effect include such jazz elements as disrupted structure, polyphony, solo-like interjections, and breaks.

Un Soir au club is divided into 23 chapters and four unequal sections, each leading up to a key conflict that the narrator, Simon's friend, then feels compelled to comment upon with his own thought and judgments. He is aware that Simon's infidelity

is morally suspect and so he wishes to make his own opinions on the matter known, either to defend his friends' behavior or to defend himself from blame in the events that lead to Suzanne's death. Thus, while the narrator is an indelible part of the story because he is writing it, he is also resisting the story by interjecting his own opinions and experiences. The following diagram shows the conflict buildup and the subsequent personal interjections on the narrator's part, with chapter numbers below the text:



Importantly, each of the narrator's interjections comes directly following a tense and dramatic event in the novel's development as a form of resetting before another conflict arises. As the tension grows, Gailly introduces another voice; this technique is an interpretation of jazz polyphony to vary viewpoints and, in some cases, harmony to introduce alternate experiences and judgments. Through his use of multiple voices and views, Gailly creates regular breaks, reminiscent of jazz techniques. The interjections that make these breaks are often, if not always, proleptic as the narrator discusses the current events considering his own experiences and what he knows happened later.

Looking more closely at one of these series of interjections, we can see how they stop the story's events at key moments. In chapter 15, the narrator interjects in the story to bring the action back to his own house and experience, though this is unrelated to the budding romance between Debbie and Simon. He begins by stating that "chez moi

aussi il était samedi. Il faisait beau chez moi aussi. Depuis juin la maison et le parc sont absolument resplendissants" (123). This irrelevant information lightens the mood and distracts from the awareness that Simon's relationship with Suzanne is ever closer to incurably failing, if not there already. The narrator then relates how Suzanne called him that day for confirmation and approval that she should, indeed, go seek Simon and rescue him from the clutches of jazz, alcohol, and women yet again. Distracted, he agrees: "j'étais très embêté. A vrai dire partagé. Je me réjouissais pour Simon, me désolais pour Suzanne. Je me disais elle a raison et en même temps je comprenais Simon" (124). He then follows his thoughts on a thematic aside, nostalgically telling of his own long-time desire to have been a writer, when in fact he is a painter (124), only to correct himself and reveal that in fact, he had always wanted to be a jazz musician and thus lived vicariously through his friend (125). And though he knows that he should have stopped Suzanne, instead he tells her on the phone that day "tu as raison, va le chercher… oui, ma petite Suzie, va vite le chercher" (126). As if to justify this reply considering what he knows would later happen, the narrator only mentions that had it not been for Suzanne's intervention ten or fifteen years earlier, Simon would already have committed a drunken and drugged suicide (126). In this interjectory chapter, the narrator breaks from the story to introduce a solo, his own voice and opinion. It does not change the story because the narrator admits elsewhere that Suzanne would have left with or without his approbation, but in true jazz style, Gailly creates the effect of harmony by providing the reader with greater understanding of the narrator's implication in the story. Through the addition of the narrator's experience and point of view, the reader gains insight into the complexity of these relationships.

When Suzanne dies in Chapter 17, the narrator again counteracts the scene's weight by interjecting his own opinion and experiences. He explains how Suzanne had

always hated the forest because she felt imprisoned there, only to die in a car accident in a forest. As no witnesses were present, the narrator inserts his own suppositions: "elle devait être très angoissée. Mais peut-être pas, après tout. Peut-être elle est morte sur le coup. En tout cas j'imagine que des heures se sont écoulées avant qu'un automobiliste ne la découvre" (134). In this brief excerpt, the narrator's oral style and epanorthosis recall jazz improvisation; he appears to speak spontaneously and overrides, even corrects his own assertions as he goes. He admits to it at the chapter's closing: "on imagine, on se trompe, on invente dans les vides, les historiens font ça" (137). Suddenly, the narrator is no longer just a narrator but a historian, researching the events of that fateful weekend as he settles, perhaps gullibly or wishfully, that Suzanne "est morte sur le coup" (137). The reader never learns the details of what truly happened to Suzanne, but the narrator's decision, introduced here in a break that is the narrator's own interruption, settles the matter, invented though it may be. These multiple interjections give the narrator a form of solo, suggestive of jazz. Likewise, the novel's polyphonic structure – based on chapters alternately focusing on Simon and Debbie, Suzanne, the narrator and his wife, and Simon's son and his girlfriend – exposes the reader to various angles of the same story. The reader can thus understand Simon's, Debbie's, and Suzanne's actions and how they affect the other characters.

V. Illustrating transformation through jazz references

Frequent intermedial thematizations in the form of references to jazz standards present a final way to both create and nuance the opposition between jazz and mainstream circles in *Un Soir au club*. These references are often meaningful because they mirror the story's mood and development. For example, the name of the jazz club that Simon enters is Green Dolphin Street – a prolepse in the form of a reference to the

song “On Green Dolphin Street”[49]. Its lyrics are telling: “Lover, one lovely day / Love came, planning to stay / Green Dolphin Street supplied the setting / The setting for nights beyond forgetting” Kaper np). To emphasize the importance of this reference, the American musicians playing at Debbie’s club the night she and Simon meet play this song twice, bookending their set. With this allusion, Gailly begins to mirror Simon and Debbie’s relationship in jazz, a technique that continues throughout the novel. Music helps to set the scene and convey the moment’s importance.

Later that evening when Simon finally sits at the piano, one of the first songs he plays is “You’ve Changed”[50]. With this allusion, Gailly marks the change in Simon that allows Debbie to enter his life. It is Simon and Debbie’s first duet and its lyrics are evocative: “…I honestly believe that you are bored / You've changed … You've forgotten the words, "I love you" / Each memory that we've shared / You ignore every star above you / I can't realize you've ever cared / You've changed / You're not the angel I once knew / No need to tell me what we're through / It's all over now / You've changed” (Carey np)[51]. Though Suzanne is not present at the club, with this song it is like she is there to witness Simon’s transition between the two women in his life as he is made new (Gailly 57). The jazz club becomes a liminal space, at the heart of Simon’s transition between his old and new lives.

As Simon and Debbie finally leave the club, Sonny Rollins’ disk “Softly as a Morning Sunshine” plays in the background, reflecting the story that is about to occur (Gailly 67). While Rollins never recorded this song, he did record a very similarly titled

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[49] 1947, with music by Bronislaw Kaper and lyrics by Ned Washington.
[50] 1942, written by Bill Carey and Carl Fischer.
[51] “I've an awful feeling / That this thought that's been a stealin’ through my brain / Is not to be ignored / But to really tell the truth / Though I'm not a well-known sleuth / I honestly believe that you are bored / You've changed … You've forgotten the words, "I love you" / Each memory that we've shared / You ignore every star above you / I can't realize you've ever cared / You've changed / You're not the angel I once knew / No need to tell me what we're through / It's all over now / You've changed” (Carey np).

"Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise"[52], a song whose lyrics set the stage for Simon and Debbie's liaison: "Softly as in a morning sunrise / The light of love comes stealing / Into a newborn day / Flaming with all the glow of sunrise / A burning kiss is sealing / A vow that all betray / For the passions that thrill love / And take you high to heaven / Are the passions that kill love / And let it fall to hell / So ends the story" (Romberg and Hammerstein II np). This instance of intermedial thematization anticipates the entire storyline of *Un Soir au club*: in the early morning hours, Simon and Debbie begin their affair, which betrays his marriage vows to Suzanne, and though Simon is delighted in his new dalliance, it indirectly kills Suzanne because without jazz and Debbie in Simon's life, she would not have come to pick him up, and thus she likely would not have died that day and in that way – and her death is where the story's retelling ends.

In addition to providing insight into the novel's developments, these three references show how once Simon enters the club, jazz again becomes omnipresent because his life, his emotions, and his experiences are told through jazz. Even without familiarity with the lyrics and thus without fully comprehending the meaning of these allusions, the reader can understand their importance in the text from their titles. It is not difficult to recognize that Simon's playing of "You've Changed" comes at a transformational moment when he is playing a duet with a new partner in whom he expresses great interest and even love, far from his wife. Though jazz-initiated readers may have a more complex understanding of these allusions, readers across the spectrum can gain insight into Simon's state of mind through the titles mentioned.

Musical terms deliberately describe Simon's transformation and evolution; in this world, art takes primacy over all else, and the desire to create it is a major driving

[52] 1928, written by Sigmund Rombert and Oscar Hammerstein II.

force for the characters and their actions. Anything that occurs along the way is simply *le prix des choses* that must be paid. Through jazz, Gailly shows that different artistic genres are equally susceptible to the effects of desire for love, self-realization, freedom, or art. Moreover, the desire for self-fulfillment is universal. *Un Soir au club* resists against the common conception that would oppose jazz and the mainstream through the role that jazz music plays in the novel and through jazz-inspired writing techniques such as irony, fragmentation, interjection, and individual style. In this text, classical or jazz, in the mainstream or on the periphery, desire drives all the characters. Whatever may result of their actions is but the cost to pay for desire's fulfillment – *le prix des choses*.

CHAPTER 3: Resisting Trauma and Creative Melancholy:

Jazz in Tanguy Viel's *Le Black note*

In his 1998 jazz novel *Le Black note*, Tanguy Viel explores failure and the difficulty of creativity, doing so through a fallible and traumatized narrator who paints jazz as both the cause of and the antidote against an artist's creative troubles. In this novel, jazz is present in concept and in form; it is a key organizing element with metaphorical importance. *Le Black note* relies on jazz for its fragmentary and polyphonic structure, marked by the narrator's frequent apostrophes.

Le Black note is also a trauma narrative, illustrating the narrator's efforts to come to terms with the effects of the events that caused his distress. By combining the disparate jazz and creativity-related elements with the narrator's traumatized psychological state, Viel's novel presents an allegory for the writing process and its attendant difficulties, which Viel names *mélancolie*. In this context, allegory is "a metaphor, sustained and developed…. [that] describes one thing under the image of another, or speaks one thing while implying something else" (Tambling 6)[53]. The novel's jazz-inspired form drives its allegory for the artist who struggles to create what he or she envisions – the artist affected by Viel's melancholy – but it also transcends trauma and failure to become a means of resistance against this same melancholy.

Le Black note recounts a would-be jazz musician's musing in a mental hospital following the burning of the eponymous house in which he lived with his quartet. In their ambition to be legendary, the group's members model themselves after John

[53] Allegory is the subject of much study and it is "as variable as the languages and styles in which it has been written," from early Biblical allegory through Classical, Medieval, to modern allegory (Machosky 1-2). Jeremy Tambling provides a detailed overview of scholarship on the subject in his book *Allegory*, NY: Routledge, 2010.

Coltrane's quartet from the 1960s, adopting nicknames taken from members of Coltrane's band[54]. The group's leader and saxophonist Paul becomes John (Coltrane), percussionist Christian becomes Elvin (Jones), and bassist Georges becomes Jimmy (Garrison). Only the narrator, a trumpetist, is not given a name because he is not good enough to be Miles Davis, one of jazz's most eminent trumpetists: "on ne va quand même pas t'appeler Miles, comme Miles Davis"[55] (Viel 20). The four musicians in Viel's novel come together to play and decide to share a house bearing the novel's name on an island separated from society. The country and location are not specified, though the bandmates' names suggest France. The era is not given either, though it must be post-1960s, since the musicians seek to be like the great Coltrane, who played at that time.

Instead of successfully becoming jazz icons, the quartet delves ever deeper into drug use; Paul leads the turn to drugs to deal with the difficulty of writing and creating a great jazz work. One day, the Black Note house burns down with the group's leader Paul still inside. In the fire's aftermath, the group decides to put his ashes into the metal case that had previously held their drugs and drop it into the sea in a type of funeral ceremony, marking the end of their experiment in search of jazz greatness, the end of their time following Paul, and the end of their drug use. Returned to land, investigators suspect them of arson. Georges is deemed sane and returns to his prior job in a movie theater, but Christian and the narrator are sent to a mental hospital. It is from the asylum that the narrator tells his story, entirely in flashback, as he seeks to understand what happened so he can "se dépêtrer des mots des autres [i.e. Paul] qui l[']ont obsédé"

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[54] This is a veiled allusion to John Coltrane's quartet, which in some estimations was "le quartette le plus célèbre du monde" (Hucher 50, cited in Richir "Faire jazzer" 71). It is crucial to note, however, that Coltrane's years with his quartet, in the early 1960s, were among the most successful of his career, in contrast to those of the group that emulates Coltrane in *Le Black note*.

[55] Miles Davis was a legendary jazz trumpetist. Notably, Davis was not a member of Coltrane's quartet, but he was a well-known early collaborator of Coltrane's.

(Cadinot-Romerio 111). Paul appears to haunt the narrator through hallucinations and recurrent memories. By telling the story, the narrator hopes to be free from Paul's memory and influence. The lack of hope, the substance abuse, and the sight of his one-time friend and bandmate burning to death leave the narrator traumatized. As a result, his recounting of the events within the Black Note house is fragmented and contradictory: he alternately argues his own guilt and innocence in the fire that caused Paul's death. These self-contradictions become important thematic and formal elements, driving the novel's structure and revealing the narrator's traumatized state.

Le Black note is homodiegetic, with the narrator's identity never revealed. Indeed, there is very little detail about any of the characters as all identifiers are stripped away. The narrator especially is characterized "en négatif, car il se distingue précisément par son absence de repères identificatoires" (Richir, "Hétérogénéisation" 56). Consequently, the narrator "n'échappe pas seulement au lecteur qui tenterait d'en saisir une image homogène, il s'avère également incapable d'élaborer une conscience de soi" (Richir "Hétérogénéisation" 57). Lacking his own identity, the narrator is susceptible to Paul's troubling and lingering influence. His hallucinations and description of Paul as haunting him suggest he may be schizophrenic. But these same symptoms, combined with obsessive re-telling and re-living of the distressing events, also provide evidence of trauma. Understanding the narrator's symptoms gives the reader a new perception of the novel: it can be read as a trauma text rooted in and revealed by jazz musical elements and associations.

I. Jazz associations: health and race

Le Black note alludes to multiple traditional jazz stereotypes from the mid-twentieth century: in this novel, jazz is black, closely associated with substance abuse and excess, and founded upon music of the late bebop and early free jazz era (1950s-

60s). This interpretation determines the novel's content and structure to paint a picture of jazz as dangerous, and to reflect its centrality to the narrator's life. Paul identifies two pillars of jazz greatness: being healthy and being black, both of which inspire him though ironically, he is neither healthy nor black. Either Paul is greatly mistaken in his interpretation of what jazz greatness requires, or he is condemned to fail, according to his own criteria.

Jazz bears contradictory positions in *Le Black note*, formally and thematically omnipresent though Viel never explicitly depicts the musicians themselves playing it. The novel's allusions, such as the band members' nicknames based on John Coltrane's quartet, reveal the group's instrumentation. However, *Le Black note* gives no specific song titles and the narrator never recalls their jam sessions in detail. These jam sessions appear to have quickly disintegrated into drug sessions, and playing jazz was soon more aspiration than activity as the group became increasingly addicted and their health subsequently declined.

The narrator links jazz and health early when he states their goal was to "redevenir les meilleurs jazzmen du monde … et les hommes les plus sains" (Viel 25). This assertion makes two important points. Firstly, "redevenir" implies that they had already been legendary jazzmen, a claim for which there is no evidence. Secondly, the statement's juxtaposition of jazz virtuosity with sanity implies that illustrious jazz musicianship is accompanied by and perhaps even requires health. However, the narrator suggests that the group members were neither good jazzmen nor healthy individuals during their time living together. Their search for jazz greatness appears doomed from the start, aiming for an impossible future by revisiting an imagined past.

Le Black note's portrayal of jazz also reflects the common jazz stereotypes of race and drug use[56]. In this novel, jazz is a racialized music, particularly seen through Paul's desire to be black. This reference to jazz's history as a black genre hints at greater capacity for playing jazz and for creativity among black artists, a stereotype that recalls jazz's origins in blues music and among black communities. The racial associations that accompanied jazz's founding and development followed it abroad as well. As discussed in Chapter 1, in France, race became a crucial element of jazz production in the early 20th century. Musicians, critics, and theorists alike pondered the roles of white and black artists within jazz, specifically exploring whether whites can swing[57]. Viel takes up this question as his characters debate the role of race in their music. In a drugged episode, Paul dons blackface to further become like his idol Coltrane, himself a former addict:

> …le jazz et la drogue, jusqu'à l'invention d'une couleur de peau, oui, jusqu'à la couleur de peau… à force de se croire noir américain… [Paul] avait pris le cirage de mes chaussures, et il avait caché son vrai visage derrière, jusqu'au cou il en avait mis, et fermait les yeux, respirait lentement, comme pour laisser le noir de la cire s'infiltrer plus profond, avancer vers son cœur, et il souriait, il laissait éclater ses dents jaunies sur ses lèvres peintes aussi, et coulantes de pâte noire (29).

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[56] Merrill Singer and Greg Mirhej discuss the drug-jazz stereotype in their article "High Notes: The Role of Drugs in the Making of Jazz", *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse,* 5(4) 2006: 1-38. Frederick Spencer also analyzes this association in his *Jazz and Death: Medical Profiles of Jazz Greats*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2002, which catalogues the deaths, drug-influenced and not, of jazz greats.

[57] Perhaps most well-known was the conflict on the role of whites in jazz that took place primarily in the 1930s and 1940s among jazz and classical music critics. Notably, Hugues Panassié felt that jazz is innately inspired by black people and identity, while Charles Delaunay was more open to contemporary French and white jazz. Their debate is explored in detail in Ludovic Tournès *New Orleans sur Seine*: *Histoire du jazz en France*, Paris: Fayard 1999. Notably, the belief in black superiority to whites in swing and jazz does more to support frequent racial stereotypes than to nuance them. It considers all black people equal, regardless of their origins, as discussed by Denis-Constant Martin, "De l'excursion à Harlem au débat sur les 'Noirs'", *L'Homme,* (avril-septembre 2001): 158-59.

Through this act of blackface, Viel underlines the direct link between jazz, race, and spirit. To be a legendary jazz musician, Paul seeks to become black with his skin and with his heart. And while the others profess astonishment at the excess – the narrator exclaims "il y a des limites même dans le respect de ses idoles, tu n'as pas le droit" – no one in the group reacts definitively (30). Further, Paul uses the narrator's own shoe wax to paint himself black. Through his inaction and the use of his own products, the narrator becomes doubly complicit in Paul's self-effacement and efforts at transformation.

Paul's episode of blackface[58] references jazz performativity, as blackface is performance in both its history and practical execution. Most common and established in the United States, it also exists – and as in the US, courts controversy – in France. Blackface requires playing a role, one that is often superficial and based on stereotypes of behavior, language, and values. In *Le Black note*, Paul reiterates the tradition of black minstrelsy via gests that imitate the caricatural, comedic, and happy role of blackface minstrels. But here, there is no public outside the quartet. Instead, this episode becomes a simulation of Paul's racialized conceptions of jazz skill. In his actions, Paul is in the realm of the clichéd; his action is a simple effort to resemble and relate to his idol in a drugged stupor. Drugs and misconceived aspirations reduce Paul's existence to imitation, described by the narrator's observation that "le jazz et la drogue" worked together "jusqu'à l'invention d'une couleur de peau" in an imitation of black appearances (29). But like the band's experiment, this imitation too is destined to fail.

[58] Blackface stems from 19th-century minstrel shows. These performances were founded upon stereotypical and frequently racist views of black people; they vilified African Americans "for their childlike irresponsibility, their insatiable sexual appetite, and their resort to thievery and violence" (Susan Curtis, in Brundage 128). Today, such conceptions of African American culture and the related blackface are recognized as controversial and discriminatory due to the stereotypical views and the racial appropriation they have long symbolized.

Feeling strong and inspired, Paul's appearance is more pathetic than motivating. With his yellowed teeth shining between his painted lips that are dripping with wax, Paul's image emphasizes his imperfections and tragic insecurity. His desire that the black wax "s'infiltr[e] plus profond, avanc[e] vers son cœur" (29) indicates a deeper yearning for change and a dissatisfaction not just with his skin color but with his heart. It is a symptom of his difficulty in achieving musical greatness that pushes him toward a tragic conclusion. Paul's death and the circumstances around it, in turn, are at the heart of the narrator's trauma.

II. *Le Black note:* a trauma narrative

Medically, trauma is the response to an experience so intense that it "impair[s] emotional or cognitive functioning and may bring lasting psychological disruption" (Vickroy 131). The traumatized individual experiences a "cessation of feeling" (Walsh 252). A traumatic situation is often one in which an individual encounters death, and even the threat of death may be enough to constitute "the very fabric of the [traumatic] experience" (Walsh 249). The consequences of a traumatic experience are varied, but they include "a fragmented memory or a diminished sense of self," feelings of alienation, shame, doubt, guilt, or no longer viewing oneself as strong and autonomous (Vickroy 131). The narrator's account shows many of these symptoms. His frequent self-contradictions are indicative of impaired cognitive functioning and bouts of doubt and guilt, and he repeatedly alludes to alienation on the island, within the quartet, and in the asylum. Moreover, trauma victims can be haunted by their experiences, which is what happens to Viel's narrator. He sees and feels Paul everywhere:

> Je ne crains pas de lui parler quand il vient, qu'il reste là, muet sur une branche d'arbre dans le parc, je fais comme s'il était vivant pour de vrai. Parce que c'est vrai, et il murmure toute la nuit, je ne sais pas ce qu'il dit, ça

> n'a aucune importance, c'est une question de présence brute… il pénètre à l'intérieur de moi pour mieux murmurer, pour respirer à ma place, je le sens (60).

Paul's memory becomes a veritable force that follows and inhabits the narrator. This, too, indicates trauma because haunting and phantoms are common in trauma victims. As Noel Walsh and clinical psychologist Donald Kalsched observe, trauma patients experience "recurring dreams, nightmares and daytime intrusions" (Walsh 251):

> [It] became clear to me through the analysis of these patients' dreams … they were in the grip of an internal figure who jealously cut them off from the outer world, while at the same time attacking them with merciless self-criticism and abuse. Moreover, this inner figure was such a powerful 'force' that the term *daimonic*[59] seemed an apt characterization (Kalsched 12).

Death becomes a frequent theme and preoccupation of a trauma patient, which the narrator's hallucinations reflect. He cannot free himself from the memory of the fire and Paul's death. Through his hallucinations, he attempts to understand the event, gain control of it and rewrite it on his own terms. This explains the narrator's contradicting versions of that fateful night. His hallucinations evidence the narrator's endeavors to create a complete picture of the fire and its aftermath and reshape it into a less traumatic iteration by insisting upon his own innocence.

The narrator's repetitions also further emphasize his psychological state as a trauma victim. Walsh explains that the trauma patient's "inability and failure … create an ongoing process of repetition compulsion – a constant replaying of the traumatic scenario – in an attempt to absorb and master it" (251). The narrator exhibits such

[59] Kalsched gives the etymology of *daimonic* as the word *daiomai*, meaning to divide, and referring to moments of divided consciousness in trauma patients (11).

behavior and tendencies. Like Paul's visitations, the obsessive re-imagining that is at the very heart of *Le Black note* is a symptom of his trauma. The fact that the narration occurs in a mental health facility also underscores the narrator's condition. Considering all these elements, the entire novel can be read as a trauma text.

The novel's writing style supports interpreting *Le Black note* as a trauma witness testimony. Cathy Caruth writes that "the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another" (Caruth 11). In this regard, the novel's reader-listener plays a crucial role, experiencing the narrator's trauma through his re-telling of it, though ultimately, the reader-listener does not learn why the narrator is in a mental hospital. The narrator is accused of beginning the fire, but as the novel progresses, his mental instability becomes increasingly apparent.
Additionally, the narrator's fragmentary recollections reflect his shock. In a trauma patient, "experience itself becomes discontinuous … [because] the memory of one's life has holes in it – a full narrative history cannot be told by the person whose life has been interrupted by trauma" (Kalsched 13). The narrator recounts the story of the Black note house in fragments, interspersed with moments of his current life in the asylum, because that is how he remembers and understands his own experience. The fragments indicate the narrator's conflicted and incomplete understanding of his life at the time during and shortly following the Black note quartet experiment.

The narrator's trauma justifies and nuances his unreliability. In general, an unreliable narrator is one that "misreports, -interprets or -evaluates, or … underreports, -interprets or -evaluates" what he or she is presenting (Shen, "Unreliability"). Gregory Currie builds on this definition, pointing out that with an unreliable narrator, there is a disconnect between what the reader knows and tells; an unreliable narrator recognizes "a disparity between what is true in the story and the intentions of the narrator

concerning what [he or she] would have the reader believe occurred" (Currie 20). Wayne Booth's description further nuances our understanding of unreliable narrators because he introduces the presence of both an implied author and of the reader's expectations: "I have called a narrator *reliable* when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), *unreliable* when he does not" (Booth 179-180). It is important to distinguish between narrator and implied author; for this analysis, the narrator tells the story, while the implied author records it[60]. In *Le Black note*, this difference is very clear because the narrator uses strictly oral language and even mentions his relief that none of what he says is written down when he tells Rudolph, another patient at the sanitarium, that "il n'y a pas de preuve écrite, Rudolph, c'est comme si je ne t'avais rien dit" (87). But the reader knows this statement to be false, because he or she is reading the (written) account that the narrator says does not exist. Thus, an implied author wrote it without the narrator's knowledge, realization, or memory. The differentiation between narrator and implied author is key to understanding unreliability in this novel.

At first glance, *Le Black note*'s narrator fits the description of an unreliable narrator because his self-contradictions lead the reader to question the veracity of his statements. With each statement of guilt and innocence, he appears convinced of his own position, only to rescind it later. But in the context of the narrator's trauma, the question of reliability loses importance in favor of fallibility, which is when a "character's perceptions and conceptions of the story events … seem at odds with what

[60] The concept of implied authors has elicited varying interpretations among literary scholars. Wayne Booth argues its importance: "for practical criticism, probably the most important … distance is that between the fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator" (178-79). Other notable works on the implied author include Dan Shen's comprehensive overview article entitled "What is the Implied Author?" (Shen, "What Is the Implied Author?") and Seymour Chatman's chapter titled "In Defense of the Implied Author" (Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 74-89).

the narrator is telling or showing" (Chatman 149). Rather than make statements he believes to be true but the reader knows to be false, a fallible narrator is inconsistent within his own words and actions. In this approach, such characters are deemed fallible "as *perspective bearers* [emphasis mine], not as narrators" (Martens 81, in D'hoker and Martens). In other words, a fallible character does not provide a consistent and reliable account of an event based on both their words and actions, though they do still fulfill their greater role within the work. Applied to *Le Black note*, this means that the narrator's contradictions are not a narrative error and do not imply unreliability because their depiction accomplishes precisely what the implied author desires: showing the narrator's trauma, its symptoms, and its implications. Because of the contradictions in which the narrator alternately assumes his guilt and innocence, the reader becomes aware that the narrator has psychological difficulties.

