

Laurent Cugny, Paris / France

JAZZ RESEARCH IN FRANCE

In June 2008, I was among a few dozen jazz and pop/rock musicologists at the Mannes Institute annual meeting held that year in Rochester, with the topic »Jazz Meets Pop«. Henry Martin was in charge of a general introduction on the history of jazz studies and mentioned, among other writings, two academic reviews: the *Annual Review of Jazz Studies*, edited in the USA, and *Jazzforschung / Jazz Research*, published in Austria. After his speech, Henry came to me and apologized for not having quoted *Les Cahiers du jazz*, acknowledging that he forgot to do so. As I thought about it, I found some logic in what seemed to our dismayed host a mistake. I still believe that *Les Cahiers du jazz* is a valuable review but it obviously lacks visibility and international resonance. Of course, its publication in a language other than English is still a strong handicap, while *Jazzforschung* has made the effort to publish articles in both languages, German and English – but this may not be the only reason for the fact that the Austrian review is far better known in the academic jazz world than its (older¹) French counterpart. Let's say, as a first rough appraisal, that the latter is more literary and the former more analytically oriented.

As usual in this kind of argument, it is useful to go back to the beginnings. I would like to do so by addressing three questions – naturally much too quickly and superficially, as dictated by the present format. 1. What was the real role of Europe and European authors in jazz historiography? 2. Did France and French authors assume a specific role in this area? 3. What, in this global picture, was the real position of Robert Goffin and Hugues Panassié?

Early jazz historiography: USA versus Europe

In a book published in 1988, James Lincoln Collier exposed what he considered to be two myths, described as follows:

The history of jazz has been plagued by two myths which have badly distorted both the nature of American culture and the process by which jazz evolved from a local New Orleans music into a national – indeed international – phenomenon. The first of these myths says that the American people, until relatively recently, have ignored or despised jazz and that it lived its early years as a music of the black ghetto, appreciated elsewhere only by a handful of enlightened

1 *Les Cahiers du jazz* and *Jazzforschung / Jazz Research* published their first issue in 1959 and 1969 respectively.

white critics and musicians. This myth has been rubbed so deeply into the grain of jazz history that it appears in virtually every book on jazz that touches on the early development of the music. It has been accepted and repeated not only by jazz writers with particular axes to grind but also by many otherwise reliable scholars. (Collier 1988: 1)

The second myth which has clung like a burr to jazz history is the idea that it was first taken seriously by Europeans. Ina Dittke, in a recent issue of *Jazz Times*, says that American jazz musicians »could expect to be accorded much more reverence and respect in France than was forthcoming in their native land.« Whitney Balliett says that Hugues Panassié's early book *Hot Jazz* »put jazz on the map in Europe and in its own country«. The English writer Derek Jewell, in a biography of Duke Ellington, says that Ellington was »nurtured by Europe rather than his own country ...«. Delaunay says, »It is not altogether surprising that all its originality and promise were first discovered by the intellectuals of »old« Europe, the French *avant-garde* to be specific ... Ten years before America interested itself in jazz there existed an entire literature and a wide European public which passionately followed the appearance of new [jazz] records«. (Collier 1988: 2)

To examine whether these truly are myths, let us first take a look at who wrote what during the early periods of jazz, considering only U.S. and French authors and historiographical examples. Hugues Panassié is often viewed as one of those first specialists and supposed to be a pioneer in jazz writing. Born in 1912, he published about jazz as early as 1930 in Issue No. 3–4 of *Jazz – Tango – Dancing* (an article about Louis Armstrong). His major work, *Le jazz hot*, appeared in France in 1934 and was quickly translated and published as *Hot Jazz* in New York in 1936. What can we learn about his vision of the origins of jazz through this quote from *Le jazz hot*?²

