DOWNBEAT

“SO MUCH MORE THAN NOTES”

SEGREGATION & JAZZ CRITICISM IN THE U.S.

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Foreword on the social utility of jazz criticism

“The music was explaining the history as the history was explaining the music. And […] both were expressions of and reflections of the people”

(Baraka, 1999)

For several centuries now, music has had a major place in society. From the Bourgeoisie of the 18th century that constituted itself by going to fancy events where classical music was being played to the latest dating apps which help you meet new people by sharing your musical tastes, music is a way for people to relate and to identify with others. Logically, as black critic Baraka wrote his influential book *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, music is tightly linked to people and the society they live in. People play music to express themselves, to talk to others. And other people listen to it. Music is of great importance for society, it is a “force for positive social change” (Gennari, 2006: 26).

The history of African Americans blends with the history of their music. It is through its music and thanks to its music that this enslaved population has survived, fought, withstood, and eventually cut loose. It is its music which has supported those harsh toils and has gone along with its religious convictions. It is its music which allowed them to express their hard lives, but also their joy and hopes. It is finally through their music that oppressed Black American people have obtained their freedom and shown their universality.

(Boutellier, 2016)

Confronted with slavery and cruelty when they were first brought to the United States, African American people quickly had to face racism, segregation and many forms of pernicious discrimination both in society and in their everyday life. Boutellier, quoted just above, gives to music a major power, the power to improve African Americans’ situation in the country. Without seeing music as a great and perfect “life savior”, this thesis is based on the assumption that music has an impact—sometimes positive but sometimes negative—on people and on society, and that it is a great witness of it. In the precise case of African American people, one of the music genre which had a great importance over the last century is jazz.

Jazz was “born” at the very end of the 19th century, not long after the ratification of the Thirteen Amendment officially ending slavery all around the United States, in December 1865. Even though some historians criticize such simplistic approach (see for instance DeVeaux, 1998), jazz is considered to be an evolution of several music genres black people and slaves in particular were performing: ragtime, sacred

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1 Tastebuds for instance.

music of the Baptist church and blues. These different musical styles met together progressively. Around 1900, New Orleans became the theatre of a gradual but still largely segregated meeting. Black slaves brought these music styles and started to play with white people, playing a “more intellectual”—European—music (Porter and Ullman, 1993) leading to what was going to be called jazz. As far as historians were able to trace it, the term “jazz” was first used by journalists to talk about this music genre in The Chicago Sunday Tribune, in 1915 (Seagroove and Gordon).

Jazz was African American people’s music as well as the music of slaves and low-class people. It played a major role in the American society, in particular for the Civil Rights movement; but it was also a useful mirror of the racial situation of the country—and of its evolution. Immigration, slavery, culture diversity, ethnic division are all reflected by jazz and influence it. To borrow DeVeaux’s words, this music “has an important political dimension, one that unfolds naturally in its telling” (1998: 485).

Therefore, an interesting way to understand jazz as more than simply music is to look at what has been written about it. Different types of materials could be worth analyzing: lyrics, (auto)biographies of musicians or producers, academic papers, historical books and press articles. As a partial fulfillment for a MA of Journalism, this research will focus on what journalists and critics have written on the matter. But more than the need to fit with the degree subject, this decision was based on the now largely accepted idea that journalism is “the first rough draft of history” (attributed to Barth, 1943: 677).

Music scholar Matt Brennan goes further by applying this idea to the case of music journalism, crediting critics and journalists with an important power in shaping music history and a part of culture:

Because they are writing music history as it happens, journalists and critics are often given the first shot at selecting which cultural moments are important enough to appear in print and therefore remain in cultural memory, as well as selecting which interpretive themes are best suited to framing these events.

(Brennan, 2006: 1)

This said, studying both jazz and the racial situation in the U.S.A. through the prism of critics’ writings promises to counter the often “reductionist approach” (Harris, 2006: 17) of academics who tend to understand this music genre by focusing “primarily [on] the history of great performers” (ibid). As Harris points out, such an approach ignores a number of socio-cultural elements which have been influencing the development of the music itself and its progressive status in society (ibid). It forgets the influences of politics, of other cultural movements, of religion, of the press and of many actors of society. Jazz, as any other music genre, has been and is still largely influenced by society in its entirety. And in the rare cases where “an alternate reading of jazz is undertaken, it usually only focuses on one factor (such as race), rather than on a host of them” (Harris, 2006: 17). With this thesis, the aim is to develop a more complete and critical approach: the idea is to use jazz as a study case for understanding the relation and even the impact of critics on race relations in the country.

The research

The critics and the guys who write about jazz think they know more about what went on in New Orleans than the guys that were there. They don’t know nothing. They’re wrong most of the time.
Georges “Pops” Foster (1971)

Were jazz critics right or wrong? This research does not claim to offer this kind of answer. What matters however is what their writings can reveal about the society in which they lived and wrote. This thesis will look at the evolution and the transformation of race relations in the US through the writings of jazz critics. In particular, it will do this through the analysis of articles written about black trumpeter Miles Davis in order to understand the extent to which jazz critics were involved in the evolution of these race relations.

Several hypotheses can be formulated. The first hypothesis is that jazz critics, at the very least, refer to race relations in the country and that in doing so their writings reflect the situation with their content evolving along with the improvement of Civil Rights. The second hypothesis is that jazz critics are not passive witnesses of the country’s racial situation. In addition to the roles discussed in the theoretical part of this work, one can argue that jazz critics have a more important historical role—they are actors of change, especially here in the case of racial relations.

In order to answer the research question and to confirm or dismiss these hypotheses, a longitudinal study will be conducted, analyzing articles written in jazz magazine *DownBeat* about Miles Davis between 1952 and 1989. Through a critical discourse analysis, this thesis will attempt to link the evolution of race relations depicted in the articles with what happened historically with Civil Rights’ improvement and transformation, and thus try to determine the role played by critics in these transformations.
Introduction to art and music journalism

When looking at journalism as a scholar, as a journalist or as reader, it is rather obvious that it takes many different forms, as Davis (1979: 102) put it, “there is a variety in journalism to be found in few other occupations”. Journalism is incredibly large and rich due to its diversity. A journalist can equally be a war reporter, a business journalist, an investigative journalist or an art journalist. These areas of speciality are called by some “occupational subcultures” (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 621). However all of them should be considered as part of the larger realm of journalism. Art journalism is no exception.

Art journalists share many similarities with ‘regular’ journalists, as they have the same “formulas, practices, normative values and journalistic methodology” (Harrison, 2000: 108-37). They all strive for objectivity, have to meet deadlines, need to have sources for their articles, have to comply with ethics and intend to give information that the public might not get otherwise.

The field of art journalism includes discussion and reviews about different types of arts, such as films, visual arts, literature, theater, music or even architecture. This thesis focuses on the specific case of music journalism, and will deal with the even more specific case of jazz critics further on.

One of the few scholars who researched music journalism, Eammon Forde, considers music journalists as “journalists with a difference” (Forde, 2003: 113), to the extent that they have specific “professional tradition, employment conditions, goal definitions, newsroom power structures, position within corporate publishing organizations, and sources and source relations” (ibid).

The terms of music journalist and music critic will be used as synonyms even though there is a difference between them. The critic’s actions are seen as more limited as their jobs consist mainly in the formulation and the diffusion of an opinion about a musical work. The job of music journalists is larger, as they also conduct interviews, write features and investigate stories related to the music industry. The point of this thesis is not to look at the differences between the two but rather to understand the link between critics/journalists and society, as well as the role that these music critics can play in a nation.

As it is nowadays understood, music journalism or music criticism mainly refers to criticism about popular music, yet journalists have been writing about music for more than two centuries. In the eighteenth century, reviews were already being issued about classical music pieces. These initial reports were mainly focusing on the quality of the elements constituting the music. It was all about the form, the technical aspects of the music, assessed in accordance with the established standards (Bujić, 2011). The Oxford Companion to Music describes music criticism as “the intellectual activity of formulating judgements on the value and degree of excellence of individual works of music, or whole groups or genres” (ibid).

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4 For instance, the British journal *The Musical Times* was founded in 1844, and the French composer Hector Berlioz wrote columns in Parisian newspapers since the 1830s.
The progressive decline of classical music combined with the appearance of more popular musical genres at the beginning of the twentieth century led to changes in the styles and roles of music journalists. Classical music journalists distinguished from the mass of popular music critics which emerged largely in the 1960s. The music journalists that are at the center of the discussion in this research are in line with these “new” critics, writing mainly about jazz and rock at first and then about the other music genres as they emerged and grew.

As a large part of the population uses mass media as their main sources of interaction, information and discovery of art and music (Webber et al., 1993), the journalists and the critics who are in charge of creating and publishing content in relation to music “play a role that is both crucial and problematic” (Harries & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007: 622). To understand better the role and the impact music journalists have on the public and on society, the definition given in the Oxford Companion to Music by Bujić is interesting:

Reviewing, if it is only a description of obvious outward features of a composition or mere reporting of ‘what it was like to be there’, will remain shallow unless the critic's arguments are based on a consistently upheld set of musical criteria and an understanding of music as a social force rather than a pleasant social custom or pastime... The act of translating from a musical to a verbal mode of thinking ought to be, for both the critic and his reader, an experience almost as profound and vital as the experience of the music itself, and the best music criticism reveals this clearly. In other words, the critic should be an artist in his or her own right.

(Bujić, 2011).

When writing, journalists are surrounded by a myriad of factors, of actors which influence them and society as a whole. The same can be said about the music that music journalists are reviewing. It implies for the critics to develop “an understanding of music as a social force” (Bujić, 2011). This characteristic of music as “a social force” necessary gives importance and certain duties or roles to the critic reviewing it. It is moreover commonly accepted that journalism is one of the “social glues of society” and that “it is the stories of the journalists that construct and maintain shared realities” (Carey, 1989; as quoted in Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009: 3). Journalists seem to play several roles for society. Music journalists are no exception, especially considering the influence music has on society.
Chapter 1 — Jazz criticism

Most music journalists tend to specialize in one or a few music genres. This way, they develop a deeper understanding of the music and a greater knowledge. One of the first music genres, after classical music, which saw a great development of its critics is rock music. Some authors link it to the breakthrough of the Beatles in the mid-1960s (Jones, 2002). But before this true professionalization of the craft, critics and journalists were already reviewing music.

The case of jazz is particularly interesting as its first dedicated media outlets appeared in the 1930s. *DownBeat* was launched in 1934 and the previously classical music centered magazine *Metronome* changed its editorial policy to focus more on jazz and other related music genres. Jazz criticism has gone through a lot of changes since then, and so did the American society.

1.1. What is a jazz critic?

John Gennari has positioned himself as one of the only scholars who paid great attention to jazz criticism and jazz criticism ideologies. He has written several papers and a rich book titled *Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*, which offers one of the most thorough analysis of jazz criticism as a craft and of jazz journalists as actors playing many roles in the jazz press and in the jazz industry. Before looking more carefully at the roles in question, Gennari tends to situate jazz critics among what he calls the jazz writers, a larger group of people.

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1.1.1. Jazz critics as jazz writers

The term ‘jazz writers’ encompasses jazz critics, historians, educators, scholars, and even novelists dealing with jazz. And it is important to keep in mind that most jazz critics are not only jazz critic, they are often also scholars, historians or even musicians. Gennari places jazz critics, along with historians and educators, in the “jazz superstructure” (2006: 3). This “jazz superstructure” can be understood as what surrounds jazz. It is what contributes to making jazz what it is but it is not directly jazz music.

Gennari considers the role of rock critics as relatively easy to the extent that rock is popular and has an audience. On the other hand, jazz writers have no guarantee of audience and thus of success—if we can even consider that some actually gain success because of their activity as a jazz critic. However, he insists on their importance as “these jazz writers crucially helped us to understand jazz and, equally important, to imagine ourselves part of a community of people for whom the music mattered more than almost anything.
else” (2006: 3). The term jazz writer is pretty accurate to talk about jazz critics considering that their roles places them at the crossroads between several occupation. It is true that critics exert an important power in influencing public taste. However, “it is because criticism has both an objective and a subjective quality, flitting between principle and prejudice, that it is in the land between the poles of scholarship and journalism that it has often proven most fruitful.” (Mc Donald, 2007: 79). Jazz critics are not only limited to reviewing jazz, their work also implies to conduct interviews, to write features and to try to unearth new talents (Harris, 2006: 2).

In this thesis the term jazz critics is mainly used, but it is could be replaced by jazz journalists or even as we have just seen by the term jazz writers. Within the diversity of jazz writers, of people spending their time as jazz critics, the next section will try to identify some common features and thus to draw a portrait of the jazz critic.

1.1.2 A portrait of the jazz critic?

Developing a portrait of who the average or common jazz critic is and how he behaves is impossible. Jazz criticism is far from being a unified whole to the extent that the occupation has fundamentally evolved with time and alongside the mutations of both the American society and the American culture. Although it might not be representative all the time, a few common features can be set out. Such insights will be helpful to understand the work of jazz critics and the potential impact of what they write.

Gender

An easily perceptible common characteristics amongst jazz critics is that most of them are males. It is clear that already in jazz itself, women are less present than men. And it is also the case in jazz criticism. Gennari explains it as being more complicated than only a “matter of sexual identity, but also of gender dynamics” (2006: 16). For him, the milieu in which critics had to evolved was unfavorable to women, as it made it hard for them to establish and to distinguish themselves:

From the violent gangster milieu of jazz’s early sporting life environs; to the urbane, stylized machismo of the jazz-inflected New Frontier; to Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch’s tendentious feminization of the 1960s counterculture, jazz culture has been dominated by masculinist voices and sensibilities.

Gennari, 2006: 16

This does not mean there were no women at all in jazz criticism or that what they were doing was of lower quality than men (see for instance Helen Oakley Dance and Valerie Wilmer), but the main problem is that “women in the jazz world very often are pigeonholed either as maternal figures or as sexual objects” (Ibid: 17). Behind the male-dominance in the jazz criticism realm, an important matter is that jazz criticism, especially at its early stages contributed to assert the critics’ masculinity—as they were often white men trying to oppose their family (Gennari, 2006: 63).
Race

It is rather obvious, but no less contestable that “U.S. jazz magazines [...] historically have been dominated by white ownership and editorial control” (Gennari, 2006: 9). Gennari after drawing such conclusions quotes Reed who asserts that “most jazz criticism is a form of white-collar crime” (Reed, 2000). Such a vision might be a bit simplistic, and it shows the “white jazz critic as a parasite or vampire sucking blood and loot off black musicians” (Gennari, 2006: 10). Some like Gerard Early, as quoted in Gennari’s book, even go as far as calling critics “white expropriators of black creativity” (Ibid: 45). It somehow reduces black musicians as simple victims of white critics, and totally sets aside the fact that they are able to deal with their own lives, their own careers and all that it implies.

As most jazz writers are white, most criticism which has been formulated against them come from African American people. It led white people who tried to raise against racism to sometimes being accused of wanting to become “white-negros”. However, in the opinion of some black musicians several white critics became “the white exception”, according to an expression coined by Emily Bernard (2005). The “white exception” is used to refer to white critics who had been able to show they had a good insight on black culture which helped them being open to more musical experimentations and feeling comfortable in a black environment. Hence, black critics had a hard time having their voices heard, as most media outlets were owned by white people hiring white people to work as critics. However, by the end of the 1950s, black critics finally started to have their voices heard by a broader audience. This “upsurge” in the 1960s was seen by black critic Baraka as “a reflection of the black masses’ simultaneous cry for self-determination” (1990, 62).

Especially before black critics could express themselves through journalism, black criticism developed in a different form than white criticism. It was based more on an audience validation, like for instance the case of the Apollo Theater, where people on stage were validated depending if the audience booed or acclaimed them. Even though black critics progressively had the opportunity to be heard, they remained a minority which put them under pressure: “Precisely because the relatively smaller number of black voices (and other voices of color) in this discourse, black critics have carried even more of a burden—the burden of “representing the race” in a way that answers to the complex and often contradictory demands of their communities” (Gennari, 2006: 8).