The narrator's self-contradictions are simultaneously an unreliable account of the novel's events and a manifestation of the narrator's traumatized state. At moments when "the trauma or loss is too overpowering or painful to confront head-on … narratives are riddled by extreme denials, displacements, projections, digressions and overinterpretations"[61] (D'hoker 166). When the focus of the story is not on what happened in and to the Black note house but rather on the narrator's trauma, its effects, and the narrator's efforts to overcome it, unreliability and self-contradiction become symptoms rather than narrative problems or faults.

Though he does not speak in psychological terms of trauma, Maurice Blanchot's *L'écriture du désastre* (1980) offers observations that can trace the connection between the narrator's trauma in *Le Black note*, his style, and the novel's form. Blanchot's

[61] Elke D'hoker wrote these words about the works of Kazuo Ishiguro, but they are equally applicable to Viel's novel.

influence on all Viel's *oeuvre* is notable and considerable[62], and *L'Ecriture du désastre* is particularly influential for *Le Black note.* Blanchot's *L'Ecriture du désastre* is a collection of reflections on the experience of a distressing event, one which witnesses and surpasses death because it "n'a pas l'ultime [i.e. la mort] pour limite" – in other words, a trauma (49). Blanchot posits the following reaction to a disaster or traumatic event : "lire, écrire, comme on vit sous la surveillance du désastre: exposé à la passivité hors passion. L'exaltation de l'oubli. Ce n'est pas toi qui parleras; laisse le désastre parler en toi, fût-ce par oubli ou par silence" (12). This is what *Le Black note's* narrator does ; throughout his various versions of the events in their shared house, the narrator asserts that "c'est Paul qui parle en moi, le même Paul qui est mort, c'est à cause du poids qu'il occupe dans mon crâne, alors il remonte à la surface" (Viel 101-102). Paul is behind much of the trauma that the narrator experiences who, in turn and willingly or not, is overcome by Paul's influence, even after the latter's death. The disaster continues speaking through Paul. The narrator's lack of identity, forgetting, and traumatized state allow his former friend's memory to take the reins.

Blanchot also highlights the importance of passivity to one's experience of a disaster and its aftermath. Blanchot's passivity "n'est pas simple réception" (Blanchot 49). Instead, it is "le non-récit, ce qui échappe à la citation et que le souvenir ne rappellerait pas – l'oubli comme pensée, c'est-à-dire ce qui ne saurait être oublié parce que toujours déjà tombé hors mémoire" (49). In a world he views as dominated by the ruins of World War II and the Holocaust, writing is a means of memorializing the disaster and its effects. In *Le Black note*, the narrator confirms that "mon démon à moi,

[62] Laurent Demanze explores Blanchot's influence on Viel in detail in his article "Ecrire après Blanchot selon Tanguy Viel." He notes that Viel appropriates Blanchot's philosophy on writing, which is "une révolution dans la conception de l'écriture, qui n'est plus saisie par Blanchot comme somme des œuvres réalisées, mais comme drame mental ou comme psychomachie" (Demanze 2). *Le Black note* illustrates this conception of literature, as the novel centers on the narrator's psychological state and development.

c'est la passivité" (Viel 102). While the narrator is using the term *passivity* to suggest an inability to act, Blanchot's definition is also apt. Viel's narrator seems unaware that his words are recorded on paper. He appears unable to write and memorialize his experience, stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of recounting and retelling events he cannot clearly recall.

The narrator's meandering thoughts and self-corrections are additional signs of Blanchot's influence on Viel. These instances of epanorthosis clue the reader in to the narrator's traumatized mental state, and further, they are also an interpretation of Blanchot's circular view of literature. As Laurent Demanze notes, Viel and Blanchot both subscribe to a view of writing that is "circulaire et ressassante … précisément à l'œuvre dans les romans de Tanguy Viel, où la phrase longue et complexe, progresse de tâtonnements en hésitations, de corrections en épanorthoses, vers une formule jamais atteinte" (2). By incorporating Blanchot's view of literature in *Le Black note* in this way, Viel imitates jazz and jazz techniques such as variations and improvisation that bring literary life to Blanchot's ideas on writing.

III. Revealing and healing trauma by writing jazz

Jazz is fundamental to understanding *Le Black note*. It is jazz that induces the narrator's trauma as the group chooses to live together to better practice and thus to create a stronger band. Paul's descent into drugs, which inspires and accelerates the same behavior among the other bandmates, is fueled by jazz and by Paul's own inability to cope with his difficulty creating it. And in the end, the narrator aspires to play jazz again; with this realization, music comes full circle and becomes not only the catalyst but also, perhaps ironically, the antidote. The dual role of many formal jazz elements within *Le Black note* further emphasizes the link between trauma and jazz because they

are simultaneously symptoms of the narrator's traumatized state and literary interpretations of jazz form.

IIIa. Interpreting jazz structure

Rhythm is particularly influential on the novel's structure and pacing, which is a deliberate decision on the author's part. In an interview, Viel confirms rhythm's importance for his work: "je crois que l'apport le plus important sur mon propre travail est celui du rythme, c'est-à-dire de l'enchaînement des durées" (Allemand 301). Overall, rhythm in *Le Black note* is reminiscent of free jazz[63] because of the novel's inconsistent pacing, which centers around punctuation and sentence length. These control the novel's rhythm and emulate jazz rhythmic manipulations.

Viel's winding sentences mirror and show the narrator's wandering thoughts while giving the novel a spontaneous and oral style, typical of jazz. For example, the narrator tells Rudolph that it is "dommage vraiment que les photos aient brûlé dans l'incendie, j'aurais aimé te les montrer, au moins à toi, Rudolph, à toi parce que tu le mérites plus que les autres ici, mais c'est trop tard maintenant, tu ne verras plus la ressemblance avec les instruments du vrai quartette de Coltrane" (33). In this long run-on sentence, the narrator expresses five separate thoughts: regret for the photos burning; a desire to show them to Rudolph; Rudolph as deserving to see them; it being too late to fix the problem and show the pictures now, and Rudolph never again seeing the resemblance between the instruments. The sentence shows a jazzy style of theme-and-variations composition because the subject of each thought plays a role (albeit a different grammatical role than subject) in the preceding thought. Thus, the photos are the object in the first thought, but the subject of the second thought. Rudolph is the

[63] This is also a veiled imitation of John Coltrane, who was a pioneer of free jazz.

indirect object of the second thought, but the subject of the third. The fourth thought – it being too late now – stands alone, emphasizing the break in time. The final idea resumes the whole: time, Rudolph, the pictures, and the content of the pictures themselves are all represented in this phrase that is the synthesis of the entire sentence's major parts. Viel's style represents both jazzy modulations and the narrator's drifting thought process, drawing attention to the novel's jazz influence and to the narrator's traumatized and meandering expression.

The novel heavily references and imitates jazz in its overall structure, too. The narrator's obsessive re-telling of the story surrounding the house's burning becomes a vamp for the novel. In jazz, a vamp is a "repeated chord progression or rhythmic figure" (Schwed np). A vamp can also serve as a repeated line over which a soloist plays. In *Le Black note*, the scene of the fire and Paul's death is continuously repeated, like a vamp, with various accounts of how it happened superposed on it – different voices and perspectives, much like jazz solos. This consistent, obsessive repetition is also a key characteristic of trauma, when the traumatized individual relives or revisits their traumatic moments, seemingly uncontrollably. Further, the novel itself is written in fragments of varying lengths. Some sentences are complete, others not. The sentence above, describing the pictures and musical instruments, exemplifies the long, fragmented style the narrator often employs. Other times, he is comparatively more concise and declarative: "Un jour je raconterai tout. Reste quand je dis ça, n'aie pas peur d'écouter ce qui donne froid sur le cou. Même un fantôme qui t'observe, il vaut mieux se rappeler" (101). This is an apparently lucid moment in which the narrator implies that he has a chilling story to tell. His sentences here are complete, shorter than most others in the novel, and they follow each other in a clear and logical manner. However, even in this lucid moment, his trauma is evident because the existence of a phantom, such as

that to which the narrator alludes, is also a trauma characteristic. In this way, the jazz-inspired structure reveals the narrator's psychological state.

Le Black note's four chapters are reminiscent of the cyclical AABA articulation of many jazz pieces. In this format, a first theme is introduced and repeated (sometimes with modifications or variations), then a second, different theme is played, followed by a return to the original. *Le Black note's* narration is in four unequal parts[64], each of which varies on the same theme, with its own variations (Richir "Faire jazzer" 76). In a modification of the typical AABA form, Viel's novel takes AAAB form; the first three chapters present a similar point of view, and the fourth contrasts it.

The narrator's unreliability is fundamental to the novel's structure because the AAAB form emphasizes his many self-contradictions. In the novel's four-chapter composition, the narrator assumes varying – and contrasting – positions as each chapter has a different overarching theme. The narrator alternately admits to wanting to kill Paul, killing him, and maintaining innocence, though the reader never discovers the truth.

The first chapter introduces the novel's main event (the fire and Paul's death) and its possible causes. The narrator alternates between contradicting views on the circumstances around Paul's death: he is accused of mental illness and killing Paul though he maintains his innocence (15, 20), he admits to wanting Paul dead (29, 44), and he claims that Paul killed himself (40). This chapter also raises the question of intent, a question that is never clearly answered: was Paul's death an accident, suicide, or arson?

[64] Each chapter is shorter than the previous one.

The second chapter reiterates and develops the first chapter's themes. Introduced in the novels' opening pages (11-12), repeated comments that Paul speaks to him and through him continue in chapter 2 and suggest the narrator's possible mental illness (60, 63). Throughout the chapter, the narrator avoids taking blame for the fire and does not consistently articulate his position regarding his own involvement in the fire.

In a change, the third chapter introduces the narrator's argument that he was indeed the one who deliberately set fire to the house after months of preparation and planning (85). Despite his earlier protests to the contrary, the narrator describes in detail how and why he lit the fire:

> Je voulais que Paul se taise pour toujours, je voulais le voir dans une boîte en fer, hermétique au son, hermétique à la lumière. J'en ai rêvé, Rudolph, des mois plus tôt j'ai imaginé ce moment du brasier, ce moment où tout s'inverse pour chacun de nous. Le feu dans la maison, Rudolph, c'est moi qui l'ai mis, dans la pièce principale. C'est moi qui ai mis le feu, ne le répète pas, ne le dis à personne… C'est pour ça que je te dis que c'est moi qui ai mis le feu, parce que c'est vrai (85-6).

Yet later in the chapter, the narrator rescinds his claims: "Est-ce que j'ai dit vraiment que j'avais pu mettre le feu, est-ce que tu as pu me croire? … J'ai dit que c'était moi qui avais mis le feu, mais ce n'est pas vrai. Ce n'est pas moi, c'est Paul qui essaie de me faire dire ça" (101). He goes on to link his morality, which absolves him of murder, with jazz by arguing that "Non, Rudolph, crois-moi que c'est incompatible… il y a des choses comme aimer le jazz, alors c'est signe qu'on est incapable de tuer" (104). Through emphasis on the specific events of that fateful day and on the narrator's mental health, the third chapter's theme continues to center around his instability and inconsistency.

In the fourth chapter, equivalent to theme B of the composition structure AAAB and thus the counter-theme or antithesis, the narrator again claims his unequivocal guilt. He states that "c'est moi qui ai pris l'allumette, j'étais en congé ce jour-là, j'ai menti quand j'ai dit que je travaillais. Avec Georges, on a mis le feu à notre maison" (111). This time, there is no hesitation in his argumentation. What changes from one chapter to another is not only the narrator's account of his role, which changes even within chapters, but his conviction. As a result, the theme that varies between the novel's chapters (and between its A-B sections in the AAAB format) is whether he is mentally stable and convinced of his own arguments. The AAAB format that Viel applies to this novel becomes a means of questioning the narrator's mental health. In turn, his psychological condition becomes crucial to understanding the novel, why the narrator's inconsistencies happen, and why the lack of conclusion does not ultimately matter. Likewise, tracing the formal representation and impact of his inconsistencies helps understand how the narrator's trauma affects him, his style, and the novel's conclusion.

IIIb. Interpreting jazz style

Jazz elements feature in the novel's style through the narrator's widespread use of epanorthosis, which imitates a jazz-like theme and variations compositional style[65] (Richir "Faire jazzer" 77). Viel's style mirrors jazz "en malmenant les règles syntaxiques et les marques de ponctuation qui organisent les rapports de dépendance entre les différentes propositions du discours" (Richir "Faire jazzer" 76). The following excerpt shows the narrator correcting himself when he summarizes his time in the Black Note house first with nostalgia then with disappointment:

[65] Theme and variations are used throughout all genres of music, but it is a frequent style in jazz because the variations lend themselves particularly well to improvisation.

> …quand on descendait l'escalier vers la cave, pour aller jouer des heures entières, jouer sans s'arrêter des morceaux de jazz, au début surtout, les premiers mois quand j'ai pensé que c'était la meilleure vie qu'on pouvait demander, que vraiment on deviendrait les meilleurs en jazz, et les meilleurs amis, et que rien n'a duré plus de trois mois. Ça a duré sept ans en vrai, mais rien n'a duré plus de trois mois, et l'impression quand on jouait au fil des années, l'impression de tomber des cieux vers la poussière, et que jamais on ne serait les meilleurs (28).

The narrator corrects himself here, modifying his earlier statement regarding their ambition to be the best jazzmen in the world. At first, he believed in this goal, though in the end of this sequence he accepts its falsity. Moreover, the meandering final sentence is a series of fragments; the narrator never completes his thought about how it would end, foreshadowing the sudden end that the fire brought to their ambitions.

Le Black note only has one narrator and it depicts no conversational exchanges, but it creates the effect of polyphony in multiple ways. The narrator's self-contradictions incorporate multiple voices, reminiscent of jazz harmony. As Alice Richir explains, "la folie du narrateur annule toute appropriation définitive, unilatérale, du champ verbal. La narration n'appartient plus à une seule voix ; elle s'affiche comme le produit des différents discours qui ont présidé à sa naissance" ("Faire jazzer" 75). Paul's presence further adds to the novel's polyphony as an occupier of the narrator's thoughts and speech, and thus as a realization of his illness. The narrator describes his predicament to Georges, explaining that :

> Il y a Paul plus que jamais, il parle pour moi. Il dit que c'est moi qui ai mis le feu, mais ce n'est pas vrai, c'est toi qui l'as fait, et Paul dans ma mémoire qui

> veut que ce soit moi. A Rudolph j'ai dit ça, je me suis entendu lui dire, et je ne pouvais rien faire, pas même un signe avec la main (98).

Though it is always the narrator speaking, the novel's style presents multiple points of view and versions of the house's fire, all of them summarized in this excerpt. It presents the narrator's fragmented identity as he alternately maintains innocence, argues that Paul speaks through him in a fit of hallucination and asserts guilt, and that Georges may have set the fire. Because these contradicting versions are presented by the same narrator and all are presented with conviction at some point, the reader never conclusively learns which is true. However, the truth becomes irrelevant; what is most illuminated through these differing assertions is the tension in the house, the complex relationships between group members, and the narrator's traumatized state. *Le Black note*'s polyphony, of which this excerpt is also an example, becomes a symbol of the close relationship between the novel's content and its oral style.

Orality presents a method of mirroring the spontaneity of jazz, manifest in the narrative voice and choice of verbs. Viel makes frequent use of verbs that imply speech, beginning with the opening sentence: "Ici je parle à tout le monde" (7). There are numerous later examples of oral style, including the accusation that "tu mens, Elvin, parce qu'à toi les morts ne parlent pas" (79) ; the narrator's confession "il y a la vérité qui sue par les pores de mes joues quand je parle, et je peine, Georges, je peine à tout contenir" (89) ; the musings "un jour je raconterai tout" and "est-ce que j'ai dit vraiment que j'avais pu mettre le feu?" (111), and "je dis"[66] in the opening to the final section (111), among many other such instances. The emphasis on orality reflects jazz composition because this is most frequently a spontaneous and oral music, meant to be

[66] "C'était mieux de la faire brûler, je le dis pour de vrai" (Viel 111).

enjoyed live rather than recorded, though recordings clearly exist, and abundantly so. Like live jazz, whose form is enhanced and even determined by the musician's improvisation, *Le Black note*'s form is heavily reliant on the narrator's (simulated) orality.

The narrator's abundant use of apostrophe also simulates orality and introduces polyphony. The narrator tells his story to multiple people (Rudolph, Georges, Christian, the doctors), all of whom are addressed throughout the novel. There are no distinct, conventional scenes because it is all stream of consciousness writing, so the apostrophes serve to help differentiate one instance of recounting from another. Consequently, the apostrophes underline the fragmentary form of the *Le Black note* because they make evident the multiple sessions during which the narrator recounts the novel's content. The regular interpellations also give the novel's first three sections a loose rhythm; there are no apostrophes in the final section that is either an ultimate fit of hallucination and the narrator is speaking to himself, or he is speaking directly to the reader. In this way, the apostrophe "devient symptôme du délire obsessionnel qui *in-forme*[67] le discours de ce roman" as well as its form with sections addressed to different recipients, all interwoven (Wagner 14).

The narrator's style and anxious, self-contradicting nature are crucial to the reader's understanding of him and his or her experience of the story. As Ari Blatt explains, "if Viel's novels resonate with some semblance of the real, of reality that, as he acknowledges, is filled with danger and anxiety[68]… they [his novels] do so more evidently not in what his narrators have to tell, but in how they tell it" (375). The novel's style becomes as important as what is being told. Viel himself confirms this when he

[67] Italicization original in Wagner's article.
[68] As explained in Viel's essay "Un droit à la mélancolie", *Inventaire/Invention*, May 2005.

admits that narrating from a manipulated narrator's point of view is the only way to tell the story. The manipulated narrator is weak, which is a position the reader can relate to because he or she is in the same weakened position, relying on incomplete information to follow the story (Liger np). The narrator's voice is unique, characterized by an aspect "torturée par un trop-plein d'affects" (Wagner 220). He is puzzled and overwhelmed within his own world. His style reflects his confusion:

> Ici quelquefois, je me demande si on est retenu vraiment. Tu as des cigarettes sur toi? J'oublie toujours de demander aux infirmières d'en prendre quand elles sortent. Ça ne les dérange pas qu'on fume, pourvu qu'on ne dise rien, même sur le solarium quelquefois l'après-midi, quand le directeur fait la sieste. Je te dis cela, mais il ne faut plus venir, Georges, c'est dangereux pour toi aussi, ils finiront par t'enfermer pareil, et croire que tu as besoin d'une cure aussi" (69).

Here, the narrator speaks to Georges, though Georges never replies so it is unclear if he is present or if this is a hallucination. In these five sentences, the narrator discusses multiple disparate topics: the possibility of leaving the sanitarium, smoking, rules in the sanitarium, and the warning to Georges against visiting due to the risk of being locked up too – a statement that appears to answer the narrator's original thought of this sequence. He also reveals himself as highly distrustful and anxious about his surroundings, pushing boundaries and questioning the specialists' conclusions on his condition.

Situations such as this one indicate to the reader that something is amiss with the narrator – just as the narrator does not trust those around him, the reader questions whether to trust the narrator himself. As is the case throughout the novel, jazz is the instigator. But ironically, it is also the remedy, as the narrator observes when he

declares "je voudrais jouer de la trompette maintenant" (104). He realizes he cannot because the gravity and the goal the group once had are gone, burned with the Black Note house, and so he remains in the asylum. The narrator is unable to pull his trumpet from the house's ruins, though he is aware that he desires to play again.

IV. Le Black note: allegory for the first novel

While Paul and the narrator fail in their search for creative production, Viel succeeds in his own endeavor. Fighting against the melancholy of intimidation and precedent, Viel triumphs in writing and finishing his novel in the creative personal struggle that his novel illustrates.

Le Black note is Viel's first published novel, and it uses symbolism and allegory to explore the difficulty of writing a first work. Viel himself has been open about the difficulty that writing posed for him; he explains that "pour moi, écrire est très difficile… Je suis comme contraint à mythifier le peu que je suis parvenu à faire. A en être perpétuellement mélancolique peut-être même au moment où je l'écris" (Viel, "Vers une mélancolie " 93). More specifically, Viel was most conflicted by putting his ideas into text. As he says, "chez moi, ce désir, ce premier livre, je l'ai traîné parce que c'est sans doute un des seuls moments où j'ai réussi à écrire. Mais au moment où je l'ai fait, je n'ai pas réussi à l'écrire. Au moment où je l'ai fait, je n'ai essayé que de faire tenir ensemble des choses intenables. Des ruines" (André et al. 92). In this thought, Viel links his own writing struggles with four themes of *Le Black note*: the difficulty of creating art; the dissonance and distance between text and concept; fragments; and ruins[69].

The difficulty of writing a novel, for Viel, lies in the awareness that "de l'objet premier, tout se dérobe, tout s'enfuit" (André et al. 90). The *objet premier* is an

[69] This is also another veiled reference to John Coltrane, who was at the forefront of free jazz at the end of his quartet.

accumulation of all the writer has read and the image of this first work itself toward which the author strives. As Viel explains, the *objet premier* is, "dans mon cas… une image du livre, celle qui suggère le livre même que l'on va écrire, celle qui donne l'incarnation tant bien que mal… il est posé à l'horizon du texte à la fois (et paradoxalement) comme sa finalité et son impossibilité constitutives" (André et al. 90)[70]. But this first work, this *objet premier*, is also a ghost, a "fantôme … à la fois présent et absent, manifeste dans sa disparition, obscur dans son dévoilement" because it becomes another one of the ghosts that haunt future works, creating the difficulty of knowing what to write when all has already been said ("Vers une mélancolie" 95). The author finds him- or herself in a paradox: "au moment où on commence, il faut supposer que rien n'a été dit sinon on ne peut pas commencer" ("Vers une mélancolie" 95). But an author's work, first novel or otherwise, joins the intimidating chorus of precedents, which furthers the difficulty of writing. Once completed, a novel becomes like a ghost that is absent because the novel is finished, but also present because it haunts the author's current work and progress. Viel's comments suggest that he is hyperconscious of his work and the rich artistic field he is entering. This characteristic unites Viel and Paul, both acutely aware of the many great artistic accomplishments that precede their own[71] and the intimidation that results. What Viel conceives of as the *objet premier* can be haunting for a beginning artist.

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[70] Maurice Blanchot's influence on Viel is again evident here. Demanze observes that "si le jeune romancier [Viel] a la vive conscience de venir dans un temps d'après, de s'inscrire dans une esthétique postmoderne du recyclage, puisque toutes les histoires ont été jouées [*a main source of his mélancolie*], et d'appartenir à un monde de spectres et de ruines, il fait de cette position esthétique travaillée par le vide un lieu de création et d'impulsion. C'est cet antidote aux discours du déclin qu'il saisit dans la figure de Blanchot" (Ecrire 3).

[71] In his discussion on the *objet premier* and what formulated it for him, going into his writing of *Le Black note*, Viel wrote: "Comme moi, quand on a vingt-cinq ans en 1998 et quand on a lu Beckett, Duras, Bernhard, l'image du livre est l'image monumentale du passé plus l'image du livre déjà défait dans toutes ses considérations" (André et al. 90). His image of *objet premier* and his goal with this novel are sharply defined by his awareness of the literary field he is joining. Similarly, Paul's desire to imitate Coltrane's quartet and to become black in heart and body suggests an acknowledgment of jazz greats.

Le Black note shows this ghost in its representation of jazz, simultaneously omni-present in theme and influence and physically absent. The idea of absence – and thus disappearance – is central to *Le Black note* (Houppermans 96). The entire story is recounted from the outside and in retrospect. As a result, everything to which the narrator alludes and which he describes is gone: the Black Note house in which the group lived, Paul and his body, their drug paraphernalia that was ceremoniously thrown into the sea, their aspirations of musical greatness, their relationships as the group's members are divided among death, the sanitarium, and the outside world. Disappearance also comes back to Blanchot's ideas on life and existence after disaster. The event itself has passed – disappeared – but it continues to haunt the survivor. In similar fashion, *Le Black note* dwells on, recounts, and relives the failure that led to the disappearance of all that made up the narrator's life during his time in the quartet. It is the narrator's effort, in all its difficulty, to begin life again after the Black Note house has disappeared but its memory remains.

Disappearance and new beginnings are closely tied to Viel's theory of writing – namely, that a first-time writer faces great pressure from past precedent, where all has already been said and done. This theory strongly influenced his composition of *Le Black note*, exploring "comment commencer quand tout est fini?" – the same situation in which the novel's narrator finds himself ("Vers une mélancolie" 89). *Le Black note* illustrates this question by exploring the quartet's artistic failure to produce their music and their first public success, akin to a writer's first novel. The lack of definitive conclusion, both regarding the narrator's guilt or innocence and the future that awaits him, returns to this question of beginning after the end. The narrator is seemingly unable to continue or to begin again when all is finished. In this way, the novel mirrors Viel's own writing process and the obstacles he faces. It is a mise-en-abyme of the

difficulties surrounding artistic creation because Viel is depicting Paul's creative struggles while experiencing the same troubles himself.

Viel's writing experience further emphasizes the link between the novel and its subject. Viel began it instinctively, without a specific plan. He finished it in the same way, not knowing it was done until another reputable author (François Bon) read it and affirmed that it was done ("Vers une mélancolie" 90). The novel's plot mirrors this writing process, where the narrator begins *in medias res* in terms of narrating the novel but after the fateful event that it describes (Richir "Hétérogénéisation" 55). The reader is dropped into the main character's narration, piecing it together through the events that he relates, little by little and in disjointed order. When the novel ends, it does so in the same place where it began: the house named Le Black Note. The ending is circuitous, returning to the beginning to seemingly eternally revisit the scene of Le Black Note's burning. And, by finishing with a return to the main concept – i.e., the story of the house and how the group's time there ended – the narrator has the story come full circle in a fanatical and seemingly eternal re-evaluation and retelling of the fire. It is a meaningful conclusion because it shows the narrator's obsession, but it does not advance the plot or answer key questions about what comes after, except apparently endless reflection. It is a conclusion that mirrors Viel's experience writing the novel because in both situations, the main character or author is unaware that the end has come until an outside person signifies that it has been reached – François Bon giving Viel affirmation that the work is done, and Viel himself signaling the end for the narrator by writing no more. Viel observes that "le phénomène de l'énoncé a besoin d'une validation"; here, both writer and narrator find it externally ("Vers une mélancolie" 90).

In this experience of creativity, finality provides freedom. As Viel explains, "la libération, c'est l'écriture qui la produit mais toujours après-coup" ("Vers une

mélancolie" 91). For Viel, this liberation is freedom from the haunting of the *objet premier*. Like Viel, the narrator of *Le Black note* is also looking for freedom. For the narrator, though, this freedom is from Paul and his ghost, which inhabits him as a trauma symptom. The narrator's constant state of enclosure also emphasizes his search for freedom. First in the Black Note house, then in the asylum, he is consistently confined. Jazz (and perhaps the health that Paul assumed a great jazzman would have) offers the narrator a means of escape, of finding freedom in his situation. Freedom becomes both a physical and an artistic goal.