We do not know much about the origins of hot interpretation, nor about the origins of jazz music itself. The French trumpet player Ray Binder, under the title »History of jazz«, published on that subject a few articles briefly summing up the most likely hypothesis about these origins. First, the distant source of jazz music: »Once upon a time was a country where chained-up Negroes worked as slaves for nasty New Orleans shipowners. This country, located southeast of the United States, has the Mississippi as its main arterial way. At that time, confining the river was of great importance, as it was always threatening the neighbouring cotton fields. For this work, one employed Blacks imported from Africa ... These Negroes where intensely unhappy: most of them pushed stakes into the ground and to help each other they did the job in *rhythm* – a rhythm which obviously had to be slow and steady. Their laments inevitably became songs in rhythm and it seems natural to see here the origin of »sung blues«. Negroes don't forget easily and a few years later the black slave, now a free citizen, taught his children the painful songs of his ancestors – *Saint Louis Blues*, *Memphis Blues*, *New Orleans Blues*, etc. – while scratching an old banjo. Here is the

2 Translated by myself.

national repertory that any American Negro knows and reveres as we revere our old French songs.« Binder then tells how, during the early part of our century, around the year 1903, some poor wretches put together street bands in New Orleans featuring cornet, clarinet, banjo, drums and trombone, playing old-time Negro themes. These street bands quickly became popular and were soon copied by numerous black and white musicians. This was the origin of the first jazz bands, which gained early success in America, mainly as dance orchestras for ragtime, blues and cake-walk. (Panassié 1934: 55–56)

We should not forget that Panassié was then very young (22 at the publication of the book) and that he lived in France – far away not only from the music itself but from other magazines and books as well; these of course did not travel fast in those early days. However, it's impossible not to notice the incompleteness of his knowledge, at least about the origins of jazz. It is clear that he was forced to rely on a series of articles by another French author and probably did not read anything else; not only does he take for granted a story which was highly problematic – even in 1934 – of the sudden birth of jazz in 1903, but he is obviously ignorant of the provenance of »Saint Louis Blues« and »Memphis Blues«, composed by W.C. Handy in 1909–1912 and 1917, respectively – and as such are in no way »painful songs of the [freed black slave's] ancestors«. This quotation seems to acknowledge Collier's myth #2, or at least invalidate Whitney Balliet's assertion that Panassié's book »put jazz on the map in Europe and in its own country.«³.

What could Panassié have read, had he been in the USA and looked for historiographical writings about jazz or related musics? He could have discovered that the music of the slaves had been studied and transcribed as early as the second half of 19th century (Spaulding 1863, Allen, Ware and McKim 1867, Marsh 1872, Fenner and Rathburn 1874, Tonsor 1892, Edwards 1895, Barton 1898 and 1899, Murphy 1899, Hallowell 1901, Peabody 1903, Ballanta-Taylor 1925, Johnson and Johnson 1925 and 1926). He could have known that the music then known as »rag-time« had been widely discussed, at least from 1899 (Converse 1899). He could have discovered that a white lawyer from New York by the name of Abbe Niles had made a serious study of the blues (Niles 1926). In the press, we find in a 1915 article from the Chicago Daily Tribune entitled »Blues Is Jazz and Jazz Is Blues«, (Seagrove 1915) – an astonishingly modern approach to this very new music, some time after another journalist had heralded the emergence of a new word – »This word is ›Jaz‹. It is also spelt ›jazz‹« (Hopkins 1913). Some time later more specialized articles followed by scholars such as Don Knowlton and Henry Osgood, who both published articles in the same year – 1926 – identically entitled »The Anatomy of Jazz« (Knowlton 1926, Osgood 1926). Paul Whiteman, the anti-hero of the time, nevertheless wrote a book that is – and certainly was – worth reading (Whiteman 1926). And nobody can forget that what probably was one of the very first serious transcriptions of a jazz recording (»Black & Tan Fantasy« by Duke El-

3 The question of whether or not jazz musicians were better recognized and welcomed in Europe is another story.

lington with Bubber Miley) was from the hand of an American dancer (and jazz lover), Roger Pryor Dodge. (Dodge 1929)

This listing (far from exhaustive) prompts us to consider that Collier could be right in stating that the lack of interest of Americans towards jazz is a myth (even if we are now talking about pre-jazz musics).

