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FACULTY OF LETTERS  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY STUDIES

## **Summary**

# **Jazz Avatars in World Literature**

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2020

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**Keywords:** jazz, avatar, metaphor, primitivism, sexuality, violence, freedom, time, space, identity.

**Summary:**

The present work emerged from the need and desire to respond, in a positive manner, to the dissatisfaction manifested by numerous critics and theorists who witnessed, against their will, the conversion of jazz into metaphor. The critic and author Nat Hentoff probably expresses this inconvenience most directly, when he resumes the words of a renowned jazz teacher and collector, who stated: “I’m tired of jazz being treated as a metaphor rather than music”<sup>1</sup>. Gunter Schuller similarly accuses the tendency of jazz critics to approach music “in anything more than general descriptive or impressionistic terms”<sup>2</sup>. In a more friendly tone, David Yaffe notes that “there has been more literary material about life surrounding the music [...] than about the music itself”<sup>3</sup>. The technical components of music, says the American critic, “are less important than the feeling they invoke, the lifestyle they accompany, the muse they feed”<sup>4</sup>. However, at the conclusion of his book – without this observation being the starting point and the basis of the work – Yaffe notes that “jazz has appeared in a number of guises in American writing: as orgasm, as preadolescent fetish, as protest, as «a beam of lyrical sound», as primitivism, as ethnic crossover [...] but seldom as itself”<sup>5</sup>. In *Drifting on a Read: Jazz as a Model for Literary and Theoretical Writing*, Michael Jarrett uses these successive metamorphoses of music in his favour. “I imagine jazz as the musical and written dissemination of several culturally engendered images,”<sup>6</sup> the critic explains. These images, which aim to reproduce not what jazz is, but what it “says”, are converted by the author into four main tropes (*satura*, *obbligato*, *rhapsody*, and *charivari*), which are the basis of four distinct writing patterns. From the complex theoretical system developed by Michael Jarrett, we took the desire to favour an analysis of “representations as representations”<sup>7</sup>, at the expense of a predominantly musical approach to jazz. But these “representations” did not constitute, in our work, an exclusive cover of writing, as it happens in Jarrett’s case, but were extended outside this area, generating metaphors similar to those

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<sup>1</sup> See Nat Hentoff, *The Jazz Life*, Dial Press, New York, 1961, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1968, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> David Yaffe, *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2005, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Jarrett, *Drifting on a Read: Jazz as a Model for Literary and Theoretical Writing*, Doctoral Dissertation, under the direction of Gregory L. Ulmer, University of Florida, August 1988, 320 pages, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

invoked by David Yaffe. From the wide range of symbols that jazz provides, I have chosen – assigning them the name of “avatars” – four of the favourite masks of music: that of primitivism, sexuality, violence and freedom. Developing a work that is intended to be, to some extent, encyclopaedic (without claiming, at the same time, to exhaust the endless resources of jazz literature), we set out to offer a complex and unmediated approach to each metaphor in part. To fulfil this plan, we have divided the work as follows.

The first chapter, although it does not exemplify any of the four avatars, satisfies the natural and immediate need to know more closely the main aesthetic concept of the thesis, namely “jazz”, not so much as a musical phenomenon, but as a cultural process and a textual instrument. The first subchapter is built starting from the urge to present jazz through the prism of its many symbolic values, at the expense of a sordid inventory of technical or musical qualities. We have thus presented a history of the mysteries, controversies and paradoxes that African-American music contains and spreads in the renowned spirit of its generosity. Starting from the cultural background that jazz promotes, we have illustrated – with examples from literary history and from the critical field – its many antithetical values. We explored the tense dialogues proposed by Paul Rinzler in *The Contradictions of Jazz* and the definitions by which Jürgen Grandt or Steven C. Tracy tried to capture the unstoppable temperament of music, continuing with the patterns that underlie this work and culminating with the universal/American, African/European oppositions, from which the length and conflicts that arise between white and black, carnival and formal, sacred and profane, civilization and otherness, jazz and classical music, improvisation and composition come off. They are joined by new cultural disagreements that transform the jazz imaginary into a favourite place of dispute: primitivism and industrialism, suffering and its transcendence, modernism and postmodernism, community and supreme individuality, phallic, masculine authority, and feminine sexuality, transposed into a fluid and excessive writing practice, all of which cause jazz to be perceived through its many paradoxes.