If the narrator represents the author (Viel) in this allegory, then fittingly, Paul becomes a metaphor for the creative melancholy that he himself experienced, that pushed him to excess, and that haunted Paul and now haunts the narrator. The text comes full circle. As a trauma narrative, it is only in its completion that the narrator hopes to find freedom. And, as Viel's first novel, it is only in its completion that the author finds freedom from the *objet premier* that haunted him throughout its creation. This freedom, however, can be tenuous or incomplete. It is like Blanchot's disaster that continues to haunt the survivor even after it is gone. Likewise, the memory of the *objet premier* remains to haunt the artist, represented by the narrator's continuing struggles to explain and come to terms with the trauma he experienced from the jazz group's time together.

Viel coins a term for the personal haunting by the *objet premier* that an artist can experience: *mélancolie.* In his words, this melancholy is "un état psychique, une forme de neurasthénie ou de difficulté à élire des éléments dans la réalité…[ou] la difficulté de décider d'un sujet pour faire un roman ou raconter une histoire" (Demanze and Viart 154). More than any other character in *Le Black note*, Paul suffered from Viel's melancholy because he struggled to create, resorting to drugs for inspiration, freedom,

and authenticity. The narrator is repeatedly and consistently clear that Paul was the one who led the group toward drugs; he recalls that it was

> lui [Paul] qui nous a éloignés des choses, parce qu'il lui fallait toujours plus, disait-il… A cause de son excès de différence, à cause de ça tout simplement on l'a suivi. Le meilleur quartette du monde, disait-il, voilà ce qu'on va devenir… puis [Paul] buvait, puis saisissait une seringue qui toujours gisait sur une table près de lui (41).

Paul believed that in order to create, the group needed "moins de contrôle… le contrôle de soi est une gangrène du vingtième siècle, disait-il, un cancer qui empêche les grandes choses et les grands hommes" (45). In Paul's view, drugs would provide the quartet freedom from self-control and ultimately lead to enhanced creativity and virtuosity.

However, as Paul's lack of productivity and his unfortunate death show, drugs are not the answer to setting aside intimidation and inhibitions before the creative act. A rare prolepse to the future after the end of the novel's events confirms this: the narrator longs to play jazz again because it is a means of resisting Paul and his destructive influence. While in the group, jazz had been a means of resistance to the "distraction" of their drug use that Paul encouraged (104). Even when they were drugged, when "on se tassait dans les fauteuils, qu'on se momifiait à force de regarder dans le vide: au fond de nous on résistait" (104). The narrator, Christian, and Georges were all aware that playing jazz was a means of resisting Paul; by playing, they succeeded in doing the act from which Paul "distracted" them. Consequently, in this context playing jazz is a means of resisting the melancholy of creativity and the threat of failure.

As a result, it is fitting that the narrator would desire to play the trumpet again. Indeed, in the end, Viel's narrator finds freedom, despite his confinement in an asylum;

this contradiction gives the freedom a twinge of irony, but he describes himself as free nonetheless from Paul's influence and from drugs. The narrator explains how the fire and its aftermath purified and liberated him from Paul's ghost and from the melancholy of creativity[72]:

> c'est tomber de Charybde en Scylla qui m'est arrivé… j'ai suivi Paul sur toute la ligne, j'ai eu peur encore plus, et j'ai pensé en moi-même: pour moi, c'est le dernier sursaut avant la mort…. Je veux seulement que tu saches, maintenant je suis libre. Paul, il ne revient plus à présent, plus aucun souffle derrière la nuque, parce que je vais mieux… mon sang qui se clarifie, mes mains qui s'apaisent et se reposent d'avoir tant tremblé (Viel 107).

With this parallel between the narrator's and Viel's struggles with melancholy, the allegory between jazz and writing is complete. In writing this novel, Viel grappled with the challenges of a first work, settling on what to write about and representing his impressions of the elusive *objet premier.* Viel overcomes his difficulties in the very act of writing; the narrator does the same by telling his own story[73].

Creativity and artistic production serve as resistance to the nefarious influence of melancholy and memory. Just as Blanchot continues writing in a world that is falling apart after World War II, Viel and his narrator also turn toward art. In a seeming answer to the question expressed earlier – comment commencer quand tout est fini? – Viel's novel suggests that one should write, play jazz, and most of all, create.

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[72] Fire and purity have long been equated. Many current and ancient religions see fire as the most efficient form of purification (Durantez 621). Fire also features in in purification rites such as purgatory and funeral pyres (Shelestiuk 233). Given the narrator's liberation following the house's burning because their troubles, including Paul, died inside, the Black Note house could be interpreted as a funeral pyre itself.

[73] Re-narration of a traumatic event is a therapy technique for traumatized individuals to lessen anxiety and master the patient's reaction and understanding of the traumatic event, as discussed in Mooli Lahad's and Miki Doron's *Protocol for Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: SEE FAR CBT Model: Beyond Cognitive Behavior Therapy*. Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2010, 60.

CHAPTER 4: An Ugly Illumination: Ambivalent Jazz in Pascal Quignard's *L'Occupation américaine*

As jazz music spread throughout the United States and the world in the twentieth century, it took on important cultural and political meanings with both positive and negative repercussions. Its roots in black American communities made jazz a distinctly American genre of music abroad, including in France. But if jazz was an exotic and modern music to the mid-twentieth-century French, it also posed a threat to traditional values. Consequently, jazz's cultural effects are ambiguous because it is at once a symbol of democratic freedom and of American imperialism. Pascal Quignard's 1994 novel *L'Occupation américaine* depicts this dual-edged influence. In this novel, Quignard considers jazz not from the perspective of the musician but the listener (Pautrot, "De la leçon" 344) as he explores the experiences of Patrick Carrion and Marie-José Vire, adolescents coming of age in American-occupied, small-town Meung-sur-Loire. *L'Occupation américaine* illustrates the American GI's effects on the two protagonists, their families, and French society. Quignard's novel shows jazz as a form of resistance while problematizing the modalities and consequences of this resistance.

Viewed positively, Quignard shows jazz as part of the post-World War II culture wars, bringing and advocating for American influence in France. For the young members of Meung, this is a constructive and progressive influence because it offers an alternative to the life that is expected of them. Quignard equates jazz and its related Americophilia with religion to illustrate how all-encompassing and extensive they can be. He creates multiple parallels between an interest in American culture and the Catholic religion that dominates traditional French life as the two become intimately intertwined in the experiences of Quignard's characters. He also illustrates jazz's

positive effects by emphasizing rhythm and physicality, which guide the main character Patrick through adolescence and puberty toward physical self-awareness.

But Quignard maintains an ambivalent attitude toward this music and its possible effects. He closely ties jazz physicality to racism and violence among the American troops and all those who play jazz in Meung. Jazz leads to alienation and isolation, eventually causing the two main adolescent characters to severe their ties with society, each in their own way. Their respective outcomes provide a twist on the freedom and resistance against societal and familial expectations that jazz enables among the young.

I. Creating an occupation: an overview of L'Occupation américaine

The novel opens with a question: "Quand cesse la guerre?" (Quignard 9). This question thematically dominates *L'Occupation américaine* because war is everywhere, though fighting is never explicitly portrayed. References to radios and political events imply that combat and occupation are widespread throughout the world, while little Meung remains calm but tense under the presence of American GIs. There is no warfare, but generations and cultures (French and American) are in conflict. In this setting, Patrick and Marie-José share a childhood and grow up. They dream of America and the hope it offers, and they struggle against their parents' traditions and preferences.

As the novel begins, Patrick and Marie-José are children enamored with all things American, and their interest only intensifies when American GIs set up a base in their town. They dig through the base's trash, dreaming of one day going to the United States. They promise each other love, they promise each other to leave. The opportunity arrives in an indirect and unexpected way: after Patrick is assaulted by a group of French communists, American soldiers find him and take him to their base, where he recovers. Over time, they form friendships and Patrick joins their jazz band, learning the

drums as he goes. American sergeant Wilbur Caberra buys him a new instrument to complete his drum kit each time Patrick improves his skills and shows proficiency with the drums he acquires.

Patrick's newfound interest in jazz creates tension. His father does not allow him to play jazz in the house at first, then he forbids his son to play it at all. Meanwhile, Patrick begins casually dating a young American girl, Trudy Wadd. Marie-José becomes jealous, and dates Wilbur Caberra as retribution in an attempt to make Patrick as jealous as she is. But their illusions fall apart when Wilbur dies in a drunken car accident. His death precipitates and confirms Patrick and Marie-José's realization that America is not the glittering prospect it appeared to be. Patrick grows increasingly disenchanted with the American way of life, and a hopeless Marie-José commits suicide. Patrick, seemingly unaffected by her death, does not attend her funeral and instead leaves Meung for India.

Jazz is a fundamental driver of the action in *L'Occupation américaine.* It enables Patrick to continue his relations with the American soldiers after their initial contact following the assault. Through jazz, Patrick asserts his individuality, leading him to break with his family and eventually his town. He realizes his burgeoning sexual interests that are often, though not always, refused by Marie-José's revulsion, despite her declared love for him. In the end, Patrick's Americophilia – originated, fueled, and symbolized by jazz – frees him from all that holds him to Meung. But Marie-José is disappointed; though she is surrounded by Americans and Americophiles, she is ultimately unable to realize her dreams of leaving. In the process, she loses Patrick, Wilbur, her ambitions, her childhood, and her innocence. She learns that America is not paradise and that neither Patrick nor Wilbur will take her there. In all these developments, jazz is an important factor because it gives Patrick and Marie-José an

alternative to the values they know, enabling them to resist against pressures and expectations that these adolescents, especially Patrick, realize they no longer want to fulfill.

II. Political, cultural, and musical occupation: putting generations in conflict

A central part of Patrick's and Marie-José's experiences is the desire to leave the traditional French life they know and assimilate to American culture. Both characters come from families with absent or distant mothers, and their fathers have respectable careers in town, Doctor Carrion as a veterinarian and Monsieur Vire as an *épicier*. But their children are ambitious; they want to explore the world and build a life beyond the walls they know.

Within this intergenerational conflict, jazz is an important point of contention. Following Patrick's sudden initiation into the American world[74], he desires to assume his newfound independence and to separate himself from his childhood. Playing jazz is one way to mark this new distance. Patrick's father prefers that he listen to and play other music than jazz, telling his son that "il y a d'autres musiques sur terre. Il y a Bach. Il y a le *Messie* de Haendel. Il y a Camille Saint-Saëns. Il y a le chant des oiseaux" (83). Anything but jazz will do. Patrick's response is simple: "Papa, je ne suis pas toi" (83). With this comment, he denotes the distance that he is seeking from his family. Jazz symbolizes and enables his drive for independence and self-determination, serving as a powerful positive force for Patrick and a negative distraction in his father's eyes. The American occupation has surpassed politics to affect local culture and relationships.

[74] Waking up in the American barracks following his attack, he finds Trudy cleaning his wound and her effect on him "fut soudain. Soudain, il fut surpris d'avoir quitté l'enfance. Ce fut une découverte qui le prit de court: l'enfance était partie; tous les liens s'étaient dénoués ; la fusion s'en était décomposée" (46).

The novel's title sets the stage for these tense relationships that problematize American influence. In *L'Occupation américaine*, multiple occupations are layered on top of one another. The Americans occupy the French, who host American GIs against their own will. The reticence of Patrick's and Marie-José's fathers vis-à-vis the American presence reveals how the French were opposed to the Americans' military and cultural occupation. Outsiders threaten French culture and traditions as they bring their products, relationships, and cultural practices to France, though their influence is constrained by limited contact with the French due to the Americans' self-imposed separation from living on an enclosed military base. Such an imposition of new, outside influences is central to an occupation.

Quignard's word choice in the title is provocative. This is not officially a military occupation, in contrast to the German occupation in World War II. The American soldiers are in France legally through NATO agreements, and in the end, de Gaulle and the French government exercise their power to expel US (and other foreign) forces in 1966 as de Gaulle withdraws French forces from NATO control (Popkin 265). This suggests a more nuanced and figurative meaning for the term occupation, and indeed, other occupations play out in this novel. Patrick and Marie-José are occupied by Americophilia, and Patrick becomes occupied by jazz itself. He explains his relationship with jazz in military terms, recognizing that it is "la musique qui l'avait conquis et qu'il avait conquise" (188). The musicality of the phrase and its *polyptote* emphasize the equality of the two parts and the reciprocal relationship between them. The American music conquers the young Frenchman, who in turn accepts it and masters its technique. What is American becomes French too. And while jazz is not in and of itself a military force, it is closely associated with one in this context, brought and introduced by the American GIs. Quignard emphasizes its violent and physical nature in the piano playing

of Rydell, the French jazz pianist and would-be philosopher whom Patrick befriends and who leads French jazz interest in Meung. But as with all occupations and relations, jazz's occupation here works in multiple directions and has complex consequences.

The occupation in the title also refers to the occupying regime itself. The American GIs intrude into French territory and culture. They provide Patrick and Marie-José with alternate values that fascinate them from childhood and drive their goals through adolescence as they mature and make their own decisions, often against their parents' wills. Their primary method of gaining familiarity with this new culture is through jazz; the concerts at the base's mess hall enable them to forge friendships with some American GIs and gain further access and insight into the American way of life.

Like the influence of jazz itself, the American's occupation of Meung is a double-edged sword. The United States are a "présence militaire [qui] est donc un rappel incessant et importun. En même temps, il existe une certaine envie face à la capacité logistique de l'occupant" because the Americans live a lifestyle of abundance and success that the French in Meung do not (Thibault 116). The American occupation that this novel references is a multi-layered one, simultaneously political, cultural, and musical. It is the "source d'une préoccupation, d'une interrogation sur l'identité nationale et sur le sens de l'Histoire" (Thibault 116). The novel's title establishes the foundations for the relationships of *L'Occupation américaine*, driven by force, rebellion, and captivation as contrasting cultures and political ideologies meet. They meet in and through jazz, leading in part to its double interpretation as both positive and negative, a symbol of freedom and imperialism.

III. Searching for nirvana: finding freedom through a jazz religion

Jazz brings and symbolizes a new lifestyle and values that temporarily bring freedom to Patrick. *L'Occupation américaine* expresses this freedom and the contrasts

between jazz and tradition, American and French influence, in terms of the one experience that combines tradition and values in 1950s Meung: religion. This is built into the novel itself as its four-chapter structure and the chapter titles underline how Patrick and Marie-José see jazz and Americanism as religion.

The first section, entitled *Meung*, serves as a vamp, an introduction to the novel's setting and main premises. They include the town of Meung itself, in the Loire valley not far from Orléans; Patrick and Marie-José and their shared childhood; Patrick's developing physicality and interest in sexuality, countered by Marie-José's reluctance, even repugnance; and Patrick's entry into the American camp. These themes and places form the main topics of the exposition and of the entire novel. Further, the children grow up around religion, and Patrick's family lives across the street from the town church where he serves as acolyte and thurifer.

The second section, *Le Royaume*, develops on the first section's themes and accompanies Patrick's and Marie-José's discovery of the American base. The section's title is revealing because it highlights the adolescents' idealization of all that is American while suggesting America's extensive reach and influence on the local culture. In the perceptions of Patrick and Marie-José, America is not just a country or a base. It is a realm apart, a veritable kingdom with all the power, nostalgia, and grandeur that the word inspires.

The third section, *Sécession*, sees the culmination and counter-argument (*antithèse*) to the first two. Here, the relationships that dominated the first two sections break as Patrick completes his secession from family, friends (notably, Marie-José) and tradition in favor of the American GIs and jazz.

The final section, *Nirvana*, is a turn to calm, a resolution of the novel's conflicts. In Buddhism, nirvana symbolizes peacefulness, happiness, and resolution. It is the goal

and accomplishment of the life cycle, and liberation from death. Given the omnipresence of religious themes in the novel and the religious-like worship that Patrick has for jazz and America, it is fitting that it concludes in nirvana – a non-Christian alternative to death and a form of freedom that results from resistance.

The link between jazz and religion begins at the novel's outset, when ten-year-old Patrick and Marie-José conduct a simulated religious service to affirm their shared goal of reaching the United States. In this twist on the Catholic Eucharistic ceremony, Marie-José leads as Patrick kneels before her. She "étendit les bras, ouvrant les paumes de ses mains. La pluie s'était arrêtée tandis qu'elle parlait. Patrick leva la tête vers le ciel, une dernière goutte de pluie tomba sur sa pommette. 'Je commande le ciel,' murmura-t-elle" (21). Marie-José takes the role of the priest, arms outstretched, commanding the sky to obey her whims, as it appears to do. They then distribute a non-consecrated Eucharistic host that Patrick had stolen from the church, and they make their vows:

> - Nous deux, plus rien d'autre.
>
> - Nous deux, plus rien d'autre, répéta Patrick.
>
> - Nous irons en Amérique, dit Marie-José.
>
> - Nous irons en Amérique.
>
> - Ouvre ! commanda Marie-José.
>
> Patrick ouvrit la bouche et elle introduisit l'hostie entre ses lèvres.
>
> A son tour, Patrick avança l'hostie qu'il tenait et la glissa entre les lèvres de Marie-José qui gardait les paupières baissées. Les yeux toujours fermés, elle avança les bras, prit à tâtons les deux mains de Patrick et les serra dans les siennes. Après la pluie, la terre avait une odeur très forte, presque écœurante. Ils fermaient très fort les yeux (22).

In this replication of the most solemn part of the Catholic mass, Patrick and Marie-José make promises to each other that will define their relationship for the remainder of the novel. There are two fundamental parts to these vows: Patrick and Marie-José are to remain together, just the two of them, and they are to go to America. With this ceremony, as ten-year-olds they begin to step away from tradition and family, supplanting their Catholic religion with the worship of America, its products, and its values instead. Later, they continue this parallel by equating imagery of Jesus on the cross with the base's trash, when Patrick stands "comme un dieu mis en croix dans une église, comme une poubelle de fer devant un rouleau de fils de fer barbelés" (206). Patrick and Marie-José create their own religion, one in which they worship America and everything it symbolizes.

The priest Montret's support for Patrick's jazz playing further underscores the juxtaposition of Americanism and Catholicism. When Patrick's father no longer allows his son to play drums at home, Patrick finds refuge with the l'Abbé Montret, who allows him to practice on church grounds. This new practice location blurs the lines between religion and Americanization, faith and jazz even more. America is the faith or the god, and jazz becomes the religion, the method of practicing and expressing this faith.

Americanism and religion merge after Wilbur's death in a drunk driving incident while picking Patrick up to take him to a jazz performance in another town. Patrick requests l'Abbé Montret to hold a mass for the dead in Wilbur's honor, making funeral arrangements without knowing Wilbur's religion. By arranging a memorial mass for his friend, Patrick emphasizes Wilbur's importance to Patrick's own faith – both Catholicism and Americophilia. But by remaining an observer and refusing to participate in the mass as a thurifer (194) or in any other major capacity, Patrick establishes himself apart from the Catholic rites. His refusal is even more evident given

that Patrick is initially the only attendant at the ceremony so his participation would be expected, as there is no one else there to take his place.

The funeral becomes even more symbolic when Marie-José, who is Wilbur's former girlfriend, enters in silence and places an item on a chair. Patrick ignores her, but at communion "il vit tout à coup, sur la paille de la chaise, le jouet qu'elle avait déterré mais elle [Marie-José] avait disparu" (195). This toy – a Traction avant en fer blanc, a type of car – is one they recovered from the trash of the American base years ago and buried on an island in the middle of the Loire river that they often visited, prior to their shared promise ritual. Marie-José's placement of the toy in the church reminds Patrick of their promises and hopes, the meaning that they had ascribed to religion and the faith they had made their own. Marie-José's act of placing this toy in church during a funeral service for an American soldier also makes of the small car a sacrifice and a representative for Wilbur, whose body is not present. Through their shared culture, the toy that represents America and that is, as a car and as a toy, a symbol of American luxury, innovation, and consumerism acts as a stand-in for Wilbur. In this way, Marie-José is not just burying her former suitor, whom she claims never to have loved (197); she is also burying the dreams of America and the promises that she and Patrick made to each other. Wilbur's funeral mass doubles as a funeral mass for Patrick's and Marie-José's dreams and American aspirations. Their story has come full circle when what began with a solemn, unofficial religious ritual loosely resembling marriage is closed with another solemn and unofficial[75] ceremony, this time a funeral.

The path to Marie-José's suicide is prepared. She and Patrick made two main vows on the island as children: to remain together and to go to America. Patrick breaks

[75] Wilbur's funeral mass is unofficial because, even though a priest leads it, it is unknown if Wilbur was actually baptized and practicing in the Catholic faith.

both vows, and without the hope that they offer, Marie-José despairs. The narrator observes that "tout lui échappait à la fois, l'Amérique dans Wilbur, l'amour, ou bien les liens d'enfance, ou bien le mariage dans Patrick, … les camps, les nourritures, les voitures, les vêtements, les fils de fer barbelés, les poubelles, les rêves" (199). All these items that had given Marie-José's life meaning are tied to America. However, as she recognizes with her sacrifice of the toy, she has lost them all. Further, shortly before her suicide, Marie-José observes of her situation that "où il n'y a plus d'espérances, c'est l'enfer" (204). With this thought, in a continuing appropriation and changing of religious terms and rituals, Marie-José redefines hell: in her experience and judgment, it is not a place where sinners burn but a life without hope. To live without hope is to die. Thus, for Marie-José, suicide is an escape from death as much as an escape from life. It is nirvana.

For Patrick, nirvana is not as closely tied to religion, though it remains psychological escape. Patrick's nirvana takes form through alternate states of mind, accomplished via jazz, among other methods. Patrick is introduced to this concept by the jazz pianist Rydell:

> la conscience dans les crânes humains… était comparable à la flamme d'une chandelle allumée dans la nuit de l'hypnose. Cette flamme pouvait être mouchée et cette nuit devenir pénétrable. Quand on buvait beaucoup, quand on faisait éperdument de la musique, quand on lisait passionnément, quand on aimait, quand on se droguait, on mouchait cette flamme… le nirvana, c'était cela : le rêve qui sait que personne ne le rêve (122).

In this metaphor, alternate states of mind, brought about by substances or art, make existence tolerable. When Patrick begins to distance himself from Catholic religion by refusing to be a thurifer or go to mass, and when he changes goals for his future,

evidenced by his denial of studying for the *bac*, the significance that life had for him is gone. He fills the void through jazz, affirming its importance when he claims that "la musique[76] n'est en aucun cas un *divertissement*" (150). Jazz's importance for Patrick goes beyond entertainment to self-expression and a search for freedom. Further, Patrick does not drink much, he does not do drugs like Rydell (119), and neither does he read or study. He desires sex but his sexual relationships with both Trudy and Marie-José are tenuous and conflicted at best, full of refusal on all sides. As a result, jazz is the only method of escape, the only way to achieve a sense of nirvana, a sense of peace and calm.

When the Americans leave, Patrick sells his drum set (192) and never plays music again (202). The occupation is over, both in terms of the American GIs and the jazz that had conquered Patrick (188). He no longer needs religion – neither Catholicism nor Americophilia – because as he explains, "quand on découvre que tout est irréel, il n'y a plus de salut possible" (210). The novel's structure shows how Patrick has developed, using jazz and the Americanism it brings to rebel against the religious tradition he grew up with, create his own instead, and achieve a final sense of peace and balance. Patrick finishes in India, from where nirvana comes. And while he gives up jazz when it is no longer needed, what pushes Patrick through the discovery of his spiritual development is the phenomenon that gave him his first spiritual experience, one that was illuminating and transcendent beyond words, his first nirvana: jazz.

IV. Jazz as soft power: finding freedom through American consumerism

The jazz-inspired Americophilia that seduces Patrick brings changing values to Meung. Americanism – or rather, the French conception of it – presents a sharp contrast to traditional French national identity. Jazz gives Patrick an opportunity to rebel against

[76] Here, jazz, contrasted sharply with classical music in this same discussion and others between Patrick and his father.

what he has known; in the midst of an occupation, it is a liberating force. By creating personal ties with American GIs, Patrick, Marie-José, and one can assume other adolescents like them are further introduced to American values and products. This exposure, spurred on by their initial fascination for American culture, causes Marie-José and Patrick to resist against their own culture and tradition. Marie-José and Patrick argue with their parents over small and large things. In all these actions, it is jazz that brings about change. *L'Occupation américaine* is soft power illustrated.

One of the defining characteristics of American culture, as Quignard's novel presents it, is the tendency toward consumerism and materialistic acquisition. Patrick experiences it first-hand in multiple ways. The children gain their first impressions of America through products discarded at the base. Later, Patrick receives American clothing and entertains a relationship with young, bubbly, blonde American Trudy in lieu of the dark-haired and dark-minded Marie-José. In their camps, the Americans have PX shops that sell their own products, unavailable to the French outside the black market. The store becomes a dream come alive, an experience that surpasses the senses with its promise of abundance and success. Standing in the entrance, for Patrick "la réalité était plus rayonnante encore [que les déchets dans les poubelles]. La lumière violente des néons ajoutait à l'abondance. Elle était déjà par elle-même féerie. Elle était comme de l'or sur de l'or. Dans la vallée de Canaan coulent le lait et le miel" (171). The PX store, utmost symbol of consumerism and mass production, becomes a religious space in the religion of Americanization, in which the collection of goods is apparently a form of worship and participation.

Jazz, too, is included in this obsession with collection and goods as throughout the novel, Patrick and his friends exchange recordings of jazz, rendering it a commodity. For Trudy's birthday, Patrick gives her a Miles Davis record, though ironically, she

prefers Paul Anka[77] (135). Even Patrick's learning of jazz is commodified. Wilbur gives him a new drum when Patrick makes significant progress; as Wilbur declares, '"You better practice, you better work your ass off, kid! Every time you dazzle me, you get the next piece"' (80). The acquisition of a drum set becomes a practice in collection, consumerism, and growing Americanism. As a result, Patrick himself becomes increasingly Americanized as his jazz skills develop. Through jazz, he gains exposure to a new community and their values. For the adolescent, it is exciting and liberating. Patrick's choices, which favor a growing relationship with the Americans throughout much of the novel, prove his consistent denial of traditional French values and identity.