Early jazz historiography: France

What was written in France at that time about the new music? The first and probably most famous article was written by the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet about a London performance by Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra featuring Sidney Bechet: *Sur un orchestre nègre* [On a negro orchestra], published in 1919 in the *Revue romande* (Ansermet 1919). Everyone remembered the prophetic last paragraph:

There is in the Southern Syncopated Orchestra an extraordinary clarinet virtuoso who is, so it seems, the first of his race to have *composed on the clarinet* perfectly formed *blues*; I've heard two which he elaborated at great length, then played to his fellow musicians so they can do the comping. Very different from one another, they were both admirable equally for their richness of invention, their force of accent, and their daring novelty and unexpected turns. They already show the germ of a new style. Their form was gripping, abrupt, harsh, with a brusque and pitiless ending like that of Bach's second Brandenburg Concerto. I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius; as for myself, I shall never forget it – it is Sidney Bechet. When one has tried so often in the past to find one of those figures to whom we owe the creation of our art as we know it today – those men of the 17th and 18th centuries, for example, who, from dance airs, wrote expressive works and cleared the way for Haydn and Mozart, who are not the beginning of it but the culmination – what a moving thing it is to meet this black, fat boy with white teeth and narrow forehead, who is very glad one likes what he does, but can say nothing of his art, except that he follows his »own way« – and then one considers that perhaps his »own way« is the highway along which the whole world will swing tomorrow. (Ansermet 1919: 131–132)

There is naturally a great deal in this statement at which to be amazed. First, of course, there is Ansermet's foresight of the importance to come of this music and the value of this particular musician – most of the observers would have considered Bechet at best good entertainment. But Ansermet also has the boldness to dare to compare Bechet with the great Bach and talk of the »genius« of these black street acrobats.

It's a pity, however, that this article has so often been reduced to its last paragraph; the whole text is as profound as its ending. Not only is it an important document about the music played in the times when recordings were still very rare (almost no black players had been recorded at that point and the description of the performance is very precise and informative), but moreover, important and profound ideas are expressed here, at a time when such ideas were practically unheard of. We can see, for example, one of the early descriptions of the blue note phenomenon:

In the melodic field, even if his habituation to our scales has erased in him the remembrance of the African modes, an old instinct encourages the black musician to seek his pleasure outside of the usual intervals: he realizes neither major nor minor thirds, false seconds, and often reaches by instinct to natural harmonic sounds of a given note; then, no written music can render his playing. I often noticed for example, that in this portion of one of the most widespread secular melodies [here is included a transcription of three bars of »Saint Louis Blues'« main theme in G], the A# and the Bb, the E and the Eb are not the sounds of our scale. [p. 130]

But the main idea is probably Ansermet's warning that, in this music, the interpretation is more important than the composition, the way of playing is to be heard first.

[...] Black music is not material, it is spirit. [p. 128] It is not enough to say that black music consists of the habit of »syncopating« whatever musical material. We saw that syncopation was itself only the consequence of an expressive need, the appearance in the rhythm field of a particular taste and actually of a race genius. [p. 129] There is a black way to play the violin and a black way to sing. [p. 129–130] [...] The importance of the writer in the creation of a work is strongly balanced by the action of tradition, represented by the performer. The work can be written but it is not *fixed*, and it is totally realized only with its performing. [p. 131]

Much later, other authors will talk of process and product; here is one early, obvious seed of this paradigm.

As it happened, though, Ansermet was only a visitor, a shooting star. He would never again write about jazz⁴ and was not really heard by his followers in the field of jazz commentary. Panassié would discover this article very late and be fascinated by it to the point to reprint it in the – then very young – Jazz Hot magazine (November/December 1938).

What are other milestones in French writing about jazz during these early times? Olivier Roueff and Denis-Constant Martin listed some press articles that show that the reception of jazz was real as early as the early 1920s. But the two main texts are André Schaeffner's *Le jazz*, published in 1926, along with *Le jazz*, a lengthy analytical article by Arthur Hoérée published in *La revue musicale* in 1927.