The second part of this first chapter explores how jazz and literature “mutually illuminated one another”<sup>8</sup>, staging a show whose protagonists are often hampered by inaccurate and often contradictory indications that the two arts convey. If the absence of a hierarchy capable of ordering jazz and writing and the aura of mystery of music (which is the quintessence of this art itself, Stéphane Mallarmé stresses) make the relationship between the two arts difficult to clarify from the beginning, the overlap of the two codes – one analogical

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

and the other digital – transforms the task of mapping music into a challenging path. The intermingling of the structural characteristics of music with those of language, stated by Paul de Man and Michael Jarrett, who claims to renounce the opposition between music and language, is cancelled by the untranslatable character of jazz. However, theorists have been forced to create or attest to certain schools of thought capable of delimiting jazz literature. Whereas Michael Jarrett considers the syncopation and presence of jazz-specific cultural codes as inherent elements of jazz literature, Sascha Feinstein adopts an approach defined by two broad directions: that of jazz as form and that of jazz as subject. Romanian jazz expert Virgil Mihaiu believes that jazz poetry should be ordered not on two, but on three levels, adding to the formula proposed by Feinstein a third level, one that refers to the poetry for which jazz is a “sign of the era”<sup>9</sup>. All these definitions are, however, subsumed by Sascha Feinstein's even more generous definition, which considers that jazz literature – especially poetry – is the one “inspired” by the African-American music. I ended this chapter by paying tribute to those who, for over a hundred years, have populated the world literature with works that reflect, deliberately or accidentally, jazz music. A chronological analysis of this literature, organized, in an initial stage, by generations – so that, in the end, those who did not fall within the limits of these aesthetic segments could speak in their own name – invites contemplating a complex and dynamic artistic landscape, capable of synthesizing the artistic aspirations of the twentieth century.

In the second chapter, we observe how jazz, from its first representations in literature, assumes a rhetoric of primitivism that transforms it into a discourse of excess, of Dionysian ecstasy, of direct passion, of carnivalesque fission and grotesque dissonance. We notice, in the first part, how improvisation, the founding dogma of jazz discourse, envelops music in the mysterious aura of the irrational and the emotional as an immediate but transient reward, giving it a mythology of romantic abstraction. At the irrevocable indications of music, the scenery is transformed at once, allowing the wild cry of the jungle to pour its echo into the unleashed souls of the listeners embraced by the frenzy of profane glory. “Infected by the jazz bug”<sup>10</sup>, the protagonists of the jazz literature adopt “the role of the wild black man”<sup>11</sup>, becoming, like the characters of Claude McKay, the actors of “a primitive dance of war and love”<sup>12</sup>. “The marshalling of the spears”<sup>13</sup> and “the sacred frenzy of a phallic celebration”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Virgil Mihaiu, *Resonance Box*, Editura Albatros, București, 1985, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Eileen Simonow, in Kirsten Aigner-Krick & Marc-Oliver Schuster, (eds.), *Jazz in German-Language Literature*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2013, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1987, p. 196.

thus become capable of awakening the "roars thousands of millions of years old"<sup>15</sup> of a brontosaurus in whose body the sounds are poured out like huge tears, or bring back to life the robustness and the ancestral rhythms of the African people, as Langston Hughes does in his poetry. In associating jazz with "animalistic chaos,"<sup>16</sup> some authors, such as Percy Haselden, go so far as to suggest that the hypnotic force of jazz instigates the release of dark instincts, culminating in the cannibalistic act or the sabbatical ritual, unfolding against the background provided by a "shrieking, tortured music from the depths of hell"<sup>17</sup>. In Ralph Ellison's *Cadillac Flambé* short story, the primitive ritual, converted into an extremely pyromaniacal gesture, accompanied by a furious jazz recital, is updated by the urgent need to respond to equally radical acts of racism. The gesture of the revolted pyromaniac is confirmed, in the same first subchapter, by the predominantly primitive constitution of Norman Mailer's hipster, the product of a discourse of excess, passion and lack of forethought.