V. Problematizing jazz: racism, violence, and alienation

Jazz and Americanism tempt and fascinate the younger generation in *L'Occupation américaine*, but Quignard does not depict these associations as uniquely positive. The novel highlights two main negative elements: the GI's brute racism and violence, both of which are linked to jazz in *L'Occupation américaine*. Racism has influenced much of American history, and it came to a very visible head during the time that *L'Occupation américaine* describes when the Jim Crow laws and their implications were under fierce debate in the United States[78]. As a genre that emerged from black music and was led primarily by black musicians, jazz's racial origins heavily influence its music, perception, and reception. Jazz's identity as a predominantly black music (more applicable during the mid-twentieth century than today), together with burgeoning public awareness of and in some cases, resistance to American racism, emphasize racial

[77] Miles Davis is a legendary American jazz trumpetist; Paul Anka is a well-known Canadian-American pop singer and songwriter. It is ironic that, despite being the American, Trudy prefers pop music and is unfamiliar with the same jazz that her father and his military colleagues brought to France.
[78] The novel itself does not depict any American events, but they would have been at the forefront of social and political domestic awareness at the time, including among the American GIs. Their racialized and racist comments and behaviors represent domestic opinions and conflicts in America at the time.

controversies that were at the social forefront of the time, in the social, political, and jazz worlds.

Rydell, Meung's resident jazz pianist turned drugged philosopher, recalls this racialized history and equates jazz with blackness. While he heavily espouses anti-American opinions – the result of his communist leanings – he divides America between white and black. He proclaims that

> 'je chie sur la conquête de l'Ouest… sur la bombe Little Boy, sur les Ford et les Chevrolet, sur le racisme, sur Wall Street, sur les buildings'…. [Rydell] prétendait qu'il n'y avait que les Noirs qui fussent américains. Le choix était le suivant aux yeux de Rydell: ou bien les Noirs qui illuminaient la vie en se droguant et en jouant de la musique [jazz], ou bien le sénateur Joseph McCarthy (109).

Patrick does not immediately subscribe to Rydell's philosophy, though he finds Rydell fascinating; his philosophy "en imposait à Patrick. Sa nonchalance, l'argent tout à coup plein les poches, les poches tout à coup crevées, son refus des études, ses poèmes, ses paradoxes, les joints, la cocaïne, le rendaient insaisissable" (109). While Rydell's take on American identity and jazz is not uniformly accepted among the French youth, it is notable that he, as a Frenchman, identifies and finds fault with the importance and extent of race in American society.

The GIs and Wilbur especially confirm Rydell's impressions of racism among the American public. Racist language accompanies Patrick's beginnings as a jazz musician and a friend of American troops. Shortly before offering to give Patrick a drum kit so he can acquire and improve his jazz skills, Wilbur refers to a black musician in the bar as "a slave" and tells him "Hey you! Monkey! Shut up, you apehead!" before "le soulevant de terre, ouvrant la porte, le refoulant dehors, le vouant au silence" (75-76). Patrick is

visibly disturbed by Wilbur's language and treatment of the otherwise apparently innocent black man; Patrick's hands, glass, and beer all tremble (76). He looks at Wilbur "avec anxiété" (77), though Wilbur turns to Patrick with a kinder offer: "Hey kid, would you like to have a set of drums"? (77). So begins Patrick's initiation into the jazz band. This scene illustrates ambivalence toward the American GIs as Wilbur takes Patrick under his wing while also being a drunk with racist opinions.

Though Wilbur is friendly toward Patrick, he remains a problematic friend. Wilbur's calculated generosity offers Patrick a limited freedom. By learning jazz and joining the American group, Patrick finds liberty from the constraints that tradition and his father put on him. However, Wilbur's systemic guidance is manipulative. By putting himself in a position of power over Patrick (because Wilbur decides when Patrick receives a new drum piece and which one it will be, for example), Wilbur maintains the French teen in a subservient position. It alludes to the novel's title, as the American holds power over – *occupies* – Patrick's learning and cultural practices. Patrick and Wilbur are friends, but it is an inequitable friendship in which they do not stand on equal footing. What seems like freedom at first is also a carefully-orchestrated system of control.

Aggression in *L'Occupation américaine* extends beyond Wilbur to jazz and to the violent tendencies that it brings out in others. For example, Rydell plays piano in a violent way. His musical touch is particular; when he hit "deux notes avec violence et Patrick était bouleversé… Son jeu était incroyablement brutal. Il blessait le corps par de brusques et longs silences, par de soudaines attaques dissonantes sur les touches. Son dieu était Monk"[79] (61-62). The viciousness of Rydell's playing sets him apart from

[79] Thelonius Monk (1917-1982) was a well-known jazz pianist and composer with a unique, aggressive and unorthodox style.

other musicians. This forceful style of play is typical in Quignard's work, which often shows music or incorporates musical elements. Sophie Angot notes that Quignard favors "les interprètes qui communiquent une impression de force primitive ou élémentaire en jouant. Quel que soit l'instrument, le jeu décrit est énergique et même souvent – le mot se trouve dans plusieurs de ses descriptions – violent" (Angot 7).

Rydell's musical style also corresponds to the otherwise violent image of the occupiers in *L'Occupation américaine*. It breaks from the calm of a small town and exemplifies the chaos that was associated with jazz in its early years. In Dr. Carrion's estimation, jazz is "même pas agréable. Ce n'est même pas joli" (150). Neither is it meant to be. Jazz is serious business in *L'Occupation américaine*, and its brutality emphasizes its importance beyond aesthetics and entertainment while also illustrating its potential for negative effects.

The violence attached to the GIs is on full display when they host and participate in a football match (*football américain*) that the Meung civilians attend with curiosity. This event becomes a metaphorical cultural transition from French origins, founded in tradition and faith, to an American era of brutality and lack of religion. It begins with the priest's blessing: "l'abbé Montret, à la tête des fidèles, bénit les champs, les vignes, les barques de pêche et le fleuve" (154-55). But when the football game begins, it does so "par une mêlée d'une violence impénétrable" (157). The term *impénétrable* here suggests the difference between the two cultures; the melee of the football game is tight and impassable, just as the violence of the game itself is incomprehensible in French eyes. They find the physicality and brutality of the game disturbing: all the spectators "se turent, sauf l'abbé Montret qui… dit avec inquiétude à Patrick qui se trouvait à ses côtés: 'C'est sans doute nous, mon fils, les Martiens. Où est Dieu?'" (157). The sport's shocking violence and the American ownership that it expresses render the French

townspeople alien in their own land. It is a seeming preview of what will come, a world in which God is absent, replaced with consumerism, aggression, and frivolity. With this game, l'abbé Montret recognizes the continuation in the transition; their faith and traditions (represented by God and sport) have been replaced by their American counterparts. Importantly, l'abbé Montret's own affinity for jazz adds irony to the situation because the Catholic priest – the utmost local symbol of tradition – supports Patrick's American musical endeavors and his independence while recognizing the brutality and lack of religion in the world that makes and spreads jazz.

Patrick's experiences with jazz-inspired violence take a personal turn when he argues with his father over playing music instead of studying. When Dr. Carrion loses patience with his son, "tout à coup, [il] leva la main pour le gifler. Patrick leva la main lui-même" (161). His father backs down but presents his son with a biography of Johann Sebastian Bach as an alternative to the jazz that Patrick prefers. When Patrick refuses it, his father again shows his frustration with his son, warning him "Attention… c'est la troisième fois. C'est la dernière fois que je te dis de travailler" (162-63). Patrick's reply is confident but insolent : "La prochaine ? La prochaine, tu me feras quoi, dis-moi, mon père ?" (163). Patrick's reply implies that he will not begin studying and that he will not let his father intimidate him. He is aware of and confident in his own body and his personality, both elements that jazz valorizes through its emphasis on corporeality, improvisation, and individuality. In the end of this encounter, Quignard contrasts the father's threat of *dernière* with the son's rebuke and anticipation of *prochaine*, the next time that he will favor jazz over work and traditional values. Quignard's emphasis of these two words further underlines the different directions in which these two characters and the generations they represent are going: one conservative, looking

backward; the other self-absorbed and assertive, going forward but doing so with no regard.

The next time this argument happens, Dr. Carrion carries through with his threat. He hits his son in the face with a belt, leaving him "sur le lit parmi ses vêtements américains, bouleversé, prostré, gémissant tout bas" (175). After restraining himself from hitting his son earlier, Patrick's desire to play a gig in a neighboring town instead of studying drives Dr. Carrion to the brink and he gives in to violence. While the argument is over authority and respect, it is jazz that spurs it; jazz gives Patrick the motivation and the self-awareness to stand up to his father, and jazz provokes Dr. Carrion beyond his limits.

Most important of the novel's violent incidents is Wilbur's death in a car accident. That fateful night, after Patrick's father hits him and forbids him from playing a gig in a neighboring town, Patrick sneaks out a window and asks Wilbur to take him instead. And while he agrees, Wilbur is heavily intoxicated and crashes on the way to get Patrick. But even this death is politicized in terms of resistance; Patrick sees "le corps de Wilbur ensanglanté qu'on avait tiré sur le bord de la chaussée, au-dessus de l'inscription HOME de US GO HOME" (179). Wilbur's body recalls the divided social and political situation in Meung, and the instigating role that jazz plays in it.

This crash is the moment when Patrick and Marie-José's relationship breaks definitively. In distress, Patrick "se précipita vers elle, la prit de force dans ses bras. Son père la lui reprit et la ramena en la tirant vers la camionnette. Elle se laissa faire" (179). Marie-José's father is aware of Patrick's influence on his daughter that led to her relationship with Wilbur in the first place. It is he that reprimanded the adolescents on their behavior, arguing that "Vous vous montrez trop avec les Américains. Vous ne vous souvenez pas. On sort à peine des Allemands. Aujourd'hui, le Général ne veut plus des

Américains. Demain, ce seront les Russes qui seront sur nos terres, qui habiteront nos maisons, qui souilleront nos filles… N'est-ce pas, ma fille?" (133-134). By letting herself be taken away from Patrick and from Wilbur's body by her father, Marie-José is allowing him to distance her from Patrick and her interest in America. Though Mr. Vire's victory here is a small one, Marie-José makes her choice to not follow Patrick.

The physicality of jazz extends beyond violence to a troubled sexuality. Patrick's experience with jazz references this genre's long history with sexuality and the body. In representing the link between jazz and corporeality, Quignard shows that he recognizes "l'ancrage corporel du musical" (Quignard "La Haine" cited in Pautrot, 1997, 63). More specifically, for him, the base and foundation of music lie in its biological rhythms (Pautrot 81). Quignard fictionalizes this philosophy on musical identity in Patrick, who finds physicality to be jazz's most profound effect, even from his earliest experience with live jazz.

Patrick's initial fascination with jazz manifests itself as burgeoning sexual awareness, although his relationships with Trudy and Marie-José remain difficult. Neither relation becomes long-term or satisfactory as they are full of rejection on all sides, at various times. Patrick's sexual relationships center on anticipation, the chase, and satisfaction. Once he acquires a girl – to use the consumeristic term – he loses interest. For example, during a sexual episode with Trudy, she claims she needs to work and Patrick agrees, though by now he has given up on preparing for the *bac*. Instead, he takes Trudy's hand from his body and "la posa sur la bouche de la jeune fille toute blonde. Prélevant le rose qu'elle avait mis sur ses lèvres, il lui murmura qu'elle n'existait pas" (154). This reaction suggests that once he has had her, Trudy no longer exists for him beyond sexual satisfaction. Likewise, Patrick's relationship with Marie-José ends in denial as well. Following Wilbur's funeral, well after Patrick and Marie-José have

consummated their relationship, she begs him to return to her. She tells him she loves him, but his reply is "tu es monstrueuse" (186) and he refuses to entertain the idea of beginning again. The purely physical nature of Patrick's desires combines with psychological violence and distance from emotional intimacy, evoking a shallow and consumeristic lifestyle.

Jazz's influence in *L'Occupation américaine* leads to freedom of self-expression[80], but Quignard's novel shows how it also leads to sexual, social, and ideological alienation. Drugs and alcohol mix with jazz to create psychological isolation, as with Rydell. Of the characters in this novel, Rydell is the most involved with substance abuse, often "nu, ivre … Parfois il passait des heures à chercher à s'habiller à la manière des musiciens noirs posant sur les pochettes en carton des disques, se regardant dans le miroir avec haine. Il buvait du whisky au goulot" (108). He also uses drugs, including heroin (183) and other unknown substances (136). Patrick also experiences a mind-altering sensation, though he does so through jazz: while he is "concentré devant la caisse claire, devant les deux cymbales, devant le tom basse, [Patrick] souriait dans une véritable ivresse intérieure" (82). Playing jazz induces drunkenness, with or without substance abuse; this drunkenness, in turn, creates distance from reality and offers temporary escape.

L'Occupation américaine shows that escape can have noxious, self-destructive effects. Rydell spends much of his time in a drugged haze. Marie-José finds herself alienated from her family, Patrick, and with his death, from Wilbur, leading to her own death. And while Patrick does not harm himself like Rydell and Marie-José, he also becomes troubled and alone. Once the American GIs leave, Patrick continues the path of

[80] Patrick justifies his interest in jazz as "Moi, je veux m'exprimer moi" (162).

isolation that jazz began by also leaving Meung, his family, and his friends. He ends in Ara, a remote city in India that is far from American influence. In an ironic turn, with this move, Patrick's life trajectory illustrates how potent jazz and American influence truly are. Patrick would not have gone to Ara had it not been for his desire to find distance from America and to alienate himself yet again, this time from his parents, his hometown, and from the music and culture that led him to begin his journey of self-discovery. Americanism is thus also subtly present in Ara because it is so crucial to Patrick's motivations in living there; by thinking of America, Patrick introduces it to his new locale.

Patrick's departure for India and his renunciation of jazz reflect Quignard's ambivalent gaze on American influence. Bruno Thibault argues that "on reconnaît dans le malaise de Patrick l'expérience ambiguë de la fascination, faite d'attirance et de répulsion. On y reconnaît d'autre part la puissance du désir mimétique, avec la mauvaise conscience qui s'ensuit" (Thibault 119). Patrick's experience with jazz is as complex as the genre itself and its effects on society. Fascination, freedom, repulsion, and destruction are present as consequences of jazz, showing how jazz is at once freedom and constraint, positive and negative. They also follow Patrick's development from initial enthrallment to disenchantment with jazz and all things American.

VI. Freedom through distance and disenchantment

Patrick comes to understand that Americanism is not always positive. This realization inspires him to reflection and eventually disdain, leading to a complete disillusionment with Americanism. As he grows more familiar with the new and tantalizing American world through his participation in the jazz group and the friendships he subsequently makes, Patrick discovers its weakness: superficiality. He observes that

> Les âmes étaient en effet devenues … des pauvres collages d'apparences, de comics, de séquences de films, de pochettes de disques, de réclames… Ce monde ne se rassemblait jamais. Monde dans lequel il n'était pas question de vivre puisqu'il s'agissait d'y mourir et d'en étendre la somnolence pour accroître l'omnipotence qui assure le profit (120-1).

The more Patrick grows implicated in the American GIs' world, the more it becomes shallow to him, driven by profit and material acquisition. Even the objects that had once been a source of fascination now repulse him. Patrick now sees as frivolous the consumerism that had at first attracted him, revealing a paradox in his personal development. At first, American materiality seduces Patrick: he and Marie-José fumble through American trash cans for remnants of items; Patrick's jazz improvement and learning is led by a consumeristic approach through the systematic acquisition of more and more drums to complete his set; Patrick acquires girls for enjoyment but specifically avoids attachment. Explaining to Marie-José, Patrick states that "je ne veux pas être attaché. Le mot 'avec' est ce que je hais le plus" (204). But in the end, experiencing consumerism from an outsider's and an insider's perspective, Patrick grows distant and disillusioned.

Patrick's dissatisfaction with Americanism also leads him to re-evaluate his relationships and ideals. He rejects Marie-José once and for all, no longer because he favors the American Trudy (though at one point, this is the case), but because Patrick comes to view American culture and all who partake in it as literal trash. Consumerism revolves around the acquisition of material objects; as new ones are acquired the old ones are discarded and lose their value. Because this novel and Patrick's experience create such a strong association between American culture and material acquisition, Patrick equates Americanism with superficiality. Since all products are eventually

replaced with newer, more desirable ones, all the artifacts that make up American culture, in Patrick's understanding of it, lose their worth. He recognizes that "la civilisation américaine entassait un si grand nombre de gadgets périmés que la déesse de ce monde lui paraissait commencer à rassembler … à un grand entrepôt de carcasses de voitures et d'instruments dépareillés" (120). The seeds of anti-Americanization are sown in Patrick's mind.

Patrick eventually extends his disdain for consumeristic culture to those who love it, as their values are no less superficial. He thus rejects Trudy, whom he comes to find silly, and Marie-José too, because she reveres America until the end and looks toward it for hope of salvation from her current life. To Patrick, Marie-José's naïveté and Americophilia represent the shallowness he comes to scorn. In this way, Patrick's implication with jazz leads him to a double resistance, first against his familiar traditions and family, and then, with his newfound autonomy, against the very culture that he had once found so inspiring. Due to his disillusion with Americanism, Patrick ultimately rejects even jazz and after he leaves Meung, "de sa vie, il ne fit plus jamais de musique" (202). Instead, he moves to rural India, choosing a geographic area relatively untouched by American cultural and military imperialism. Through jazz, Patrick learns and expresses his autonomy in Meung; he then practices this independence by renouncing jazz and the Americanization it promotes. It is a cycle of resistance and soul-searching.

Lastly, Patrick's renunciation of all things American is a way to question the effects of cultural change over time. The tensions between the Americans and the French, between jazz and classical music, exemplify the tension between modernism and nostalgia. Thibault notes that in this novel, "le passéisme et le modernisme apparaissent comme deux attitudes fausses, trompeuses, qui ne font que traduire le

malaise contemporain" (120). As a solution, Quignard's novel offers a celebration of the present, the "temps vivant" that is a "temps tendu… où l'attachement et l'arrachement au passé se combattent sans cesse" (120). Though Patrick renounces jazz, this solution is ironically reminiscent of it: somewhat chaotic, it is founded in the past but reveres the present moment through the interaction – the swing – between multiple time periods.

In the end, the GIs leave but their impact on Meung is lasting. As the troops depart, the narrator remarks that "ils partaient. Ainsi il se trouvait que les *US* rentraient au *home*. Mais à vrai dire, le *home* était devenu le monde entier. Ce qu'ils avaient fait au Japon, ils l'avaient fait ici" (209). Through their presence and influence, the American troops transform France, as they transform the whole world. But in France, they do not do so through military conquest but through spreading cultural values, promulgated by jazz. *L'Occupation américaine* illustrates an ambivalent attitude toward jazz, neither entirely good nor completely bad, freedom to some and menace to others.

VII. Cultural resistance and moving rhythms: jazz in words

Quignard's image of jazz is above all based upon jazz as a social and cultural construct. Quignard writes little about the music itself that so fascinates and inspires Patrick, favoring instead its associations and effects. Jazz in *L'Occupation américaine*[81] is based upon a view of it as an American genre that is above all *alive* ("vivant"), both physically and figuratively (52). Moreover, Quignard opposes jazz with classical music, which seems pretentious and staid to Patrick, who views jazz as "l'exact contraire de la contention et de la prétention des concerts de musique classique" (52). The contrast between jazz and classical music is even more prominent because they belong to

[81] And by extension, Patrick's jazz, because he takes jazz as his own, is haunted, obsessed, inspired by it, and temporarily re-orients his life around it.

different realms, with jazz the music of youth[82] and classical the music of parents and tradition.

By emphasizing concepts over formal elements, Quignard's jazz writing is an example of what Aude Locatelli terms *écriture analytique*. This is a type of jazz writing that "privilégie la modalité à proprement parler référentielle," that is, exploring and interpreting jazz through musical and conceptual references rather than through stylistic imitation (Locatelli 207). She contrasts this writing with its counterpart, *écriture mimétique*, or writing that imitates jazz descriptively or metaphorically in a visual, structural, or audible way. There are instances of écriture mimétique in *L'Occupation américaine*, but they are few, which makes them even more notable. Instead, jazz is most remarkable in this novel for what it represents as a new American music and the resistance it inspires.

Consequently, jazz has a dual role. On one hand, it represents American culture and all the modernity and consumerism that it entails in French eyes. At the same time, jazz takes on spiritual, philosophical, even religious importance. Surrounded by and caught between adolescence and maturity, Frenchness and Americanism, capitalism and communism, Patrick and Marie-José explore them all but they do not fully adhere to any of these categories or ideologies. Further, as they grow and as the novel develops, the two teens separate themselves from the institutions and bonds that had previously given meaning to their lives: church, school, and their mutual friendship. Without these, they confront the world's absurdity, in existentialist terms. Their friendship with jazz pianist Rydell embodies this conflict; in a fit of drugs, Rydell often philosophizes on the meaning of life and how to live it, with existentialist leanings. Similarly to Antoine

[82] During a jazz concert early in the novel, the narrator notes that "la salle était aussitôt pleine de lycéens, les cartables entassés sur les tables" (75). In contrast, Dr. Carrion repeatedly encourages Patrick toward classical rather than jazz music (Quignard 150, 162).

Roquentin in Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée*, for Rydell too, creativity and jazz are among the few ways of escaping the despair of life's absurdity. Sartre's Roquentin is a single man and writer in his thirties, whose daily experience is dominated by his profound distance from and disenchantment with society and life itself. *La Nausée* details Roquentin's experiences and musings on existence, his trouble to find meaning in life, and the cure for his resulting existential melancholy: art and creativity, including jazz[83]. Similarly, Rydell declares that "tout est perdu. Tout est égaré comme la goutte d'eau dans la nappe immense de la mer," a statement on the absurdity of life and all that makes it up (119). For Rydell, drugs, sex, drinking, and art feed consciousness and presence, much like art and creativity aid Roquentin. In both cases, jazz becomes a method of personal and cultural gratification and resistance.

Quignard incorporates two important structural and technical jazz techniques in his novel: fragmentation and rhythm. Fragmentation is most exemplified through Quignard's use of a unique narrative voice. It is a sign of his literary time, a nod to the author's awareness of fragmentation in contemporary literature[84]. In *L'Occupation américaine*, fragmentation is most noticeable in what Jean-Louis Pautrot calls the distance in the "ton et [l]'espace entre la voix narrative et le récit" (Pautrot, "Fragmentation" 253). Quignard's novel mixes historic and literary timelines as the events are situated both in terms of world history and in terms of the novel's development. For example, the novel's setting is situated in historic terms:

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[83] It must be noted that Rydell is also a failed character in that while he plays jazz well, he shows no ambition in education or work, and spends most of his time under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Nevertheless – or perhaps because of this, since his substance abuse directly results from his philosophical leanings – Rydell's philosophical influence on Marie-José and Patrick is considerable and provocative (Thibault 119).

[84] Quignard's *Une gêne technique à l'égard des fragments* (1986, revised in 2005) in particular discusses his opinions on fragments in literature, from Jean de la Bruyère to Mallarmé and Blanchot (as discussed in Jean-Louis Pautrot's "La fragmentation romanesque chez Pascal Quignard" (251)).

> C'est à Meung, le 15 juin 1429, sous l'occupation anglaise, que Jeanne d'Arc reprit le pont à l'armée ennemie. C'est à Meung, le 17 juillet 1959, sous l'occupation américaine, qu'un homme désira soudain la mort de la femme qu'il aimait. C'était le fils du vétérinaire. Il s'appelait Patrick Carrion. Il avait dix-huit ans. Il était enfant unique. Il était né en 1941 sous l'occupation allemande. En 1943, les Allemands avaient réquisitionné le premier étage de la maison familiale (10-11).

This opening sequence begins with a historic event, Joan of Arc's presence and actions in this town. Maintaining the same observant tone and the same date-oriented formulation, the narrator continues, introducing the novel's protagonist and his situation, as if his existence and background were equally historic and true as Joan of Arc's actions. This narrative approach links the historic to the literary while it simultaneously disrupts the continuity of both the historic and the literary *récits*.

Quignard also relies on jazz rhythms to inform his writing style at key moments. One such occasion is when Patrick first hears jazz performed live, on the American base. It is the opening scene of the second section, *Le Royaume*, after American GIs save Patrick and he awakens at their base:

> Voir jouer du jazz fut une illumination. Il avait déjà entendu cette musique mais la découvrir improvisée, quotidienne, vivante, fut pour Patrick une expérience si extraordinaire qu'elle lui parut incommunicable. Du moins ne parvint-il pas à l'exprimer à Marie-José. C'était l'exact contraire de la contention et de la prétention des concerts de musique classique qu'il avait pu entendre à Orléans. Patrick n'avait jamais imaginé que la musique pût être cela : une tristesse devenue corps ; un lien immédiat associant sur-le-champ ceux qui jouaient à ceux qui écoutaient comme s'ils formaient un seul corps ;

> une façon de respirer et de mouvoir tous ses membres ; une possibilité de prendre au mot le hasard d'un instant et de le ressentir de la tête aux pieds ; une façon de vivre plus intense.
>
> Tous ceux qui écoutaient s'accordaient au même rythme immédiatement. Tous se perdaient dans l'autre. C'était une solidarité aussi subite que bouleversante. C'était un véritable lien social, sans discours, sans intérêt, comme une tribu des premiers âges. Chacun croyait retrouver un chant qui remontait de l'aube (52).

In this excerpt, Quignard paints a portrait of what jazz is and what it means to Patrick. Its singularity and meaning are not in its musical elements but its physical effects: corporeality, breath, movement, intensity. In music, rhythm drives all these elements, underscoring physicality.

The writing style of these two paragraphs also imitates jazz rhythm. Throughout *L'Occupation américaine*, the writing style is composed primarily of relatively short, punchy lines followed by a longer descriptive one. This style is particularly common during episodes of observation when the narrator adopts a tone of historic récit. For example: "Elle s'appelait Marie-José Vire. C'était la fille du quincaillier-épicier de Meung. Le père Vire avait cinq filles. Sa femme l'avait quitté sans le prévenir, sans même laisser un mot, une nuit, après la guerre, en 1947" (11-12). Another instance of this compact style is when the children explore the American base's trash: "Patrick se précipita vers les grandes poubelles de fer. Il fouilla dans la hâte. Le lendemain matin, il communiqua à Marie-José son excitation. Ils allaient avoir dix ans. Les troupes américaines envahissaient Pyongyang. Les troupes chinoises envahissaient le Tibet. Les troupes françaises s'emparaient de Hoa-Binh. Marie-José ordonna que le lendemain il vint la

retrouver sur le banc de la muette" (19). Here, the narrator mixes short, observant sentences with a final longer one, creating a unique, quickly-moving rhythm.

In contrast, when Patrick first sees a jazz gig in the excerpt cited above, the rhythm disrupts his life and the writing style in the description of Patrick's experience. The long, meandering and multi-part sentence that describes what jazz is for Patrick dominates the paragraph that describes his jazz initiation. The frequent use of the sound "s" imitates the cymbal of a jazz piece (emphasis mine):

> une tristesse devenue corps ; un lien immédiat associant sur-le-champ ceux qui jouaient à ceux qui écoutaient comme s'ils formaient un seul corps ; une façon de respirer et de mouvoir tous ses membres … (52).