Schaeffner's is often presented as the first book about jazz, but it is actually much more about African music. Jazz is for Schaeffner a prism through which he looks at the object which truly interests him: the music of the Dark Continent.

The music of the Negroes from Africa and America, whatever it is, brings directly before our eyes the sight of a properly *elementary* art, bound much more to the conditions of the native land than to any other. It finds besides something vegetal – in the making and timbre of the instruments, in a boldness of

4 He had other opportunities to show his interest for Afro-American music, for example by inviting one of the very first Black opera singers, Marian Anderson, to perform in Switzerland in November and December 1934.

growth and a longevity that marks their singing and in the flexible way to fit indistinctly to any expression, whether joyous or sad. From violent musics from Africa up to the West Indies planters' singing or from Louisiana, to the *spirituals* and to *jazz* at last, it is always about the same musical fact, under aspects which, strangely, hardly vary: a bag of expressions reduced to its minimum – even to a distressing simplification – that would nonetheless lead to the conquest of three continents. (Schaeffner 1926: 14)

As well as Ansermet's text, this one has the great merit of emphasizing the fact that jazz is a black music and that we never should forget it, where other observers from the same period looked for jazz in Paul Whiteman or George Gershwin. It is, however, important to notice that Schaeffner's main interest is in the African field itself. Black jazz, live or recorded, was of course very rare, but it can't obscure the fact that not a single black musician is studied or even quoted in this book.

The same observation can be made about Hoérée's article, to an even more disturbing extent. Indeed, while Schaeffner was focusing mainly on the instruments, Hoérée aspires to deliver a musical analysis of the music. Thus, it's rather embarrassing to see him focusing on fox-trots and making assertions like the following:

Contrary to a common idea, I do not consider jazz an essentially negro expression, rather a negro interpretation of an art by the white race and of European origin. However, some American musicians have managed to crystallize its various elements with positive results. The examination of the first fox-trots allow me to propose this hypothesis [...]. Indeed, the negro characteristics («staggered» rhythms, choral effect, melancholy) that we like in jazz expressions of today do not occur in fox-trots from 1915 to 1917 and even 1918. They appear because of the evolution of the genre itself, reaching toward a complete seduction, where elements of European origin (sinuous outline of the countermelodies, logically developed form, harmonic subtlety) obviously prevail in the language of jazz. (Hoérée 1927: 227)

We notice here – even if it does not render otherwise possible perceptive observations impossible – a clear misconception of the object at hand revealed by a totally inappropriate corpus. The same could be said of a German text published the same year 1927: *Das Jazz-Buch* by Alfred Baresel: a book purportedly dealing with jazz which focuses to a great extent on Ernst Krenek's opera *Jonny spielt auf*.

Robert Goffin and Hugues Panassié

Finally, what about the two great French-speaking authors, Robert Goffin and Hugues Panassié (the former a Belgian lawyer, the latter French)? As early as 1932 Goffin published *Aux frontières du jazz* [On the Borders of Jazz], two years before Panassié's *Le jazz hot*.

When explaining his need to begin writing a jazz history (even if he does not call it so), Goffin, always very lyrical, admits (and romanticizes) the fact that his exposure to

jazz has only been through recordings – he will cross the Atlantic in 1941 and stay in the USA until 1945:

Irreparable escape of the days. I struggle to look back and prepare myself, 1920–1930: there are now ten years of popular tunes waiting to be translated. I am alone with all my memories, which show reluctance when I play the least record on my Columbia. Tunes born in Harlem, the Negroes' paradise, or in any American ghetto will die in the small brabançon⁵ valley in which I live and where frightened tourists listen. Louis Armstrong, Hawkins, Jimmy Dorsey, Adrian Rollini and you, Joe Venuti, who have definitively domesticated the violin – it is high time that I proclaim to everyone your pure creative genius and, if the law gives me a bit of time, I will not fail to do it. (Goffin 1932: 11)

But this very generous statement is immediately followed by another in the form of a declaration of his own legitimacy, a legitimacy that he vehemently denies most others:

We are in Europe a scant few who can speak about it calmly; a few who I know well, for whom jazz has been a daily need that ten years were not enough to satisfy; there are probably some others whom I'd like to know and then I'd be happy. I deny a fairly high number of ignorants the right to talk about things they know only as an experience. They saw in jazz only a musical façade that they failed to layer on the African past; they did not feel what had to be felt. Only their mind expressed itself, because they left their heart imprisoned in the pre-war music. (Goffin 1932: 11–12)

One can recognize here the main themes that he (and Panassié, to an extent) will turn over and over during the whole '30s and '40s: jazz music should be received through the heart, not the mind, and its commentary should be reserved to experts who know the real, authentic music, who truly care about it and do not instrumentalize it to argue about any other subject – even if he himself insists on the Black character of the music:

There is a very thick history of jazz that begins with the pages that Coeuroy and Schaeffner wrote about it.⁶ Jazz starts where their book ends; it has the Edenic innocence of days we have not lived; it is as naive as the Negro slaves' singing on the Southern plantations, it is the expression of oppressed people without a fatherland and the deliverance cry of Negroes and Jews, instilled with their inexhaustible loneliness and stunning depression. (Goffin 1932: 13)

Panassié, two years later, exhibits his agreement with Goffin's vision first by respectfully but firmly stating his opinion of Schaeffner's *Le jazz* as interesting but rendered irrelevant by the author's ignorance:

⁵ From the Brabant, a region of Belgium.

⁶ Allusion to *Le jazz*, by André Schaeffner, co-signed by André Coeuroy co-signed (the latter actually only wrote the last part, consisting of a commentary on a survey conducted among personalities of the French musical world of the time.

It is, however, curious to think that the French lacked information on major elements of jazz for so many years. Indeed, Mr Coeuroy and Schaeffner wrote a book entitled *Le jazz*, devoting it to the – incidentally interesting – study of the distant origins of this music, but paying no attention to its definitive form. (Panassié 1934: 25)

Shortly later, Panassié acknowledges the work of his fellow writer Robert Goffin, but immediately distances himself by relegating him to a subordinate position, claiming that he, Panassié, held an objective and therefore superior one:

Robert Goffin, in his excellent book *Aux Frontières du Jazz*, works on the contrary on the present form of jazz. Though we do not consider these new pages useless, Robert Goffin is mostly concerned with describing jazz in a fairly subjective way through his own impressions. We propose to offer here, in a strictly objective exposure, the essential information required to know exactly of what real jazz, especially *hot* jazz, consists. If we leave out the question of the origins of jazz it is because, in spite of the interesting nature of the question, it does not bear directly on our topic. Our only goal is to give a precise notion of what jazz is, fixed in its definitive form, in order to try to dispel the regrettable misunderstanding that has lasted for so long. No mistake can be more fatefully attached to an art than *believing that one understands it while seeing it in a completely false aspect*. We hope that its detractors, considering it under a realer aspect, will see their objections fall apart. We beg the reader to liberate himself from all the legitimate prejudices of which he could conceive up till now, to examine without bias arguments that are not ours but the loyal rendering of those of the great jazz musicians. In short, to listen to this cause as though it had never before been heard. (Panassié 1934: 25–26)

Of course, it is not without irony that the most biased author, the one steeped in prejudices and who would soon reveal himself as the most intolerant of all jazz writers, requires of his readers – apparently very sincerely – objectivity, lack of prejudice, and a serene observation of a reality that would only ask to be viewed as it occurs in the real world. We notice, too, how easily he distances himself from the necessity to know the story of the origins, and we would say more: to know the history of this music further than a few years back. We keep from this statement Hugues Panassié's establishment of legitimacy, ultimate legitimacy, for himself – since in his view even Robert Goffin is less expert than he.