But the binary rhetoric of jazz discourse allows this primitivism to equally embrace the fragmented aesthetic form of modernism. The adoption of what Robert Goffin calls "primitive hearts"<sup>18</sup> forces, this time, to assume a new language, which "has as much originality as jazz"<sup>19</sup> and is capable of incorporating the tumultuous pulse of Africa. This language becomes the gestation space for a new vocabulary, by means of which Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Carl Sandburg, Mina Loy and T.S. Eliot aim to translate their aspiration towards something "clean, sparkling, elusive"<sup>20</sup>. This product of synthesis, resulting from a mythology of opulent and at the same time diffuse primitive spirituality, is capable of providing the means necessary to create a dialect different from what R.W.B. Lewis calls "the «Wall Street Idiom» of the poem"<sup>21</sup>. Thus, aspiring to the rewards of modernism, the poets urge their works to become more elastic and to balance in rhythm of jazz music (thus avoiding, J.G. Keogh would say, a mediocre poetic destiny<sup>22</sup>),

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Josef Skvorecky, *The Bass Saxophone*, Washington Square Press, New York, 1985, p. 141.

<sup>16</sup> Sascha Feinstein, *Jazz Poetry: From the 1920 to the Present*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1997, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven*, University Of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 2000, p. 254.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Goffin, *Horn of Plenty: The Story of Louis Armstrong*, Greenwood, Westport, 1978, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> William Carlos Williams, in Linda Welshimer Wagner, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams*, New Directions, New York, 1976, p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> Hart Crane in Brom Weber, (ed.), *The Letters of Hart Crane, 1919-1932*, University of California Publishing, Berkely, 1965, p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> R.W.B. Lewis, *apud* David Yaffe, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>22</sup> See J.G. Keogh, "Mr. Prufrock's Big City Blues", in *Antigonish Review*, Nos. 66-67, Summer-Autumn, 1986, pp. 75-79.

which becomes, for T.S. Eliot and his contemporaries, an important aesthetic extension, generating new poetic rhythms and able to support the hysterical dualism of modernism, which shows how "the most barbaric art tends to be the most up-to-date and sophisticated"<sup>23</sup>.

The primitive component of jazz, however, continues to maintain its original attributes and be perpetuated in the form of uncontrolled instinct and corporality. Authors such as Hermann Hesse, Mihail Bulgakov or Alejo Carpentier opt to undo the dualism present in "the divine grotesque"<sup>24</sup> of Crane's works and to place themselves in opposition to the desire of Wallace Stevens and Michael Ondaatje to bring together the blues of blacks and European choral music. Instead, they destabilize the dialogue between jazz and classical music, placing the two genres in a permanent dispute. If Bulgakov uses the primitive component of jazz (present in the musical performance of the monkey jazz band) to oppose the lack of inhibition of this show to the Muscovite rigidity represented by classical music, and Carpentier observes the "infernal cacophony"<sup>25</sup> and the "impossible harmony"<sup>26</sup> resulting from the attempt of reconciling the music of the whites with that of the "chunks", Hesse associates the music of the blacks with everything that is "instinctual, savage and chaotic"<sup>27</sup>, thus opposing it to the music of the stars, divine music, capable of transcribing the "frozen in space"<sup>28</sup> time. Jazz thus becomes the instigating element of the conflict between the "contemplation of distant, abstract concepts"<sup>29</sup> and "a directly accessible expression of humanity"<sup>30</sup>. The concepts of style and substance, improvisation and composition, primitivism and civilization, become the pillars of a space whose inhabitants, trying to reach both limits, end up becoming alienated. Thus, the main character of Michael Ondaatje's novel *Coming Through Slaughter* loses his mind "trying to play the devil's music and hymns at the same time"<sup>31</sup>. If these two poles cannot be merged, they can, however, be reversed, allowing jazz to become "something sacred and hermetic"<sup>32</sup>, in a "strange prayer of harshness and sweetness"<sup>33</sup> or in a "language of angels"<sup>34</sup> and "of an innocent cult"<sup>35</sup>, similar to the one represented in the novel *The Bass Saxophone*.

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<sup>23</sup> Saadi A. Simawe, (ed.), *Black Orpheus. Music in African American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 2000, p. xiii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Baroque concert*, trans. Dan Munteanu, Editura Univers, București, 1981, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, translation George Guțu, Editura Univers, București, 1983, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174

<sup>29</sup> Jane Olmsted, „Black Moves, White Ways, Every Body's Blues”, in Saadi A. Simawe, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Michael Ondaatje, *Coming Through Slaughter*, Vintage Books, New York, 1996, p. 134.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio Muñoz Molina, *Winter in Lisbon*, trans. Ileana Mihăilă, Leda, București, 2009, p. 217.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.