The repetition of the sibilant is like percussion giving order and rhythm to the phrasing and moving it forward through the phrase's progression. In the first part of this description (*tristesse devenue corps*), the absence of an "s" at the end of the expression creates a poetic pause that is missing in the other fragments; it underscores the importance of the word "corps," an importance that is further underlined by its repetition in the same, ultimate position in the following fragment. The same imitation of jazz rhythm is repeated, fittingly, in the second paragraph when the narrator notes how life-changing this experience is for Patrick (emphasis mine): "C'était une solidarité aussi subite que bouleversante" (52). This sentence's stylistic sonic repetition emphasizes the jazz rhythm it evokes.

The description of Patrick's initial exposure to live jazz also recalls jazz writing in the length of its sentences. The first sentence is observant and descriptive while the second introduces a more fluid and lyric style that mirrors jazz improvisation ("Il avait déjà entendu cette musique mais la découvrir improvisée, quotidienne, vivante, fut pour Patrick une expérience si extraordinaire qu'elle lui parut incommunicable"). The fact

that this music is "incommunicable" for Patrick and Marie-José, introducing jazz as an initial break between the two friends, is mirrored with a return to the blunt style of life outside jazz. The meandering style does not return until two sentences later, with a thematic and stylistic return to jazz music after contrasting it with traditional, "pretentious" classical music.

Lastly, Patrick himself feels rhythm is crucial. He is "obsédé de rythmes de jazz" (122), reflected in his desire and quest to become a jazz drummer himself. In jazz, rhythm is most commonly synonymous with swing, which emphasizes the music's lively nature; swing's syncopation and the variety in rhythm give the illusion of active, forward drive that pushes through the song (McCalla 68). Because Patrick is so intrigued by jazz's liveliness and energy, it is fitting that rhythm should be what most interests him as he pushes into adolescence and adulthood.

By imitating the jazz principles that are most pertinent and impressive to Patrick, Quignard emphasizes their existence and their importance. And, by incorporating jazz elements in the writing and narrating style, the novel imitates jazz's influence toward change in Patrick's life. Jazz gives new order and substance to Patrick, just like the imitation of jazz effects does to the very sentences that describe them.

L'Occupation américaine illustrates how jazz, at heart a musical genre, can take on political importance and symbolism with a variety of effects on the people and societies it touches. It is as much a cultural occupation as it is a military one, with jazz becoming a meaningful tool of soft power, illustrated here in both its power and disillusion. Jazz brings people together across cultures, but also divides them by race, values, politics, and personal preferences. Though ideology plays a part in the public's perception and reaction to jazz, its influence surpasses political and philosophical conceptions. Because jazz in *L'Occupation américaine* affects individuals like Patrick as

well as the town's society, it becomes what each individual wants it to be. Jazz is a broad genre so perception is crucial, and *L'Occupation américaine* illustrates this phenomenon: for all, jazz is a symbol of Americanization; for Patrick, jazz and Americanization become a means of freedom, helping him assume personal individuality against his parents' and eventually society's expectations; for the Communists of Meung and surrounding towns, Americanization becomes an evil to fight against; for Marie-José, it is hope of a future; for the town's traditionalists, Americanization (and by extension, jazz) poses a threat to tradition, the status quo, and a stable future.

One thing, though, is certain: America and the jazz that it brought threaten what the French have known. As Pierre Rigoulot explains, "tous voient en l'Amérique ce qui détourne de la tradition" (78). In Quignard's novel, jazz and the Americanization that it symbolizes are a means of change, freedom and danger, an illumination and an ugliness that show the wide and strong reach of American music and culture.

CHAPTER 5: *Une Résistance Improvisée*: Creating Connections through Jazz in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*

Maximin's 1981 novel *L'Isolé soleil* presents French Antillean decolonization and the Antilleans' quest for independence as cultural and political pursuits. Oral tradition figures prominently in the novel's content and style, with multiple references to and depictions of orally transmitted culture including prayers, proverbs, stories, and songs. Women's voices and experiences are particularly important; Maximin shows them as the prime transmitters of oral culture. Telling the story of how the French Antilles and especially black Guadeloupeans fought for freedom, equality, and respect, *L'Isolé soleil* presents an Antillean historiography with a unique emphasis on culture and daily life. It intersperses stories from different time periods, notably late-18th and early-19th-century slave revolts, Antillean departmentalization of the 1940s, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s that was primarily in the United States but, as Maximin shows, had echoes in Guadeloupe where his characters explore questions of racial identity and meet African American political figure Angela Davis[85].

In this novel, the arts, especially literature and music, are central in creating communities and circulating ideas and ideologies across time, space, and culture. Through music and literary, epistolary exchanges, Maximin maps socio-political tensions throughout the black diaspora, on both sides of the Atlantic. Jazz specifically holds a privileged position; Maximin's jazz is part of a wider musical scene in the French

[85] Angela Davis is a political activist and academic especially known for her work on black rights and women's rights. She is a former member of the Communist party and was also involved with the Black Panther movement during the American Civil Rights movement. Notably, Davis visited Cuba and Guadeloupe in August 1969, where her communist leanings caused her and her travel-mates problems with French authorities. Gerty Archimède helped her, inspiring certain characters and relationships depicted in *L'Isolé soleil*.

Antilles and in Paris, and interpretations of formal jazz elements emphasize the pain and the solidarity that define Antillean experience. In this musical context, jazz brings together black Antilleans from across the diaspora on both sides of the Atlantic, in Paris and the Antilles. Jazz offers a method of self-expression and a way to forge community, constructing black Antillean identities – male, female, slave, free – in the process.

L'Isolé soleil offers many discussions and reflections on identity, especially in the black diaspora and the French Antilles. The main characters discuss important artistic and political movements of their time, methods of establishing and expressing identity: assimilation, négritude, and creolization.

Assimilation refers to the process through which black Antilleans acquire cultural and political respect and equality by identifying with and conforming to the ways and traditions of their French colonizers. Speaking French rather than Creole, celebrating French holidays, and frequenting French schools – including Parisian ones – are examples of assimilation. It is controversial because arguably, assimilation is a whitewashing of local black culture and thus a cultural extension of colonialism. At the same time, within the framework of colonialism, assimilation can afford political, social, and economic advantages to those who partake in it.

Négritude is a concept forged by the "Sainte Trinité" of Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas (François 15). The word is attributed to Césaire, first used in *L'Étudiant noir* in 1935 and then in 1939 in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Originally defined as "l'ensemble des valeurs culturelles noires," négritude has many variable components. It places important emphasis on rhythm, which Senghor says is born in emotion[86]. Négritude also extends to attitude, described in Lylian

[86] "Le rythme, qui naît de l'émotion, engendre à son tour l'émotion," in *Ethiopiques*, cited in Kesteloot 122.

Kesteloot's words as "la négritude de Senghor …[comme] refus de se laisser assimiler, [et] affirmation de soi" (Kesteloot 123). Négritude aims toward a universal dignity, based in the "reconnaissance du fait d'être noir et de ce que cela implique de souffrances et d'humiliations passées et présentes" (François 15). Acknowledging the injustices that black people have faced, particularly with slavery and colonialism, négritude inspires a recognition and affirmation of black culture, particularly in relation to its African roots.

Négritude has links to leftist, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and communist ideologies (all of which are on display to some extent in *L'Isolé soleil*), but it is above all artistic, led first and foremost by writers and poets (Delas 47). Resulting both from its origins as cultural values and its promulgation by artists, négritude implies action, creation, and a cultural, even anthropological representation of traditions and cultural symbols (François 16). Further, Césaire breaks from Senghor's biological conception of négritude, extending this philosophy to include an "aspect culturel et la solidarité" (François 16). In its themes as well as in its interpretation and even imitation of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier, L'Isolé soleil* can be inscribed in the literary tradition of négritude even though it ultimately critiques and surpasses it.

In contrast, creolization centers around plurality. In their 1989 text *Éloge de la créolité*, authors Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant define Creoleness as "the *interactional or transactional aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (87, emphasis original) and it privileges orality (95). More simply, creolization is creating "une communauté antillaise avec toutes ces composantes" (Mpoyi-Buatu 42). By exploring cultural mixing and the importance of a non-assimilationist and pluralist approach to identity, *L'Isolé soleil* anticipates the concepts behind *Éloge de la créolité,*

published eight years later. Notably, it is through music and a critical eye toward négritude – while still acknowledging the deep influence of this philosophy – that Maximin's novel highlights the creolization upon which Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant expand in their 1989 essay.

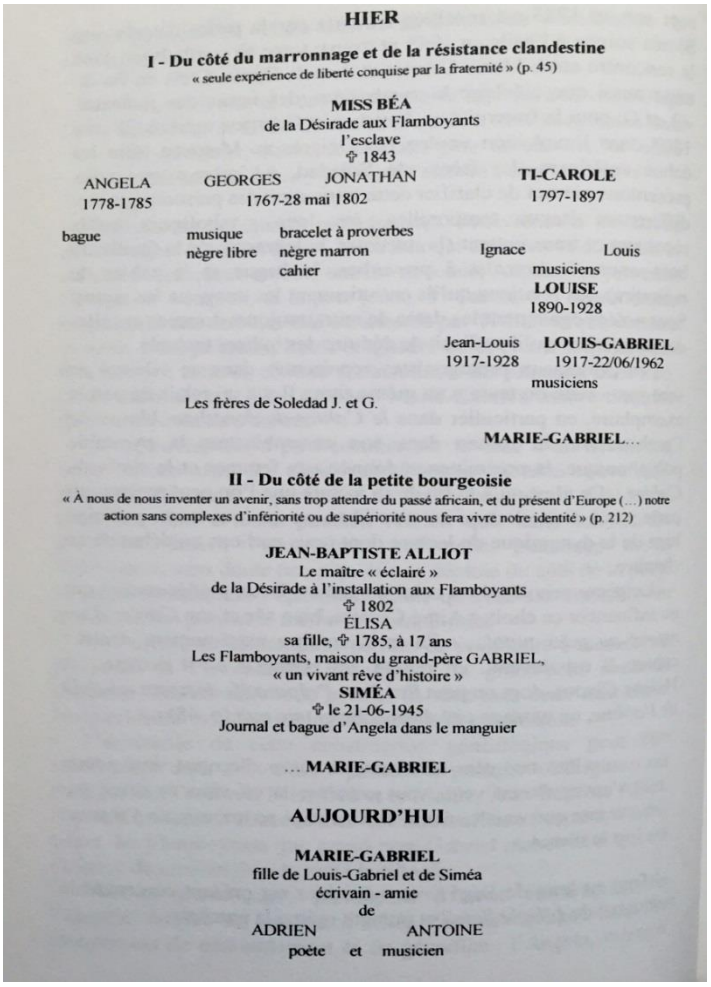
In *L'Isolé soleil*, creolization extends to jazz, which resembles a creole music because it brings together the histories and musical influences of multiple cultures and geographies, from African drumming to American blues. In *L'Isolé soleil*, the connections that jazz enables between the people and communities from which it comes and which it unites allow the characters to participate in resistance through their music-making and shared ideologies.

Ultimately, *L'Isolé soleil* is also about creation. Within the novel, the characters consciously and carefully discuss creation in many forms: country, identity, music, and written works. In the process, Maximin's novel creates a historiography of the French Antilles, showing the histories of black Antilleans in a way that is influenced by négritude, creolization, and with a drive for non-assimilation in the quest for identity and freedom.

I. *L'Isolé soleil*: an Antillean historiography

L'Isolé soleil is notoriously difficult to summarize because its plot is complex and follows a multitude of characters across generations. Christiane Chalet-Achour describes *L'Isolé soleil* as "délicat, car il n'offre pas une intrigue classique mais un entrecroisement de voix qui tisse le sens d'un regard sur les Antilles aujourd'hui" (*Trilogie* 35). From the turn of the eighteenth century through the twentieth, the novel follows Guadeloupe's search for independence and freedom that leads, instead, to departmentalization. The novel's main characters are Marie-Gabriel, Adrien, and Antoine, who correspond in the novel's present-day time period through letters as each

focuses on his or her own literary aspirations and projects. *L'Isolé soleil* reflects – though is not the same as – Marie-Gabriel's writing project, which aims to recount the Antilles' history and path to independence through journals, notebooks, and music. This path covers two centuries and the (hi)stories of multiple individuals. The following tree[87] shows the relationships of the novel's main characters:



The correspondence between Marie-Gabriel and Adrien forms the heart of the novel, but their friends Eve and Antoine add their own reflections on writing and history. Together, they create an international cast: Marie-Gabriel and Antoine are in Guadeloupe, Adrien is in Paris, and Eve spent time in Algeria. The novel is divided into six sections: 1) Désirades, 2) Le Cahier de Jonathan, 3) L'Isolé soleil, 4) Le Journal de

[87] From Chaulet-Achour *Trilogie* 40.

Siméa (Paris, 1939), 5) L'Air de la mère, and 6) L'Exil s'en va ainsi. Each section focuses primarily on a different time period and part of the story, except sections 1, 3, and 6, which are comprised of the letters between the main characters.

L'Isolé soleil centers around three important moments in Guadeloupean history. The first is the revolt of 1802. The earlier French Revolution inspired this uprising in which African slaves and freed ex-slaves revolted against the largely white and wealthy ruling classes. The rebellion was bloody and ultimately unsuccessful, as Napoleonic France succeeded in re-instating slavery. The stories of enslaved siss Béa, her sons Georges and Jonathan, and daughters Angela and Ti-Carole illustrate the violence and racism of this time.

The novel then centers on the World War II era and Guadeloupean departmentalization immediately afterward in 1946. Maximin shows this time through the eyes of Siméa, who lives in Paris in the late 1930s, where she has a white French lover, the architect Ariel. When Siméa becomes pregnant, Ariel and Siméa's Guadeloupean mother conspire to drug her and trick her into a forced abortion. Ultimately, Siméa returns to Guadeloupe, where she meets musician Louis-Gabriel and dies in childbirth with his daughter, Marie-Gabriel.

The novel's final important event is the 1962 crash of a Boeing aircraft in Guadeloupe. Caused by bad weather, this crash becomes central to Marie-Gabriel because her father died in it, together with his revolution-inspiring songs. These characters and their accounts are fictional, but the events are all historically accurate.

More important than what the novel says, though, is what it does. Maximin's work is a sonic historiography that remembers and re-writes the past by exploring and imitating music. It is a text in which memory, rhythm, and narrativity are central while exploring the events that happened and how they sounded. The character Adrien, a

scholar and writer, writes to Marie-Gabriel that his own objective in his research on Antillean history and the revolt of 1802 is to determine "quel chant d'amour a-t-il [Delgrès[88]] bien pu jouer sur son violon en attendant l'assaut final?" (Maximin 97). Music is central both in the novel and in the characters' lives and culture.

L'Isolé soleil is part of a rich tradition of French Antillean historiographies – texts, both nonfiction and fictionalized, that depict the region's history. Laurent Dubois gives a detailed analysis of the French Antillean historiography in his article "History's Quarrel: The Future of the Past in the French Caribbean"[89]. From the beginnings of colonial presence in the region to the present day, many texts have recounted the history of the French Antilles and the struggles of their people; *L'Isolé soleil* is one of these, tracing the French Antilleans' quest for freedom and equality. Early historiographic texts were frequently written from the white elite or colonizer's perspective. One of the first of these works is Charles de Rochefort's 1658 *Histoire naturelle et morale des Antilles et de l'Amérique*, which describes the beginnings of French settlement in the region. Jean-Baptiste du Tertre's *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François* (1667-71) provides a historic overview of Martinique and Guadeloupe, which itself inspired Father Pierre Labat's 1722 work *Voyage aux îles d'Amérique*. The early-19th-century revolutionary era that Maximin illustrates in the first half of his novel is described in Auguste Lacour's multi-volume *Histoire de la Guadeloupe* (1855-58), notable for the author's incorporation of personal experience and interviews with those who lived

[88] Louis Delgrès (1766-1802) was a mixed-race (*mulâtre)* leader of the Guadeloupean resistance against Napoleonic forces that reinstated slavery in the French Antilles in 1802. Delgrès died fighting against the French at the Battle of Matouba in Guadeloupe on May 28, 1802, in a battle that *L'Isolé soleil* shows in the section entitled *Le cahier de Jonathan.*

[89] In this article, Dubois discusses the extensive history of historiographic texts in and about the Antilles, dating from the 17th century to the present day. Most of the works to which he refers are historical overviews and non-fiction texts, though he also references works like *L'Isolé soleil* and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992).

during the revolution (Dubois 214). But this work, like the others referenced here, is written by and from the viewpoint of the colonizer.

In the second half of the twentieth century, French Antillean historiographies further incorporate the local, black, and in some cases, slave voice. For example, Gabriel Debien's notable *Les Esclaves des Antilles françaises* (1974) discusses the history and experience of black slaves in the French Caribbean. Around this time and in the 1980s, Martinican writer and intellectual Edouard Glissant (particularly with his highly influential 1981 *Le discours antillais*) strove to extend historiography to a social and geographic approach that writes "a history rooted in the topography of the islands, in the daily struggles and realities played out in that topography" (Dubois 214). With its multitude of references to Antillean geography, nature, and history, Maximin's novel illustrates this approach that surpasses a summary of events. Instead, it depicts key historical moments and daily life in the region from the local, colonized (and black) perspective.

The central quest for freedom and equality that Maximin illustrates mirrors the region's path toward departmentalization because Maximin shows how the fight for freedom was simultaneously intensely political, social, and personal. As citizens and residents of a French *département*, the French Antilleans remain under the French flag and rule. Moreover, while race is not to be singled out in the name of *égalité* and *fraternité* in the French Republic, Antilleans have still felt they are viewed and treated differently than citizens in Metropolitan France. Adlai Murdoch explains these mixed effects of departmentalization, observing that "the political control and cultural marginalization which had historically been the bane and the defining sign of the region were effectively maintained, while at the same time, the appearance of equality and parity provided a palliative to colonial concerns" (Murdoch 82). In this way,

departmentalization provided progress with no solution. Maximin's novel, written four decades after departmentalization, supports this argument by showing that in the French Antilles, race cannot be discounted and it cannot be ignored.

The novel's historiography emphasizes the arts, in both form and content. Nick Nesbitt describes *L'Isolé soleil*'s account as one where poetry and history cohabit; both jazz and the novel itself "pratiquent tous les deux une forme vernaculaire d'historiographie qui explore le passé pour mieux faire évoluer le futur" (Nesbitt 77). The novel traces the development of black Antillean identity throughout Guadeloupean history from the early 1800s until the novel's writing in the 20th century. It also echoes the goals of Martinican writers of historiography. Dubois explains that "the goal of the criticism of Martinican 'historians' is … to propose that it is from outside this discipline, particularly in theater and literature, that a history that is truly rooted in Martinique and therefore relevant for its present and future can be produced" (219). By writing a fictionalized history of the Antilles, Maximin fulfills Dubois's identified aim: Maximin is writing a history from the eyes of the colonized rather than the colonizer. As the format of choice, the novel gives freedom and latitude to explore and illustrate the different perspectives – in crucial events and in daily life – that have been ignored or given secondary status in many of the historical, non-fiction texts from the colonizer's perspective. For example, the letters that the characters exchange show their thought processes, their identity searching and construction, and the community they build across the Atlantic.

Similarly, the emphasis on women's experiences and perspectives gives greater say to previously ignored voices as the novel's female characters seek community and identity in their daily struggles. Maximin himself explains that it was his object to affirm "dès le départ… cette identité caribéenne, antillaise, cette identité guadeloupéenne

comme un fait, comme une réalité et non pas comme un questionnement, non pas comme une angoisse" (Mpoyi-Buatu 36). From nature to city, volcanic mountain to ocean, Guadeloupe to Paris to the United States, *L'Isolé soleil* follows black Antillean history.

Additionally, *L'Isolé soleil* highlights the actions of the revolutionaries and the slaves who fought for emancipation at the turn of the 19th century. By doing so, it presents the abolition of slavery in 1848 as the end to a long fight led by Caribbean slaves rather than as the result of goodwill on the part of French colonizers. The emphasis on the revolutionary period is "a way of focusing on the actions of the people of the Antilles rather than those of the French administration – a way of celebrating local heroes… [and] it also reflect[s] a historically-grounded understanding of the process of emancipation" (Dubois 225). By underscoring the experiences of black colonized locals rather than the white colonizers, as so many previous historiographic writers had done – including Lacour, who writes of many various French administrators in the Antilles but does not detail life and struggles for the black (ex)-slaves – Maximin's novel traces Antillean history through the culture that witnessed it. As a different type of text, Maximin also uses different sources: he recounts historical events, in part, through the incantations, poems, songs, and philosophical discussions that surrounded and inspired them, granting tradition and oral culture the same importance that historical documents hold to other historiographers.

The novel's characters have their own agenda in adopting a historiographic approach: self-possession and determination. Marie-Gabriel writes to Adrien in the 1960s that in Guadeloupe, "on ne trouve rien, puisqu'ils [les Français] continuent à nous confisquer notre passé dans l'espoir de maîtriser notre avenir" (Maximin 115). By writing her own version of Guadeloupean history, Marie-Gabriel counters the French

domination to which she alludes in her letter to Adrien. In writing a historiographic account of Guadeloupe, she takes ownership over her history and of that of her people to better own their future. Decades earlier, in another place and time, Marie-Gabriel's mother Siméa notes a similar collective need for identity and ownership in the early 1940s. She declares that "c'est à nous de nous inventer un avenir, sans trop attendre du passé africain, et du présent d'Europe. C'est très important: Je pense que *l'identification est l'ennemi de l'identité*…. Je suis nécessairement Antillaise, et je ne suis Guadeloupéenne que par hasard!" (Maximin 212). There is hope in this statement, and responsibility. Black Antilleans can find identity through their African past or through assimilation with present European influence. But in their words and actions, Siméa and Marie-Gabriel suggest an alternative, that one must instead emphasize Antillean individuality to build a successful future for her or his gender, race, and country in an independent and individual construction of identity and a rejection of assimilation to the French colonizers.

As an alternative historiography based on the experiences of black Antilleans, *L'Isolé soleil* describes the construction of an alternative identity. Heavily influenced by oral tradition, both the writing style and the content of *L'Isolé soleil* recall the stories and voices of the black Antilleans that it portrays through tales, proverbs, and music that stem from oral tradition, including jazz.

Oral and aural transmission are key to this novel, which Maximin often emphasizes by imitating musical styles in his writing. Rhythm, closely related to music and sound, is an important method of transmitting black culture (Munro "Listening" 396). The music to which Maximin alludes and which he imitates varies, but he frequently places emphasis on its oral and performative dimension. For instance, Maximin regularly references Antillean musical genres like biguine and gwoka, an

improvised and percussion-based Creole music that is linked to dance (Camal 395). His novel also presents an "imitation du procédé de créativité jazzistique dans l'historiographie: apprentissage des codes et des standards, maîtrise du matériel [et] mouvement créateur utilisant une culture orale pour infléchir le matériel de sa propre personnalité" (Nesbitt 7-8). Jazz enables connections that advance resistance in the search for freedom, and jazz especially allows the novel's characters to express and share black Antillean history across borders, continents, and time.

Instrumentation and references provide indicators of what jazz means in this novel. Jazz references reflect the times described in each section of the novel. In the 1940s, Louis-Gabriel plays the clarinet and saxophone, as does Antoine in the 1960s; both are melodic instruments in jazz. Siméa's 1939 experience features Coleman Hawkins, a predominantly swing saxophonist[90] while two decades later, Antoine plays free jazz in the 1960s. Rhythm is also a significant feature of Maximin's jazz, linking it to Antillean music. Across time periods and across geographical locations, Antillean drums and American and European instruments combine with current trends to create a contemporary, forward-moving music. These descriptions and references show Maximin's interpretation of jazz to be an amalgam of styles and influences. In that regard, it can be interpreted as a creole music.

The relationship between jazz and resistance in *L'Isolé soleil* is the subject of disagreement among scholars. Nick Nesbitt observes that jazz cannot be divorced from its revolutionary role, stating that "étant donné l'implication profonde du Jazz dans le contexte socio-historique de la communauté qui l'a produite, il est impossible d'éluder sa fonction historique de force révolutionnaire" (71). Jason Herbeck argues the

[90] Active between the early 1920s and late 1960s.

opposite, that "the revolutionary aspect of jazz is in many ways minimized – and necessarily so – in order to accentuate a more diverse expression of Caribbean identity" (165). I contend that there is truth in both statements: in the musical world of the Caribbean, there are many styles that express political positions or traditions and that exemplify the region's Creole identity. But among these multiple styles, jazz holds a privileged place; as an ever-developing music with symbolic meaning of freedom, community, and black self-determination, jazz enables resistance. As a relatively new style of music (especially during the time of departmentalization that Maximin depicts), developed by black musicians, and shared internationally and interculturally, jazz provides musicians and fans alike with a musical language that can also be a rallying call for change and a model for self-fulfillment. Indeed, rather than assimilate to existing styles, jazz musicians incorporate elements of these styles to create their own singular music, as evidenced in the many subgenres of jazz like bebop, free, latin, fusion, and others. Jazz allows musicians and fans to construct their own new and pluralistic identities.

II. Historical and cultural background

L'Isolé soleil draws heavily on historical figures and cultural elements. To understand the socio-political implications within this novel, it is important to recognize the intertexts, historical figures, and cultural values to which Maximin alludes and upon which he bases the development of his text.

IIa. Key historical figures in Antillean history and *L'Isolé soleil*

L'Isolé soleil references many Antillean heroes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of these is Toussaint Louverture, born Toussaint Bréda in 1743, and a leader of the Haitian Revolution. He was born a slave but was freed in 1776 at 33 years

old and eventually owned property and slaves himself. Louverture was a key figure in Haiti's early history, from the rebellion that began in 1791 to its independence from France in 1804. Louverture declared himself Governor-General for life in 1801, though he was forced to resign by Napoleon and died in prison after his deportation to France. He helped transform the rebellion into a revolutionary movement, leading the way to making Haiti an autonomous colony and a sovereign state in 1804, a year after Louverture's 1803 death. His successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, successfully led the Haitian rebellion to French defeat in 1803. In *L'Isolé soleil*, Toussaint Louverture inspires a character that bears the same name. Maximin's Louverture is a dissident of the 20th century, a mixed-race friend of musician Louis-Gabriel and passionate about poetry and Antillean freedom. Louverture is also an intertextual figure in *L'Isolé soleil* because he figures prominently in Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, itself an important reference in this novel.

Louis Delgrès is another important Antillean hero to Maximin's novel and to the events it describes. Born free but of mixed race, the Guadeloupean Delgrès fought for black freedom and against the Napoleonic French regime's reinstatement of slavery at the turn of the nineteenth century. Along with those he led, Delgrès died in a murder-suicide mission at the Battle of Matouba on May 28, 1802. Igniting gunpowder reserves when it became evident that they could not beat the French, Delgrès and his followers sought to kill themselves and as many French as possible in the process. *L'Isolé soleil* depicts a version of this battle and Delgrès is a hero for the black revolutionaries throughout the novel across all the time periods it depicts.