All this led black and white critics to face pretty different challenges. For white journalists, it was all about sharing their passion for this music and its characters; whereas for black critics it was more about offering their insider’s knowledge on black music without falling for some cliché generalities white audience could be looking for. In addition to that, a certain number of the critics were acting as social activists, no matter their skin color. They did not all tackle the issue in the same way but what is noteworthy is that there are few critics over time who wrote their articles while completely ignoring the racial aspect of jazz, its

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5 See for instance Feather’s article in *DownBeat* titled “A Plea for Less Critical Infighting, More Attention to The Music Itself” (1965)
industry and society more globally. How they tackled the racial issue is directly linked to the role they thought they had regarding jazz and society.

1.2 The roles of jazz critics in society and jazz

As proselytizers, intermediaries, gatekeepers, translators, rhetoricians, conceptualizers, producers and analysts of jazz, jazz critics have been undeniably powerful voices—some would say too powerful—in the music’s public discourse.

Gennari, 2006: 3

The roles enumerated above by jazz critics expert Gennari are numerous and diverse. It underlines that jazz critics achieve more with their writings than just assessing the artists and the music they produce. They shape the music, they influence the public tastes, they impact the production of jazz music and they might even affect society. If the roles discussed in this part have been discussed by scholars in literature, one of the aims of this thesis is to grant them a much more active role and to show them as actors of change, in the case of race relations.

1.2.1 A gatekeeper role?

One of the first roles of a journalist which comes to mind is the role of gatekeeper. In 1950, the research professor of journalism at Boston University, Dr. White already defined this gatekeeping role as the responsibility journalists have to select whether or not a story is credible and if it will make it to the media and thus become news (White, 1950: 390). Shoemaker et al. specified the definition, stating that gatekeeping is the process of “selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news” (Shoemaker et al., 2009: 73). Such a role may perfectly be applied to the case of music journalists to the extent that “the music journalist as reviewer or interviewer is a ‘relay’ between producer (musician and/or music industry) and consumer (the audience for popular music)” (Laing, 2006: 335). Hence, the music journalist had the role to select what artists, events, discs etc. were worth talking about, and, to some extent, what deserved to be heard by the public.

However, other scholars, like Klein, refute the principle of popular music journalists as gatekeepers because they consider their role to be more complex and more linked to the industry and to society:

Popular music critics see themselves as performing quality control in their attempt to help guide consumers, existing as the last stand against tasteless record labels. Yet the positive tilt of music criticism, dictated in part by space constraints, makes the music critic appear to be more of a cheerleader than a gatekeeper. Even so, being an incidental publicist or promoter of an artist is generally not interpreted by critics as a negative or compromised position; they are happy to get the word out about a good artist or album. The role becomes problematic, however, when an opinion has either been manipulated, or has the appearance of being manipulated.

(Klein, 2005: 13-14)
For Klein, the ties between music criticism and the music industry are major obstacles to critics being gatekeepers per se. Going further, Van Venrooij tries to show the danger behind the interconnection of critics and the music industry. Indeed, “media gatekeepers can become co-opted by the music industry and […] critics can act as an appendage of the promotional vehicle for the music industry” (Van Venrooij, 2009: 43, drawing on Hirsch, 1972). The question raised by these scholars is not necessarily if music critics are gatekeepers, as it is quite obvious that they are as they have the power to decide which artists were going to be looked at and how. The issue is more to know if they should be gatekeepers. Do they have enough objectivity, freedom and detachment to have such an important role?

It appears that music journalists cannot necessarily be considered as gatekeepers, as understood in its noble meaning, or maybe not in general. The music and the jazz journalist would then be more of a guide for the audience and thus a precious help in the work of spreading and promoting the music.

1.2.2 Between consumer guide and promoter

This role needs to be looked at by keeping in mind the context. Nowadays, it seems that “everyone is a critic, everyone has an opinion” (McLennan, 2013: 2717), and it is especially true considering the importance of blogs and other fanzines and the ease of becoming a music blogger. But that was not the case a decade ago. Music and jazz critics were read and followed because they were great guides for people seeking to discover new music or to make their own opinion on what they heard.

According to music press scholars such as Mark Fenster, one of the most important roles of music journalists is “to legitimize and canonize, to perform an external evaluation of the music industry’s products based upon certain assumptions about what makes good, important music, and what makes disposable crap (as well as what makes bad important music and good disposable crap)” (Fenster, 2002: 86). This gives critics the task to tell the audience what to listen to, they must act as consumer guides. Even if they should perform a sort of quality control (judging a record as good enough for the public to listen to it), there is a tendency for music journalists to mainly talk positively about the bands they review. Klein offers a technical argument to justify such habit, explaining that “there was general agreement that, when one only has a limited amount of space, it is preferable to share with the reader good albums rather than bad ones, except perhaps to warn readers of an awful, high-profile release” (Klein, 2005: 12). The idea of critics as consumer guides became especially true with the rise of columns giving a grade, with a letter or a number of stars like in *DownBeat*'s reviews.

Musicians themselves perceive this ambiguous role of the critic, leading some of them to state that “the music press is my best friend and my worst enemy” (Terfry, as quoted in Brennan, 2006: 221). From their perspective, the music press and its critics appear as some kind of tools musicians use to sell records and thus sustain their musical career. Brennan shows that a positive press coverage is of paramount importance for new-comers whereas long-established artists can benefit from any kind of publicity. In his essay, Brennan later discusses with musicians the role of the music press in record retail (2006: 223) and in
“creating industry buzz” (ibid: 227), reaffirming the link between music journalists and the music industry as already pointed out by Klein previously. The music industry does put pressure on music journalists. Journalists depend on it to have access to the source of music. But another pressure they have to face is their fear to miss or underestimate an artist, and in order to avoid such pitfall they tend to rely on the industry and the public relation officers to know what to listen to and what to write about. They can sometimes become this way the spokespersons of the industry.

1.2.3 Mediators of culture and knowledge

Another key role of jazz critics is “to provide words for an experience for which there are no words” (Gennari, 2006: 4). Critics act as translators, as mediators between the musicians and the audience. They have the very hard task to convey to their readers the quality of the music, and to describe them what they will hear (if it is a record) or could have heard (if it is a live report).

The central idea here is that there is a need for critics to appreciate and evaluate one’s work in its context, artistic or social. Only by doing so they will be able to give the readers the tools to decrypt the music and what it means. Baraka insists on critics putting the artist and his/her life at the center of their criticism: “Criticism, ideally, should be analysis, but also identification and use, based upon a work, its creator’s intent and values, and their relationship to the real world” (Baraka, 1990: 55). Having such knowledge is not easy, and might be a bit extreme, “but it is not the role of a critic to know everything or to be right at every instance. The job is to illuminate, and illumination is the true art of criticism” (Crouch, 1990: 76). One of the ways critics have found to “illuminate” is to turn to musicians directly, to listen to what they have to say and carry their important messages. In fact, critics tend to be “intimates and confidants of the musicians”, which allows them to know a lot “about the hardships and dissipations that have been part of the jazz life” and also “about the prosaic day-to-day struggles and the simple pleasures of musicians’ lives” (Gennari, 2006: 8-9), this gives them a lot of credibility: it makes them appear as insiders who are able to translate the musicians’ language for the readers.

Putting this role in perspective with the racial context of the United States of the last century, the idea of them being “white expropriators of black creativity” can come to a less negative meaning as they appear as “mediating figures who helped dissolve white middle-class prejudice against jazz, enabling it to to accrue cultural capital that eventually paid interest to black musicians as well” (Gennari, 2006: 45). Is this expropriation of black creativity necessarily bad? Critics might actually appear as a way for this black creativity to be expressed and to (try to) be explained. They would here play the role of mediators between black artists and white audiences which need more information to understand properly the art.

1.2.4 Creators of jazz canons
Hazell makes the assumption that jazz would have been jazz regardless of the existence of critics but she doubts that jazz would have gained such widespread recognition and public interest (2010: 5). This vision credits critics with a very important role: to establish what jazz is and what it means to society. When Fester (2002: 86) credits music critics with having the role and the power “to legitimate and canonize” he implies that “through valued judgments and the decision to critique an artist at all, [music critics] control the written history of popular music” (Klein, 2005: 16) and in a way of the written history of society.

As jazz critiques became popular and more widely read, they began to be significant, for listeners but also to decide what was jazz. Journalists have established a jazz canon that they wished to remain rigid and irrevocable. Tomlinson describes it as follows:

Jazz has been institutionalized, its works evaluated, and those judged to be the best enshrined in a glass case of cultural admirabilia. The jazz canon has been forged and maintained according to old strategies, according to what Gates (1986-1987) identifies as Eurocentric, hierarchical notions, in which the limiting rules of aestheticism, transcendentalism, and formalism are readily apparent. The institutionalized canon itself operates, in the hands of most writers, with little serious regard for the contexts in which canonic works were created and those in which their meaning and value are continually discovered and revised.

(Tomlinson, 2002: 87)

In other words, journalists are creating an “official version of jazz history” (DeVeaux, 1998: 485), which according to DeVeaux is based on values like the rejection of capitalism, or the celebration of an ethnicity. And this inflexible cannon is a bad thing for jazz itself and the critics, to the extent that it fails “to recognize that the essence of jazz is the process of change itself” (DeVeaux, 1998: 487). Keeping in mind that jazz critics acted as creators of jazz canons is interesting because they are the ones who could change these canons as society evolved. What was seen as acceptable jazz has evolved a lot and it now has roots in society but also influences it. To put it simply it is through the canons the critics developed collectively that they hoped to make a change in society.

1.2.5. Actors of the jazz business: an overlapping role?

Jazz criticism is a more complex exercise than only writing about such or such album or performance: “U.S. jazz criticism as a multi-pronged mission involving artist management, record production, concert promotion, mass media advocacy, and liberal political activism” (Gennari, 2006: 11). Critics’ omnipresence in the milieu is crucial because the fact that they are very important to the music industry and not only to the criticism field impacts the power of what they write. Indeed, the missions of jazz critics are often described as “overlapping”, for instance they are also “jazz missionary, social activist and salesman” (Gennari, 2006: 11). Baraka sees white critics as “linked to powerful corporate and commercial interests upon which it depends for financial support, whether through advertising, consultancies, foundation grants, corporate gifts, and so on” whereas he sees black critics work as “a reflection of the black masses’ simultaneous cry for self-determination” (Baraka, 1990: 62).
The saying that “there is no such thing as bad publicity” is central to understand how critics were able to become so important. Whether their articles were good or bad, positive or negative, racist or not, did not really matter at first. Initially, they often did not fulfill the conditions of ‘good journalism’ or ‘good music journalism’ but the fact that they were creating such a fuss around jazz music benefited jazz as a whole and empowered them.

Therefore, the interconnection between jazz critics and the jazz industry is obvious. Nevertheless one can wonder if critics have overlapping roles or if they are purely dependent of the music industry: “without the products of the music industry, music journalism as a profession would not exist. Journalists are taken to be fully dependent on music labels for their information and access to musicians, labels which often only have a commercial interest and ‘use’ journalists to their own benefit.” (Katz and Schüren, 2012: 8). Could jazz critics only do their job because they were supported by the music industry? Is there any critic acting outside of this framework? For Collier, the system was desperately compromised as “it should be remembered that many of the people responsible for producing and promoting jazz were also engaged in more lucrative aspects of the music industry” (Collier, 1993: 241-2). This issue of the objectivity of the critics, as we are looking at the racial dimension of what they write, has to be taken into account to understand that in some cases, their work was, first and foremost, influenced by business.
**Chapter 2 — Contextual and chronological approach to jazz criticism**

In a field of black creative leadership, most jazz critics are white, and they’ve often brought to their work a heightened sense of social purpose in a culture in which crossing the color line historically has been fraught with complications.

(Gennari, 2006: 8)

Jazz wasn’t built in a day. Neither was jazz criticism. The insights given in the previous chapters are of great importance but in order to spot the evolution of race relations in the U.S. through the prism of the critics work it is fundamental to look at the craft in its context but also over time. And as it appears, racial ideologies influenced the way jazz critics did their job in many ways.

### 2.1 Racial ideologies behind jazz criticism: a general approach

For years, the jazz industry, like the wider American culture, was dominated by white people, thus African Americans often took the option “to gain white critics as allies”, so that they could “use their white privilege on behalf of the musicians” (Gennari 2006: 9). This created a major ambiguity in the relationship between musicians and white critics. It also created a mutual dependency: critics needed musicians as they are the subject of their work, and musicians needed critics to spread their music and to be better accepted by a certain part of society (depending on the critic and the media outlet they worked for).

Social and racial considerations also contributed to the complex relationship between musicians and critics, as Gennari’s quote opening this chapter underlines. What he calls a “heightened sense of social purpose” developed by most critics is what gives a concrete social impact to their writings and thus what makes them so interesting to understand societal change.

Racial ideologies were already a central matter at the early stages of jazz. In the 1920s, the “Negro vogue” touched Harlem, which was slitted in two: black life versus white entertainment. The Cotton Club was a good example of this era: white people would come there to enjoy the show whereas African Americans would only be tolerated when playing or serving. African Americans had specific places where they could go to entertain themselves. This vogue led to the “Negro renaissance”, better known under the term “Harlem Renaissance”, an artistic but also cultural and social movement taking place in Harlem, New York in the 1920s. The idea was that thanks to their intellect, culture and art, African American people could challenge society and the pervading racism installed in it. This renaissance asked central questions about Black culture, as asked by Gennari “What is authentic African American art? Which expressive practices and artistic forms will contribute most to the cultural progress of the race? How should “the Negro” be represented to the larger world?” (2006: 29). In order to answer those questions, two cultural ideologies,
were developed. The first school of thought, supported by authors like Dubois and Locke, is based on the idea of a “talented tenth”, which corresponds to a percent of the Black population talented and brilliant enough to show that African Americans are not inferior to white people. It is based on the pursuit of a “politics of respectability”, coming from a part of the Black community. The people part of the “talented tenth” would try to use their fame to help improving the situation of the entire community. But this way to achieve changes was not accepted by everyone. Authors like Langston Hughes (1926) regarded this “talented tenth” as “better-class Negro[es]” (Gennari, 2006: 30) who are just trying to act and be like white people. This elite would not help to defend the cause of the black community.

**White privilege**

As shown by the portrait drawn of jazz critics, most of them tended to be white. The term “white privilege” relates to white critics who could use the societal advantages of their whiteness to better advocate African American people’s rights.

Critics could try to change the belief system from the inside in order to help their cause. Gennari presents the specific case of two critics, Hammond and Feather. According to him, their “bourgeois whiteness gave them the leverage to proselytize and canonize jazz and to agitate for black civil rights campaigns that hinged on the clout they could wield in mainstream and elite quarters” (Gennari, 2006: 32). They were not the only two critics to do so. Feather for instance came to consider that African Americans were similar “to other Americans in their bourgeois individualism and desire for upward class mobility.” So as a critic, “his role was to help them break down the barriers of segregation that prevented most of them from leading middle-class lives” (Ibid: 34). As they were advocating for Civil Rights, critics used the status given by their whiteness for the best. However, other critics did not use this “white privilege” but tended on the contrary to act like if they were black.

**White Negro**

But in opposition to critics like Feather or Hammond, some took the role of a “white negro” or “wigger”. Theses terms, as well as “voluntary negro”, referred to critics who absolutely ‘identified’ to blackness, sometimes by marrying a black person or by moving to Haarlem, like the case with clarinetist and critic Milton “Mezz” Mezzrow. Such behavior witnessed a “white rebellion through a transformative affiliation with romanticized blackness” (Ibid, 32). White Negroses were some kind of “romantic racist” who did not take action as much as their white privilege had entitled them to do. The great appeal or compassion they have for African Americans was not helping the community and was most of the time poorly perceived by African Americans artists and readers.

**Black critics**

In the mid-1960s, thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawing discriminations based on race, skin colors, sex, religion and national origins, black critics progressively started to make their names and to
be hired in the ‘regular’—not black centered— press. Unsurprisingly, these black critics “tended to emphasize the social messages embodied in the music (“so much more than notes”: Hentoff, 1975) and usually have been more concerned with jazz’s function as a form of communal bonding, ritual, and social interaction — jazz not just as a collection of sounds, but as a way of living the world. In this approach to jazz, criticism is a form of participatory discourse embedded within the social process of music-making, not a form of judgment or analysis delivered from on high.” (Gennari, 2006: 6). Black critics when they finally got the opportunity to have their voices heard (see more on that topic in the last part of the chapter) took it very seriously, and dared to speak their mind freely. They often took the role of spokesperson of this long muted community.