If the primitive imaginary of jazz places the music in a system of oppositions, causing it to contradict both itself and the demanding arguments of classical music, the sexual imaginary offers it a stable identity, which comes with its own antagonisms. Adopting – this time – the qualities of an exacerbated sexuality and, thus, contributing to the consolidation of an exclusively sensory space, jazz assumes its new role with an ease that attracts the sympathy of such authors as Norman Mailer, Julio Cortázar, Michael Ondaatje, Ann Petry, Gayl Jones, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker or Wallace Thurman, as well as the manifested contempt of E.E. Cummings's or Vachel Lindsay, who see in jazz a "global intoxicant,"<sup>36</sup> whose poisons are "sexual immorality and explicit vulgarity"<sup>37</sup>. In the first subchapter, jazz becomes the epicentre of an intense "phallic celebration" proposed by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the "aura of sexual excitement"<sup>38</sup> of the music being subsequently transferred to several works by Boris Vian and to the suffocating sexuality of the "bodies in combustion"<sup>39</sup> in Erico Verissimo's novel. In the supersaturated universe of the African-American author Alice Walker, jazz, placed on the border between spirituality and sexuality, becomes a ferment of the divine qualities absorbed in abundance by musicians transformed, through the goodwill of music, into the main actors of the beneficial conversion of the community. In *Home to Harlem* and *The Blacker the Berry*, jazz contributes to coagulating the image of a Harlem unified by ecstatic manifestations and "the sensual blare of jazz"<sup>40</sup>. In Cortázar's novel, *Rayuela*, the uncontrollable flow of jazz, which generates a "hot and panting"<sup>41</sup> atmosphere, triggers the dialogue, of bataillean inspiration, between violence, religion and eroticism. And in Ondaatje's novel *Coming Through Slaughter*, as well as in Michael Harper's *Dear John, Dear Coltrane* poem, the urgent need to sing is tantamount to the delirium and excesses of the sexual act it mimics by the paroxysmal emptying of the entire artistic content of the instrumentalists.

If the coexistence of jazz and sexuality does not induce, despite the victorious aesthetic gesture it proposes, a triumphant destiny, to Norman Mailer, it offers all the necessary conditions for obtaining an "apocalyptic orgasm", by which the author establishes

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<sup>34</sup> Josef Skvorecky, *op.cit.*, p. 121

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Sascha Feinstein, *Jazz Poetry*, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen E. Grandt, *Kinds of Blue. The Jazz Aesthetic in African American Narrative*, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2004, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Trupuri în combustie, Erico Verissimo, *Noapte*, trans. Micaela Ghițescu, Editura Vivaldi, București, 2011, p. 104.

<sup>40</sup> Carl Van Vechten, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, trans. Tudora Șandru Mehedinți, Editura Univers, București, 1998, p. 34.

an aesthetic of an ongoing present. This lubricating mysticism, which equates jazz with libido, divine energies and vital forces, is not only a form of therapy, but also the only weapon that can oppose the instinct of death. The poet Mina Loy, in turn, pays tribute to the aesthetic relationship between jazz and sexuality, using the dialogical qualities of music to articulate the fantasy of the meeting between celebration and mourning, effusion and silence, but also the protagonist and his absent lover. We also mention here the adverse effects that the poets E.E. Cummings and Vachel Lindsay, but also Toni Morrison's characters, associate with the relationship between jazz and sexuality. If, for the former, this is the main pretext of the aesthetic and moral feeding with a dangerous and enticing obscenity, for some of the characters of the novel *Jazz*, music – a relic of African primitivism – becomes, by its libidinal qualities, a devastating and devouring presence of present achievements, repressed memories, or unrealized projections.

This sexuality that is attached to jazz music transforms, in the third subchapter, the relationship between body and instrument. The personification and sexualization of the instruments, often based on the masculine tradition of jazz music, lead to a negotiation not only of black sexuality, but also of female sexuality in general. The objectification of women changes not only the perception of the artistic act, but also that of the body, and places them in the role of muse, in which they appear in many of the works approached. In Skvorecky's novella, the embrace of the legendary bass-saxophone is equivalent to wrapping "the beautiful neck of a silvery water monster"<sup>42</sup>, and, in Portuguese writer João Tordo's novel, the bass is portrayed as "a woman with wide thighs"<sup>43</sup>. In *Winter in Lisbon*, not only one, but all the instruments are transformed, in turn, into mistresses who take advantage of the musicians like "a woman of a lover who leaves her cold."<sup>44</sup> And if, for the pianist and composer Duke Ellington, the music is inseparable from the attributes of sexuality, and the drum is a woman, for Yusef Komunyakaa "the road / can never be a woman, / even if her name's whispered / across skin"<sup>45</sup>. Nicole's shoulders, from the novel *Tender Is the Night*, remind of the shoulders of a violin that makes Dick think "of the dishonour, the secret"<sup>46</sup>. For Langston Hughes' characters, from *The Blues I'm Playing* short story, controlling the music is equivalent to controlling the sexuality of Oeola, and in the poem *Ardella*, by the same