Maximin also frequently refers to Léon-Gontran Damas. Damas (1912-1978) was a French poet and politician from Guyane, though he was educated in Martinique and later in Paris. Together with Césaire and Senghor, Damas co-founded the literary journal

L'Étudiant noir in Paris, founding the négritude movement in mid-1930s France, though its influence extended across the black diaspora on both sides of the Atlantic. Damas also wrote jazz-inspired poetry, notably the volume *Pigments* (1937). In *L'Isolé soleil*, Damas and his works are frequent references for Siméa and her social group. Siméa's friend Toussaint remarks that "notre seul écrivain que j'aime vraiment c'est Damas et ses *Pigments*" due to his unique ability to understand and represent Antillean experience, especially with an emphasis on non-assimilation (Maximin 245). With this statement, Maximin's Toussaint alludes to anti-colonialist attitudes evident throughout *Pigments*. Bart Miller explains that

> The poetics of *Pigments* consists of adapting to colonialism through the racial identification of subject narrators who challenge assimilation into French culture. *Pigments* responds to colonial racism through a series of reactions in which poetic personae perform an initial adoption of behavior, adapting this behavior to their own idioms and then displaying an adaptness or independence from it (63).

Damas' poetry illustrates and explains his philosophy of non-assimilation as reaction to colonialism and the racism it inspires. In *L'Isolé soleil*, Damas, his work, and his ideology inform the characters' understanding of their world, how they share it and live within it, inspiring the words they write and the jazz they play.

Lastly, the novel's final pages welcome American political and civil rights activist Angela Davis to the Antilles, whose conversation with Marie-Gabriel centers around Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952). Their discussion strives to "mettre la passion de la négritude dans l'action modèle de Fanon" (Maximin 304). Davis inspires Marie-Gabriel to think outside the black-white racial dichotomy; Davis proclaims that "seule la dynamique de la rupture révolutionnaire peut faire évoluer" this simple, racial

opposition, a thought that Marie-Gabriel repeats in her own writing (Maximin 304). In this world and these interactions, there exists a deliberate and self-conscious drive toward rewriting norms and toward racial, social, and political reform, demonstrated in the characters themselves and in the many references to historical figures.

IIb. Music as symbolism

L'Isolé soleil shows a nuanced image of race and socio-cultural norms in the French Antillean context. The Antilles present a codified world, where norms and musical associations are different from those in France. For example, in France, the term *noir* encapsulates any element tied to black culture or experience, however vague; the term *musique noire* does not account for differences between origins and contexts in which a genre is played. In contrast, in the French Antilles, one's race indicates her or his socio-economic status; race and music thus take on social and political meaning. Maximin's novel illustrates in detail the differences between the races, particularly in the sections devoted to the nineteenth century. Here, white people are dominant French colonialists, black people are slaves, and mixed-race *mulâtres* are in between, neither black nor white, not enslaved but without all the freedom of whiteness; as one of Siméa's friends tells mixed-race Toussaint Louverture, "le marronnage n'est pas une question de degré de noirceur, en tout cas pas à notre époque" (241). The qualificative at the end of this statement, proclaimed in Paris in the early 1940s, implies that in the Antillean past, degrees of blackness defined *marronnage*. Maximin's Louverture is suggesting that in racially codified French Antillean society, whiteness implies success and wealth, perhaps even ownership of black slaves prior to abolition. In this context, race becomes socio-economic and political capital.

Antillean music reflects this race-based stratification; it is a statement of identity and politics. For instance, the origins and style of the biguine make it a symbol of French

imperialism because it combines African rhythms with European dance steps. Due to the European influence on the biguine, it has come to be associated with colonialism, so much so that négritude writers rejected the biguine in favor of drumming. In contrast, gwoka – a drum-based singing and dancing style – arose from the African slave trade, was practiced on plantations, and is "strongly infused with nationalist sentiments" (Camal 396). Gwoka was particularly associated with the separatist movement of the 1960s-1980s, the years leading to Maximin's writing of *L'Isolé soleil* and in which Marie-Gabriel writes. This history positions gwoka as a symbolic counter-genre to the biguine.

In French clubs, these different types of Antillean music mixed fluidly with each other and with others, like Cuban or Brazilian dances and jazz, even played by the same musicians. Louis-Gabriel, Siméa's lover and Marie-Gabriel's father, exemplifies this variety in his repertoire as a "saxophoniste [qui joue] jazz, biguines, et afro-cubain, selon les soirs et les pays" (Maximin 15). In France, all these styles are Caribbean, while in the French Antilles, they cohabit but each carries its own identity and politics. As Monique Desroches points out, at a time when the French Antilles "sont à définir leur identité culturelle, les traditions musicales apparaissent comme des points d'ancrage, des relais qui permettent un débat vers des avenues possibles de redéfinition de la société antillaise contemporaine" (49). If different types of black music are interchangeable in France, the differences between genres carry important implications in the French Caribbean.

Where can we locate jazz in this maelstrom of music and politics? Maximin declares that jazz is inherently freer than the Caribbean musics (*Les fruits du cyclone* 39). *L'Isolé soleil*'s depiction of jazz in relation to political and personal resistance puts this statement in practice. Free of the symbolism contained in French Antillean musics like biguine and gwoka, jazz brings novelty. And, especially during the late 1930s and

the 1960s that Maximin illustrates, American jazz musicians were using their art to gain political and cultural influence in the fight for civil rights. As a genre of music that emphasizes self-expression and that arises from oppression, jazz introduces a unique element of freedom.

Maximin's references to jazz in *L'Isolé soleil* emphasize the genre's cultural links to blackness and freedom in social conventions and politics. Maximin evokes two main jazz periods: the bebop era of the 1940s/1950s (especially Coleman Hawkins), and free jazz of the 1960s/1970s, especially the AACM[91] and its main group, the Art Ensemble of Chicago (Nesbitt 70). Jazz's political and cultural connotations of rebellion help it become a method of expressing values across borders and even continents. That the characters of *L'Isolé soleil*, especially the women, find common values with others in and from Europe and North America through jazz shows their shared culture and jazz's role in it. It portrays diasporic unity despite linguistic and cultural differences.

Jazz is central to liberation in Maximin's novel. In contrast to Antillean forms of music and dance, as Kathleen Gyssels observes, jazz and the blues from which it partially evolved were always "d'abord le témoignage émouvant d'un état d'âme et d'une condition existentielle, celle-là même de l'être-au-monde du Noir" (Gyssels 127). Jazz entertains a unique link with black identity and history, giving it the power "d'exprimer et de combattre 'la Solitude' et l'exclusion dictées par des critères de race et de classe" (Gyssels 127). When Antoine writes "la douce violence des Harlémicains … voilà l'ennemi qui fera évader nos amours insulaires!" he is aware of jazz's dual effect (Maximin 296). He understands that jazz is foreign and thus poses a threat to tradition,

[91] Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. This is an American non-profit organization, founded in Chicago in the 1960s and designed to promote jazz. It has historically supported many innovative and avant-garde musicians (AACM Chicago).

but it can also overcome boundaries, uniting people internationally in their shared black experience because it does not carry the symbolic weight of Antillean musics.

Jazz enables freedom through self-expression. Maximin's Louis-Gabriel explains how important this is to his experience of jazz, stating that:

> Quand je joue, je pense toujours à la liberté. Oh, attention, pas au grand sens politique, égalité, fraternité, tout ça ! … Moi, je reproche à toutes nos musiques antillaises d'être trop soumises aux caprices de la clientèle des danseurs. Il faut faire la musique pour elle-même. Et alors ceux qui l'aiment vraiment apprendront à chanter et à danser sur elle. C'est cette liberté que d'après le peu que je sais, nos cousins d'Amérique – on peut dire d'Harlémique ? – commencent à conquérir... Ça doit vous choquer d'entendre parler de liberté musicale dans une île occupée depuis quatre ans par les troupes de papa-Pétain (Maximin 189).

Louis-Gabriel understands jazz's liberating nature and how important freedom is to playing jazz well. In stating "il faut faire la musique pour elle-même," he makes two important propositions. Louis-Gabriel intimates that French Antillean music serves the dancers and their "caprices". As a result, it is not personal because it is played to the preferences of others. Instead, Louis-Gabriel argues that one should play music for its own sake. Further, by emphasizing the link to freedom, he posits jazz as a modern music. Where Antillean music leads to freedom through the body via dance, jazz leads to freedom through the mind and the music itself. In this context, through intellectual music, jazz leads to a modern form of emancipation and offers an alternative to the corporeal, dance-based Antillean musics.

Though he claims to distance himself from politics, the remainder of Louis-Gabriel's observations in this excerpt invariably tie jazz and freedom to political

circumstances. In calling America "Harlémique," Louis-Gabriel implies how important the Harlem Renaissance and its artists' works are to his perception and interpretation of freedom, especially underscoring creativity, identity, and expression in relation to race. He is also rejecting discrimination and social injustice; the term Harlem Renaissance draws a parallel between the black arts scene in Harlem and the European Renaissance. Louis-Gabriel further weaves the links between music and politics by pointing out that Siméa and her countrymates may be impressed by the concept of musical liberty because of their political situation as citizens of an occupied island.

And Siméa? Her response to Louis-Gabriel's suggestion is clear: "me choquer? Pas du tout. Article premier: La libération sera musicale ou ne sera pas" (189). Siméa's comment shows that personal (musical) and political freedom are intricately and inescapably tied to music and given the context of her statement, to jazz. In so doing, she politicizes the genre and underlines her own ties to jazz as she seeks freedom both as a black Antillean and as a woman.

III. Jazz, memory, and resistance *au féminin*

The female experience is at the center of *L'Isolé soleil*: those who tell the tales, share the memories, and remember Antillean history in both oral and written form are largely women. Miss Béa, Angela, Ti-Carole, Siméa, Marie-Gabriel are the spokeswomen and narrators of their cultures and times.

Across all the centuries and generations depicted, trauma and loss mark the women in *L'Isolé soleil*. Miss Béa loses multiple children; seven-year-old Angela loses her voice and is interned after she sees her father die in a boating accident[92]; Siméa is forced into an abortion then later dies in childbirth with Marie-Gabriel; and Marie-

[92] This is not the same Angela that was Miss Béa's daughter, who died at age 7. In a reference to Angela Davis, Maximin gives her name to multiple characters in the novel.

Gabriel loses both her mother in childbirth and her father in a plane crash. But in all this trauma, there is also artistic creativity. Little Angela only regains her voice to sing a lullaby[93] ("Avec quoi vas-tu chercher de l'eau / Chère Elise, chère Elise" (180)). Siméa finds solace and healing in jazz (157), and Marie-Gabriel turns to writing the historiographic work that parallels *L'Isolé soleil* itself. If women in this world are victims, their pain inspires art and creation; as Siméa notes, "tu sais dans la mémoire de ton corps que les seules révoltes justes sont celles porteuses de création" (173). By emphasizing women's roles here, especially in relation to their creativity which is intimately tied to their corporeality, Maximin's novel suggests that revolution is feminine. And, viewed in light of Maximin's observation in an interview that "c'est dans la création qu'on prouve qu'on existe," this revolution is not only creative, it is an affirmation of existence and agency – on the part of these characters both as French Antilleans and as women (Mpoyi-Buatu 36).

Miss Béa is the oldest main character in Maximin's novel and her body provides the link between memories of African origins and the future to which she gives birth. She is a visionary that benefits herself and those around her with her "mysterious" understanding of herbal remedies and an instinctual knowledge of what is occurring in the world around her (Maximin 35). Her closeness to nature is a gift from "La Grande-Mère Woyengi"[94] who gave to Miss Béa "le don de la vision et de guérison" (36). In exchange, Woyengi gives her neither power, wealth, nor children. And while she does defy Woyengi by giving birth to children, Miss Béa understands that they will not all survive because such is her destiny. Thus, when Miss Béa is "fécond[ée] par la forêt

[93] Angela's experience mirrors the use of the voice in Roach's and Lincoln's "Protest," discussed in Chapter 1. Maximin's Angela is overwhelmed and unable to communicate, and only music allows her to feel and interact with those around her.

[94] Woyengi is the Nigerian goddess who created the Earth. In referencing her, Miss Béa maintains her African origins and links.

marronne," she gives birth to Angela after only seven months, knowing that after seven years, Woyengi would take her back so Miss Béa can keep her gifts of vision and healing.

When the fateful day comes, Miss Béa quickly realizes what is happening. While out, she feels "une profonde douleur au ventre, et murmur[e] sourdement: 'Angela va mourir!'" (35). Tragically, Miss Béa's understanding of the event is right. When she and her son return home, they find Elisa – the girl in Miss Béa's care – "à genoux indemne sur la terrasse, tenant dans ses bras le corps violé et mutilé d'Angela" after a group of drunk white soldiers invaded the house. Thus, Miss Béa's maternity is denied. Her sons Jonathan and Georges survive, though they too die violently and before their mother. As with Angela, Miss Béa experiences a similar foreshadowing of her twin sons' impending deaths; seven years after Angela's death, when one day Miss Béa arrives "au gué de la rivière, elle ressentit une douleur terrible à son ventre. Elle sut alors que Georges et Jonathan allaient mourir ensemble aujourd'hui" (65). It is a twisted sort of mother's intuition, a connection between the natural, physical world and the supernatural that fulfills Miss Béa's destiny. She understands the world around her through her body.

Miss Béa preserves a transatlantic link that connects the Guadeloupean traditions to their earlier African counterparts. She becomes a healer of her people, relying on African knowledge and mysticism from the Ijo people in the Nigerian region, alluded to by her prayers to their goddess Woyengi. Miss Béa thus closely ties together two different geographies: blessed by African gods and impregnated by Antillean nature, she represents the tight connection between these two physical worlds and the Antillean culture they inspire. This connection manifests itself in a corporeal, visceral way as bodily pain, a symptom that suggests the relationship between Africa and the Antilles is troubled and full of pain as well. Moreover, Miss Béa's connecting the old world with the new, Africa with the Antilles, symbolizes the networks across the black

diaspora that the main characters of *L'Isolé soleil* create, and the creolization that is so influential on black Antillean identity in this novel.

If Miss Béa is destined to not have any power, her descendants have a different fate. Her son Georges is an influential musician. Through music – improvised and traditional – Georges spreads his culture and ideas, going on to inspire revolt before and during his early death. In the attack that kills Angela, Georges loses an ear. His injury is the consequence of his not defending against the invaders; Georges was only holding his violin, caught improvising "des mélodies à l'unisson des voix aiguës des paysannes, sur le rythme des tambours gros-ka" (35). Notably, what earned Georges his punishment was his musicianship, improvising melodies over a percussion accompaniment in a description that is uncannily similar in form, if not in substance, to the jazz that later generations would play. With this reference, Maximin alludes to the highly politicized and symbolic world of Antillean music, in which gros-ka is a revolutionary music of independence. The similarity in description between gwoka and jazz here suggests that jazz may be a successor to the earlier genre, ultimately taking on a similar role.

IIIa. Jazz and feminine corporeality

Corporeality and collective memory express the female experiences that dominate the novel's narration. The narrator of the *Cahier de Jonathan* repeats, at important and regular intervals, the desire "que ton ventre se souvienne que Miss Béa était toujours vivante et que Woyengi la Grande-Mère n'avait toujours pas rappelé à elle Ti-Carole qui eut [x][95] ans" (65, 67, 70). This formulation becomes a vamp, repeated to create the background for each scene within this series. A century later, Siméa also experiences her femininity through her suffering and her body; for Siméa, the vamp of

[95] The [x] represents Ti-Carole's age, which is different each time the phrase is repeated.

corporeality becomes more concrete as she finds healing to the sounds of jazz and dance, using her body to heal her soul.

Close ties between female experience and geography further emphasize how intimately these characters are connected to the physical word around them. Time is measured in and related to natural disasters[96], and displacement across the ocean and continents influences the characters' – particularly the women's – lives, though they never abandon Antillean influence. One of the most important places in the novel is Paris. It is a symbol of the colonizer, a place of suffering, of exchange, and of transition, a place where Siméa finds pain but also freedom through discovering the jazz that will follow her back home to Guadeloupe.

As the French capital, Paris is the administrative heart of French colonialism and Siméa equates it with pain and oppression. The opening lines of her journal state the violence she experiences in Paris: "Tout en déluge, en séisme et en raz-de-marée, le cyclone de 1928 vient de repasser onze ans après au pays de mon corps" when her lover and her mother plan an abortion so she does not have a mixed-race love child out of wedlock (123). Though she is in France, Siméa still understands her life and experiences in terms of nature and natural disasters. The pain she feels from her forced abortion is a flood, an earthquake, a hurricane, and her body is her nation. Siméa continues Miss Béa's corporeal interaction with the world around her. Moreover, with the imagery that describes Siméa's abortion and its painful effects on her, Maximin applies negative, tropical images of the 1928 hurricane that ravaged the Caribbean to Paris instead. At this difficult time of her life, Paris is intimately tied to her experience. Drugged, Siméa is

[96] For example, the *Cahier de Jonathan* writes that "la veille des élections du 22 août, un cyclone dévasta la Désirade et tout le nord de la Guadeloupe" (81). Louis-Gabriel loses his family and becomes a musician in a hurricane (87), and later, Siméa's abortion is like a hurricane as well, described as "la maison de mon ventre culbutée, son cœur éventré, mes rues encombrées de débris de toutes sortes, mes artères déracinées. Toute ma terre dévastée" (123).

"traversant Paris capitale de ma douleur bleue comme un orage dans cette saison d'enfer" (123). Paris is the capital of her country's colonizer, and it is the capital of Siméa's pain. Importantly, Siméa experiences her suffering in a poetic way; within this sentence, her description entails three poetic references: Paul Eluard and his 1926 poetry collection *Capitale de la douleur*; Eluard's 1929 surrealist poem "La terre est bleue comme une orange," which explores love and freedom; and Arthur Rimbaud's 1873 poem *Une saison en enfer*[97]. Together, these references underscore the topics with which Siméa is struggling, namely love, freedom, and pain. These are also the same poets whom Siméa decries later, when she has an awakening as a black woman, inspired by music (Maximin 151, 158).

Siméa names a chapter within her journal after this Eluard reference: "'E' comme *Capitale de la douleur*" (144). The expression *capitale de la douleur* references Eluard's collection about Paris and Eluard's wife Gala, who emotionally causes him to suffer and leaves him for another. Siméa lent Eluard's collection to Ariel, along with a copy of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* from the journal *Volontés* (Maximin 151). Of the two, Siméa tells Ariel that "nous allons pour la dernière fois nous jouer de la poésie. Je te laisse Eluard et je choisis Césaire; et nous allons jouer aux douze coups de minuit le final du plus bel amour que tu auras jamais connu" (151). For Siméa, Césaire is symbolic. In this moment, she and Ariel dance their final dance in which he is represented by Eluard and she by Césaire; in their dance, "une ville et une île vont échanger leurs dernières paroles et leurs dernières volontés" (152). The division between these two works underlines the differences of Siméa's and Ariel's respective

[97] Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer* influenced the surrealists to whom Siméa also alludes, including Eluard. Rimbaud is known for his critiques and revolt, particularly against society such as in his poem "A la musique," among many others. For example, Gérard Bayo discusses the critical aspect of Rimbaud's work in his *La Révolte d'Arthur Rimbaud*, Troyes: Libr. Bleue, 1995.

cultures, traditions, and choices during this break between the two former lovers and, by extension, their countries. Siméa returns to the Antilles with a renewed dedication to freedom following this dance that she describes as a "ridicule bataille entre le poète blanc de l'amour et le poète noir de la révolte" (152). In choosing Césaire, Siméa also symbolically rejects love and chooses resistance instead.

But even at this moment, as Siméa chooses Césaire over Eluard, the Antilles over France, she recognizes the shortcomings of Césaire's philosophies. During this evening that is a black female renaissance for her, Siméa tells Césaire "prends garde à toi, prends garde à moi, si je trouve ce soir chez toi une seule ligne d'excuse au Blanc… j'ai un peu peur d'ouvrir au hasard ton *Cahier*, je ne sais pas encore ce que tu sauves des femmes et des enfants" (151-52). She identifies that the *Cahier*, and négritude in general, do not give to the black female experience the attention they require.

Indeed, Siméa's pain and experience are uniquely female. She explores her femininity through art following "la trahison des hommes" (149), and finds community, healing, and self-expression in "les mélodies des blues et des boléros… la contrebasse et la conga… la plainte du chanteur-guajiro" (145). As a woman in pain, Siméa finds comfort in music and distance from her male artistic heroes. She tells them "vous les chanteurs cubains et les poètes antillais, vos corps d'hommes sont enfermés dans des paroles et des serments de stratèges amoureux, que seuls peuvent briser le rythme du jazz improvisé et celui de la folie douce ou furieuse des mots" (147). She lashes out at those she had once revered, including musicians and other artists, because they incarne male bias. Only jazz can transcend the sexual and experiential divide to provide healing and unity due to its ability to express emotion, love, and community. Decades later, Siméa's daughter Marie-Gabriel feels the same, writing about her friend Antoine that "quand il me joue de la clarinette basse, je comprends tout ce qu'il veut dire et même un

peu plus… la musique d'Antoine me sert de nid" (282-3). With this statement, Marie-Gabriel creates a sense of community with her mother that, ironically, only the reader knows about, as Marie-Gabriel and Siméa never spoke due to the mother's death in childbirth.

While Paris is a city of pain and suffering for black Antilleans like Siméa, as a cosmopolitan city it is also a positive place of exchange. It is here that Siméa finds jazz, which traveled there from the United States. Her friend Gerty Archimède, also a black woman from Guadeloupe, studies law in Paris before returning to the Antilles to work as a lawyer and activist. And in the 1960s, Antoine observes that "Paris devient un asile de la Great Black Music[98]!" (294). Jazz, and by association the black and American culture it represents, find a home in Paris. This city takes on a symbolic role of intellectualism, education, and change, all factors which the characters directly use to foster change in their native Antilles afterward.

IIIb. An imperfect feminism: Siméa and the trope of the Doudou

The emphasis on female corporeality, while highlighting aspects of the female experience that are unique to them, also risks being reductive. By accentuating the black female body, this approach recalls the notions of primitivism that were widespread in 1920s and 1930s France, particularly in relation to cabarets and jazz. Reducing women to their bodies, this type of female representation, focusing on their corporeality, eliminates or relegates thought to a secondary position. Memory moves from the brain to the abdomen (*le ventre*), which recalls female fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth, while removing reflection and rationality. The result is a limited feminism that gives voice to women and female experiences but simultaneously relegates them to

[98] Calling jazz the Great Black Music is also a reference to the motto of the AACM, which identifies jazz with this same expression.

stereotypes and tropes, such as that of the exotic Other or of the French Antillean colonial mythological *doudou*, which Maximin's narration of Siméa's affair with Adrien particularly recalls.

The doudou represents "the Creole woman of color desperately in love with a French man but carrying the weight of French imperial civilization in the New World" (Hill 20). One of the most well-known examples of the doudou comes in the traditional Antillean song "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras"[99]. This song tells the story of a black Antillean woman who falls in love with a white French ship captain. But her love is impossible to realize due to their socio-political situation as mixed-race and mixed-origin. In this song the male captain is referred to as the Doudou but in French Antillean colonial folklore, the term refers to the woman. As a traditional song, there are many versions of its lyrics; these selected stanzas illustrate the doudou's situation:

Bonjour! Monsieur le Gouverneur!
Moin ka mandé ou en tit pétition
Pou Doudou moin qui ka pati
Hélas ! Hélas ! cé pou toujour.

Mademoiselle ! Il est trop tard
Les connaissements sont déjà signés
Le bâtiment est à la rade
Il va bientôt appareiller.

[99] There are many versions of this song's lyrics, referenced through travel narratives and letters. There have also been many recordings of it, including those by Nelly Lungla, a performer at the Bal Nègre, in 1932, biguine leading man Sam Castendet, whose version is entitled "Les Adieux d'une Créole," and Henri Salvador in 1957. Hill notes that between the 1920s and the late 1950s, there were about a dozen recordings of this song in France (22).

Bel bateau' a qui dans la rade'là

Ou prend Doudou moin ou minnin'i all'e

Chè Doudou moin qui ka pati

Hélas ! Hélas ! cé pou toujour.

Refrain : Adieu ! foulard, Adieu ! madras

Adieu ! graines d'or … Adieu ! collier choux

Chè Doudou moin qui ka pati

Hélas ! Hélas ! cé pou toujour (Hill 20-21).

The lyrics show the racial and power discrepancy between the lovelorn woman and the ship captain. She speaks in Creole, while his situation is described in French. As a woman of color, she is not free in a colonized country while the captain travels between countries and across oceans. She is helpless, her beloved is taken away and her requests for change are in vain, while he is an officer and a patriarchal figure. As Edwin Hill writes, this song "serves as a primal scene of colonial subject formation as well as a mythical narrative staging this oedipal scene as the origins of French-Antillean imperial relations" (21). Moreover, the fact that she remains at the port suggests the impossibility of uniting the two worlds and of any improvement in her social status.

Like other traditional musical pieces and genres in the French Antilles, "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras" is political. Biguine artists supported the song and the term *doudou* eventually became a name for French colonial fantasy (Hill 21): the trope of the doudou embodied French imperialist colonization. The possible conditions of the song's composition underscore the power of the colonizer even more: Deborah Jenson notes the possibility that in French Antillean culture and society, a woman composed text, poetry, or song though he – that is, the slaveowner – recorded it, published it, and

received credit (83). If this is true of "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras," it adds another layer of imperialism, ownership, and colonization as even the woman's words and experiences are told and owned by white French men.

Siméa's experience resembles that of the doudou in "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras". She, too, is an Antillean woman of color who falls in love with a white Frenchman of respectable social standing. Siméa's affair is in vain, both the French and the Antillean sides – via her lover and her mother – reject the *métissage* of her child, miscegenation, and the mutual assimilation that their union would represent. When Siméa mourns this unborn child, she is, by extension, mourning the unfulfilled potentialities between her own and Ariel's countries, cultures, and races.

Siméa's experience is also an ironic mirror of the doudou. While the doudou remains behind and watches her lover leave, Siméa's situation is the opposite because Ariel stays in France while Siméa leaves. This reversal of positions has a dual effect: it underlines the role of women in the novel and their agency while creating a parallel between the French and the Antilleans. Siméa's departure also marks a major changing point in her life. Prior to leaving Ariel and France, Siméa had little bodily autonomy; the fact that she was drugged and forced to abort her unborn child, whom she appears to deeply care for, illustrates how as a young black woman, she had little say. Others, including her mother and her white French lover, imposed their decisions upon her body. At this point, Siméa's situation parallels that of the doudou as both are subject to decisions by those around them.