This sketchy presentation of the different ideologies behind jazz criticism are helpful to understand the different trends, the different schools there were in jazz criticism. However, in order to grasp the complex evolution of jazz criticism and the ideologies behind it, there is a need to look at jazz criticism over the years.

2.2. A chronological approach to jazz criticism

Debates about jazz have taken place all along the twentieth century and have been fed by all the evolutions within jazz itself and the development of sub-genres like bebop, cool jazz, free jazz or fusion and by the the artists at the center of it. Jazz criticism has largely evolved as well. From the first appearance of the word jazz back in 1915 to the debate on the roles of jazz critics, the face of jazz journalism has changed over the last century.

2.2.1. “If art comes, the critics cannot be far behind” 1900-1938

Jazz appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century and as Collier writes "if art comes, the critics cannot be far behind” (1993: 226). Consequently, almost simultaneously to jazz development, jazz criticism —which was at first limited to plane commentary—started to grow and to professionalize.

2.2.1.1 Early stages of jazz commentary

Until the early 1920s, jazz was not recognize by the public or the media, with the first use of the word jazz traced back to 1915, in The Chicago Sunday Tribune (Seagroove and Gordon). Large media initially disregarded jazz until it progressively gained popularity with the development of swing. When jazz finally made it to the media, the people playing the role of critics “were still primarily fans who wrote” (Hazell, 2010: 16), which means that they did not have a musical training and were bothering well-established critics in other music genres.

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7 In a 1924 editorial, the New York Times was for instance stating that “Jazz, especially when it depends so much on that ghastly instrument, the saxophone, offends people with musical taste already formed, and it prevents the formation of musical taste by others.” (October 8th)
2.2.1.2. Apparition of jazz magazines in the 1930s

Jazz magazines appeared in the mid-1930s. Before that, music magazines were essentially covering classical music and marching bands. Their publication was launched “to meet a growing demand for serious jazz criticism” (Welburn, 1987) as it was not covered by music periodicals and was lacking a real critical analysis of the music per se. According to some authors, including Gennari, before they were launched most fans turned to European critics, which were less impacted by the black-white division and could thus develop a more objective approach—or at least less influenced by the social context of the music—and more music-focused.

1934: New magazines and new columns

1934 is an important year in jazz criticism. First, it is the year *DownBeat*, one of the most influential jazz magazines of the twentieth century, started publishing. Second, it is when the music magazine *Metronome*, which was before that year mainly concerned with classical musical and marching bands, operated a change and updated its description to “modern music and its makers”. Finally it is also in 1934 that drummer George T. Simon began to write columns in *Metronome* in which he was “reviewing the bands” by giving a grade to the record and discussing it. Such format was soon to be imitated by other magazines and periodicals, and “even if these columns were essentially about the theoretical and pedagogical challenges of jazz in particular and music in general, they provided needed commentary on jazz structure, harmony, rhythm, and melody” (Welburn, 1987: 260). The rise of these new jazz magazines led to a better coverage of the music and thus to a better knowledge and greater interest of the public.

1938: the first real debates in jazz criticism

It is in 1938 that *DownBeat* instituted a new column named “Critics in the Doghouse”: for the first time musicians had the chance to answer to the often harsh criticisms made by journalists. This column is of great importance as it was at the time the only way for musicians, and in particular for black musicians, to have their voices heard in a white-owned magazine. As Welburn puts it, “such commentary was one of the few instances where both black and white musicians’ remarks on jazz found a forum” (Welburn, 1987 p. 264).

1938 is also the year when *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* by Sargeant was published which according to Gennari was one of the first book “to apply the scrutiny of a professional music critic to jazz, describing chord structures, scale systems and rhythmic patterns in a way that gave ‘hot jazz’ meaning as a complex musical language rather than as a vague emotional state” (2006: 119). As a matter of fact, there were signs announcing this important transformation when, for example, in November 1937 an article titled ‘Do musicians despise critics?’ was published. This showed that critics were not accepted just for what they were anymore, they had to gain legitimacy by proving that their writings were thorough and researched. Until the beginning of the 1940s jazz magazines appeared to be important to jazz because they were the only ways for jazz to be publicly discussed and thus to start being standardized and evaluated.
By the end of the 1930s and thanks to the growth of swing and jazz magazines, the role of jazz critics started to become more 'serious' and thus recognized. This development helped integrating and giving back musicians the status and the credit they deserve.

**2.2.2.1. Professionalization of jazz criticism**

With the development of Bebop in the mid-1940s came new standards for music journalism. It was not anymore only about reviewing the music, but also to debate “its instrumental attack, its place in history, its theoretical properties, and its extra-musical posture and image.” (Welburn, 1983: 172). Critics started at the time to dissect the music, in particular the impressive solos of the new-comers beboppers. If this professionalization is important, one must keep in mind that in the mid 1940s quite some money had been invested in jazz, it was a pretty healthy industry with hundreds of bands, record companies, radio programs, magazines selling ad inserts, etc. The industry needed the critics to enhance the value of musicians.

Another major feature of jazz criticism in the Bebop era was the *historicity* of the critics. In Gennari’s words “historicity was now a central feature of jazz criticism, with critics and aficionados defining themselves by whether they thought jazz was in decline or was still progressing forward” (Gennari, 2006: 119). This debate about the impact of bebop on jazz—and the potential death of jazz—was animated and opposed the traditionalists, who thought bebop was the death of jazz, to the modernists who saw the music of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie as the great beginning. Behind the division, such debates showed a brand new aspect of jazz criticism well described by Harris:

> On one level, these debates between traditionalists and modernists required a level of thought and articulation that prepared the way for the emergence and critical acceptance of jazz as an art music. Due to the level of sophistication demanded in the defense of either camp, they naturalized the reference to jazz as an art form. What was being constructed was an aesthetic discourse, which Bernard Gendron defines as a set of concepts which fix the limits within which discussions about jazz could occur.

Harris, 2006: 145

(drawing on Gendron, 1995: 33)

This debate showed the real reflection and the will to develop a more professional approach that critics and writers began to have at the time. This professionalization can also be seen through the progressive integration of African American people in jazz criticism and in the music industry and in society more largely.

**2.2.2.2. Progress in African American’s integration**

Before integrating African American people properly, jazz magazines and their white writers started by showing they cared about them and what was going on with them. It is only by the mid-1940s that “the virtually all-white jazz journals were boasting of their progressive racial attitudes, as well as those of white musicians, while denouncing Jim Crow practices in nightclubs, record companies, and the rest of society” (Gendron, 1995: 46). This first step was crucial to what was to came next.
One of the first times African Americans had their voices heard in the jazz industry, not only as musicians but as active characters, was in 1943, when *Esquire* launched the first edition of its ‘jazz poll’ in which two dozens of both black and white musicians and writers had the opportunity to decide which concerts and albums were the best this year (Hazell, 2010: 22). *Esquire* was a large and respected media outlet so it shows how the interest in jazz was growing at the time. However, this poll was not unanimously praised. Gendron gives the example of an essay by Jake Trussell titled “Jim Crow — Upside Down” in which Trussell “accused the *Esquire* poll’s critics of reverse racial discrimination because of their excessive preoccupation with the “fight against Jim Crow” (1995: 47). This conservative approach was not isolated at the time, many white critics did not want black musicians, and even less black critics, to have their voices heard.

Around 1943, *The Music Dial*, one of the first black jazz magazines started being published. Even though it was small and did not survive long, it is interesting to see that this time African Americans could start playing a role in the jazz industry and in particular in jazz criticism. But what is also really interesting is the strong reaction that *Music Dial* triggered from the well established and “self-proclaimed champion of “Negro” rights” (Gendron, 1995: 48) magazine *Metronome*. The latest denounced the lack of quality in content and in style of *Music Dial* because of its tendency to focus primarily on the interests of Black musicians. For Gendron, the racial issues encountered in jazz criticism were far from being limited to this realm:

> These local, racially defined conflicts in the jazz press were symptoms of a much larger, more generalized anxiety about racial destabilization and violence in the music industry. There was much to feed this anxiety: the movement of southern blacks and whites to northern industrial cities; racial tensions in the armed services; increasing physical attacks on black musicians; the race riots of 1943; continued and sometimes intensified segregation in the music industry; increasing black militancy.

Gendron, 1995: 48

These racial tension forced journalists to be careful with their language and with the way they were dealing with race. *Metronome* took it as its course of action and did its best to rise against discrimination and fight for civil rights, even considering that “the fight against discrimination and for recognition “of the rights and achievements of the Negro in music” was an important function of “any self-respecting music magazine” (Erenberg, 1999: 204, quoting Metronome’s editors in 1943). But behind these great ideas, the actions critics could concretely take were limited and it became an everyday challenge for a part of the journalists and media outlets.

### 2.2.2.3. Jazz criticism and politics: the role of jazz and swing during WII

During the war, racial tensions increased in the music world over the meaning of America’s “home” values. Black and white radicals—and many swing players and fans—believed that swing carried a vision of democratic community rooted in ethnic and racial pluralism—the concepts that defined the

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8 No exact date of when the Music Dial was first and last published could be found, but in Porter, 2002 and O’Meally, 1998, authors mention articles written in 1943 and in 1944.
war’s purpose at home and abroad. The elevation of swing to national symbol allowed musical leftists and racial activists to link war and music to the fight for social democracy.

Erenberg, 1999: 202

Erenberg explains why and how jazz and swing were used as propaganda tools during WWII. Jazz and swing were used both concretely and on a more ideological level. For instance, the USO (United Service Organization, a non-profit organization that provided programs, services and live entertainment to United States service members and their families) and Government policies makers had at the beginning of the war a tendency to support segregation. They recognized the power of jazz and had swing bands entertaining soldiers and their families (Erenberg, 1999: 203). On an ideological level, jazz and swing artists such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Benny Goodman were used by President-to-be Roosevelt during his campaign, to look like “a supporter of racial and religious tolerance” (ibid: 202).

This political utilisation of jazz showed it as a symbol of freedom which they are proud of. It led liberals in the music press to condemn the racism that the State officials were tolerating: “Liberals in the music press, many of them Jewish, utilized the discrepancy between America’s fighting an anti-Semitic, white supremacist enemy and the country’s racial and ethnic realities to make common cause with civil rights groups and the black press in a wider attack on Jim Crow” (Erenber, 1999: 203). By the end of the 1940s, “jazz had come to be synonymous with democracy and freedom, made the cover of Time magazine (Dave Brubeck), fostered festivals (Newport) and tours and was the subject of increasing academic study” (Hazell, 2010: 29). This new ideological value of jazz was obviously going to change things for jazz criticism in the 1950s.

2.2.3. “So much more than notes”\textsuperscript{10}: the 1950s

All these debates inside and outside jazz led to a rupture in the 1950s: jazz criticism started to be about more than just analyzing music for the sake of analyzing music (Jones, 2002: 2). By the end of the 1950s, jazz critics started to be criticized on how they did their job and most importantly they began to self-reflect on their work and on the methodology they used to review jazz. Jazz criticism was becoming a craft. For instance, major players in jazz criticism, like critic and historian Nat Hentoff, condemned Metronome, DownBeat and The Record Changer for having lacked “the depth of perception that Musical Quaterly applies to classical music or The Kenyon Review to literary criticism.” (Hentoff, 1955: 110). Williams, a DownBeat pundit, went further stating that the critics “assure [themselves] that jazz is an ‘art’ and often proceed to talk about it as if it were a sporting event.” (Williams, 1958: 42).

Another important factor of evolution of jazz criticism in the 1950s was the rise of jazz scholarship. The Lenox School of Jazz in Massachusetts opened in 1956, which contributed to solidifying jazz studies, as students could take part in open debates, jam sessions and workshops. During this period, more and more

\textsuperscript{9} For instance by banning mixed dancing in canteens.

academics got involved in jazz magazines like *DownBeat*, whose sales had drastically fallen in the 1940s with the decline of Big Bands. In the mid-1950s, “Jazz education turned out to be the strategy both *DownBeat* and its advertisers needed. The best way *DownBeat* could survive as a magazine was to serve musicians, particularly learning musicians. And jazz education provided the magazine an opportunity not only to write about music, but to help build it as well.”¹¹¹ The improved knowledge of the journalists was the key to continue selling the magazine. Jazz had become a more intellectual form of art, at least jazz as reviewed by these white-owned media outlets.

In 1952, *Down Beat* introduced its Hall of Fame in which “legends in jazz, blues and beyond [are] elected”. At this time it was essentially readers who were making this Hall, electing Louis Armstrong as the first Hall of Famer. By including readers, *DownBeat* proved to be more concerned with the opinion of the audience and of other people than of the white-owners. The 1950s marked the mainstreaming of jazz, and it is this mainstreaming which gave critics the opportunity to change their battle. From fighting for jazz to be accepted they could move to fighting for civil rights all around the country.

2.2.4. New styles, new challenges: the 1960s and the 1970s

The 1960s marked a turnaround for jazz. Even if it developed in the 1950s, rock music became particularly popular and grabbed a large part of the public’s and critics’ attention. However, jazz and jazz criticism continued to evolve. The political context of the USA and of the world had an impact on both jazz musicians and journalists.

2.2.4.1. Jazz as a propaganda tool during the cold war

With the Cold War at its culmination at the beginning of the 1960s, jazz's political dimension was taken to a brand new level: it became a weapon on an international scale. U.S. State Department officials sent abroad as many Hall of Famers as possible to play the role of “representatives of democracy as heard through the free and improvising language of jazz” (Hazell, 2010: 34). In 1956, “good-will trips” (Feather in DB, Aug. 17, 1961) an initiative of Dr Marshall Stearns, a jazz critic and musicologist then consultant to the United States State Department, were used by politicians in their war against the Eastern Block as tools of persuasion and propaganda.

Launched in 1962, the magazine *Jazz* had understood this idea well, as one of his editors sums up in the second issue:

Jazz, with its message of life and hope, has captured the imagination of young people throughout the world. Jazz, born in America, symbolizes the creative union of all races and creeds, which lies in the future. It is the music of our time, the first universal art. By helping, in a modest way, the spread of jazz where it is needed most, we hope to make a small contribution to the cause of peace and freedom.

Editorial of Jazz second issue (Jazz, 1962: 3)

It presents jazz as “one of the best and cleanest weapons in the battle for a brighter world” (Jazz, 1962: 3), and it is important to keep in mind that this “brighter world” is a word without communism, a world under Western domination. This way to consider jazz makes it “a crucial element in John Kennedy’s campaign for an anti-communist New Frontier” (Gennari, 2006: 258). Like Roosevelt did after the war, jazz became the symbol of a more tolerant nation, a nation in which everyone’s right were being respected. However, it is not until 1964 and its Civil Right Act that any kind of discriminations based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin were outlawed; resulting from dozens of demonstrations during the Civil Rights Movement.

Another great example of how jazz, and jazz journalism, were being used as a propaganda tools during the Cold War is the case of Willi Conover’s “The Jazz Hour” segment on Music USA, as explained in Ritter’s essay (2013: abstract). The radio program was largely followed by listeners worldwide and in particular in the Eastern Block. If jazz is seen as a “window to the West”, such popularity could be seen as an eminent victory of the Western ideology.12

2.2.4.2. The black cultural revolution

At various time during the 1960s, musicians, critics, fans, politicians and entrepreneurs claimed jazz as a national art form, and Afrocentric race music, an extension of modernist experimentation in other genres, a music of mass consciousness, and the preserve of a cultural elite. (Anderson, 2000: 264)

This quote by Anderson underlines a fundamental change in jazz criticism: if race had always been a subtext in jazz writings, in the 1960s it moved to the forefront as critics began mentioning it in their reviews, columns or editorials. At some point it became so strong, that some started complaining that it was “sometimes taking precedence over writing about the music itself” (Hazell, 2006: 36).