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<sup>42</sup> Josef Skvorecky, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

<sup>43</sup> João Tordo, *The Sabbatical Year*, D. Quixote, Lisboa, 2012, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Antonio Muñoz Molina, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Yusef Komunyakaa, in Sascha Feinstein & Yusef Komunyakaa, (eds.), *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, Volume 2, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, p. 113.

<sup>46</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, trans. Mircea Ivănescu, Editura Simrom & Europartner, 1993, p. 42.

author, the singers' songs become "extensions of their own bodies"<sup>47</sup>. In the novel *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones, the female reproductive organ, which the protagonist sees as "the centre of a woman's being",<sup>48</sup> is the one responsible for providing the "seeds" to be converted into music and which directly condition the making of the artistic act. We therefore found that the relationship between body, instrument and sexuality is so complex, that the literature that gravitates around the phallic authority of the microphone, the voyeurism of the spectators, the fetishizing of the music through the recording process or the exacerbated sexualisation of the musical instruments through which the sexual and artistic climax are touched at the same time, is no longer able to surprise us.

In the fourth chapter, we show that "there is more than a casual connection between jazz and violence"<sup>49</sup>, as the critic Jürgen Grandt says. Initially, jazz is presented as "simulacrum of ritual murder"<sup>50</sup>, highlighting the ability of music to translate a tumultuous way of life, whose density and moral syncopation are extended beyond the limits of the bearable. In a Harlem soaked with the "violent colouring of life",<sup>51</sup> the characters of Carl Van Vechten and Claude McKay, penetrated by the opaque energies of primitivism, resort to acts of not only intense, but also irrational violence. Jazz is guilty, however, not only of acts performed under the impetus of the moment, but also of long-term actions. Poet Vachel Lindsay sees in African music a way not only to provoke crime, but also to celebrate it, and the saxophone becomes the favourite instrument of criminals, because, says the poet, "none but an assassin would enjoy this horn."<sup>52</sup> Without assigning such guilt, Carl Sandburg and Peter Bowman also associate jazz with the intensity and deadly circumstances of war. In *Winter in Lisbon*, music is able to sow through its unfathomable mystery, terror and disorder. At other times, music becomes, without its will, a horizon on the heights of which foreign crimes or murders of one's own body<sup>53</sup> are clearly marked, as it happens in Michael Ondaatje's novel. And in James Baldwin's short-story, violence can be the only way to access

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<sup>47</sup> Katherine Boutry, "Black and Blue: the Female Body of Blues Writing in Jean Toomer, Toni Morrison, and Gayl Jones", in Saadi A. Simawe, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> Jürgen Grandt, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1985, p. 28.

<sup>51</sup> Claude McKay, *op.cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>52</sup> Vachel Lindsay, *A Curse for the Saxophone*, in Dennis Camp, (ed.), *The Poetry of Vachel Lindsay*, Vol. I, Spoon River Poetry Press, Peoria, 1984, p. 394.

<sup>53</sup> See Michael Ondaatje, *Coming through Slaughter*, p. 49.

music, because, listening to Sonny, we understand that "sometimes you would do anything to play; you would strangulate your own mother [...] Or your brother [...] Or yourself"<sup>54</sup>.