Music further emphasizes the similarity between the two women. The doudou's story, immortalized in song and music, also portrays Siméa's experience. Nesbitt observes that music "traduit parfaitement son sentiment de déchirure intérieure"

(Nesbitt 70). The night following her abortion, Siméa dances with Ariel to Coleman Hawkins' "Body and Soul"[100]. The song's lyrics evoke her heartbreak:

> My heart is sad and lonely/ For you I sigh, for you dear only/ Why haven't you seen it/ I'm all for you body and soul
>
> I spend my days in longing/ And wondering why it's me you're wronging/ I tell you I mean it/ I'm all for you body and soul
>
> I can't believe it/ It's hard to conceive it/ That you'd turn away romance/ Are you pretending/ It looks like the ending/ Unless I could have just one more chance to prove, dear
>
> My life a wreck you're making/ You know I'm yours for just the taking/ I'd gladly surrender myself to you, body and soul
>
> My life a wreck you're making/ You know I'm yours for the very taking/ I'd gladly surrender myself to you, body and soul (*Body and Soul* np).

Like the doudou in "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras," Siméa's moment of heartbreak is set to a song that expresses her devotion and its impossibility. From the doudou's "Hélas! Cé pou toujour" to Siméa's "It looks like the ending," the rejection that both women face appears final and they have no voice in it.

Yet unlike the doudou of "Adieu Foulard, Adieu Madras," Siméa finds healing. With her departure, she begins a new phase in her life, assuming individuality and agency over her body and her decisions. Siméa rejects France and Ariel, returns to the Antilles, and remains independent; while she goes on to have a daughter, Marie-Gabriel,

[100] "Body and Soul" was written in 1930. The lyrics are by Edward Heyman, Robert Sour, and Frank Eyton; the music is by Johnny Green. It has been recorded by many legendary jazz musicians, among whom number Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Etta James, Sarah Vaughan, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Coleman Hawkins, who is referenced here.

Siméa does not enter a long-term intimate relationship or a marriage. Unlike the doudou, Siméa remains free.

Siméa also finds resolution and community through her ordeal. Her dance with Ariel gives closure to their relationship, and she establishes a sense of complicity with women – perhaps including the doudou – of her race and country who have suffered as she does. In dancing, Siméa's body is restored and she is "pleine et entière, grave et aiguë, mélodieuse et improvisée" (157). With the music and the dance, Siméa becomes "une jeune femme noire heureuse par-delà le bien et le mal. [Elle] fête [s]a renaissance au-delà de la couleur de peau" (157). She reaches this stage of acceptance and healing through an understanding of female community. Siméa declares that "j'ai vu l'enfer des femmes là-bas, dépossédées de la vérité de leur âme et leur corps, *body and soul*. J'ai perdu mon ange et ses images. Ma saison en enfer se termine sur un baiser d'adieu aussi long que le passé commun" (157). Siméa's experience begins with Ariel and the betrayal of the forced abortion, but dancing to jazz leads her to establish solidarity with all women who have felt similarly betrayed or hurt because of their sex. Her *baiser d'adieu* with Ariel joins that of the doudou, inscribed in the long *passé commun* of their people and, most particularly, their women's histories. This sense of belonging, even across borders and oceans, promotes Siméa's healing. Memory is again expressed through the body, but this time, it heals rather than hurts. Siméa's ill-fated affair with Ariel and the song "Body and Soul" that closes it reduce Siméa to a trope, but the healing that follows simultaneously inscribes Siméa in the heartbroken history of the doudou and allows her to surpass it by overcoming her heartbreak through her awareness of this community. The search for solidarity dominates Siméa's experience of trauma. Recovering from her pain, she cries out to her friend:

> Gerty, où es-tu ma fraternelle ? Je n'ai pas envie de combattre seule … J'ai besoin d'une main de femme, de femme-soleil, de soleil noir, de Noir bien Nègre, de Nègre bien marron pour ma défense, ma légitime défense. Je me ferai cyclone pour décoiffer les arbres décrêpés. Je me ferai Soufrière pour protéger mon fils du vent, je ne laisserai filtrer que la pluie comme le volcan au gros dos protecteur de Saint-Claude et du Matouba (128).

In her time of struggle, Siméa relates her experiences and her desire for resistance to two focal points: black female unity and Antillean nature. To fight against the injustice done to her against her will, Siméa finds strength in her Antillean roots. The natural wonders and disasters of the region define her resilience, and she threatens to lash out at dangers the same way Guadeloupean natural disasters lash out. Her identity and self-conception are intimately tied to her gender, her race, and her origins even across the ocean. Jazz enables these connections. It leads her to resolution and peace of mind in the tragic end of her relationship, healing her in body and in soul.

IV. Expressing a black Atlantic solidarity through jazz

In *L'Isolé soleil*, consistent trans-Atlantic displacement minimizes national borders and emphasizes cultural exchange and unity in the search for freedom. It continues a long tradition of black collaboration, as "from the moment when African people began to be dispersed across the Americas [including the Caribbean and thus the Antilles] by the Atlantic slave trade, artists, writers, and everyday people of African descent have created linkages that would allow them to communicate and collaborate from diverse global locations" (Meehan 22). Notably, Meehan singles out artists and writers for their contributions; these are the same two groups whose travels and collaborations *L'Isolé soleil* depicts. Music is a means of cultural and historical transmission.

The image of international solidarity is present from the novel's first words. Maximin begins: "Un vol de colibris s'est posé en pleine mer pour soigner ses ailes brisées au rythme du tambour-Ka… îles de liberté brisées à double tour, la clé de l'une entre les mains de l'autre" (Maximin 8). With these words, he introduces the themes of trans-Atlantic movement and unity among Antilleans that form much of the novel's thematic content, setting them to the rhythm of drums. The tambour-ka figures in gwoka, the counter-imperialist Antillean music that shares an emphasis on rhythm with the jazz that follows it in *L'Isolé soleil*.

In the contemporary parts of Maximin's novel, three continents (Europe, Africa, and North America) meet, fittingly, in three main ways: the letters that Antoine, Adrien, and Marie-Gabriel exchange, the jazz that has traveled between them in various iterations and contexts, and Angela Davis' presence and ideology. The novel's characters move across the Atlantic. Siméa travels to France and back to Guadeloupe. Displacement continues into younger generations; Siméa's daughter, Marie-Gabriel, is the fruit of an international union. And jazz and resistance bring America into the picture when Marie-Gabriel and her friends meet American intellectual and activist Angela Davis.

Displacement also extends to ideas and concepts. Jazz opens an international dialogue on music and politics. Césaire's writings in the 1930s and 1940s introduce his theories on black experience and négritude, based on his black Antillean viewpoint, to the Hexagon. Fighting for equality, many in the French Antilles, including Césaire, adopt communism, an international ideology with many worldwide iterations. It is attractive to many Antilleans because communism offers communion with others facing a similar fate throughout the world as well as a promise of equality, emancipation, and human

rights[101]. Decades later, Angela Davis helps introduce the Black Panther movement to the Antilles, as Maximin shows in his novel.

International influence also includes the Mediterranean and North Africa. In an interview, Maximin describes the Mediterranean and the Caribbean Seas as "deux mers, deux centres de mondes, où le monde entier s'est donné rendez-vous. C'est sans doute ce qui cimente nos fraternités, que j'ai tenu à symboliser dès les premières pages… La Caraïbe et la Méditerranée sont pour moi sœurs sur la terre, par la rencontre en elles de trois ou quatre continents" (Chaulet-Achour 6). Likewise, Maximin expands the postcolonial diaspora with interspersed references to the Algerian struggle for decolonization (Donadey 53). Antoine and Eve are particularly pertinent, having spent time in Northern Africa. The entire black diaspora, on both sides of the Atlantic, participates in the historical and cultural exchanges of *L'Isolé soleil*. In his writings with Adrien and Marie-Gabriel, Antoine recognizes a shared and international goal for the three friends and writers: for them, "écrire n'est ni un salut ni un jeu gratuit: c'est un jeu salutaire. Il nous faut pirater l'histoire et l'écriture, accrocher nos grappins à leur culture sur nos trois continents" (302). Across the Atlantic, solidarity illustrates and celebrates the black diaspora's breadth and reach. Specifically, black musics connect their musicians and fans across the diaspora in their desire and quest for political and personal freedom. In Maximin's world, music frequently features in moments of conflict and revolution, from Jonathan's ditties to Louis-Gabriel's pieces almost two centuries later. In creating these links – based on a shared desire for freedom, expressed through music – Maximin maps black political and personal resistance to French colonial rule

[101] Notably, Césaire himself grew disenchanted with communism following the Soviet Union's suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Two years later, Césaire founded the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais. The Parti communiste français (PCF) has seen a considerable decline in numbers since the mid-century.

and French cultural influence on both sides of the Atlantic, in colonized lands and in metropolitan France alike.

The desire to express a shared history, be it written or musical, is at the heart of the novel's trans-Atlantic exchange. Marie-Gabriel expresses it best when she writes to Antoine: "Quand tu m'as appris que les camarades te demandaient d'être candidat à Saint-Claude, j'ai tout de suite pensé à ta musique, à ta soif de marier ton délire free-jazz à la rythmique bien structurée du tambour gros-ka" (309). In this exchange, this musical marriage, is resistance to French imperialism. The rhythm of gwoka evokes tradition and the revolutionary, anti-imperialist politics it symbolizes. In contrast, the then-cutting-edge free jazz brings boundless possibilities with its abandonment of limits. Their coexistence enables expression of black Antillean identity past and future, introducing new freedom through self-expression.

V. Négritude: illustration, practice, and critique

As a historiographic novel, *L'Isolé soleil* depicts the development and expression of French Antillean identity and its role within the greater context of resistance against the French colonizers. In this occupied context, identity and creation are intimately linked to resistance, as the characters use them to resist against the occupier and against assumptions and stereotypes of black culture such as inherent *Africanité*, moving instead toward mixing and créolité, founded in the creation of something new.

Maximin explains that "l'idée [du roman], c'est de montrer comment nous en sommes arrivés là, à ce vécu de l'Antillanité comme une réalité, c'est-à-dire comme une identité" (Mpoyi-Buatu 41). Maximin identifies and illustrates three major steps in the process. The first is political: "lorsqu'on est soumis à une maîtrise, à une domination, qu'on veut y échapper, on est obligé de passer par les armes du maître, de se défendre avec les armes du maître" (Mpoyi-Buatu 41). In the novel, we see this attitude in the

creation and expression of Antillean identity through education; by becoming doctors, teachers, and lawyers, Antilleans can become their own masters as they use their education to fight against primitivistic conceptions and to create their own society (Mpoyi-Buatu 41). Ironically, many of the intellectual leaders of the time, including those represented in *L'Isolé soleil* such as Siméa, Gerty Archimède, and Césaire, completed their higher education in France, which puts added emphasis on the concept of "armes du maître," as they are using the knowledge they learned in France to fight against French policies. However, adopting the dominator's ways is also problematic because in this framework, resistance is still defined "entièrement par rapport au monde occidental," as Maximin explains (41). In other words, to gain freedom, black Antilleans must first adapt to the roles, cultures, and expectations of their French colonizers. They temporarily assimilate in order to better defend and define themselves. *L'Isolé soleil* shows this too, as many of the young characters it depicts are educated and politically oriented, using their schooling to explore and further their goals of identity and independence, including Siméa, Marie-Gabriel, Antoine, and Angela Davis.

The next step toward Antillean identity that Maximin identifies passes through Africa with recognition of African traditions, religions, and musical influences – such as on jazz. In order to resist the colonizer, Maximin explains that "il fallait une superpuissance spirituelle, culturelle, qui était celle de l'Afrique pour pouvoir échapper à l'intégration, à la superpuissance occidentale qui était toujours là présente et qui était l'oppresseur et le maître sur le plan, je le répète, politique, économique, social et culturel" (Mpoyi-Buatu 42). In this context, Africa presents an idealized land and traditions. This phenomenon appears in *L'Isolé soleil,* too. In the sections of the novel that depict the events of the 19th century, African divinities such as Woyengi inspire the characters. This depiction of African spirituality emphasizes that those who came from

Africa did not, in fact, come empty-handed but with cultures, beliefs, and histories all their own. At the same time, this emphasis on African spirituality no longer exists among the characters of the 20th century like Siméa, Marie-Gabriel, and Antoine. One can understand that by this point of Antillean history, the desire for an African identity is no longer as necessary. At this point, Maximin observes that "iI ne s'agit pas de dire: nous sommes entièrement Africains, l'Afrique est notre mère perdue que nous essayons de retrouver" (Mpoyi-Buatu 42). Instead, this is the last step of the progression toward Antillean identity: créolité. This is where *L'Isolé soleil* leads, doing so through the expression of identity that, like Antillean music, is politicized in this context. The focus toward creolization and politicization also suggests why jazz is so important in this novel: it is itself a Creolized type of music, combining many influences to create its own identity, a new whole; further, the improvisation at the heart of jazz encourages each musician's unique expressions of identity.

L'Isolé soleil behaves similarly; it puts passion into action by becoming an artistic realization and anticipation of Creoleness that is simultaneously influenced by and critical of négritude. Jazz plays a particularly significant role as, in Louis-Gabriel's aforementioned words, it leads to and even expresses freedom. From the early Antillean music that predated jazz, to the later bebop and free that inspire Louis-Gabriel, Siméa, and Marie-Gabriel, rhythmic, black music and especially jazz bring together people from across the diaspora[102] to unite in expressing a common goal.

L'Isolé soleil also anticipates a view of art that reflects theories on Creoleness. The three authors of the *Éloge de la créolité* (Bernabé, Chamoiseaux, and Confiant) note

[102] This refers to the many travels depicted or alluded to in *L'Isolé soleil*, such as the arrival of slaves in the Antilles; the back and forth between France and Guadeloupe by multiple people, including Louis-Gabriel – who dies in travel, his death perhaps symbolic of the struggle to progress in the search for freedom – and also Siméa, Marie-Gabriel, Eve, and Aimé Césaire, among others; and also the travel of ideas like freedom and communism across oceans and continents with Césaire and Angela Davis.

that "for the moment, *full knowledge of Creoleness will be reserved for Art*, for Art absolutely" (90, emphasis original) because "only poetic knowledge, fictional knowledge, literary knowledge, in short, artistic knowledge can discover us [Caribbeans]" (99). Art enables what these authors call interior vision, which in turn allows them to see, understand, and accept their Creoleness (99). The result is a work that expresses "our emotional experience, our pains, our uncertainties, the strange curiosity of what was thought to be our defects, [and] will help in our achieved expression to build in diversity the harmonious Being of the world" (113). *L'Isolé soleil* itself as well as the literature within it, written by its characters, illustrate this interior vision that critiques and analyzes their own history and multi-faceted identity.

One way in which *L'Isolé soleil* anticipates this interior vision on art is through its depiction of and relationship to Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.* By creating many parallels with this work, Maximin's novel illustrates Césaire's considerable influence on Antillean thought and literature; by favoring creolization, Maximin's text also reveals négritude's limits. Siméa reads and quotes the Césaire's *Cahier* repeatedly, and Maximin's novel mirrors many themes and structures from Césaire's work. The *Cahier* opens with an "identification secrète du narrateur avec le regard perçant d'un grand oiseau de proie qui fouille les îles en une grande plongée" (Pestre de Almeida 143). Similarly, Maximin's novel begins with a bird flying over the islands. Césaire's bird is a hunter while Maximin's is a hummingbird, but both images show suffering. This brokenness is a major link between the two works. With the repeated epithet "Au bout du petit matin," Césaire gives a series of unfavorable descriptions of the Antilles (Césaire 8-20). It is a "vieille misère pourrissant sous le soleil,… [où] les volcans éclateront, l'eau nue emportera les taches mûres du soleil et il ne restera plus qu'un bouillonnement tiède picoré d'oiseaux marins" (Césaire 8). It is a difficult place plagued

by sickness, "morne" and surrounded by "lèpres, de consomption, de famines, de peurs tapies dans les ravins, de peurs juchées dans les arbres, de peurs creusées dans le sol, de peurs en dérive dans le ciel, de peurs amoncelées et ses fumerolles d'angoisse" (Césaire 10). Similarly, Maximin opens by describing the Antilles in negative terms. Maximin's Antilles are "de soleil brisés, d'eaux soufrées, de flamboyants saignés" (Maximin 7).

The second section within the *Cahier*'s first thematic part describes a desire to leave the Antilles. Césaire repeats the word *partir* (Césaire 20-22). Maximin, in turn, writes that "les hommes qui n'ont jamais osé s'envoler n'ont plus qu'à courber la tête pour ramasser les débris d'étoiles filées" (12). This statement can refer to a continuation of the bird image and to travel; in both cases, the narrator suggests that one must fly to be free and to succeed. Those who do not leave only have the remnants, the debris, of those who have succeeded.

Toussaint Louverture is also a shared reference between the *Cahier* and *L'Isolé soleil.* Louverture is the only Antillean hero to be named in the *Cahier*, and in this context, he enables "la découverte de l'espace de la diaspora noire et d'un héros fondateur [Louverture]" (Pestre de Almeida 143-4). Maximin's novel describes how Louverture inspired revolt; he declares "que nos balles rendent les routes impraticables, jetez des cadavres dans tous les puits, incendiez et anéantissez tout, afin que ceux qui sont venus pour nous réduire à l'esclavage aient devant eux l'image de cet enfer qu'ils méritent" (Maximin 54). This shared reference deepens the intertextual links between these two works.

Further, the final section of Siméa's *cahier* is entitled "'A' comme *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*" (153). It is in this chapter that Siméa finds healing in her relationship with Ariel, telling him that "ce soir je t'aime et je te quitte au-delà de ta blancheur. J'ai eu la chance extraordinaire pour mon premier amour d'aimer un toucher

de peau avant la couleur de cette peau" (158). She then leaves France, knowing that war is about to break out, and returns with Gerty to the Antilles, where she will disown her mother and will never see her paternal land of the Flamboyants again (159). Siméa fulfills Césaire's prophecy of leaving the Antilles only to come back, fighting for freedom. In Césaire's words, "si je ne sais que parler, c'est pour vous [les Antillais] que je parlerai" (Césaire 22). And so Siméa does, passing her task on to Marie-Gabriel in the form of her written history when Siméa dies while birthing Marie-Gabriel.

Césaire's *Cahier* then opens its focus to include a broader worldview. This "élargissement spatial est tout d'abord un élargissement des images du *contenant* vers les *continents*" as Césaire's narrator describes his place in the greater world (Pestre de Almeida 151). He writes that "ce qui est à moi… [est] la Guadeloupe fendue en deux de sa raie dorsale et de même misère que nous, Haïti où la négritude se mit debout … la comique petite queue de la Floride… l'Afrique gigantesquement chenillant … Virginie. Tennessee. Géorgie. Alabama / Putréfactions monstrueuses de révoltes inopérantes … une petite cellule dans le Jura, une petite cellule, la neige la double de barreaux blancs" (Césaire 24-5). Importantly, these are all references to black struggles around the Atlantic. In this way, Césaire is describing the black diaspora that Maximin illustrates so well in *L'Isolé soleil* with his characters' movements across the Atlantic. *L'Isolé soleil* is négritude in literary action; anthropology, history, and music reflect Césaire's themes and show a broad realization of black identity in Maximin's characters.

The *Cahier du retour au pays natal* and négritude are important influences, but Siméa identifies a major shortcoming; in her new, music-inspired self-awareness, she is dismayed at négritude's lack of understanding of the female condition, exclaiming that "je ne peux plus supporter d'entendre les poètes et les chanteur dépecer les femmes aimées. Nos cheveux plantes nourries par vos larmes, et nos désirs filtrés par vos

regards. Mon Dieu!" (147). Césaire stated in his *Discours sur la négritude* that négritude is "une communauté d'oppression subie, une communauté d'exclusion imposée, une communauté de discrimination profonde" (80-82). These are all conditions that Siméa experienced through her forced abortion, and with the process, she realizes how widespread similar pains and troubles are for black women.

Nevertheless, she feels abandoned by the writers behind négritude and the poets she had once admired: Breton, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Léro[103] – in her eyes, all are renown but lack understanding. Siméa cries out to Léro, though he is not present, that "les femmes ne sont pas nues noires devant vos solitudes, votre avenir ne s'arrête pas dans nos bras, vos traces de sang salissent nos lignes de vies" (147). Léro wrote, in *Légitime défense* (1932), that "le vent qui monte de l'Amérique noire aura vite fait; espérons-le, de nettoyer nos Antilles des fruits avortés d'une culture caduque. Langston Hughes et Claude McKay, les deux poètes révolutionnaires, nous ont apporté... l'amour africain de la vie, la joie africaine de l'amour, le rêve africain de la mort" (cited in Irele 774). In this excerpt, Léro rejects white influence on Antillean culture in favor of African preferences, led by black, American Harlem Renaissance poets. Siméa knows Léro's work, dubbing him "notre héraut martiniquais, poète par légitime défense[104] contre le lyrisme de classe des bourgeoisies de toutes les couleurs assimilées au blanc" (147). But if Léro understands resistance to white, western culture, he does not understand the black female experience. Siméa wonders if Léro truly died not knowing that "les vierges noires n'ont pas les seins d'argile ni les mains de glace," an allusion to Léro's surrealism and his distance from women's experience; Siméa implies that what appears evident – that women are human – may not be so for the poet (147).

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[103] Etienne Léro (1910-1939) was a surrealist Martinican poet. He was also a co-founder of the literary journal *Légitime Défense* (with René Ménil).
[104] With this expression, Siméa references the journal of the same name that Léro co-founded.

It is not just Léro that disappoints Siméa; she exclaims that "toutes vos paroles ce soir me font mal, vous les chanteurs cubains et les poètes antillais, vos corps d'hommes sont enfermés dans des paroles et des serments de stratèges amoureux, que seuls peuvent briser le rythme du jazz improvisé et celui de la folie douce ou furieuse des mots" (147). She continues that "tout mon espoir ne vivait que de confiance totale en nos poètes et nos musiciens. Leurs voix douces et brutales disaient à mes oreilles des messages de révolution… Il vaudra mieux que je meure, si vivre c'est découvrir les serments non tenus des révoltes poétiques… Mon corps échappe à la silhouette sculptée par mes compagnons" (148). Jazz, Siméa's abortion, and her final dance with Ariel bring to her realizations and self-awareness of her situation as a black woman. As a result, Siméa identifies the male-dominated world in which she lives, and distances herself from it, finding even the words of poets and writers insufficient. She realizes their shortcomings in not recognizing, understanding, and expressing female experience.

The same applies to négritude, central to the novel and influential in its ideology, but insufficient in its lack of focus on women and their experiences. Instead, Siméa's experience and *L'Isolé soleil* as a whole recall Edwin Hill's concept of "négritude in the minor," which relates "alternate and everyday management of the condition of pain characterizing histories of black Atlantic subject formation" (16). This concept poses a contrast to Hill's "négritude in the major," which is focused around a "a masculinist hero who intervenes at the mythical crossroads of History" (16). Maximin's novel, with its emphasis on women's stories and the representation of quotidian events expressed in letters, reflections, and interactions between characters, poses a stark contrast to the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, and its representation of the masculine hero Louverture. Siméa's realization of the distance between the négritude poets she loved

and the depths of her own, female experience highlight a major deficiency of the négritude movement and some of its seminal works.

In addition to *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* other important négritude-related poets and intellectuals of the time provide important inspiration for the characters' debates. In particular, the Harlem Renaissance inspires these characters and the artists and scholars that motivate them; dating from about 1918 to the 1930s, this movement provides common ground for many black writers, intellectuals, early jazz musicians, including those of Siméa's time, and négritude's anti-assimilationist beliefs. An artistic movement led by black artists, the Harlem Renaissance sought to promote their work and to gain them respect and affirmation in a western and predominantly white society. Négritude and the Harlem Renaissance both arise from a shared history of black affirmation and express a unique bond with Africa in reaction against white, western policies that prefer assimilation (Irele 766, 769). Notably, through references to Damas and writers of the Harlem Renaissance such as McKay and Hughes, as mentioned above, Maximin and his characters emphasize their resistance to assimilation.

The Harlem Renaissance influenced many francophone writers, including Damas, whom Siméa and her friends admire. Damas is also inspired by the sounds of his time, especially jazz; Edwin Hill notes that Damas' "entire oeuvre rhythmically stages the New World black subject's struggle with French imperial culture and history by figuring it as a percussive series of temporal breaks and corporeal seizures" (109). The effects of jazz on Damas' writing are considerable[105], both in content and especially in percussive, rhythmic effects. In his writing, Damas transforms "the French language to the accents

[105] Edwin Hill's chapter "Negritude Drum Circles: The *Tam-Tam* and the Beat" in his book *Black Soundscapes, White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic,* discusses in detail how Damas treats music and negritude in his poetry, with many musical and thematic examples from Damas' poetry.

of Harlem in a poetry modeled in its themes and cadences on the poetry of Langston Hughes, while displaying an originality of tone that belongs properly to Damas himself" (Irele 773). Importantly, these cadences are jazzy, emphasized by Damas' own experience in Paris. And much like Harlem poets such as Claude McKay, Damas, too, writes of "figures de l'aliénation, du cul-de-sac, de la solitude, du profond malaise de l'artiste incompris qui trouve refuge dans l'alcool" and he does so through "l'esthétique du blues … et des figures rythmiques répétées, les fameuses *blue-notes* ou les *riffs*" (Kwaterko 7):

> Névralgie d'un robinet qui coule
> emplit le broc de ma concierge
> qu'un arc-en-ciel aspire
>
> Fermez la névralgie du robinet qui coule
> emplit le broc de ma concierge
> Qu'un arc-en-ciel aspire
> Enlevez du robinet qui coule
> le broc de ma concierge
> qu'un arc-en-ciel aspire
>
> Ou coupez de la main jusqu'au coude
> l'arc-en-ciel qui aspire
> le broc de ma concierge
> qu'emplit la névralgie
> d'un robinet qui coule (Damas, 1972, cited in Kwaterko 7).

This poem, published in Damas' *Pigments* (originally published in 1939), emphasizes the repetition and the rhythm that drive its progression from beginning to end, with the conclusion wrapping around to where the poem started. Importantly, *Pigments* is a collection of poems to which Maximin's characters allude on multiple occasions, and it is particularly of note because it "expresses an uncompromising resistance to assimilation" (Porter 191). Marie-Gabriel echoes this sentiment, stating that "l'assimilation sera le plus court chemin vers la révolution" because assimilation does not bring peace or progress; it must be resisted against (Maximin 266). In this context, expressing identity becomes resistance. Damas is also at the heart of a dispute among Siméa and her jazz musician friends Louis-Gabriel, Toussaint Louverture, and Gaby. Louverture argues that "tout leur engagement et leur humour et leur obscurité [de Ménil, des Césaire, et de l'équipe des *Tropiques*] sont cent fois moins efficaces pour notre libération qu'un seul poème de *Pigments*" (Maximin 247). The reply to Louverture's observation is a sharp rebuke: "… c'est Damas qui est redevable à Césaire de ce rappel à l'authenticité et non le contraire… Je trouve très inquiétante votre théorie du créole, seul critère d'authenticité… Or, nous, les Antillais, nous sommes bien d'abord des Nègres, mais ensuite des Nègres d'Amérique, et aussi des Nègres d'Amérique européanisés. Notre authenticité se fonde sur le respect de cette triple origine," a reference to the creoleness of black Antillean culture (248).