The 1960s witnessed the development of yet another jazz sub-genre: free jazz. Authors such as Baraka called it “the New Thing”. The debate was quite strong among the critics to know what this New Thing was and whether it could be acclaimed as a part of jazz. Some like writer John Tynan were calling it a “nonsense” (Gennari, 2006: 254), whereas others called it a pure expression of freedom, or even “the third great revolution in jazz” (Balliett, 1965; as quoted in Chinen, 2007)13. Behind the debate over free jazz itself, some critics started to reflect on why it was or wasn’t accepted by others. Baraka wrote a lot on the failure of white critics to deal with this new form of art, and he blamed it on their incapacity “to recognize that free jazz, like bebop, was the exact registration of the social and cultural thinking of a whole generation of black Americans” (Baraka, 1968: 16). The tendency to dismiss free jazz would then be a consequence of white critics being unable to perceive what this music means, socially and musically.

12 Ritter demonstrates that it was much more complicated. The US administration strategy to infiltrate the Eastern block with jazz to weaken it failed as listeners in these countries did not revolt against their regime but preferred to develop their “own” jazz. However, the Eastern block did not succeed in deleting completely the “American orientation in jazz” (Ritter, 2013: abstract).

Kofsky recognized critics like Hodeir and Schuller (as opposed to Feather) for their ability not only to be able to know what the musician played, the notes he used in his chorus but for also trying to grasp why he did so, what message he was trying to convey (Kofsky, 1971: 405-6). He went on and deemed as inherently racists critics calling free jazz “anti-jazz”. But even if the debate was hard and sometimes pretty radical, in the end critics agreed about the power of jazz. For Baraka, “jazz was a music capable of reflecting not only the Negro and a black America but a white America as well.” (Baraka, 1963: 149). He presents jazz as the reflection of a black and white society, not only black, and consequently criticism should do the same and reflect this society. The 1960s appear as the beginning of an open dialogue about race both in jazz criticism and in academics writings.

2.2.4.3. The rise of fusion (end of the 1960s and the 1970s)

Free jazz was not the only jazz sub-genre to develop in the 1960s: jazz-fusion also started to pick up speed. Fusion can be seen as the logical evolution of jazz musicians who came into contact with rock and other electronic sounds. Some critics exclude fusion from the realm of jazz, and they justified it as follows in the words of DeVeaux:

…fusion is “not jazz” because, in its pursuit of commercial success, it has embraced certain musical traits – the use of electric instruments, modern production techniques, and a rock- or funk- rhythmic feeling – that violate the essential nature of jazz.


The rise of fusion led to different debates than those raised by free jazz. The free jazz debate was mainly concerned with the essence of jazz music, the freedom it embodies; whereas regarding fusion, critics were mainly concerned by the commercial dimension behind the music itself. The question was to know if moving in the fusion direction was a betrayal to what jazz really is.

Fusion is an important factor when analyzing writings about Miles Davis for two main reasons. First, because according to some people Davis was seen as one of the pioneers of the sub-genre, with for instance Watrous, a critic from the New York Times calling fusion “The Miles Davis Curse” (Watrous, 1995). Second, critics’ opinion at the time is particularly interesting because relatively hard with him (see for instance DownBeat 1973 review on his album On the Corner) even though these albums met a large commercial success. Moreover, the rise of fusion corresponded to the shift of several critics from jazz journalism to rock journalism that was more popular and maybe easier to review. But it also triggered a sort of revival with young musicians, such as Wynton Marsalis, turning back to old fashioned jazz and creating what was going to be called neo-bop or post-bop. This movement pleased some critics such as Stanley Crouch and was judged as the thing that would definitely kill jazz by others like Greg Tate.

History shows that jazz did not die, quite the contrary, it continued to develop and to broaden with the rise of hip hop and other music genres. Jazz criticism has evolved for more than a century, raising a lot of debates. African Americans, musicians or critics, initially had a hard time being heard, and they had to fight for it. One of their allies was the white jazz critics of the 1940s-1950s, before they finally obtained a bit of
recognition in the 1960s and 1970s. This fight for recognition led their message to be relatively strong and direct which will be something to take into account when analyzing articles written by black critics.
Chapter 3 — Research design

With this research the goal is to analyze race relations and racism through the prism of the media and in particular of the jazz critics. In order to do so, the attention is brought to the discourse of critics and to what is “behind this discourse”.

3.1. Choosing a method

In order to understand the link between what jazz critics wrote and race relations in the country several methods could have been chosen. A qualitative research was preferred as such methods are often “used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations” (Wyse, 2011). To answer the research question, and understand the evolution and the transformation of race relations in the US through the writings of jazz critics, it is necessary to look at the writings of the journalists in a critical way, which will help read between the lines, what they tell about society and more particularly about race relations in the country.

Discourse analysis is a general term “for the study of the ways in which language is used in texts and contexts, or texts' surrounding and defining discourse” (Nordquist, 2017). The choice was made for this research to use this method, as it seems that developing a qualitative and textual analysis of the articles is the only way to answer the research question. In the realm of discourse analysis, several specific theoretical perspectives and analytical approaches have been developed such as applied linguistics, discursive psychology, functional grammar or critical discourse analysis. Among them, the choice was made to use the latest, critical discourse analysis.

3.1.1. What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

As discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis is based on the idea that “people seek to accomplish things when they talk or when they write” (Bryman, 2012: 529) causing ideologies to often be embedded in
texts. The purpose of discourse analysis is thus to reveal what language does or tries to do. Discourse analysis “is concerned with the strategies [people talking or writing] employ in trying to create different kinds of effect” (ibid). To be able to fully tackle and understand the strategies employed, critical discourse analysis (henceforth referred to as ‘CDA’) develops a more critical approach, taking into account the socio-cultural context in which the discourse has been produced. Tamara Witschge, drawing on Wodak (2001: 2), explains it simply: “CDA considers language to be social practice, views the context of language use as crucial to the analysis of it and takes particular interest in the relation between language and power” (Witschge, 2011: 4).

A commonly used model to employ critical discourse analysis in research is the one established by Fairclough (1995). He separates three interrelated dimensions for this analysis. The first dimension is the textual analysis: it is mainly a description of the text and of its linguistic and grammatical specificities. Second is the level of language interpretation, which consists in interpreting the language choice and trying to figure out how the texts are produced but also received. Finally, the third dimension expects from the researcher to pay great attention to the socio-cultural context in which the text was written, in order to interpret and give real meaning to the texts. Once these three dimensions have been ‘applied’ to the object of the analysis, then it is possible to start explaining the texts and what they really want to tell. Of course, scholars such as Hilary Janks, point out “analysis is not always as tidily linear” (1997: 330) and it is often relevant and necessary to upset the order in which the dimensions are analyzed. Language is complicated but this method given by Fairclough is helpful to get started with the analysis.

3.1.2. Why CDA?

According to Van Dijk, “evidence have repeatedly shown that the dominant media in various degrees have always perpetuated stereotypes and prejudice about minority groups” (1986: 11). But how do media do this? Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach used to find the answer to this question. It helps in understanding the mechanisms behind discourses and the way writers construct relations of power. CDA is interested in social issues, it is not directly concerned with language “but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures” (Richardson, 2006: 15). CDA focuses on power-relations in a society, which makes it the preferred method for this research.

The research question that guides this thesis—how to understand transformations in US race relations through the writings of jazz critics?—can be answered only by revealing what these writings mean in their context. Race relations are a direct consequence of the relations of power in the society and as CDA is mainly focused on how power relations are (re)produced through discourse, CDA appears to be the best method to understand the extent to which critics through their writings are witnessing and even impacting race relations in the United States.

3.2. Miles Davis as case study
If the research question is rather precise, it was necessary to chose a precise case study as jazz critics have written a plethora of articles over the decades. As explained in the introduction, in order to narrow the field of research, it was necessary to pick an important jazz figure among the dozens of musical geniuses and cultural explorers who have contributed to give jazz its current shapes.

The choice was made to focus on trumpet player Miles Davis. Before explaining why he appeared to be a good example, a few details about his life and career should be outlined. Born in 1926, Davis started playing the trumpet at the age of thirteen. Raised in a wealthy family of musicians, Davis was sent to New York to attend Juilliard in 1944 but quickly got bored of the relatively classical and conservative education of the school. His desire to move to New York was mainly motivated by the idea of finding and playing with his bebop idols, Dizzie Gillespie and Charlie Parker. In 1949, he built a project with Gil Evans, in which they focused on “new methods of instrumentation, improvisation, and orchestration that would offset the steeplechase rigors of bebop” (Giddins, 1998: 340). This project eventually resulted in the compilation album *Birth of the Cool* released in 1957. In 1959, Davis recorded his classic album *Kind of Blue*, based on modality. As rock music became the trend in the early 1950s, Davis turned to it and developed a particular interest for its electric sounds, leading him to play what was soon to be called fusion. He was highly criticized at the time for doing so, as some people considered such experimentation to be nothing more than a sell-out. By the mid-1970s, Davis had to stop his career for a while due to poor health. However, by 1980 he resumed his activities and gathered a team of young musicians, who helped him to gain a larger—and more popular—recognition; even though the critics dismissed most of his work at the time. His last studio album, the hip-hop influenced Doo-Bop, was released in 1992 after his death on September 28th, 1991.

Miles Davis happens to be relevant for this research for different reasons. One of the most pragmatic is the length of his career. Not many musicians, especially at that time lived this long or at least managed to remain at the center of attention of the media and the public for such an extend period of time. He first caught critics’ attention a few months after moving to New York in 1944 and remained of interest to them until the end of his life in 1991. Throughout these forty-seven years, his music evolved considerably: he was directly linked to most jazz sub-genres which developed throughout these years. Maybe even more importantly, during this period, the United States experienced major socio-cultural changes, especially concerning African Americans, their rights and their status in society. This period coincides as well with the Cold War, which had large impacts on the American society, especially regarding race relations.

Another important reason to chose Miles Davis as the case study for this research is his interest in racial issues in society and in the music industry. He was concerned with civil rights but also with the role played by critics in race relations of the country, as the following quote shows:

> After bebop became the rage, white music critics tried to act like they discovered it- and us- down on 52nd Street. That kind of dishonest shit makes me sick to my stomach. And when you speak out

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14 His father was a dental surgeon, his mother a music teacher and violinist and his grandmother an organ teacher.
on it or don’t go along with this racist bullshit, then you become a radical, a black troublemaker. Then they try to cut you out of everything.  

(Davis, 1989: 45)

Davis was one of the few who dared at the time to speak out against white critics. He did not even mind calling them “non-playing, racist, white motherfucker(s)”, and rejected the common tendency for black musicians to flatter critics and to entertain the audience in order to have critics write good articles about them (Davis, 1989: 73). He was against the idea of critics being able to shape the industry and society, and was proud of his ‘blackness’. His outspokenness occasionally resulted in him being called a racist at several occasions. All these reasons depict him as a complicated character but as a great and challenging case study.

3.3. The sample

3.3.1. DownBeat

DownBeat is one of the most prestigious American jazz magazines. Created in 1934 in Chicago, the magazine is now devoted to “jazz, blues and beyond”. Its founder, Albert J. Lipschultz, started DownBeat as a secondary activity: his primary goal was to sell insurance policies to musicians and thus had no interest in properly reviewing music. Quickly though with his departure and the arrival of Burrs who introduced the first record reviews, the magazine moved “from being a parochial little news and gossip sheet to becoming a credible national publication with a solid musician orientation and a particularly keen ear for jazz” (DownBeat.com). Throughout the years, the magazine kept evolving with a changing team at the top, but it remained quite strong and active, spreading all over the country and following the path of jazz and its musicians.

A great advantage of analyzing articles written in DownBeat is that the history of the magazine and its evolution over time both regarding music and society is well documented. Several authors have looked at DownBeat and written about it, and DownBeat website includes an eleven-page description which can be helpful.

DownBeat appears to be a good representation of the jazz press for several reasons. First, DownBeat is one of the few jazz magazines which has survived until now. An early direct competitor - Metronome - closed in 1961. In addition to this, several—if not most—prominent jazz critics have written for DownBeat. Among the frequent byliners are Leonard Feather, John H. Hammond, Billy Taylor, Gunter Schuller, Dan

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15 For instance, in his autobiography he mentions the moment at the end of the Forties when white people were pressuring to close the clubs on 52nd Street because more and more African Americans were getting rich and famous there: “There were a couple of white music critics (...) who understood what was going on with bebop, who liked it and wrote good things. The rest of them white motherfucking critics hated what we were doing. They didn’t understand the music. They didn’t understand, and hated, the musicians.” (1989, 59).

Morgenstern, and many others. It is also quite representative of the press and of the jazz press with a large majority of the byliners being white. If this is not something to praise, it is revealing of the social and racial reality of the time. Despite that, current *DownBeat* editors claim that “no music magazine of the period was more progressive or aggressive on the race issue, or in making sure that its readers understood the black innovators who lay behind swing.”17. And if black critics were not able to write for *DownBeat*, the magazine now claims that the editors tried to give African American people and black musicians recognition by publishing covers featuring black artists for example, but they insist it was not easy.18

This struggle was characteristic of the time, making *DownBeat* a great “window” into race relations in the United States and into their evolution.

3.3.2. The *Miles Davis Reader*

Davis’ lengthy and successful career resulted in an enormous amount of articles written about him. However, it is not easy—or cheap—to access articles written before the 1970s as they rarely have been digitalized or even archived19. Ten years ago *DownBeat* editorial director/associate publisher Frank Alkyer took the initiative to dig into the magazine archives in order to gather all the articles ever written about Miles Davis and to publish them in *The Miles Davis Reader* (Alkyer, 2007).

The articles to be analyzed will be selected from *The Miles Davis Reader*; the first book in the *DownBeat* Hall of Fame Series. Introduced in 1952, the *DownBeat* Hall of Fame consists of a list of musicians, giving them the status of “legends in jazz, blues and beyond”20. Miles Davis was designated as one them in 1952 by the readers’ poll.

In 2007, Frank Alkyer, who started in October 1989 as editorial director before becoming editorial director/associate publisher, published the *Miles Davis Reader*. This book is a compilation of everything *DownBeat* ever published on the trumpeter, from reviews to interviews and features. This book offers an impressive source of information, both on the musician and on jazz in the United States with about 200 articles. Using the *Miles Davis Reader* to select articles to analyze is valuable as it offers a large sample from which only the most interesting and revealing articles will be chosen, while keeping the others in mind as they help to figure the context in which the others were written.

17 [http://downbeat.com/site/about/P5](http://downbeat.com/site/about/P5)

18 [http://downbeat.com/site/about/P9](http://downbeat.com/site/about/P9)

19 For instance the jazz magazine mentioned in the theoretical part *Metronome*—which stopped issuing in 1961—has not been digitalized and archives are very rare, with for instance only one library in France being in possession of a few issues.

3.3.3. Sample

While Miles Davis started his jazz musician career as early as 1945, it is not that easy to find articles from his beginnings as jazz was not deemed of enough interest by publishers and by the mass audience to be discussed. Moreover Miles Davis was not ‘famous’ before the 1950s. The first article ever written in DownBeat mentioning his name dates back to 1946, although he is just mentioned as Charlie Parker’s musician on different tracks\(^21\). It is not before 1948 that a journalist wrote about him as a musician leader and not a sideman\(^22\). However it is in 1950 that the first features and interviews about him were released by DownBeat. After that, several dozen articles have been written, looking at his music and his personal life.

After reading and quickly analyzing all the articles, thirty-four articles were picked to be more thoroughly looked at. The articles have been selected in relation to the research question, with the aim to choose articles from different decades. As the Miles Davis Reader offers a variety of articles—news, features and reviews—, the three types of articles are represented in the selection. It was important to the extent that they offer different insights on the question: news articles tend to talk more about Davis personal life (his issues with the police and justice, his love life, his physical state, etc), whereas features offer more interviews and thus more insights about him as a person, and all the reviews focus more on his music by looking at both his records and live performances.