If in this first subchapter, the jazz song becomes synonymous with talking about "bodies in the river, knives, love pains, cockiness"<sup>55</sup>, in the following one, music becomes the spokesman for the tragic and violent history of the African-American soul. The schematic and unidimensional aspect of violence in the preceding subchapter is corrected by the profound and multidimensional character of violence born on the border between the American Dream and the American Nightmare, between chimera and reality. The impulse to kill is directed, this time, against a collective evil. The protagonist of Ann Petry's novel thus destroys, at the repetitive and obsessive urge of jazz, the very "street", a painful synthesis of "everything she fought against"<sup>56</sup>. And the music, which was initially presented to her as a way to "sing her way out of the street"<sup>57</sup>, becomes destructive through the illusion it perpetuates. Ann Petry's resigned and fragile tone takes on strident undertones in the works of Langston Hughes, Xam Wilson Cartiér or Amiri Baraka, where music, recognized as an asset of African-American identity, becomes, at the same time, a recipient of a sanguinary past and an embryo of a revolutionary ideology that, by transforming jazz into machine gun fire, uses it to combat and outclass the "white" culture.

In the third subchapter, we follow in the novels of Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, and Ann Petry the evolution of the tragic and hostile fate of the blues singers. The music triggers, this time, a violence stemming from the mysterious power and dangerous sexuality attributed to the dark forces of these "Red Hot" and "Evil" "mamas". The "paradoxical anxiety of female performance as a sexual danger inimical to motherhood"<sup>58</sup> and the negative consequences of the music capable of designing a "persona blues" that becomes the main source of power and suffering of the characters, are largely discussed here. We also discover that, despite its profoundly violent character, jazz can manifest itself, in numerous novels, as an agent of reconciliation. The same three novels (*Jazz*, *Corregidora* and *The Street*), which are joined by the works of Ntozake Shange and Alice Walker, are analysed in the light of music's ability to act as a healing force. Thus, we observe how jazz recomposes the life of Toni Morrison's characters, protects the protagonist of Ann Petry's novel from the dangers of

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<sup>54</sup> James Baldwin, *Blues for Sonny*, in *From the Wild*, trans. Corina Cristea and Petru Popescu, Editura Univers, București, 1971, p. 144.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Ondaatje, *op.cit.*, p.43.

<sup>56</sup> Ann Petry, *The Street*, Mariner Books, New York, 1998, p. 429.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>58</sup> Katherine Boutry in Saadi A. Simawe, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 106.

commodifying female sexuality, favours the reconciliation of Gayl Jones's character with her own past, by replacing her dysfunctional reproductive organs, points to Shange's characters, through its cathartic effects, the way towards healing, and makes known, in Alice Walker's work, the therapeutic powers capable of transforming even a criminal into a better version of himself.

In the fifth chapter of the thesis, jazz acquires the uncertain consistency of freedom and its polyvalent imaginary. The first subchapter explores the process of individual transgression and that of collective fixation, agglutinated by the unshaken belief that "the world means possibility"<sup>59</sup>, but not before examining the many spatial, temporal and climatic compressions and deconstructions that jazz produces in Boris Vian's or Toni Morrison's novels. Afterwards, the way in which jazz contributes to the creation and amplification of democracy is specified and closely approached, its musical and aesthetic success becoming, in equal measure, "a victory for democracy"<sup>60</sup>, transposed into the new aesthetic-political conception of *jazzocracy*. The conflicts between tradition and rebellion, structure and improvisation, individual and collective, subordinated to this concept, have been revealed to us as the main coordinates of Ralph Ellison's work. His writings betray a strong desire to establish a "delicate balance struck between strong individual personality and the group"<sup>61</sup>, obtained by a clever conversion of the uniqueness of improvisation into a harmony capable of integrating a multitude of voices, with different racial, political, aesthetic, and political resonance. The mythological association of jazz with democracy is, however, being challenged by those who, like Theodor W. Adorno, see in music a deeply ideological manifestation. At the aesthetic level, this vision is transposed into a desire to challenge an improvisation perceived, by authors like J.D. Salinger, as a disciplined, rigorous and predictable language. The essence of music is not reduced, however, to protest and to its ability to battle against ideological expressions, be they political or literary in nature. We thus notice how, in Dorothy Baker's novel and in the short-stories of Julio Cortázar and James Baldwin, jazz exercises, through its cathartic qualities, that "explosive creative energy"<sup>62</sup>, as the author Josef Skvorecky calls it, and that, together with an exacerbated individualism, is able to provide access to a sublime "freedom of ascending"<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, trans. Ovidiu-Gheorghe Ruta, Editura ALLFA, București, 2012, p. 537.

