
INTERPRETATIONS

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THE JAZZ AVANT-GARDE IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Abstract: Jazz originated and evolved in a free market economy and complex mutual relations with unregulated social conjuncture. Coping with social challenges during the Progressive era (1890–1920) contributed to the partial emancipation of marginalized groups; however jazz, in its first decades, remained directed to the general need for mass entertainment (the “jazz era” in the 1920s). The artistic development of jazz was therefore temporarily delayed during the economic crisis, Great Depression and the new recession of the late 1930s (1929–1938). The first movement in jazz that could be considered to be an art for art’s sake, while renouncing any populist elements, appeared in 1939 Coleman Hawkins’ *Body and Soul* recording. Market and social conditions for the emergence of the avant-garde began to mature only during the years after 1945, within a new business cycle in the US economy. The prosperous and conformist decade of the 1950s stabilized the middle class and directed general social preferences towards the benefits of higher education. European immigration from the inter-war period, and a new wave of immigration at the end of the Second World War enabled the growth of American universities in terms of quality and social influence. Universities recruited the jazz avant-garde audience, and supported other progressive art movements in the 1960s “decade of turbulence, protest, and disillusionment”. Thanks to market support, the jazz avant-garde managed to survive free of the influences of state institutions, as John Coltrane’s *Love Supreme*, often listed amongst the greatest jazz albums of all time, was sold in about 500,000 copies by 1970. A similar development, with the emergence of the baby-boom generation in the late 1960s, has contributed to the maturing of European avant-garde audiences and markets (ECM, 1969). The study will also examine avant-garde movements in relation to historical changes in economic and social disparities, from the thirties to the early 1970s.

Keywords: jazz avant-garde, economic trends, social differences, market, high education

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Widely interpreted, the jazz avant-garde embraces authors who themselves have lived or even created different styles, phases, and also historical periods. The first movement in jazz that could be considered as art for art's sake, while renouncing any populist elements, appeared in 1939 Coleman Hawkins' *Body and Soul* recording. Bebop emerged with its new, sophisticated and complex language in Manhattan bars in early 1940s, revealing a new audience, a new incoming cultural, social and economic environment. Bop was an elitist and artistic breakthrough. Bop was even compared to quantum physics, as the music was appearing in each succeeding moment, in altered, impenetrable forms and structures. "Bebop was meant to be difficult and baffling. It was meant to scare the non-talents off those early Harlem stages, to shock the commercial, white jazz establishment, and generally to leave audiences in a state of slightly bewildered awe".¹ In that way, bop needed a complex theoretical basis and elitist market support. Already long before the birth of bop a conservative entertainer, Louis Armstrong, considered bop as a "modern malice", "no tune to remember and no beat to dance to".²

And although there were references to the "back to the roots", bop was obviously, almost inextricably, relying on European heritage, even to that which preceded Stravinsky or Schoenberg. The economic and social background also revealed an emerging white, educated audience. During the 1950's and 1960's, led by strong experimental impulses, jazz musicians directed jazz to more exploratory domains. Inherited forms, harmony, melody, and rhythms were considerably extended. Saxophonist Ornette Coleman and trumpet player Don Cherry issued fundamental albums *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* and *Free Jazz*. Bop and post bop remained a strong basis with more conservative currents in jazz avant-garde. Pianist Cecil Taylor, with his percussive playing style, included dissonant clusters of melodies and fast technical passages, exempt of any particular harmonic or rhythmic obtrusion. Musical highpoints of the avant-garde were reached by saxophonist John Coltrane, in the mid 1960's. Further flows can be traced through jazz fusion or ECM production during the 1970s.

Jazz Avant-Garde definitions vary, as the following ones:

avant-gardists (for want of a better term) such as the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp ..., Sam Rivers, Anthony Braxton, Ornette Coleman, McCoy Tyner, Keith Jarrett, Dewey Redman; mainstreamers Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, Eddie (Lockjaw) Davis, Bill Evans, Phil Woods, Zoot Sims, Dizzy Gillespie, Dexter Gor-

¹ Dmitri Tymoczko, "The End of Jazz? Bebop: The Music and Its Players by Thomas Owens (review)", *Transition*, 1996, 70, 72.

² *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, 2 edition, Edited by Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Oxford University Press, 2005, 359.

don, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Gary Burton, Oregon, two Generations of Brubeck, Stan Getz (with Joao Gilberto); pop-jazz performers Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Stanley Turrentine, Donald Byrd, Hubert Laws, Jean Luc Ponty, Patrice Rushen, Airto, Flora Purim, Weather Report, Freddie Hubbard, George Benson, Jackie and Roy, George Shearing, Ramsey Lewis, Sonny Rollins, Hampton Hawes...