3.4. Limitations of the research design

This research has several limitations due to the research design. They are fundamental and need to be kept in mind during the analysis and the interpretation of this analysis. The answer this thesis will offer to the research question does not pretend to be nor definitive nor exact science, as for instance there is a lack of diversity in the sources selected and also because of the method chosen.

3.4.1. Dearth of source diversity

Even though the Miles Davis Reader gives access to a large amount of articles written about Davis, analyzing articles all written in the same magazine creates a lack in source diversity. DownBeat is a specialized outlet, and most of its articles are written by critics who are often themselves involved in the music industry. It can be speculated that national and local newspapers, radios and TVs covered jazz and the case of Miles Davis differently than DownBeat. Before deciding to study only articles of DownBeat, articles from other media outlets were looked at, like for instance articles from The New York Times. If it appears that

\(^{21}\) For instance, in DownBeat issue of July 15th, 1946, there is a review of Charlie Parker ‘Ornithology’ and ‘A Night in Tunisia’ saying that “Trumpet man Miles Davis follows in the Dizzysteps admirably”.

\(^{22}\) DownBeat, December 29th 1948 issue, reviewing “Sipping at Bell’s” and “Milestones”. The critique starts with “Trumpeter Davis is among those at Savoy who have taken turns as labelleader”
mass newspapers sometimes refer to specialized press as sources in their articles\textsuperscript{23}, the overall coverage appeared maybe more distant, as these journalists have less direct connections with other actors of the jazz industry.

The choice of \textit{DownBeat} has already been explained earlier in the methodology chapter. \textit{DownBeat} is representative of the media and of the jazz media at the time. White critics were a lot more numerous than black journalists: black author and musician Greg Tate (2009) asserts that the only Black journalists who ever wrote for \textit{DownBeat} were Amiri Baraka, A.B. Spellman, Bill Quinn and W.A. Brower\textsuperscript{24}. Among these four authors, it appears that only the last two, Quinn and Brower, have each written one article about Miles Davis\textsuperscript{25}. Picking only one source could be seen as reductive of the research, but as for any research it is impossible to scrutinize everything related to the topic. In addition to that, selecting all the articles in the same magazine is more of an advantage as it offers a more representative sample of one particular case instead of picking articles from different outlets which would then be very different from each others.

\textbf{3.4.2. Limits of critical discourse analysis as a research method}

A criticism often formulated against CDA is the subjectivity inherent to the research method. CDA tends to be applied in research with political dimensions, and the researchers as human beings are not completely objective. This has direct consequences in their analysis (Breeze, 2011: 520). As problematic as such limitations could appear, Breeze sees the solution in the ability of the person reading the research to take this into account before interpreting what is written (ibid). The subjectivity of the research method is due to the methodology itself because according to authors such as Toolan (1997) and Stubbs (1997) it fails to develop a systematic—scientific—approach which would allow researchers to analyse the texts in all in the same way.

In \textit{Racism and the Press}, professor Teun A. van Dijk, an expert in CDA and the study of racism in the discourse explains that it is impossible to remain objective when discussing matters such as racism in society:

No research is free of norms and values or their implications. This is particularly true in the humanities and the social sciences, where norms and values are themselves objects of analysis. The study of the role of the media in the reproduction of racism is a prominent illustration of such an assertion. At every level of our analysis, we encounter ideologically based beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. This is true both for news reports as well as for our own approach to their analysis and evaluation.

\begin{flushright}
(van Dijk, 1986: 5)
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\textsuperscript{25} Quinn has reviewed ‘Sorcerer’ in 1968 and Brower ‘The Man With the Horn’ in 1981. Several articles in the Reader have no byline so it is hard to assert that only 2 articles out of 200 were written by Black authors.
These “ideologically based beliefs, opinions, and attitudes” present in the articles are what matters for this research and for what is going to be analyzed in the upcoming part. If the analysis will inevitably be influenced by personal beliefs and opinions, the theoretical chapters and the socio-cultural context will help to develop an objective-as-possible understanding of the articles.
Chapter 4 — A critical discourse analysis of the articles analyzing Miles Davis and his work

“Knowledge is freedom and ignorance is slavery”
(Davis, 1989: 61)

When it comes to CDA, knowledge is not merely freedom but also a key to understand and analyze the critics’ articles. Of the almost two hundred articles of the *Miles Davis Reader*, thirty-four were picked because of their interest in relation to the research question. In order to avoid a mechanical and chronological analysis, the choice was made to separate these articles and make this analysis in two parts. The first section thus looks at the articles written before 1964, and the second section focuses on the articles written after this date. As it is going to be further developed, the year 1964 has been picked for two main reasons. Firstly it corresponds to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which is a landmark regarding Civil Rights and labor law. The second reason is that major differences could be found in the articles of the two periods: between 1950 and 1964 race relations evolved from a taboo topic which was hardly discussed to a cause to be denounced whereas after 1964, the racial situation in the United States seems to have improved.

4.1. Race relations: from a hardly spoken issue to a cause to be denounced (1950-1964)

Over fifteen years, the United States drastically evolved as the country that was dealing with the consequences of WWII, the beginnings and development of the Cold War, the military and ideological wars conducted by the U.S. all around the globe. These fifteen years saw jazz evolving as well, with the rise and the fall of numerous artists, developing new approaches to the music. In a way, jazz critics in their articles showed a synthesis of these evolutions, especially in the case of race relationships.

4.1.1. The great prudence of—white—journalists when discussing race or race related issues

One of the most common features between the early articles is the tendency for journalists to state facts and relate to them when discussing a sensitive matter, in particular when it comes to race or racism. This can be seen as a way for them to remain as far as possible from sounding polemical. Their caution is obvious thanks to several mechanisms which can be spotted in these articles.

First of all, the critics tend to contextualize everything so they cannot be blamed for taking sides. It can be interpreted as a way to seek objectivity or more likely as a way to protect themselves against racism or activism accusations. In the article about Miles Davis being beat up with a blackjack by a NYC policeman (DB, Oct. 1, 1959), the journalist (unknown) takes time to explain every element that can help figuring out the situation:

If you go to for a stroll on Broadway in the vicinity of New York’s 52nd Street, you can on a normal evening spot any number of famous jazz musicians standing about, chatting, smoking cigarettes or
just relaxing. They are between sets at Birdland, and they have come upstairs for a breath of fresh air and a few minutes of comparative quiet. […]

[…] The incident should be put in social context. New York at this time is described as “like a volcano” by DownBeat’s New York editor George Hoefer. A number of youngsters between 14 and 20 were killed in gang rumbles within a few days. Shortly before the incident involving Miles, an attempt to arrest a drunken woman attracted a crowd of hundreds in Harlem and almost turned into a riot. Sugar Ray Robinson headed it off with a speech.

(ibid)

The journalist later talks about the “racial troubles” which were agitating the country and more specifically the city of New York, explaining that “with teenage and racial troubles just at the boiling point, police are reported to be tense, worried and, in the cases of some, frightened.” and that it was so tense that on the very same day Davis was beaten, a prisoner trying to escape was shot by a policeman despite being still handcuffed.

These explanations are interesting as they show the journalist takes precautions, he makes sure that everything is properly explained so he cannot be blamed by one or the other side of the conflict. Behind the reasons which drove journalists to explain all this, their explanations themselves are very interesting to understand that state of race relations at the time. In that same article, the author writes that “There is a chance that, by a strange fluke, the police will hear an absolutely objective report of the incident” (DB, Oct. 1, 1959). This not because the police or Miles Davis are expected to give it, but because when the incident occurred an orchestra was rehearsing close to the scene and had to stop because of the noise, and decided to record the whole thing. This underlines the extent to which facts had a tendency at the time to be manipulated or altered, both by police officials and by the victims as well, showing that the social and racial context was highly strained and that the truth was hardly the most important feature in this kind of cases. This visible precaution does not mean that journalists did not refer to and trust official statements, as an upcoming part of this section will show.

An important fact mentioned in these early articles is the cabaret card. Introduced in 1926 and more widely applied in the 1940s this cabaret card was a permit to work in city places serving alcohol, so simply speaking, a card allowing jazz musicians to play in clubs and thus to earn their lives. What is particularly important is that this card “could be revoked at the whim of the police, usually for narcotics infractions, however slight or untried.”26 This was the case for Miles Davis in 1959 when he was beaten up by a policeman: “Streaming blood from wounds on the head, Miles was taken to jail and his temporary cabaret card […] was lifted” (DB, Oct 1, 1959). However the next day as his innocence was stated by the media: “He was told he could have his card restored “on demand”” (ibid). After the dismissal of the charges remaining, Harold Lovett—Davis’ lawyer and personal manager—intended to file “a $1 million damage suit against the City of New York. But Miles, reportedly, does not want to use the city too far, on grounds that even though he might win the damage suit, he might then become a target for the police, who might seek to nail him on any charges they could find or drum up. This could cost him his cabaret work card, issued by the

26 see https://jazztimes.com/columns/the-gig/the-cabaret-card-and-jazz/
New York police.” (DB, Feb. 18, 1960). This incident presents black artists' conditions in New York at the time: they were dependent on authorities which had the power to decide whether or not the musicians could work and practice their art. If critics appear to relate to facts as much as possible, the analysis of the articles has also shown that they prefer to refer to facts which are certain, or facts stated by other media or institutions. For instance in the previously mentioned article recounting the evening Miles Davis was beaten-up by a detective from the NYPD, the journalist tries to limit himself to fact-reporting, even listing them:

(1) Something close to a dozen witnesses interviewed by New York newspapers said that Det. Rolker was drunk.
(2) Almost all witnesses, including alto saxophonist Julian Adderley, made accusations of police brutality, saying that the beating was excessive and unnecessary. Said Miles later: “They beat on me the head like a tom-tom.” A witness used the phrase “like a drum.”

(DB, Oct. 1, 1959)

This very passive way to tell the story might indicate the journalist wants to “remain clear”. He is not the one accusing anyone, he is just recounting facts. Interestingly, the journalist then moves on to what the “Negro Press” had to say on the story: “Adding to the distaste of the situation was the reaction of the Negro press. They intimated that the patrolman went for Miles because the trumpeter was seen escorting a white girl to a taxi.” (ibid). It shows that in 1959 there was still a strong distinction between the “white press” and the “Negro press”. The fact that the journalist is referring to this can be interpreted in different ways. Is it a way for him to give a Black point of view in order to offer a “balanced” paper? Or is it a way for him to show that the “Negro press” was a bit extreme, linking most incidents to racism?

In the following article focusing on this incident (DB, Oct 29, 1959), the journalist talks about “the New York Amsterdam News, a “Negro newspaper”, which said Davis had suffered a “Georgia head whipping”. This “Georgia head whipping” referred to the “kind of beatings received by civil rights demonstrators in the Deep South”, and this incident demonstrated that they “were also possible in the North and could be suffered by even the most famous of black people” (Szwed, 2012: chapter 5). This assault was considered by many as “a defining moment in race relations in New York”, as many newspapers released a picture of the incident showing Davis handcuffed and bleeding; the next day The New York Times even had a headline reading according to Szwed “Miles Davis Assaulted by New York Policeman” (ibid). However, what appears in the New York Times edition of August 27th is “JAZZ MAN FREE ON BAIL — Miles Davis Is Charged With Assault on Policeman” (New York Times, Aug. 27, 1959; appendix 1). Even if Szwed wrote his book decades after the incident, such inconsistencies are revealing of the hardly-objective discourse of journalists and media as soon as it involved African Americans and racial issues, at the time.

27 Miles Davis was not the only musician to meet difficulties linked to cabaret cards: for instance, Charlie Parker had his lifted in 1953, writing to New York Liquor Control Board: “My right to pursue my chosen profession has been taken away”, and these restrictions also plagued Billie Holiday, Thelonious Monk, J.J. Johnson and many more musicians. For an interesting insight on the matter see: https://jazztimes.com/columns/the-gig/the-cabaret-card-and-jazz/

28 The precise page could not be found as the book was accessed online: https://books.google.fr/books?id=GA-fCDG3CP4C&lpg=PT203&ots=qZhWNQGcu&dq=%22georgia%20head%20whipping%22&pg=PT203#v=onepage&q=%22georgia%20head%20whipping%22&f=false
The obvious prudence of journalists when discussing these kind of race-related events or issues had them relying more precisely on official statements. Following his attack in August 1959, Davis was exonerated (DB, Feb. 18, 1960): to explain and justify this decision, the author opens the article with a quote: “It would be a travesty on justice to adjudge the victim of an illegal arrest guilty of the crime of assaulting the one who made the arrest.” This provocative statement, called by the author himself an “acid comment”, shows already a timid will by some members of the court not to let this kind of power abuse harm people (too much). However, the same justices did not go as far as condemning and punishing the actions of the involved policemen: “the three justices said, “The arresting officers may well have been guilty of misguided zeal and not a deliberate violation of law in placing the defendant under arrest.” By using these two quotes, the journalist protects himself, but interestingly the quote he decides to use to start his article is the one in favor of Miles Davis. The same mechanism can be observed in the article “Miles Davis “Approved” for Bay Concert” (DB, March 31, 1960), as the author refers to and quotes the manager of the venue, who did not want Davis to perform in his theater. Here again, the journalist quotes him to explain what is going on. These quotes though are used ironically by the journalist, they thus appear as a way to criticize the theater manager while remaining prudent. It appears that at this time DB journalists could not openly criticize the yet apparent racism spread in society: advocacy was still at its early stages.

4.1.2. Indications of an hesitant criticism of race relations and racism in the United States

Critics had to remain careful and could not openly criticize the authorities because discrimination based on race and skin colors were not to be outlawed before 1964 and the Civil Rights Act. However, a critical analysis of the articles uncovered the use of irony against this discriminatory system. Sometimes this irony could be felt only by the way critics were constructing their sentences or their articles. A good example of this can be found in the aforementioned article focusing on Davis’ assault. In it, the (unknown) journalist explained: “With teenage and racial troubles just at the boiling point, police are reported to be tense, worried and, in the cases of some, frightened. The same day Miles was beaten, another policeman shot a prisoner trying to escape in the parking lot a Bellevue Hospital. The prisoner was handcuffed.” (DB, Oct 1, 1959). The last sentence shows the disapproval of the critic of the policeman’s action, to the extent that having a new sentence only to clarify that the prisoner was handcuffed is a way to emphasize this fact. And thus to denounce it.

In other cases, the criticism is not properly hidden, but it is never expressly formulated. For instance, in ‘Miles Exonerated’ (DB, Feb. 18, 1960), the New York justice’s comment is quoted by the author, who calls it an “acid comment”, showing his will to underline that there are things to say about the behavior of the white policeman who attacked Davis. In the same article, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the author’s choice to highlight the first quote, the “acid comment”, indicates a certain distance from the policemen and their actions.
One of the most virulent and obvious form of irony used in the articles analyzed can be spotted in “Miles Davis “Approved” for Bay Concert” (DB, March 31, 1960). Its opening sentence is “After much soul-searching, the management of San Francisco’s Masonic Temple appears to have determined that Miles Davis fans in the Bay Area can be trusted not to beat up the ushers and tear seats apart.” This is a way for the author to show how ridiculous the initial ban - decided by the manager - was. More than ridiculous, the use of this quote by the journalist seems to mean that the real reason of the ban is discriminatory which is confirmed by the rest of the article. Indeed, the author uses quotes from the competent authority (see part before), but it is obviously done to denounce their actions: “Horwege [Bay manager] declared his decisions were made “not because of race or color but because we had been advised the kind of audiences these artists [Davis, Nat Cole and Ray Charles] draw could be destructive to our $7 million auditorium.” In support of his nonracial reason, the manager noted that Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington and Dakota Staton have played the hall at various times.”. It reveals the conflict and the complexity of the time, when decisions were often based on race but this could no more be the “official” justification. In the same article, irony can also be spotted at the end: “All projected shows at the temple, however, will continue to be “screened” to guard against what the management termed “the wrong audiences’. The use of quotation marks on “the wrong audiences” is a hint that the author does not consider that there is such thing as a bad audience, which in the words of the San Francisco’s Masonic Temple’s manager seems to refer to a black crowd.

