Since its birth, jazz has often been perceived as a musical paradigm for the modern age, a technological and rhythmic age characterized by an unprecedented "acceleration"\(^1\), considered as a danger by some philosophers. The idea of modernity, which has been progressively legitimized and used within the field of aesthetics, is generally defined as a distance taken from the tradition and/or an orientation toward the future\(^2\). The argument of modernity and positioning in relation to tradition is at the core of controversies relating to jazz legitimacy, from Berendt and Adorno, Panassié and Vian, to the recent controversy about the nomination of Olivier Benoit as director of the French Orchestre National de Jazz. Then, can and/or must one consider jazz a “modern” music, considering it is often constituted by a tension between rupture and continuity.

In jazz history, modernity — here understood as an “era” or a “period” — was often associated with bebop\(^3\). However, there are other approaches: French musicologist and pianist Laurent Cugny for instance chose to start modernity in jazz in 1959\(^4\), for Bataille or Ellison, jazz is modern as early as the 1920’s\(^5\), and free jazz has sometimes been called “modern jazz”\(^6\), like so many other styles from the moment they are topical and somewhat progressive. There are so many perspectives on this issue that we thought it could be more productive to follow Baudelaire’s lead and define modernity as a “manner”, a “qualitative category” or an “attitude” to borrow Foucault’s term\(^7\), rather than a “period”, a “moment” or a “chronological category”. This is how we call to question the way jazz can contribute to thinking (or re-thinking) modernity, and the way modernity may in return shed light on jazz differently. In other words, how do jazz and modernity shed light on each other?

This is also how we analyze the modernity of jazz players’ open-minded practice. From the new expressivity of Armstrong’s improvised solo on “Tight Like This” (1928) to John Zorn’s current multi-faceted work, or Coleman Hawkins’ contribution to Max Roach’s We Insist! Freedom Now Suite

---

7 “Je me demande si on ne peut pas envisager la modernité plutôt comme une attitude que comme une période de l’histoire. Par attitude, je veux dire un mode de relation à l’égard de l’actualité ; un choix volontaire qui est fait par certains ; enfin, une manière de penser et de sentir, une manière aussi d’agir et de se conduire qui, tout à la fois, marque une appartenance et se présente comme une tâche.” FOUCAULT Michel, « Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ? » [1\textsuperscript{er} éd. 1984], in Dits et écrits, IV, 1980-1988, NRF Gallimard, Bibliothèque des sciences humaines, 1994, p. 568.
sessions (1962), there are many events in the history of jazz that, by their (r)evolutionary nature, invite to think modernity.

Keeping in mind the fact that modernity is a pluralist and multi-layered notion, here are a few non exhaustive and open leads that can pave the way to think jazz and modernity.

**Modernity, contemporaneity and postmodernity**

What does “modern” jazz mean today? To what extent can one speak about “modern” jazz at a time when “postmodernity” has taken over numerous aesthetics discourses? Here are questioned the current jazz forms, and the categories of performance, improvisation, spontaneity, and the figure of what one may call a “super-musician”, who finds in all kinds of musics the inspiration for a “creative” or “postmodern” music. One may also study the way modernity “has found itself grappling with counter-modern attitudes”\(^8\), and maybe also with itself, regarding the fact it sometimes became tradition\(^9\).

**Jazz in its time**

The history of jazz has followed a parallel path to the one of recording techniques\(^10\): it would be interesting to pursue the thought on the relation between jazz and sound recording or technology in general (particular system, video recordings of improvised performances, marks, diffusion modes, listening modes, recording techniques as part of creation, computer-assisted improvisation, etc.). If jazz is associated with technical modernity, it has also embodied a certain primitivism\(^11\): what of this contradiction now and then? What does it say about its time? Moreover, what can jazz, understood as a social phenomenon, reveal about its time?

**Jazz and other arts**

Here one may interrogate the way theatre, cinema, literature, etc., can use jazz as a paradigm of modernity, and by extension the way jazz is represented on and off stage, its relation to the body, dance\(^12\) and the scene. One may study as well the relationship between jazz and other musics, especially Poulenc’s or Stravinsky’s “modern music”, which lay in between strict typological separation and mutual influence. For instance, is John Lewis a modern musician simply because he so labels his quartet, or because he explicitly refers (among others) to Bartok or Schoenberg, or for any other reason, or is he even not?

The issues that are sketched are aesthetic as well as musicological, historical, sociological, anthropological, etc. Every subject is welcome. Please send contributions before 31 December 2014 to epistrophy@epistrophy.fr with a title, an abstract and a short bio-bibliography. Contributions can include photos, music and/or videos in separate files, according to the norms indicated in the guideline [link].

---

8 Michel Foucault again: “Plutôt que de vouloir distinguer la "période moderne" des époques "pré" ou "postmoderne", je crois qu'il vaudrait mieux chercher comment l'attitude de modernité, depuis qu'elle s'est formée, s'est trouvée en lutte avec des attitudes de "contre-modernité"” ([Ibid.]).