<sup>60</sup> Stanley Crouch in Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry Weinberger & M. Richard Zinman, (eds.), *Democracy & the Arts*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1999, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> Ralph Ellison in Robert G. O'Meally, (ed.), *Living with Music: Ralph Ellison's Jazz Writings*, Modern Library, New York, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Josef Skvorecky, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> David Yaffe, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

In the second subchapter, the demiurgical attributes of music are observed in terms of its ability to dismantle traditional language and conventional narrative techniques, intimidated by the obvious lack of conduct of a fluent and predominantly oral language. Under the influence of music, literature becomes a kaleidoscopic universe of potentialities, where writing and reading are transformed into "functions of possibility"<sup>64</sup>. We have noticed, therefore, how in Cortázar's novel *Hopscotch*, jazz, corresponding, in the author's opinion, to "the great surrealistic ambition in literature, namely automatic writing"<sup>65</sup>, acquires the attributions of total improvisation, absolute creation and pure automatism. Not paying an equal tribute to the surrealism cultivated by the Argentine author, Amiri Baraka and Ishmael Reed use, in order to design or invoke a language that often defies logic, the aesthetic premises of free jazz. The unpredictable language of simultaneity and contrasts evoked by the free-jazz style awakens in both authors the desire to bring to the surface both the cry of pain of the ones who were "split in half by sorrow"<sup>66</sup> and a humour meant to undermine any form of unitary and conventional manifestation, or an urgent need to put to use some "verbal pyrotechnics"<sup>67</sup>. These obvious attempts to overrule the authorial authority are balanced, at the end of this act, by Toni Morrison's seemingly inaccurate and improvised – but, in fact, extremely rigorous and long planned - writing.

The third subchapter, dedicated to the Beat Generation, aims to portray both the dissonant and paroxysmal way of life of this generation, derived from jazz music, as well as the dense, unpredictable, challenging and undoubtedly innovative writing of the authors who compose it. "Jazz America"<sup>68</sup> becomes, in this context, the favourite space of a music that translates the "countless and extravagant and innocent happenings"<sup>69</sup> imagined by Jack Kerouac's characters or the dangerous way of life of Norman Mailer's hipster, a music that offers "real relaxation and knowledge"<sup>70</sup>, that illuminates "the supernatural darkness of miserable apartments"<sup>71</sup>, liberates cities and brings "the blues blow life"<sup>72</sup>, a music that assaults the inert reality with its army of angels in overalls, an art capable of generating "a

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<sup>64</sup> See Michael Jarrett, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>65</sup> Julio Cortázar, *apud* Virgil Mihaiu, *Cutia de rezonanță*, p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> Amiri Baraka, *Class Struggle in Music II*, *apud* Mary Ellison, "Jazz in the Poetry of Amiri Baraka and Roy Fisher", in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 24, 1994, pp. 117-145, p. 127.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Jarrett, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>68</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, trans. Cristina Felea, Editura Univers, București, 1998, p. 197.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>71</sup> Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, in *Howl and other poems. Anthology 1947-1997*, trans. Domnica Drumea and Petru Ilieșu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2010, p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> Bob Kaufman, *War Memoir*, in Sascha Feinstein and Yusef Komunyakaa (eds.), *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, p. 112.

language of energy"<sup>73</sup> and shaping new idols (saxophonist Charlie Parker, "the Perfect Musician"<sup>74</sup> and "the patron saint"<sup>75</sup> of this generation). But Jazz does not provide this generation with only the fundamentals of a new way of life, but also important stylistic resources, thus becoming "a source of energy, method, and style"<sup>76</sup>. Michael McClure's "projective verse", the concept of "routine" formulated and applied by William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg's spontaneous, prophetic, energetic and disruptive writing, the terrifying and unpredictable flow of Bob Kaufman's poetry or the bop prosody, transposed in a "marathon linguistic flow"<sup>77</sup> designed by Jack Kerouac, all of these illustrate the impressive ability of this generation to reproduce, at a stylistic level, the essential structures of jazz.