In “Miles in Feather’s Nest” (DB, Aug.17, 1961), British critic Leonard Feather offers a sharp comment on the subsidized trips decided by the U.S. State Department. These tours, organized by the State Department, to “counter Soviet propaganda portraying the United States as culturally barbaric” (Kaplan, 2008) were no more, no less than propaganda tools themselves. These tours took place between 1956 and 1978, sending abroad “America Jazz Ambassadors” such as Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman or even Duke Ellington:

Thanks to the initiative and good taste of Dr. Marshall Stearns, the State Department’s jazz program started out gloriously in 1956. The first band to be sent overseas was the specially assembled interracial Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra (which enjoyed not only Stearns’ blessing but also his presence as lecturer on the first tour). Later, when outside interference entered the picture, there was at least one occasion when a big jazz star was advised that the group he was to assemble on his excursion for democracy must be lily white, perhaps to placate Southern senators when fund-appropriations time drew near.

(DB, Aug.17, 1961)

From this excerpt punctuated with irony, several things needs to be considered. First, Feather seems perplexed by the whole idea (“Thanks to the initiative and good taste”, “started out gloriously”, “his excursion for democracy”) and for once in these early articles, he says it rather directly. This reaction suggests that he was aware of the superficial intentions of the U.S. State Department and of the propaganda dimension of these events. He furthermore stresses the fact that behind this “glorious” governmental decision which apparently praised equality, racism still prevailed as there was a need for “specially [assemble] interracial” bands like the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, and that all these bands “must be lily white, perhaps to placate Southern senators when fund-appropriations time drew near.” The position of the U.S. State
Department appears paradoxical, between racism and a will to have the racial situation evolve, at least in appearance and especially in the eyes of the rest of the planet.

4.1.3. Reinforcement of certain racial stereotypes

Media and journalists had and still have the power to frame the news they convey and to decide which standards—sometimes stereotypes—they spread. In these articles, several clichés linked to race relations and racism disseminated by critics can be spotted.

One of the most obvious and noteworthy is the use of the term ‘negro’ and its derivatives. In all the articles of the *Miles Davis Reader*, the term ‘negro’ appears 16 times in total, and all the occurrences can be found in articles written before 1964, the last appearance being in “Miles in the Fifties” (DB, July 2, 1964). Today the use of this word can be quite offensive. But *DownBeat* publisher, Frank Alkyer, writes in the preface “We’ve tried to make the style of this book as consistent as possible while keeping the language true to its time. So please don’t be offended if you see the word “Negro” in articles from the 1950s.” (Alkyer, 2007). The term ‘negro’ was then largely and normally accepted, both as exonym and endonym, as it was used by black nationalist organizations (Universal Negro Improvement Association, Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the Worlds, etc.) and by prominent black American campaigners such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington for several years. Yet, in the 1950s and 1960s, alongside the Black Power Movement, some African American leaders—Malcolm X for example—began criticizing the word as it relates to a certain extent to slavery, segregation and racial discrimination. Since then, other terms such ‘black’, ‘Black African’ or ‘Afro-American’ have been preferred, and the word negro stop being used in the early 1970s. This selection of articles is a clear witness of the evolution of the term ‘negro’, as it disappeared after 1964. In addition to that, in 1961, there was still a “top 10 Negroes” in the international edition of the largely read magazine *Life* (DB, Aug. 17, 1961), showing that African Americans were still segregated in the media.

In the first half of the 20th century, jazz—especially swing—was seen as “evil” music: white parents were scared their children could be influenced by this music, which was promoting drug use, violence and sexual liberation according to some of them. Consequently the presence of sex-related expressions is not innocent: it is related to what jazz and jazzmen symbolized at the time in the eyes of the white bourgeoisie. And here, in several articles, a sexual or sex-oriented vocabulary is used to talk about Davis’ music and sometimes even about him. In the review of “Round About Midnight, critic Gleason uses in the same paragraph the expressions “romantic […] mood”, “a wail”, “logical climax”, whereas John Tynan in his review of a Miles Davis Sextet in Jazz Seville, Hollywood (DB, Aug. 6, 1959) describes Miles as “raw and searing”.

29 The word Negro is nowadays still used, for instance in some historical contexts (Negro spirituals, Journal of Negro Education, etc).
Maybe the sentence was not meant this way, but Nat Hentoff reaction to Davis knowledge (DB, Nov. 2, 1955) is surprising: “Miles, as his sharply perceptive “Blindfold Test” (*DownBeat*, Sept. 21, 1955) indicated, is an unusually knowledgeable observer of the jazz scene.”. Among the many racist stereotypes of African-Americans, there is the idea that black people are unintelligent. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1916, author Lewis Treman was publishing books in which he explained that African-American people had far less intellectual capacities, and trying to educate it would be pointless as it does not help making them more intelligent (Treman, 1916; as quoted in Parlett, 2014: 116).

Another recurrent racial stereotype which can be found or at least felt in the articles is the idea that “black people have rhythm”. This racist and never proven idea has been very present, especially in the mind of white people but it was also largely accepted in the Black community. Some *DownBeat* critics seemed to agree with this idea, for instance when using the adjective “rude” to describe the “unswinging drumming of Art Blakey” (DB, Dec 3, 1952).

Moreover a tendency to give credit to the white entrepreneurs who were then held responsible for the success of the record can be found in these early articles. It opposes them to African American people who would be seen by some as mainly good to do what they are told by these white entrepreneurs. For instance, in the review of ‘Round About Midnight (DB, May 16, 1957), Gleason gives credit to the record company and to the record producer: “I want to point out that this album has captured all the best of the group and that Columbia and George Avakian have managed to make them sound on record as they have sounded only occasionally in person.” This sentence, located in the second paragraph of the article, shows a propensity to praise the white actors of the music industry instead of insisting on the quality of the musicians and composer(s). In the rest of the article, the critic is talking about them and complimenting them, but it is revealing that he decided to start with this acknowledgment. A few months later, while reviewing ‘Miles Ahead’ (DB, Dec. 12, 1957), Gleason does the same and praises Columbia and George Avakian, this time because the record is great and there are not too many solos on it. In another review of the album ‘Miles Ahead’ by Don DeMichael (DB, Sept. 13, 1962), the critic certainly acknowledges Davis’ great work but applaudes Gil Evans, the white arranger and conductor: “Much of the credit for the diamond’s beauty must go to the setting, of course, and it is Evans’ writing and conducting that perfectly sets off Davis’ brilliance”.

Another cliché is linked to the fact that some critics in these articles define African Americans and their work as opposed to white people and their work. In his review of Sketches of Spain (DB, Sept. 29, 1960), Bill Mathieu starts by underlining the duality making this record so great:\footnote{Bill Mathieu gave 5 stars over 5 to Sketches of Spain.}

This record is one of the most important musical triumphs that this century has yet produced. It brings together under the same aegis two realms that in the past have often worked against one another—the world of the heart and the world of the mind. (DB, Sept. 29, 1960)
Here he opposes two realms, two worlds which normally do not fit together: the “world of the heart” and “the world of the mind”, the first one referring most likely to the realm of popular music and the second one to classical music. He recreates the opposition between these two universes, sometimes, at the time associated respectively with the black and the white community. In this same article, the use of oppositions to define the music is frequent: “calculating brain and feeling heart”, “union of idea with emotion, precomposition with improvisation, discipline with spontaneity”, “the intellectualism is so extreme and, at the same time, the emotional content is so profound”. To try to understand what motivates these oppositions it is important to note that for this record, Davis paired with the white composer and arranger Gil Evans. This kind of “discursive opposition” (Gendron, 2002: 139) sometimes used by jazz critics was spotted by Gendron through an historical discourse analysis. Among the commonly developed binaries he listed: authenticity/artificiality, art/commerce, modern/traditional, technique/affect, black/white, folk culture/refined culture, right-wing/left-wing, etc (Gendron, 2002: 139). It shows that at that time, Black artists’ work was to be considered and evaluated in comparison to white people’s work.

All these clichés do not directly say much on race relations in the USA although they help understand what a part of society, mainly white people, thought about African American people and how some of them could see them. Yet, what is particularly interesting is that with their articles, critics contributed to the promotion of these racist clichés. It shows how much these kinds of outlets were “white-owned”.

4.1.4. From using Miles Davis’ words to denounce racism to a more outspoken race-related discussion by critics

Interviewed or at least quoted by numerous DownBeat critics, Miles Davis voice can be heard in the DownBeat Reader. And if his words are used to describe his music and his life, they are sometimes selected by critics because of their provocative or debate-triggering nature. These quotes are of great interest for the purposes of this thesis because they tell a lot about Miles Davis’ state of mind, about a Black jazz musician’s state of mind at this time; and they also appear as a way for critics to denounce things without “getting their hands too dirty”.

In “The Enigma of Miles Davis” (DB, Jan. 7, 1960), author Barbara J. Gardner offers her perception of Davis’ views and actions regarding the race issue in the U.S.:

Among his most flagrant asserted positions is dislike for the ofay. This generalized overt exhibition of racial prejudice, however, has been undermined in practice throughout the entire pattern of his adulthood.

Since 1948, when he formed his first group, Davis has hired competent musicians regardless of race. Among his closest associates are white politicians, actors, actresses, musicians and citizens of many countries and many walks of life. He is no embittered hothead on this issue. His attitude has been arrived at because he has endured a series of cold, degrading and demoralizing experiences.

(DB, Jan. 7, 1960)
The use of the word “ofay” is remarkable as it is a very disparaging term to talk about a white person. By choosing it, the critic seems to want to show how much Davis was concerned and engaged with the racism surrounding African American people and musicians at the time. However, Gardner insists on Davis’ ability to choose “competent musicians regardless of race”: she shows that he is clever enough to think about the music first. It is interesting to see that with the last sentence of this excerpt, the critic tries to explain how a black person like Miles Davis might end up having such hard feelings against white people and how he developed this strong will to denounce and fight racism. In a way, she justifies it and simultaneously she shows that Davis knew how to deal with it. Written in 1960, this article illustrates that more and more critics decided to take a stand against racism even if their actions remained moderate.

Leonard Feather’s 1961 article ‘Miles in Feather’s Nest’ (DB, Aug. 17, 1961) offers several engaging examples, especially as his reputation gave him the liberty to speak more freely than the average critic. When talking about Davis being in the “country’s top 10 Negroes in the international edition of Life”, Feather adds Davis’ quote: “Why didn’t they put it in the domestic edition if they believe it?” Davis is obviously skeptical about this top 10 and about him being included in it. This idea of a “top 10 Negroes” is quite similar to the idea of the “talented-tenth” as developed by authors like Dubois and Locke who thought that the Black American community is better represented by its talented-tenth, a part of it with “greater qualities”. With this question Davis underlines the artificiality of such rankings, and the hypocrisy behind it. By including it in the article, Feather seems to agree, or at least to think it is a reasonable question to be asked. The main topic of this article however has to do with the fact that Miles Davis and his quintet were never sent, or at least subsidized to go, by the U.S. State Department on one of those “good-will trips” (ibid), which we mentioned earlier in the chapter. These trips occurred at the peak of the Cold War, as jazz was seen as a “window to the West” (Ritter, 2013: abstract) by the U.S. government. “Anyhow, I don’t want them to send me over just because I’m a Negro, and they want to woo Africa.” said Davis, underlining his awareness of African American artists being used as American propaganda tools. It was not the first time music and musicians were used as tools by politics to champion their ideas, one of the most terrible example being the use of music by the Nazis to instal their supremacy in Germany. Davis, and it might be generalized to a larger part of Black artists and musicians at the time, made the decision to react to state racism. They wanted to remain proud, proud of their art and proud of their blackness and thus they were ready to resist the money, the fame or just any kind of governmental pressure. He called the decision to send bands to do America’s promotion abroad “the dumbest move [he] ever hear of in [his] life” (DB, Aug. 17, 1961). And he goes even further as he noted that “They don’t even publicize what they do send. Brownie McGhee went to India, and the people over here don’t even know about it. Are they afraid to publish it here?” Miles Davis did not care about speaking his mind especially when it came to race: it was one of the

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31 Leonard Feather was a major jazz critic during most of Davis’ career and very influent. He was also known for his provocative statements. As he was British he had more distance with the racial history of the United States and could thus talk more openly.

32 These sponsored, “good-will trips” started in 1956, under the initiative of Dr. Marshall Stearns, and were notably used by Kennedy in his war against the Eastern Block.

33 Since their first days in power, Hitler and the Nazis saw music as one of the most powerful tools that could be used to seduce and sway the masses. They largely used it, banning what they called “degenerate music”: atonal music, jewish musicians, jazz, blues, swing and all kind of music associated with Afro-American music.
things he was known for, besides his music. Here he pointed out the hypocrisy of the government, which was responsible for African American people life being difficult while at the same time attempting to use them to spread their “democratic model” and their domination on the rest of the world.

To conclude this section that deals with articles published between 1952 and 1964, a closer look will be given to a feature written by famous critic Leonard Feather in 1964. Behind the rather arbitrary and convenient year of 1964 and its Civil Rights Act, this article is revealing of changes in the way critics review Miles Davis and jazz more largely. For the very first time in the *Miles Davis Reader*, several paragraphs discuss Davis’ relation to race, but more importantly it tries to put it into perspective by looking at Davis’ personal history and at the social context. Feather introduces these topics by underlining the fact that “There is also some connection between Davis’ aesthetic and social attitudes” (DB, July 2, 1964). This excerpt is long but interesting in light of what it says but also because of its construction (see appendix 2).

There is an entire paragraph focusing on ‘minority belonging’. It surprisingly starts by including Davis in a majority, as a “Negro” among important jazz figures. However, him being “a very dark Negro” and a “wealthy Negro’s son” places him in a minority, even among African Americans. This differentiation shows that racism is more complicated than a simple black people vs. white people separation. The fact that Feather cared about it shows that some white people and in this particular case a jazz critic started to advocate changes regarding civil rights, supporting to Hazell’s (2006: 30) statement that in the mid-1960s jazz critics started discussing race in their articles, more openly and critically than before.

The following paragraph is a long quote of Miles Davis looking back at his family history, especially in relation to slavery. It is the first time—and the last time—the word “slave” appears in the *DownBeat* reader, although it is Davis who is talking about it. The fact that Feather took the liberty to quote this, while knowing what slavery and its infamous legacy still implied at the time, is a testimony to his opinion on the matter. *DownBeat* editors also authorized the publication of this article revealing a positive evolution of the ability at least to talk about the somber racial past of the country.

After Davis gave his version of his ancestors’ history, Feather straightforwardly offers an analysis of the situation: “Despite his lineage and respectable bourgeois background, Miles was no more immune than any other American Negro to the traumatic blow of a Jim Crow childhood”. For the first time in these articles, a critic is openly criticizing the Jim Crow laws and all of segregationist society. To emphasize it, he quotes Davis narrating one of the first things he could remember, a white person yelling “Nigger! Nigger!” at him in the streets and his “father hunting him with a shotgun” (DB, July 2, 1964). Feather’s article stands out from all the articles previously selected as the strongest— and perhaps the only— explicit denunciation of the segregated American society.

At the end of the article, Feather not only openly talks about Miles Davis relations to race, but he also denounces a major media outlet for aggravating the situation and underlines Davis good sense: “When Time threw a few gratuitous barbs at him during its examination of Thelonious Monk (implying that Davis is raging at the white world and teaching his children boxing so they can protect themselves from white
people), Miles did not even bother to become incensed” (DB, July 2, 1964). Behind the denunciation of a complicated and questionable racial situation, the critic is pointing towards mainstream media for promoting a negative image of Miles Davis and reinforcing existing racial bias. It is one of the first direct accusations of a major white institution. To close his feature, Feather gives Davis a ‘rewarding’ title: “Both as a human being and as a musician, Miles in many ways was the symbol of the ‘50s, the decade of our discontent.” He picks Davis, as the symbol of the 1950s, and even if it is only Feather’s opinion, it is worth noting that DownBeat let him publish this, validating Feather's choice to pick an African American as the symbol of this past decade.

Interestingly enough, this article was published on the exact same day that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. Even though it took time to be de facto implemented, this Civil Rights Act has been a major milestone in the improvement of racial relations and the condition of African American people in the United States of America.