Despite this difference of opinions regarding the roles and relationships of Damas and Césaire, this group of intellectual friends and musicians ends their debate on a conciliatory tone, observing that "Siméa, vous traduisez Damas en anglais, et moi [Louverture] en créole. Mais Gaby lui, le joue au saxophone! Et je ne connais rien de plus révolutionnaire que cette musique qui dépasse nos paroles, comme son silence en ce moment…" (250). This statement emphasizes Damas' importance to all three characters.

By not participating in the debate, Louis-Gabriel remains quiet and does not take sides; he avoids assimilation. Likewise, his music – saxophone jazz – surpasses words and expresses the spirit, the authenticity that all three agree upon, despite their debates on what this authenticity means and how it is achieved. In an example, Louverture gives Louis-Gabriel's "accompagnement au saxo la musique du gros-ka" in which every note was "l'expression du désir de création le plus nu, le plus simple, le plus généreux" (248). This conversation, centered around the anti-assimilationist Damas, is a musical interpretation of creolization: the mixing of instruments and traditions to create a new and hybrid music in what becomes a continuation of the black affirmation that the Harlem Renaissance promoted.

Siméa's relationship with négritude is troubled. She believes in supporting and affirming black thinkers and culture, in political activism, and non-assimilation. But by emphasizing creolization, Siméa and her friends reveal another difference that separates them from négritude: place and location. In contrast to négritude, creolization emphasizes the importance of culture upon identity. Siméa and the other major characters of *L'Isolé soleil* are defined by their Antillean culture – black certainly, but they also all speak French (not creole), many travel to France, and learn from and dialogue with black friends in the United States. Further, there is much debate among characters, which emphasizes the variety of opinions and experiences. As a result, it is hard to define a singular black identity; despite many commonalities, including oppression and discrimination, culture, too, affects each of the characters in this novel, illustrating creolization. As Mamadou Badiane notes, though Césaire's contribution has been tremendous, "l'émergence de l'Antillanité et de la Créolité a aussi démontré la difficulté de définir une identité fixe, face aux cultures multiples qui ont vu le jour dans

la Caraïbe" (846). With an emphasis on international and female views, *L'Isolé soleil* highlights and attempts to fill this void.

VI. Playing jazz with words: writing resistance

L'Isolé soleil explores jazz and resistance, even revolution, in theme and in form. The result is a "jazz aesthetic" that is founded in formal jazz techniques (Nesbitt 71). Improvisation and alliteration, theme and variations, and polyphony all give a jazzy feel to Maximin's writing. Through these formal elements, Maximin can "perform instead of just describe subtleties of cultural, historical, political and linguistic expression on a literary scale" (Herbeck 161). Intermedial imitation and translation of formal jazz techniques emphasize the wide-reaching effects jazz can have.

Improvisation is integral to jazz. Jason Herbeck notes in his article "'Jusqu'aux limites de l'improvisation': Caribbean Identity and Jazz in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*" three methods of improvisation. They are paraphrased improvisation, which is "the recognizable ornamentation of an existing theme;" formulaic improvisation, which is "the building of new material from a diverse body of fragmentary pieces;" and motivic improvisation, which is "the building of new material through the recognizable development of no more than a few fragmentary ideas" (Herbeck 162). Of these three models, *L'Isolé soleil* most resembles formulaic improvisation as it combines improvisation and heavy fragmentation to form a new ensemble of material.

Marie-Gabriel's writing project is an exercise in improvisation which seeks to recoup lost or incomplete memories. She strives to recreate her father's journal, since the original was burned in the plane crash that killed her father. While it closely imitates the project of *L'Isolé soleil*, it is not the same project. Instead, *L'Isolé soleil* describes Marie-Gabriel's project in tandem with the process and struggle around its writing. This description is broken into many fragments composed of letters, historical moments,

journals, and reflections. Importantly, these are all types of writing that are most often spontaneous and personal, just like jazz improvisation.

The characters of *L'Isolé soleil* often improvise by playing with words. For example, Siméa plays an alliterative word game with her name, giving a word for each topic that starts with the letter "s":

-Alors commençons. Si je vous dis: … Nuit?

-Je vous réponds: Sommeil.

-Je vous demande: Jour?

-Je vous réponds: Soleil.

-Je vous dis: Couleur?

-Je réponds: … Sang.

-Si je dis: Musique?

-Je réponds: Solo….

-Si je vous dis: Froid?

-Sorbet-coco!

-Chaud?

-Sourire.

-Mort?

-Mort? …Suicide.

-Si je dis: Verbe?

-Je dois trouver un verbe en "s"? … Semer.

-Adjectif?

-Spontané (196-97).

With this game, the reader discovers a great deal about Siméa's self-perception, and much of it is tied to jazz and to her origins. She frequently refers to Guadeloupe as a

sunny island, not least of which is in the novel's title. Siméa's reference to *soleil* is also a reference to her home island, as are "sorbet-coco" and perhaps "sang" and "suicide."[106] The verb "semer" gives Siméa pause, but it is also fitting for her situation. It sounds very similar to Siméa's name itself, and it is in part what Siméa does; as she travels, she discovers and spreads the ideas of black identity and freedom, in both Paris and later in the Antilles. It mirrors the very existence of a black diaspora, with the understanding that a diaspora is a movement and dispersal of a people or community throughout the world. *Semer* also recalls the Antilles' slave history of agricultural plantation work. Lastly, Siméa's references to "solo" and "spontané" are heavily reminiscent of jazz which, in turn, is evident in this game because it is simultaneously spontaneous and unique, with each individual's improvised answers different and personal.

Siméa's anagram-like word games – extended to the novel's title itself – are an interpretation of a theme-and-variations compositional style. The theme is the first letter, and each iteration introduces a new variation. It is not entirely free and boundless, as is jazz with its predetermined chord progressions and possibly solo durations. An additional example of a theme-and-variations style is in the prose itself. Siméa writes to her unborn child:

> Ma fille, mon fils, mon enfant de cœur, je te ferai renaître de ce viol avorté. Je t'installerai sauvage dans les broussailles de mon cœur, hors de portée des vomissements et des pertes, des saignées en règles rassurantes, des ventres désertés et des seins délestés, de leurs aspirations maternelles, leurs caoutchoucs stériles et leurs bassines d'eau chaude, leur viol, leur violette,

[106] The Antillean history is a bloody one and Louis Delgrès led many militants to a suicide death in a revolt. Additionally, Adrien writes to Marie-Gabriel in a letter, "as-tu remarqué dans tes lectures à quel point le suicide est le seul héroïsme de nos îles écrasées… ?" (Maximin 92).

> leur voie de fait, voie d'eau, voirie, intempéries des pays tempérés. Je vais pouvoir longtemps revivre avec toi (124).

In this excerpt, Siméa imitates a theme-and-variations style at first in the themes she discusses and later in her words themselves. The excerpt opens with an apostrophe (*ma fille, mon fils, mon enfant*) in which each of these three words is a variation of the one that precedes it. The term *sauvage* is ambiguous, referring to the child or possibly to the mother. In the images that follow, Siméa distances her child from her body's natural, biological functions. The child is apparently very loved, while the biological symptoms of not being pregnant – *règles rassurantes, ventres désertés, seins délestés* – are undesirable here. Through this series of images, each thought relates to and builds on the last to create an image of a wanted child and childbirth. If vomiting, loss, and the *ventre désertés* have a negative connotation, it is countered by the subsequent image of *aspirations maternelles, caoutchoucs stériles et bassines d'eau chaude*, which all suggest birth. But this excerpt takes a darker turn in the final part; the *caoutchoucs stériles et bassines d'eau chaude* are instead related to the violation of Siméa imposed abortion and her lack of freedom to choose to be a mother. This assault is at first intimate and physical, then extends to seizing lands. Personal territory (one's body) becomes extended to the whole country, again linking cultural identity with corporeality. The expression *intempéries des pays tempérés* further alludes to the social and personal difficulty of living in a country like France, whose climate is more temperate than that of the Antilles; this allusion contrasts the measured, temperate countries of Europe with Siméa's wildness. The repetition and variation of terms beginning with "v" in this last part also underscores the violence Siméa experienced and the relationship between all these difficult events. Here, the jazzy compositional technique emphasizes Siméa's pain, anger, retribution, and their multiple sources.

Lastly, the plurality of voices in *L'Isolé soleil* provides a polyphonic presentation. By incorporating viewpoints of characters from multiple time periods and places, the novel nuances perspectives of the trans-Atlantic black diaspora, female Antillean experience, and Antillean history. Despite these different origins, certain aspects remain true throughout: danger and violence, racism, family, nature, solidarity, and music unite all the voices of this text.

Writing resistance takes on new meaning at the novel's end. When Angela Davis comes to Guadeloupe, she brings along controversial pamphlets. Marie-Gabriel writes that

> J'ai rencontré Angela. Une Noire américaine qui a renié le décrêpage pour une coiffure afro, et l'intégration raciale pour le Black Power... L'arrivée du bateau cubain à Basse-Terre, le directeur des Douanes a fait du zèle et a voulu saisir leurs 250 kilos de livres et de brochures, sous l'inculpation de propagande subversive et d'introduction de revues interdites sur le territoire français (302-3).

The desire to confiscate Davis' books and brochures represents French imperialist tendencies toward control and censorship and it suggests that revolution comes through art and language. That these writings are almost confiscated shows their menace, and that Davis was apparently able to keep her writings (and likely disseminate them during her stay) indicates an opening of ideas and Communist influence in Guadeloupe. In the twentieth century and especially mid-century, when Davis and Marie-Gabriel meet, the Communist party had made considerable political gains in Guadeloupe[107]. Davis inspires Marie-Gabriel to act toward revolution:

[107] Notably, though, by the time of Maximin's writing the novel, the official Guadeloupean communist party had lost its appeal and influence.

> En attendant son départ par le prochain avion pour Porto Rico, nous avons passé ensemble un grand moment aux Flamboyants. Nous avons beaucoup discuté de la violence raciale, du communisme et de la révolution…. Elle trouve que je m'enferme trop dans le rapport inconscient Blanc-Noir, que seule la dynamique de la rupture révolutionnaire peut faire évoluer (304).

Only revolution, whichever form it may take, can counteract the black-white colonial dichotomy. Marie-Gabriel seeks to do this through writing, her primary goal being "d'écrire révolutionnairement, pas de décrire la révolution" (303). With these words, Marie-Gabriel's historiography becomes a form of revolution itself, breaking the black-white dynamic so imbued in her people's past and experience.

Through all the events that *L'Isolé soleil* depicts, literature and music stand out as methods of expression and communication. Literature provides a method of understanding across time, crucial because the novel interweaves multiple related but distant time periods. Novels especially provide unique capabilities; fiction as historiography, in contrast to history books, can represent multiple voices and viewpoints, and, in this case, incorporate elements of musicality and performativity to portray identities in the very process of being created. With dialogue between characters revealing their reflections on the events around them, fiction such as *L'Isolé soleil* can simultaneously bring alive past events and not just describe but show the thoughts and reactions of those who live these events or with their consequences. Even with a male author, the novel, such as Maximin's text, can illustrate both male and female experience and perspectives.

In contrast, music allows expression across boundaries and languages, leaving aural rather than written traces. In so doing, it accentuates the rhythm that some deem so critical to an Antillean and a broader black experience (Munro 396). In *L'Isolé soleil*,

the natural world and natural disasters define both time and experience. It is only fitting that music is itself a natural force, a "cyclone" (Maximin 234). Maximin's historiography is one of resistance and struggle, of humanity and solidarity. Music – especially rhythmic, improvised music and jazz – enables connections across continents and time so people can better resist together. In Daniel's words at the novel's closing, "de débris de synthèse en fragments d'un pluriel, île et aile, c'est nous, désirades déployées proches dans l'accord des prénoms, des musiques et des actes, l'alliance des rêves et des réveils" (311). From disparate fragments of text and experience is created a whole, a creolization of sound and history. Music and musical words express this new whole, combining dreams and realities. This is the story of *L'Isolé soleil*: an exploration of a historical, creole, Antillean identity and history transmitted through women and music. It shows Antillean people isolated in name, but whose experience is as shared across continents as the sun that shines on it all in their quest to resist occupation and assimilation by creating and expressing their own unique identity; in the author's words, "arriver à se constituer une identité sans obligatoirement passer par une identification… c'est cela la chance historique que nous avons aujourd'hui" (Mpyo-Buatu 43).

CONCLUSION

In 2015, saxophonist Kamasi Washington released a new album titled *The Epic*, which includes his piece "Changing of the Guard." Befitting the album title, this piece is a musical epic, a 12-minute declaration by a new generation of jazz musicians[108] proclaiming they "have something to say" on current socio-political issues such as racism and equality (Leah np). As well-known music journalist Greg Tate writes, these jazz musicians who assume both musical and political awareness are "the Black Power flower children of the Black Lives Matter era" (Leah np). In so doing, they continue the tradition explored in this dissertation that blurs the lines between music, culture, and socio-political engagement. Across cultures and time, jazz has shown a unique ability to create community and to affect and accompany change.

Throughout the twentieth century and still today, jazz has assumed socio-political influence. As we have seen, movements like the Harlem Renaissance and its desire for black artistic legitimacy, the American Civil Rights movement and the Black Power to which Tate refers in his comment above, Kamasi Washington's involvement with Black Lives Matter, and the novels we have studied in this dissertation all testify that socio-political engagement and resistance are part of jazz legacy.

As a personal and intimate means of expression and exchange, jazz stands out as a unique affective and corporeal experience. Often tied to blackness, sexuality, and physicality, it is historically related to corporeality and bodily awareness, which in turn leads to a desire for self-discovery and self-expression. This dissertation analyzed how playing jazz had a drug-like physical effect on Gailly's Simon, who is drunk on jazz

[108] Including musicians like trumpeters Christian Scott and Keyon Harrold, pianists Samora Pinderhughes and Kris Bowers, drummer Jamire Williams, and bassist Ben Williams.

(Gailly 33), causing his hands to shake as he breathed in the "toxic" air filled with this music (33). Similarly, in *L'Occupation américaine*, Patrick's first exposure to live jazz moves the adolescent's body in a way classical music never did. Jazz is violent, even "brutal" (62), and it brings listeners alive as "on avait aussitôt envie de se lever" (53). Maximin, too, shows how jazz deeply affects the body when it overcomes the musician who plays it and the listener who hears it:

> "Louis-Gabriel … prend le saxo-alto d'un invité et commence à improviser, … promenant sans savoir sa musique dans ta gorge et ton corps ouverts les yeux fermés, pénétrant comme un cyclone, oui, comme un cyclone c'est que tu ressens, mais un cyclone qui réduirait à néant sur son passage tout ce qui ne serait pas émotion, amour et communion" (234).

In this description, jazz invades the listener's body and very being, affecting the entire person as it grows beyond corporeality to shape emotions and relationships, inspiring *émotion, amour, communion*. For musicians like Simon, Louis-Gabriel, and Patrick, as well as for spectators like Siméa, jazz is a profoundly physical experience.

At the heart of jazz in my corpus lie the desire and struggle for resistance in the name of freedom from external pressures like societal expectations, bourgeois norms, and colonial exploitation. Simon wishes to be free of the restraints of middle-class customs. Viel's narrator similarly desires freedom from his own micro-society, particularly from the band and the hold that Paul keeps on him. Quignard's Patrick, too, seeks an escape from the lifestyle imposed on him by his father. And all the Antillean characters of Maximin's novel seek personal, political, and social freedom from colonialism, racism, and sexism.

Behind this desire for freedom is a deeper wish that influences and directs this search: a wish and perhaps even a need to discover and express one's own identity. In

this search, each of the protagonists in these novels desires to create a new community through jazz, one in which they can be themselves. This desire for community and relationships can take a sexual turn, as with Simon and Patrick in Gailly's and Quignard's novels, respectively. More profoundly, the creation of like-minded communities enables their members to assert their difference from —and resistance to —environments they perceive as constraining. The narrator's band in *Le Black note* strove to create their own social and musical world. Quignard's Patrick also finds community through jazz, with Rydell and the band and with the American GIs. These friendships enable him to discover an alternate way of life and ultimately separate himself from his traditional environment, family, and the village that is a "prison" for him (60). Maximin's Siméa experiences a profound sense of community following her exposure to the song "Body and Soul;" she finds solidarity in her emotional and racial troubles with other black women throughout history. All these characters create a new community outside their societal norms, communities in which every individual can articulate their own identity while remaining part of a dynamic and creative group. In these texts, the key factors that attract people to jazz and enable them to engage in resistance are a bodily experience of music, often shown in tandem with growing physical awareness, a search for freedom, and a desire for love and community.

But resistance remains a challenge that faces many obstacles as the search for freedom can lead to new forms of alienation. Throughout my corpus, the main jazz-influenced characters frequently experience either physical distance from society or their smaller community, drugs, even suicide because of their participation in jazz. In *Un Soir au club,* jazz becomes a new form of addiction for Simon. In *Le Black note*, the members of the jazz group fall ever deeper into a cycle of self-destructive behavior that causes Paul's death and leaves the narrator traumatized and perhaps insane. Quignard's

Patrick finds new friends on the American base through jazz, but his desire for independence alienates him from his family and Marie-José. His decision to leave for India at the novel's conclusion further separates him from his family and friends, the French culture that he grew up in, and the American culture that inspired him to independence in the first place. Marie-José is also affected; learning that America is indefinitely unreachable, she commits suicide in an ultimate act of alienation.

Jazz resistance in itself is not immune to discriminatory practices such as the racist and sexist behaviors that these novels depict. *Le Black note*'s Paul participates in blackface to fully resemble his idol John Coltrane, a behavior that is at best naively stereotypical and at worst racist. In *L'Occupation américaine*, the American GIs and especially Wilbur frequently use racist slurs toward black people. *L'Isolé soleil* shows the tensions between white and black individuals in a racially charged colonial context, and it depicts sexist behaviors toward women. Women have decisions made for them, as with Siméa's forced abortion and none of the women in the novel are musicians themselves; instead, they use the jazz of others to fuel their own experiences of resistance. Like early jazz, which was heavily dominated by men with perhaps an exception for singers, Maximin's musical world relegates women to writers (importantly, writers of events that already happened rather than creative writers of entirely new works) and consumers, instead of musicians and creators. Jazz can enable and express resistance, but these novels also explore the cultural and musical limitations of this emancipatory quest.

The focus on the limitations and shortcomings of resistance highlights an ambivalence that is prominent in the novels' conclusions. Each novel's ending suggests progress without a resolution. Gailly's narrator reveals that Simon and Debbie eventually marry, which means that to some extent, Simon ends where he started: in a

settled, committed relationship[109]. Similarly, *Le Black note* closes as the narrator faces a question from a curious passerby about whether he lived in the Black Note house. This recalls the beginning of the story because the narrator prepares to tell the story of the house's burning yet again, bringing him full circle and back to the beginning of the novel itself, suggesting an unending cycle of repetition. Quignard's Patrick and Marie-José achieve independence from their parents but they both ultimately renounce their lives through departure and suicide respectively, leaving family, friends, and jazz behind. Lastly, in Maximin's novel, the black characters at the novel's heart find success in the abolishment of slavery and they gain a voice through their music, their writing, and their political activism. But at the novel's end, the French Antilles are still not fully independent, existing as a French *département* that remains politically owned by and responsible to the *métropole*. Further, the characters' ties to black American activists and musicians emphasize their continuing desire for change. They have not yet achieved their goals. The result is a dual-edged depiction of jazz resistance: positive and negative, effective yet limited.

Despite its limits, jazz remains a fruitful and dynamic force in these novels, particularly in terms of form as jazz opens the way for formal and rhythmic innovations in writing and music alike. All four texts illustrate important jazz effects upon style and structure. The rhythmic allusions to time in *Un Soir au club*, the meandering theme-and-variations narrative style of *Le Black note* and the jazzy elements that double as trauma symptoms, the four-chapter structure of *L'Occupation américaine* that emphasizes Patrick's progression from Americophilia to Americophobia, and the improvised, anagrammed word play that gives *L'Isolé soleil* its name all draw on jazz rhythms and

[109] However, his situation is not entirely the same because at the novel's end, jazz is again a meaningful part of his life.

structures to show how diverse formal jazz influence can be. They reveal the potential of translating jazz music into a literary medium. In *Le Black Note*, jazz enables Viel to overcome his sense of helplessness brought on by artistic *mélancolie*. While the novel depicts the characters' failure in becoming jazz musicians, the style, effectiveness, and even the very existence of Viel's jazz-infused prose illustrates the triumph of creativity over melancholy. Where Paul fails, Viel ultimately succeeds and in his case, the result of his creativity is the novel *Le Black note* itself.

From its earliest iterations related to ragtime, cakewalk, and swing, jazz is constantly changing. Similarly, the forms of expression and resistance associated with jazz are in continuous flux. Consequently, the dialogue between jazz and literature remains an open-ended quest. In this dissertation I have focused on four contemporary jazz-novels, but we could expand the inquiry to other literary forms. Notably, it would be worth extending the research on jazz and resistance to other jazz novel types such as Jazz Age novels, biographies, and crime novels. The different contexts in time and literature as well as the varied literary traditions from which these subgenres stem provide ample opportunities to further explore the nuances of the relationship between jazz and resistance in literature. Gaining greater understanding of resistance through art, including its strengths, limitations, and obstacles, allows us to be ever-more informed citizens of our own unique cultures, able to create and resist change.

Further, these novels extend important questions around race, stereotypes, and appropriation that have dogged jazz musicians and critics for decades. Of the four novels in this corpus, Maximin is the only black author. Gailly's novel ignores race, a glaring absence given how important it has been to jazz's perception in the United States and abroad. Viel and Quignard, in turn, both illustrate stereotyped views of the jazz world. Viels' text portrays jazz musicians as drug addicts and, ideally, black while

Quignard's text also suggests drug abuse while also illustrating the American jazz world as violent, sexual, and superficial. Both texts criticize these same views: Viel shows Paul's lack of success, implying that the stereotypes are false because blackness and drug abuse do not lead to success; Quignard's Patrick rejects Americanism and jazz once he realizes the superficiality and vulgarity of the culture. Nevertheless, these three novels together raise questions of appropriation, namely, are these white authors picking and choosing the relevant parts of jazz history to accomplish their goals, continuing a whitewashing of the genre and its culture? And, if not, what is the role of white artists within the historically black jazz art world? These are the same questions that have caused much debate since the years of Hugues Panassié and Charles Delaunay. Perhaps there is no difference, and anyone is welcome to express jazz as they feel and experience it. But it is also important to be sensitive to the race-based stereotypes and wrongs that pervade jazz history. Consequently, further research is warranted around the interaction and depiction of race and (or perhaps, in) jazz literature, especially in contemporary literature. Research on this topic would also relate to and advance existing knowledge on jazz and resistance.

Jazz and its many extra-musical associations are complicated. Time period, geography, and cultural and musical contexts all affect what jazz means and what is symbolizes. There are many questions but few one-size-fits-all answers since jazz creativity and reception are affected by issues of race, gender, tradition, identity, and politics. As seen in this dissertation, literature provides a way to shed light on jazz's complexities and nuances. I have examined how through bodies, communities, freedom, and self-expression, jazz inspires and enables resistance. It would be of benefit to expand this study to the literature of additional cultures and contexts, like French, African, Caribbean, and Québécois, to the experiences of different races and genders,

and to the perceptions of authors, readers, musicians, and listeners. Expanding the study of jazz as a driver of expression, community, and resistance would continue what this project has begun: explore how jazz can inspire literature, help individuals express themselves, and unite people of different communities across the world and across time.

APPENDIX

State Department Cultural Presentations Program performances, 1956-1960[110]:

Date	Group	Destinations
1956 Mar. 27–May 21	Dizzy Gillespie	Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, United Arab Republic
1956 July 26–Aug. 21	Dizzy Gillespie	Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil
1956 Dec. 6–Jan. 17, 1957	Benny Goodman	Thailand, Singapore, Burma, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Cambodia
1957 Mar. 4–May 17	Wilbur De Paris	Africa: Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia
1958 Mar. 6–May 9	Dave Brubeck	Poland, Turkey, India, Ceylon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq
1958 Aug. 10–31	Woody Herman	Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Jamaica, Honduras, Guatemala
1958 Sept. 26–Jan. 21, 1959	Jack Teagarden	Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Malay, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Okinawa
1959 Dec. 31–Apr. 5, 1960	Herbie Mann	Africa: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia
1960 Jan. 4–Mar. 30	Red Nichols	Greece, Turkey, Cypress, Palestine, Jordan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Nepal, UAR, Syria
1960 Oct. 25–Dec. 4	Louis Armstrong	Africa: Cameroun, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan

[110] From Monson *Freedom Sounds* 124-5.

State Department Cultural Presentations Program performances, 1961-1969:

Date	Group	Destinations
1960 Jan. 4–Mar. 30	Red Nichols	Greece, Turkey, Cypress, Palestine, Jordan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Nepal, UAR, Syria
1960 Oct. 25–Dec. 4	Louis Armstrong	Africa: Cameroun, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan
1961 Jan. 10–29	Louis Armstrong	Egypt
1961 Mar. 12–May 27	Charlie Byrd	Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras
1962 Feb. 6–July 13	Paul Winter	Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, French West Indies, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Chile, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, British Guiana, Venezuela
1962 May 30–July 9	Benny Goodman	USSR

1962 May 31–June 4	Louis Armstrong	Chile
1962 Oct. 15–Mar. 7, 1963	Cozy Cole	Africa: Morocco, Senegal, Volta, Niger, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Congo, Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroun, Ghana, Togo, Guinea
1963 Sept. 6–Nov. 22	Duke Ellington	Near East, South Asia, Syria, Jordan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Ceylon, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, India
1965 Sept. 5–24	Paul Winter Sextet	Brazil
1966 Mar. 31–Apr. 9	Duke Ellington	Africa: Senegal
1966 Apr. 1–June 8	Woody Herman	Africa: Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, Ivory Coast, Algeria; Yugoslavia, UAR, Romania
1966 July 7–Aug. 17	Earl Hines	USSR
1967 Jan. 16–Apr. 9	Randy Weston	Africa: Algeria, Cameroun, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Upper Volta; Lebanon, Egypt
1967 Oct. 12–22	Charles Lloyd	Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania
1967 Nov. 13–Jan. 20, 1968	Junior Wells	Africa: Dahomey, Cambodia, Togo, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Senegal
1968 Apr. 1–May 26	Charlie Byrd	Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Ceylon, Philippines
1968 Apr. 29–June 23	Charles Lloyd	Okinawa, Hong Kong, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Taiwan
1969 Mar.–Apr.	Oliver Nelson	Africa: Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Upper Volta, Senegal
1969 Apr. 24–June 14	Buddy Guy	Africa: Congo, Tanzania, Malagasy Republic, Mauritius, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda

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