The problem is that both of them are true experts, but only relative experts. Neither of them knows musical theory (Panassié learned some saxophone with Christian Wagner but he admits that he did not go very far). We have seen that Panassié has a very approximate view of the origins of jazz. Last but not least, he indisputably knows jazz records very well (possibly all jazz records, not that there were so many in the middle of the '30s), but he experienced the real live music only through US expatriates, non-US musicians or when US musicians came to France, for instance Duke Ellington in 1933 and Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway in 1934.

That is not to say that both were not important authors in the canon of jazz commentary. Both were pioneers in the field; both initiated important ideas for the history and the theory of this music. To Robert Kennedy for example:

If not the first, then certainly the most influential attempt at understanding jazz improvisation and the catalyst for subsequent studies was by the French critic Hugues Panassié. In his 1934 book, translated and made available to the English-speaking world in 1936 as *Hot Jazz*, he discusses – in often difficult-to-decipher prose – what he feels are the most characteristic features from the »hot style« of jazz (a designation Panassié uses to distinguish it from the commercial jazz of such bands led by Paul Whiteman and Jack Hylton, which was widely regarded at the time as jazz). (Kennedy 1987: 37)

And one page later:

This mention of the role of memory in jazz improvisation is probably Panassié's most extraordinary observation – one that strikes at the very heart of the myths about jazz improvisation. It has been picked up and corroborated by others in subsequent studies. (Kennedy 1987: 38)

Once again, the point here is not to deny the legitimacy of these authors' place in the history of jazz commentary but to put in perspective their contributions and their importance. They are important authors, but not the first nor the only ones. There are strengths and weaknesses in their views, as with any such author; the weaknesses in Panassié's perception of early jazz history are particularly visible. In addition, both have the disadvantage of all European (or non-US) writers of not being on the spot; embarrassing since they themselves proclaim the importance of expertise and set themselves in the position of absolute experts, which they are obviously not. I have to confess that I find much more real expertise in Winthrop Sargeant's *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, published only four years after *Le jazz hot* (and apparently without having read Panassié). This author is actually more modest in the goal he addresses with this book, as he explains in the introduction:

The particular field that *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* sets out to explore, however, has as far as I am aware remained almost exclusively its own. It is not primarily a critical or a biographical or a historical book. Its purpose is descriptive. What evaluation it contains is limited mainly to the consideration of jazz as a type of art compared with other types of art. Its task has been to define jazz, to analyse its musical anatomy, to trace its origins and influences, to indicate the features that distinguish it from other kinds of music and that give it its unique place in the music of the world. (Sargeant 1938: 9)

In fact, one finds here a great deal of reliable information and reflection about jazz music (most of it still usable nowadays). One example is a table Sargeant proposes, synthesizing the origins of jazz (Sargeant 1938: 45). Excepting some minor points the general structure, at least, is astonishingly acceptable even today; in any case much more accurate than the mist that seems to surround these same origins in Panassié's mind. We could say the same for many other theoretical parts of Sargeant's book as well.

What next ?

Of course, the history of French historiography does not stop here. If I have devoted so much space to these early manifestations, it is because they still appear as a decisive beginning, shaping much of what was to come.

By quoting Ernest Ansermet, André Schaeffner, Arthur Hoérée, Robert Goffin and Hugues Panassié, we have evoked the most prominent names in the field. The next would with no doubt be the one of André Hodeir. Born in 1921, he was at first a violinist but quickly abandoned it as a professional activity, dedicating himself to composing, arranging, and writing. He started with books for the general public, such as *Le jazz, cet inconnu* (Jazz, This Unknown) in 1945 and *Introduction à la musique de jazz* (Introduction to Jazz Music) in 1948. During this period he is very much influenced by Hugues Panassié, but it is the time of the severe argument known as »The Jazz War«, pitting »moldy figs« (figes moisis) against »sour grapes« (raisins aigres). Panassié cannot stand the new music known as bebop and decrees that it is no longer jazz music. This so-called war intensifies, leading finally to a schism in the network of hot clubs and the break between Panassié and his followers and the young and active newcomers to the jazz sphere, united around Charles Delaunay and the magazine *Jazz Hot*: André Hodeir, Frank Ténot, Lucien Malson and Boris Vian, along with some others. Hodeir is the news editor of *Jazz Hot* from 1947 to 1951; he lends the magazine a somewhat analytical tone, which is unusual for those times. In 1954 he publishes his magnum opus, *Hommes et problèmes du jazz*, soon to be translated and published in the USA in 1956 as *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*, today one of very few books about jazz translated from French. In 1962 a collection of articles, *Toward Jazz*, appears in the USA; it will not be published in France until 1984. Another one of Hodeir's major works is *Les mondes du jazz*, published in 1970.