The last chapter of the thesis, dedicated to Portuguese literature, follows, at first, how a series of consecrated Portuguese poets, such as André Shan Lima, Levi Condinho, Almada Negreiros, Natália Correia, Manuel de Freitas, Maria do Céu Guerra, Adolfo Casais Monteiro or António Ferro, have managed to transpose the qualities of jazz into an art dominated by an obsessive, omnipotent, but absolutely necessary music, because, in a world where "everything is a matter of swing"<sup>78</sup>, "we need Jazz"<sup>79</sup>. The second subchapter is dedicated to exemplifying, in three Portuguese novels, the ability of music to reproduce three of the primary functions associated with the concept of freedom, namely that of time, space and identity. We noticed, then, how Lídia Jorge claims an absolute reign of the "empire of the present moment"<sup>80</sup>, that extends its dominance over a past which, in a purely jazzy way, adjusts and reinterprets it, generating, permanently, new realities. From the point of view of time, music tends to unify through a shift of the other temporal segments towards an eternal present, but, on an identity level, jazz acts, in the novel of the Portuguese author, on the contrary, as an agent of dispersion, which transposes it in the typical Portuguese process of heteronomy. If, in Lídia Jorge's novel, the intervention of music proves to be wide but, to a certain extent, moderate, in the novel *The Sabbatical Year* by João Tordo, the dominance of jazz is absolute. Ruled in a despotic manner by music, João Tordo's fictional universe

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<sup>73</sup> Norman Mailer, *The White Negro*, p. 9

<sup>74</sup> Jack Kerouac, *239th Chorus*, in S. Feinstein and Y. Komunyakaa, (eds.), *The Jazz Poetry Anthology*, p. 116.

<sup>75</sup> Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*, Lawrence Hill Books, Chicago, 1997, p. 191.

<sup>76</sup> Preston Whaley Jr., *Blows Like a Horn. Beat Writing, Jazz, Style and Markets in the Transformation of U.S. Culture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 2004, pp. 12-13.

<sup>77</sup> John Tytell, *Naked Angels: The Life and Literature of the Beat Generation*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1976, pp. 67-68.

<sup>78</sup> Vasco Graça Moura in José Duarte e Ricardo António Alves, (eds.), *Poezz. Jazz in Poetry in the Portuguese Language*, Almedina, Coimbra, 2004, p. 291.

<sup>79</sup> E.M. de Melo e Castro, *Time of times*, in José Duarte e Ricardo António Alves, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>80</sup> Lídia Jorge, *The Night of the Singing Women*, trans. Laura Bădescu, Editura Univers, București, 2014, p. 23.

becomes incapable of isolating the dream and the reality, which become mere containers in which the concepts of time, space and identity are added without any sense of measure. Identity, through the prism of the improvisation that conditions it, turns, in this novel, into a ductile concept with an immense dialogical potential, and time and space become expressions of the "meaninglessness of this world"<sup>81</sup>. Jazz in the novel *Miles Davis's Trumpet* by Francisco Duarte Azevedo similarly proposes a long and profound questioning of the concepts of space, time and identity. Under the influence of a more consistent and more vigorous jazz than the one invoked by Tordo in his novel, the mythical space of the *City* is redefined by an abbreviation that music favours through its amazing ability to quickly cross urban spaces. Through its voices, songs and variations, jazz similarly shortens a time compressed by a continuous bringing to the surface of the past. The protagonist's identity is also questioned by a jazz capable of establishing and dynamizing the routine, of stimulating and accompanying the love life of the character, which, like the trumpet in the title of the novel, is transformed, on the background of music, into a simple relic.

We noticed, in the five chapters dedicated to clarifying and illustrating the relationships established between jazz and primitivism, sexuality, violence, freedom, time, space or identity, that jazz is capable of partially or totally substituting any of these metaphors. However, this process, explored throughout the work, does not require further clarification. At a simple glance at these lines, one is able to observe that the history of jazz literature is, first and foremost, a history of ideas, and not a trivial musical inventory. Jazz was and continues to be an art of transfiguration, acting as a catalyst for language, ideas or a certain atmosphere, rather than as a mere musical constituent. To write about jazz literature means to write about jazz as a depository of symbols, because, as saxophonist and songwriter Wayne Shorter explains, "music is nothing... What music is for is something"<sup>82</sup>. At the end of this journey, we understood that African-American music will never cease to impose the despotic mechanisms of metaphor on literature. Not only because of its mobile identity, the ability of music to extrapolate through the prism of its many symbolic valences, but also because of the urgent desire, both to the writer as well as the reader, to generate or assist in this process of becoming and continually renewing. By our will, of those who have entrusted their imagination to this creator of chimeras which is jazz music, of those who have understood that they must always hit the road, guided by their own fantasy.

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<sup>81</sup> João Tordo, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>82</sup> Wayne Shorter, in David Yaffe & Wayne Shorter, *Wayne Shorter's Roots*, Village Voice, June 10, 1997.