4.2. After the Civil Rights Act of 1964: racial advancements vs. remaining racism

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Enacted on July 2 1964, this act is a major achievement in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and an important milestone for the improvement of African American people’s rights. Feather’s article published on July, 2nd 1964 is a good separation between the two sections, and thus the two groups of articles. However, even if the word “negro” stops being used for instance, there is no proper, crystal clear demarcation. What is interesting is that there seems to be less discussions directly linked to race, maybe because of Miles Davis status: Davis went from being a black jazzman to an often acclaimed “music genius”. Anyhow, critics’ writings are still revealing of the racial relations at the time in the United States. The critical discourse analysis conducted on the articles post-Civil Rights Act of 1964 reveal paradoxically an improvement of race relations but also the survivability of racism.

4.2.1. Racial advancement

Many articles in this time period grant a larger recognition to Miles Davis and to his music. His music went from being qualified as popular music (understand “black”) to officially playing a more noble music (understand “white”). For instance, there is a growing reference to the lyrical repertoire: “lyricism” “lyrical” (DB, Sept. 16, 1971) ; “a serene lyricism in the midst of turmoil” (DB, Aug. 7, 1969) ; “it focuses on the trumpeter’s lyrical side, in contrast to the more aggressive playing in the other performances.” (DB, June 29, 1967).
Miles Davis was reaching a new status: he went from a jazzman playing in black clubs to a national emblem, as the “Miles Ahead: A Tribute to an American Music Legend” event organized in November 1983 showed. Held in the Radio City Music Hall (NYC), this “four-hour-plus program” was according to critic Howard Mandel (DB, February 1984) “sponsored by the professional and fraternal Black Music Association”. Launched half a decade before, the association was important in the Civil Rights movement, even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The fact that this association had to promote the event is interesting as it shows this acknowledgment still needed to be pushed. However, this article demonstrates a larger recognition of Miles Davis, calling him an ‘American Music Legend’, and the author talks about “an official acknowledgment of a great musician’s career includ[ing] his work in progress”. The expression “official acknowledgment” is interesting as the term “official” could be understood as “white acknowledgement”.

In another article that describes Davis’ Quintet playing in front of a student-audience at Michigan University, critic Bert Stratton offers an interesting analysis on what this gig meant: “The Davis Quintet strikes very close to where many white listeners are at, and I think that has to do mostly with guys in his group -like Chick Corea on electric piano and Dave Holland on electric bass” (DB, May 14, 1970). Corey and Holland are both white guys, coming from electronic (understand “rock”) projects, and the journalist asserts that it is their presence which created the link between Davis and the white audience. The author also mentions the fact that Miles made the cover of the Rolling Stone (referring to Rolling Stone 48, December 13, 1969) and that it made him “hip” and a lot more likely to fill the 4,000-seat auditorium (with white undergraduates). It implies that Davis’ large recognition was real but permitted by white guys and a white magazine, highlighting that de facto racial segregation did not disappear with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In these articles, Davis and his music seem to gain a larger recognition. For instance, Ray Townley in his review of Big Fun (DB, June 20, 1974) calls Davis “the musical prophet of the ‘70s”, showing the scope of his work and the scope of his fame. From these articles there emerges the feeling of Davis’ large and official recognition. However, Davis was very careful with such fame and looked at it cagily: “Davis’ playing influence has enhanced the stature of jazz, though, typically, he himself says, “I don’t go with this bringing ‘dignity’ to jazz. The way they bring ‘dignity’ to jazz, by wearing they formal clothes and bowing and smiling, is like Sugar Ray Robinson bringing dignity to boxing by fighting in a tuxedo’” (DB, April 6, 1967). Without stopping being provocative, Davis managed for both the critic and the society to better accept his character and his music. This larger recognition is obviously the result of Davis’ hard work and talent, but was made possible thanks to the improvement of civil rights which had him better accepted in the American society.

4.2.1.2. Scarce presence of black byliners

In the Miles Davis reader, the only two articles which can be, without a doubt, attributed to black byliners date from after 1964: Bill Quinn wrote the “Sorcerer” review in 1968, and W.A. Brower the review of “The Man With the Horn” in 1981. Their presence remains thus very rare. In Quinn’s analysis of Sorcerer (1968), there is a noticeable usage of the music and jazz technical lexicon, which is not necessarily the case in most of the other articles: “slavishly comping piano”, “a bass that plays quarter-notes just because the time
signature is in four”, “the aggregate pulse seems derived from a pentagon of sources: six against two against four, and nobody bound to anything”, “staccato theme”. It sets a tone for this article pretty different to the others. This can be attributed to the fact that black critics had to fight for recognition and might somehow obtain it thanks to their awareness of the music technicalities.

Interestingly, as late as 1988, Miles Davis when asked about critics answered “I don’t know any black critics” (DB, Oct. 1988). However, black critics started to be more widely hired and published in the 1960s, corresponding to what black critic Amiri Baraka called an “upsurge”, “a reflection of the black masses’ simultaneous cry for self-determination” (1990, 62).

4.2.1.3. Miles Davis advocacy for African Americans’ rights

In the early articles, Davis’ stand for civil rights and against racism is certainly made clear but he cannot be considered as an advocate of the cause. Yet in the articles subsequent to 1964, Davis seemed to act more openly and was more willing to talk about race. Davis used his fame and power to change the racial situation of his country.

Many informations on the subject can be found in Gregg Hall article in which he calls Davis the “Most Influential Contemporary Musician” (DB, July 18, 1974), for whom an interesting aspect of the musician is his “concern for the betterment of his race” (ibid). Davis denounces the fact that certain things are expected from him as a black musician: “I’m supposed to be able to do what I do—Swing-Sweenge, man (laughter).” (ibid), referring to the racial stereotypes that “black people have rhythm”. In his interview, the critic got Davis to talk about race and race relations more deeply than was ever the case before in a DownBeat article. Davis starts talking about his will to have things improving for African Americans, about the civil rights advocate he intended to be. The critic first mentions the fact that Davis put Cicely Tyson—a black actress to whom Davis would be married to between 1981 and 1988—on the cover of his album Sorcerer. Davis explains:

Yeah, I have a thing about helping black women, you know. Because when I was using dope, it was costing me a couple of grand a day, and I use to take bitches’ money. So when I stopped to clean up, I got mad at Playboy, and I wouldn’t accept their poll because they didn’t have no black women in their magazine, you know. So I started putting them on my covers. So I put Cicely’s picture on my record. It went all around the world!

(DB, July 18, 1974)

For the first time the discussion is not only about race but also on the place black women have in American society, and here Miles Davis is explaining what he thinks could be done to solve the problem. He also underlines the racism present in the film industry, which according to him has decided that “black people aren’t supposed to be filmed in technicolor” (ibid). This discussion with Davis is of great interest to understand that African American people were still suffering multiple forms of discrimination based on their race and skin colors, but also that voices were now loud enough to denounce it. This stand Davis takes in the
article is a good example of what the black cultural revolution, which played an important role in the politics concurrent to the Civil Rights movements, was.

Davis seemed willing to use his fame to change things, especially when it came to young people. He explained that he was once recognized by a group of young African American people and made the promise to “play every black college for nothing” (DB, July 18, 1974), which meant that they would only have to pay for the transportation and for the rest of the band. He seemed to want to become a black idol and a symbol of civil right advocacy and he joked about it saying: “I would like for black people to look at me like Joe Louis. (laugher)” (ibid).

The jazzman purposely enters a more “aggressive” discussion when asked about politics by Gregg Hall in that same article:

I love King Faisal [accepted spelling was King Faisal]!!! I love the way when they talk to white folks they got them “tommin’” like a motherfucker. Actually, black people should rule the world, ‘cause without the oil we can’t fly our planes and drive our cars, and we’d all freeze to death-man, ‘cause we got all the oil! We got it fixed do when you go near it it will blow up, and if it blows up, it will take at least 20 years to fix it. So they ain’t comin’ near it. Ain’t that some “slick” shit? (laughter)

(DB, July 18, 1974)

Beyond the content of his answer, his argumentation around the fact that “Actually, black people should rule the world” (DB, July 18, 1974) is underlining how strong African Americans had to fight to be heard. He is very coercive in the way that he talks, which is rather different. The fact that the critic and DownBeat had this published indicates a greater freedom of speech in the media, especially regarding race relations and racism.

Even Davis’ definition of success is related to race and racism as shown in this brief excerpt of his interview with Hall, “G.H.: How does Miles Davis want to be successful? M.D.: I just want to get to my race, man, I want them to quite “fibbin’” when they come in those clubs.” (DB, July 18, 1974). Behind his definition, lies his pride of blackness and his will to be recognized by the black community. In a way he identifies success with the recognition from African American people, which says a lot about the relation between the black and the white communities at the time.

4.2.1.4. More explicit talk related to race

In this second set of articles, there seems to be less fear in talking about race in general and about the racial issues affecting American society. Race relations and even racism are discussed more openly than before. There is no real need anymore for journalists or for Davis to use irony or other stylistic devices to hide criticism in their speech. A good example of this is the “easier” use of words such as ‘black’, ‘white’ ‘race’ or ‘color’, both by journalists and Miles Davis in his interviews. In his aforementioned revealing feature Gregg Hall explains about Davis that: “As in his music, colors are used for effect. There is no in-between with him. Black equals good, and white equals bad, not to be confused with racism in any form, just
a point of differentiation” (DB, July 18, 1974). This sentence does sound racist, an inverted racism often named Crow Jim. If racism of any form is negative, it is though a real progress that it is being discussed in the article.

The African roots of jazz music, and in particular of Davis’ music started to be more easily discussed. In Charles Mitchell review of the album Get Up With It (DB, Feb. 27, 1975), the references to those roots are very frequent: “These are talking drums in the most basic, African-rooted sense” ; “It exposes the chant-like, field-holler texture of the music. And it speaks from a frankly black perspective” ; “It explores both the roiling, Afro-space, electronic-tribal cauldron of rhythmic fire, and the abstract blues-hollers in one piece.” Such vocabulary is used in a positive way, calling Get Up With It “soulful music” (ibid). It is the first time the African historical and musical roots of jazz are per se mentioned and it is fundamental that they be discussed publicly. The frequent use of the term “color” and its derivatives must also be noted. If the term was rarely used in the early articles because of the context, critics do not hesitate to use it after. In the review of Get Up With It (DB, Feb. 27, 1975) for instance, four occurrences of the term can be counted.

In these articles there are also less filters than before when talking about race and its consequences on music. For example, when asked about Columbia, the record company with whom he worked from 1955 until the end of his life, Davis called them “the saddest record company in the world—but, the greatest.”, explaining that he considers them the “saddest” because “they do’t do nothing for niggers-nothing!” (DB, July 18, 1974). In the article, Davis’ answers are straightforward like in the case when he explains what is expected from him in society as a black musician: “If I were white and had blonde hair, you know what I mean, then it would be a different thing—but I’m black, man, and they figure I’m supposed to be able to do what I do—Swing-Sweenge, man (laughter).” (DB, July 18, 1974). Race relations are a main concern in many articles, both because of Davis’ believes and the angle taken by the critics.

In the 1989 article, reviewing Bitches Brew’s 1987 reissue, critic Art Lange comes back to one of Davis most controversial album. He formulates the opinion that this album was highly criticized two decades before and “remains misunderstood, misinterpreted, misjudged—whether for reasons of ignorance, antagonism or racism—and its origins and subsequent importance have never been fully documented or critically explored.” (DB, Sept. 1989a). Two years before Davis’ death, this remark shows a major change in society: here the journalist is directly linking a piece of art rejected by the critics and the public to the skin color of the person who created it, which is pure segregation.

What is obvious is that race can be more easily discussed. If this illustrates an improvement of the freedom of speech both for African Americans and for white people; yet paradoxically, the nature of the discussion highlights that the American society was not freed from racism suddenly after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 enactment.

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34 He started working with Warner Bros in 1986 for the release of his album Tutu
4.2.2. Remaining marks of racism in the articles and in society

Behind the law and the apparent betterment of the racial situation in the United States, the analysis of the post-1964 articles of the *Miles Davis Reader* shows that racist innuendos and bias continued to be part of the lives of African American people and musicians. One of the most hidden tendencies that can be spotted is the desire critics had to label the music.

4.2.2.1. The strong need to define the music genre and to categorize it

A recurrent habit in these articles is the need to define the genre of music of each album and every song. The critics paid a lot of attention to the influences in order to detect and determine how it could be labelled, as each genre has its specificities and connotations. Reviewing *Filles de Kilimanjaro* in 1969, critic Alan Heineman analyzed: “Third, I detect hints of the interest in rock Miles has spoken of lately. “Frelon’s basic riff has a soupçon of R&B and “Mabry” has a rock-bluesy kind of tag. This reaching out toward rock seems an undercurrent throughout, and the electric piano reinforces it” (DB, May 29, 1969). It appears as if the critic is having a hard time deciding and it sounds like the genre being applied to the record will impact the quality of the record and its status in society. If this tendency cannot be directly linked to racism, it is important to keep in mind that, to this day, there is a bias about which community plays what. For instance, what some people call “black music” encompassed blues, jazz, gospel and hip hop music, while white music refers more to classical or country music,

If certain genres were “linked” to specific communities, it is also the case for several sub-genres of jazz. One of the most controversial is what some (white) critics used to call “the New Thing”, more commonly known as free jazz, an approach developed in the 1950s and 1960s. Behind the rejection of standardized musical principles, many critics at the time considered “free” jazz to be a musical reaction, against the oppression of African Americans. In the article reviewing the tribute album to the boxer Jack Johnson (DB, Sept. 16, 1971), Doug Ramsey comes to the conclusion that “The Davis brand of the New Thing may have reached its extreme possibilities in the Fillmore package, which presents a maximum of rhythmic density and a minimum of creative melodic exploration.”. He thus gives a negative definition and understanding of the New Thing. This tendency has to be understood in light of what Baraka wrote on the matter. He blamed white critics for failing to deal with this New Thing. This black author sees it as the sign that white critics and more largely white people were unable to grasp what this new sub-genre of jazz wanted to tell and to represent musically and socially (Baraka: 1968: 16).

There is an obvious need for critics to label music, it is a way to label the artist and his place in society. A few years before that, African Americans were meant to play jazz and blues, but as Davis’ reviews shows, music tended to be less compartmentalized and it certainly had an influence on society. Defining the genre seems to be one of the critics’ major issues in several albums. For instance, this struggle can be found in the review of *Miles Smiles*: “But no matter how experimental Davis gets, his improvisations remain melodic and logical. Even when they are not, strictly speaking, tonal in the Western European sense, they imply tonality and fall pleasantly on the tonally oriented ear. And he swings.” (DB, June 29, 1979).
Interestingly, one of the last article written about Davis before his death (DB, September 1989b) deals with the reissue of his famous album *Kind of Blue* and uses the expression “mainstream jazz”, giving Davis a larger status and acceptance in society. The importance to label music and musicians is revealing of a society in which stereotypes remain persistent.

4.2.2.2. Persistence of certain racial stereotypes

Unfortunately even after the “official” improvement of African American people rights and situation in the country with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, certain racial stereotypes persisted. The sexual vocabulary which was spotted in the early articles can still be found in the latest selection. This kind of vocabulary is revealing of race relations because at the time, the black jazzmen where seen by the white bourgeoisie as sexual “predators” or at least as very bad influence regarding their sexuality. A few expressions illustrate this, “his electronic hookups” (DB, March 29, 1973), “high-voltage energy” (DB, March 13, 1975); “fertile and fervid period of experimentation” (DB; August 1982).

In 1988, John Epland explained “Most white people used to think, and the critics used to think, that black people just picked up this instrument and they did it because they all have rhythm” (DB, Oct. 1988). This sentence shows well that the cliché perceived in the early articles was “real” however, the use of the past tense indicates that it was supposed to be outdated. Yet, today, this cliché seems to be still present.