Hodeir, along with Gunther Schuller – their general visions are very similar – is one of the first jazz theorists with a solid musical knowledge. That allows him to speak not only about history but also to attempt an inquiry into the making of jazz itself, for example by trying to explain the improvisation process of jazz soloists directly.

A new generation of jazz commentators arrived in the 1960s with Alain Gerber, Michel-Claude Jalard, Philippe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli, among others. Carles and Comolli published a modestly successful work in 1971 that was very much influenced by LeRoi Jones's *Free Jazz, Black Power*.

The first French university course in jazz history was initiated in 1970 at the Sorbonne. Bassist Jacques B. Hess held it for some twenty years before Philippe Baudoin – a major jazz historian – took it over. At the turn of the 21st century, the first university positions held by jazz specialists appeared: Vincent Cotro (Tours), Philippe Michel (Paris-VIII – Saint-Denis), Philippe Gumpłowicz (Dijon) and myself (Paris-IV Sorbonne).

One can see from this brief overview that jazz research is in rather good shape in France as well as in many other European countries. This article has attempted to provide a few elements to discussion of many pertinent questions, above all: What is the true place of French jazz criticism in the world picture?

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Zusammenfassung

Einer weit verbreiteten Meinung zufolge entstand die Jazzforschung in Europa, und Frankreich mit Robert Goffin und Hugues Panassié spielte dabei eine Hauptrolle. Eine andere These, die diese stützt, geht davon aus, dass wesentliche Bevölkerungsteile der USA am neu aufkommenden Jazz nicht interessiert waren und diesem – nicht zuletzt aus rassenideologischen Gründen – Missachtung zuteil wurde. James Lincoln Collier tritt dem in einem 1988 erschienenen Buch entgegen und argumentiert, dass in den USA bereits in früherer Zeit – noch vor den Europäern – viele Kommentare zum Jazz wie auch zu dessen Vorformen veröffentlicht wurden.

Bei den französischen Autoren der 1920er und 30er Jahre, die sich mit Jazz beschäftigten, lassen sich zwei Gruppen ausmachen: eine, die selber musikalisch sehr gebildet war, jedoch nur wenig Jazz kannte (Ernest Ansermet, André Schaeffner, Arthur Hoérée), und die andere, die von ihrer Hörerfahrung her als Jazzexperten zu benennen war, selber jedoch über keinerlei nennenswerte Musikausbildung verfügte (hauptsächlich Robert Goffin und Hugues Panassié). 1934 veröffentlichte Panassié sein »Le Jazz hot«, das weite Verbreitung fand. Ein von der Qualität her mit Winthrop Sargeant's »Jazz: Hot and Hybrid« (1938) vergleichbares Werk sucht man jedoch in Frankreich vergeblich. Insofern steht die von James Lincoln Collier aufgebrachte Frage nach wie vor im Raum, welche Bedeutung es habe, wenn man sich als Autor fernab von jenem Geschehen befindet, über das man schreibt.

André Hodeir, der als einer der Gründer musikologischer Forschung im Bereich des Jazz gilt, ist in Frankreich im Wesentlichen eine singuläre Erscheinung. So stellt sich nicht zuletzt die Frage, ob es in Frankreich womöglich eine Hinwendung zu einer mehr literarischen bzw. philosophischen Aufarbeitung des Jazz gab. Eine Antwort darauf gibt die Gegenüberstellung zweier bedeutender Veröffentlichungsreihen, nämlich der österreichischen *Jazzforschung / Jazz Research* und der französischen *Les Cahiers du jazz*.