Another stereotype which persisted after 1964 is the one linked to violence in the black community and in “black” neighborhoods. In 1969, Davis was shot in New York after playing at the Blue Coronet, a club in Brooklyn, and said he had no idea why. According to the club owner, this shooting was ordered by another Brooklyn club owner who was pissed Miles was playing at the Blue Coronet instead of his club (DB, Nov. 13, 1969). This shooting shows that Brooklyn was unsafe and black musicians still poorly considered, as if their only value was the public they could bring and thus the money they could generate. The way *DownBeat* journalists covered this episode, like if it was a police fiction involving dangerous people or a “gang” rivalry, is revealing of the persistence of this stereotype.

4.2.2.3. Impression that the success of a black artist still bothers some people

From many articles one gets the impression that a black man “making it to the top” bothers some of the reviewers. For instance, in the review of “Relaxin’/Cookin’” (DB, Oct. 12, 1972), critic Terry Martin sounds a bit unhappy with the fact that “With the formation and success of this group he had achieved the consistent and slightly perverse aristocratic presence that pervades all his subsequent work”. The concept of aristocracy is historically related to the highest social class of a specific society and it did not include the black community at the time. Such comparison and the use of “perverse” clearly shows that this African American meeting success was not a completely normal and accepted phenomenon.

In the critique of Davis’ first album after a long retirement period “The Man With the Horn”, the
byliner, W.A. Brower, a black writer, even talks about a ‘cult of personality’: “One wonders, however, whether he will overcome the cult of personality implicit in The Man With the Horn. Stay tuned.” (DB, Nov. 1981). This acid comment is particularly interesting as it comes from a black journalist and it seems that Davis’ character is not appealing to him. This impression might also be linked to the development and commercial success of fusion, which was not critically accepted at first, and was openly called the “sell-out” by critics. This critic writes that “We can assume that the humor of the rhythm and blues number, “Red China Blues,” will be lost on those whose repeated cries of “sell-out” (ringing abrasively for several years now) drown out the funky good-time projections of the Sonny Boy Williamson-styled harmonica and tight brass arrangement.” (DB, Feb. 27, 1975) This is one example of the frequent denunciation of fusion and of the assumption that it was just a way for artists to generate and earn more money (which explains the use of ‘sell-out’ to talk about fusion). In 1975, other critics started to understand this new genre and that previous debates and automatic dismissals were idiotic.

However, some critics did not like the fact that Davis was criticized for being successful: “The well-known Davis image has been inflated, overstressed, misunderstood and as constantly criticized as if he were part of show biz.” (DB, April 6, 1967). Therefore, all the clichés or racist bias analyzed in the latest section, reveal the contradictions of the American society where discrimination and segregation were forbidden by the law but still continued to exist, in many different ways and often to a different extent.

In conclusion, what is obvious in this section is that social evolution is not that simple to track and spot. There are definitely elements that testify of the improvement of race relations and of the condition of black Americans in the country, but discrimination and racism did not stop on the 2nd of July 1964 with the enactment of the Civil Rights Act. It is clear that racism took a more hidden, even pernicious form after this law was passed.
Interpretation of the analysis

The analysis showed a large diversity of elements regarding race, race relations, racism and the role critics played socially. What is particularly interesting is that this analysis teaches us a lot on two different levels. First, it tells us about the situation in the country regarding race and society in the words of the critics. They are talking about what they thought was going on at the time, and they refer to facts or events that are important in order to understand the transformation of society and the improvement of Civil Rights. On a deeper level, the analysis is also showing that the way they write, the subjects they selected, the elements they chose not to mention are great indicators of the situation in society. To put it simply these articles are a great source of information about what is told, what is absent, how it is told and even sometimes about the moment when it is told—with for instance the article written on July 2, 1964; the exact day the Civil Rights Act was enacted. The analysis was conducted on two sets of articles, the first ones published before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the second ones published after.

The first set of articles offer four major insights. First the journalists are very cautious when discussing topics related directly or indirectly to race or racism. This is made obvious by their writing style. As soon as a sensitive matters needs to be discussed, like for instance Davis’ arrest and assault by a policeman or the racism behind cabaret cards, journalists have a tendency to emphasize the context of the event, and the social context. In fact, in journalism it is common to give the background of the facts discussed, it is even expected from the journalist in order to try and guarantee objectivity. But what also transpires from these articles is that this fact-based reporting style seems more of a way for critics to protect themselves from accusation of racism or on the contrary of activism for Civil Rights. On a historical level, these early articles are testimonies of a tension, a racial tension in the country that required caution from journalists. The relation between African American people and the city police, especially in NYC, seemed to be pretty bad, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s. The defiance and violence between them can be felt in the articles. Journalists referred to a lot to official statements—judges, the manager of a theater, etc— so they could keep their distance with the situation and the people involved.

But if journalists may seem to try to remain as detached as possible, the analysis shows obvious marks of irony and criticism against the segregationist society in their articles. Critics incorporated hidden criticism and irony through style. They criticize society and its powerful actors for their racist stands. For instance, they see the assault of Davis as a racist event, as well as the episode when the manager of a large theater did not want him to perform. Critics also pinpointed the use of jazz as a propaganda tool during the Cold War, showing the paradoxical nature of the subsidized jazz trips that the State Department was organizing worldwide to convince other countries of America’s tolerance and greatness.

Paradoxically, these early articles worked to reinforce several racist clichés. For instance, the word ‘Negro” was spotted 16 times in these early articles—and was not used in the articles after 1964. As discussed in the analysis and by Miles Davis Reader publisher Frank Alkyer, the term was largely used and not deemed really racist at the time. Obviously its use became controversial with the improvement of civil rights in the country. Journalists in these articles contributed to convey the racist cliché of African American people, black
musicians as sexual “predators”, as non-cultivated people and as naturally gifted with rhythm. Another recurrent cliché is the idea that black musicians were mainly executing white people’s great ideas. This shows that at the time the business was still led by white entrepreneurs and that the talent of a black jazzman was often linked to the white “guys” behind it. To do so, critics often tended to oppose black people and their art to white people. These clichés if they could be spotted in various articles were not that frequent. No generalization should be done, but they are important to note as one of the roles that jazz critics played at the time was the role of a gatekeeper and of a mediator of culture and knowledge. The subjects they picked, the way they wrote, the stands they took had an impact on the readers.

Aware or not of their role, the journalists of these early days seemed to however act and write more consciously over the years. The analysis of the articles showed that if in the early years the only denunciation of racism found in the article was formulated by Davis himself who was quoted in the articles. Journalists tended to opt for a more outspoken discussion on race relations later on. Critics timidly started by “using” Davis’ position - his forthright criticism of the racial situation in the country. It is revealing of a society in which one could not directly discuss certain topics, especially racism. In the late 1950s, a few critics in DownBeat finally dared offering a critical point of view on the matter. For instance in 1961 Leonard Feather, probably due to his distance from the racial history of the USA and thanks to his reputation, did not fear questioning the existence of a “top 10 Negroes” in the international edition of Life or the “good will trips” sponsored by the U.S. State Department. But the first article properly tackling the subject was also written by Feather on July 2nd 1964, on the exact day the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. In the article, the critic did mention important subjects, like the fact that as an African American person Davis belonged to a minority when looking at the country but that he belonged to a majority when looking at important jazz figures. He mentioned Davis’ history and its link to slavery. It is the first time in these articles that there is a discussion about slavery and the consequences it had on African American people’s lives and their music. Jim Crow laws are for the very first time openly condemned and their repercussions on people and society denounced. This article is a major step forward, and here for the first time, the analysis gives the impression of a critic playing a stronger role than the one of gatekeeper or mediator of culture and knowledge. It shows the journalist under a more active and activist light.

The articles written after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 both confirm and dismiss the idea of a really active and activist jazz critic. Their analysis showed both an advancement of the African American condition in the country and the presence of remaining marks of racism in the articles but also in society.

Feathers’ article gave a glimpse of this evolution: discussions about race were more explicit after 1964. Critics are less prudent and fearful when using words as ‘black’ ‘white’ ‘race’ or ‘color’ and they do not try to avoid talking about the African roots of jazz music. In a way, it depicts a better acceptance of the history of the country. It seems that critics were telling the reader: Yes African people were deported to the U.S. Yes they were enslaved. Yes their music is linked to this history. And this is a major change. The direct “connection” between race and the music business also starts to be discussed, with for instance Davis deeming Columbia the saddest company because of their lack of implication with African American people.
Furthermore, certain critics showed that if certain pieces of Davis’ work were not valued by the public it was in part because of racism. In addition to being an advocate himself, critics gave Davis a voice in the press by frequently quoting his declarations and relaying his thoughts and actions on the topic.

Over time, the articles’ analysis showed a more official recognition of Davis’ work. At first this can seem to be unrelated to race relations, but it reveals that African Americans were eventually granted their rightful place in society. They obtained a sort of official—white—acknowledgment, which shows both a persistent racism in society as black musicians still depended on it, but also a slight improvement as they were able to obtain it.

A slight improvement of race relations in the country is also made evident with the presence of black byliners, even if they remain very rare. However, in an article of this period Davis appeared very skeptical of the existence and the place of these black byliners. Even if Davis seemed pretty categoric on the matter, literature showed an improvement of the situation for black critics starting in the late 1960s.

All these “improvements” however show that the situation in the country regarding race relations was still problematic and that the Civil Rights Act did not profoundly nor immediately transformed society. In addition, the analysis establishes that several marks of racism survived to this Act. Critics continued to convey some racist clichés, for instance the sexual connotations attributed to jazz endured as well as the misconception about the violence of African American people and black neighborhoods.

Along with clichés, two points of this analysis prove that racism might have taken more vicious and complicated forms. The first aspect, which can be found in a lot of articles, is the need critics had to define the music being played in order to set its standards and methodology. This need to put a label on the music appears like a way to put a label on the artist in society, and it is often linked to the artist’ skin color. Behind this observation is the idea that the success of a black musician was bothering some people: critics but not only critics. They often saw a success or a new orientation in the music as a simple “sell-out”. It shows that there was and there still is a complicated and sensitive aspect to African American people becoming “rich”.

From this second set of articles, the analysis suggests that the evolution regarding race relations was not so easy. The general picture is unclear, and full of nuances. Van Dijk made the same assessment: “Also according to black leaders and journalists, the media convey the impression that after the Civil Rights Movement and the advances in the situation of black people, the racial problems in fact have been solved, whereas many problems have hardly changed since the 1960s” (1986: 14). Changes are definitely ongoing but they are not complete.
Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to look at the evolution and the transformation of race relations in the U.S. through the writings of jazz critics and to determine the extent to which critics were involved in the evolution of these race relations.

Two hypotheses were formulated. The first one was that jazz critics at the very least referred to race relations in the country and that their writings are revealing of the situation as they evolved in accordance to the improvement of civil rights. The second hypothesis was that jazz critics were not passive witnesses of the racial situation in the country but had a more important historical role: they were and are actors of change, especially here in the case of racial relations.

The critical analysis of 34 articles written about Davis and his work in *DownBeat* revealed many elements fundamental to confirm and nuance the hypotheses mentioned in the previous paragraph. The first hypothesis can easily be confirmed. Throughout the years, the critics and their writings appear to be great witnesses of the transformation of the racial situation in the country. They offer a pretty faithful representation of what historical studies describe. Race relations evolved, but the transformation was not linear and was not easy. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 which was supposed to outlaw completely any form of discrimination did help but it did not change society the day it was enacted. Civil Rights improvement have to remain an everyday fight as they kept being attacked.

The second hypothesis is harder to confirm or to dismiss to the extent that this research was conducted only on the basis of articles written by critics making it hard to claim that they played such or such role. However, thanks to the longitudinal approach of the topic and to the analysis, critics appeared to be more than only the passive witnesses of race relations in their country. The idea here is not to say that critics were the ones who made the situation evolve, but show that alongside many other actors they contributed to it. They would not have been that “successful” without the implication of civil rights advocates, black or white, without the will of some politicians to provoke change, without the numerous demonstrations and demonstrators, without the existence of a “Negro” press which gave a voice to this movement, and without a great number of other actors. But as a whole, jazz critics were part of the movement. Obviously not all of them were advocating for the improvement of black lives, some were against it, some did not even consider they had a role to play in this major societal issue. But this research tends to prove that critics did play a role: they were actors of society and of the improvement of race relations in the country.

Even if this thesis provides some answers to the research question, these answers are nonetheless limited and would need further research to be more precise and representative of the reality. A logical development to this paper would be to conduct the same research in other outlets, as analyzing articles of only one magazine adds to the subjectivity of the findings. It would be of great interest for instance to look more carefully at this in one or several “black-owned” media. It would be helpful to study the perspective of the African American community about race relations in order to nuance the findings of this thesis. Another
angle of this research could be to analyze more mainstream media, for instance using articles from the New York Times—which was one of the options when starting this thesis—could be very interesting as the journalists there do not pay as much attention to the music itself, the quality of the recording, the personal of the album, etc, they focus more on what that means in society.

The subject could also be looked at in many other ways, not through music or maybe through another genre of music. Hip hop would be a great example to see the evolution between the 1980s and today, especially as hip hop artists tend to act like real advocates for African American people’s rights. It is an important topic to understand, especially at a time when events like Charlottesville rage again. And in the case of these precise events the role of the media as been considerable, they made this event central, they gave protesters a voice (for the better and for the worse), they took a stand against Donal Trump’s position, with among other things influential TV hosts such as Jimmy Kimmel denouncing the president’s reaction. Understanding the role played by journalists and media on such a sensitive and important issue is fundamental to improving the situation of race relations.

\[\text{See for instance Kendrick Lamar, and the use of his song ‘Alright’ as one of the anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement, or the track Lemonade by Beyoncé.}\]
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**Articles of the Miles Davis Reader**


Appendices

Appendix 1:

JAZZ MAN FREE ON BAIL
Miles Davis Is Charged With
Assault on Policeman

Miles Davis, a jazz trumpet player, was released in $1,000 bail yesterday in Felony Court on charges of third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Mr. Davis, who is 53 years old, was arrested early yesterday morning and was accused of assaulting a patrolman who said the musician had refused to move on when told to do so. The alleged assault on the patrolman, Gerald Kilduff, took place in front of Birdland, a night club at 1678 Broadway, where Mr. Davis is appearing with his sextet.

Magistrate T. Vincent Quinn directed that the disorderly conduct charge be tried in Upper Manhattan Court Sept. 1.

Al Manuti, President of Local 802, American Federation Musicians, said later that he had sent a telegram to Police Commissioner Stephen P. Kennedy asking for a "complete investigation" of the incident.

The New York Times
Published: August 27, 1959
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Appendix 2:

Excerpt of ‘Miles and the Fifties’ (DownBeat, July 2, 1964)

by Leonard Feather

[…] 

There is also some connection between Davis’ esthetic and social attitudes. Though this may not mean that any direct relationship exists between his birth and upbringing as an American Negro and his reputation as an iconoclast, or his decision to walk off the bandstand during a saxophone solo, nevertheless certain unusual aspects of his background are relevant to any discussion of his music.

Davis’ identity as a Negro places him in the majority among important jazz figures; but as a very dark Negro he belongs to a minority. As a product of a well-to-do family he is again a minority member among jazz musicians; but his experience as a wealthy Negro’s son is even less common.

“I got to thinking about my father last night,” Miles said one day recently. “He died just two years ago, you know. I thought about how he spent his whole life trying to be better than the ‘niggers’—and I started crying…. He could have been a musician, too, you know—I have slave ancestors that played string music on the plantations—but that wasn’t what my grandfather wanted for him. He thought there were more important things to do than entertain white folks. So my father became a high-priced dental surgeon. And he owned a lot of land and raised pedigreed hogs. So I was never poor. Not as far as money goes. My father gave me an allowance, and I had a paper route and made money at that, too, and I saved money and used some of it to buy records.”

Davis’ grandfather had owned a thousand acres of land in Arkansas; Davis’ father’s land consisted of 200 acres in Millstadt, Ill., near East St. Louis, where the family lived from 1928, when he was two years old. His mother was, and is, prominent in Negro society.

Despite his lineage and respectable bourgeois background, Miles was no more immune than any other American Negro to the traumatic blow of a Jim Crow childhood.

“There the first thing I can remember,” he once told a reporter, “was a white man running me down a street hollering, ‘Nigger! Nigger!’ My father went hunting him with a shotgun. Being sensitive and having race pride has been in my family since slave days.”

[…]