Definitions of the jazz avant-garde have been usually concentrated around a few important figures, but the wider thematic frames or periodisation were subject to review.³

How to define the jazz avant-garde in a vague economic and social context? "From the beginning jazz musicians refused to limit themselves; they reached out to embrace the themes, the techniques, the idioms of any music they found appealing and they did so with a minimum of fuss or comment".⁴ Jazz avant-garde was a thorough process of searching and expression, founded on enormous talent, feelings and knowledge, sometimes even endless, unrestricted improvisation, or wandering through extremely complex but interrelated scales and harmonies. The avant-garde laid out new artistic and theoretical standards that became a definite basis for the later academicism. Significant, previous influences could be traced back as far as the European classics, especially the French Impressionists. Jazz avant-garde invented a complex, ingenious musical structure, by the use of 9ths, 11ths, 13ths, etc., and almost algorithmic harmonic progressions, and a two-part counterpoint with double-bass playing crotchets, a solo instrument or voice, and a drummer left to almost unrestrained creativity.⁵ New standards have been issued even by memorizing previously improvised riffs or phrases. Charlie Parker occasionally reused phrases recorded on "Now's the Time" (Nov. 26, 1945, for Savoy), and Miles Davis has frequently quoted his own phrases originally available on *Kind of Blue* (April 22, 1959, for Columbia).⁶

Insufficient attention is paid to the connection between the history of jazz and the American economy and capitalism. The social history of jazz was more progressivist and left-liberal oriented, exploring the phenomena of social and racial inequality, focused on urban poverty, personal misfortune, misery, social persecution, and social neglect. The conservative-liberal approach is not often represented in the available academic research, and is more focussed on em-

³ Frank Kofsky, "The State of Jazz", *The Black Perspective in Music*, 1977, Vol. 5, No. 1, 44.

⁴ Lawrence W. Levine, "Jazz and American Culture", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 1989, Vol. 102, No. 403, 17.

⁵ Patrick Gowers, "Modern Jazz", *The Musical Times*, 1962, Vol. 103, No. 1432, 389.

⁶ Mark Gridley, Robert Maxham and Robert Hoff, "Three Approaches to Defining Jazz", *The Musical Quarterly*, 1989, Vol. 73, No. 4, 523.

phasizing individualism and the realization of personal or economic freedom that enabled jazz to become, together with the film industry, the most specific expression of American culture.⁷

The beginnings of jazz coincide with the rapid changes in the economic and social conjuncture that deeply transformed the world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the series of technological, organizational, and political developments. The pre-history of jazz belongs to the Malthusian revolution, whose fulfillment in demography and changes in living conditions could be traced from the beginnings of the 19th century. People, goods, and ideas began to move faster than ever before in history, and for the first time after 10,000 years, the improvement of living conditions significantly lengthened the average life expectancy. Overall progress also affected the intensification and democratization of human relations. In 1866, the transatlantic telegraph service was established. The great expansion of the railway network took place in the late 19th century. In the 1850s and 1860s, four innovations lowered the cost of steampowered ocean transport: the screw propeller, iron hulls, compound engines, and surface condensers.⁸

During the Malthusian and First Industrial Revolution, New Orleans was becoming an important spot in international trade and world economy and, as such, a destination of migrants and immigrants. Two important relocations directed jazz towards a more profound artistic transformation: the Great Migration to the urban North, and moving from the outdoors to more sophisticated urban interiors, such as clubs, theaters and concert halls. The Great Migration, a long-term social and economic relocation of the African Americans, was oriented towards New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, St. Louis and Los Angeles. In the long term, the Great Migration lasted from 1916 to 1970. From the 1930s, Harlem was inhabited by 300,000 African Americans. The economic basis of the Harlem Renaissance was industrial employment. The Great Migration deeply transformed the northern cities. Jazz acquired a new audience and became a subject of the entertainment business. Jazz artists were given the opportunity to express their inner sensations and affinities. Urban structures al-

⁷ John Gennari, "Jazz Criticism: Its Development and Ideologies", *Black American Literature Forum*, 1991, Vol. 25, No. 3, 449–523.

⁸ General references: Douglass Cecil North, *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*, Princeton University Press, 2005; Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms : A brief economic history of the world*, Princeton University Press, 2007; Michael Lind, *Land of Promise: An Economic History of the United States*, Harper Paperbacks, 2013; Gary M. Walton and Hugh Rockoff, *History of the American Economy*, 20th Edition, South-Western, Cengage Learning, 2014.

lowed access to a richly structured, profound, and “deep” market.⁹ Jazz became a commodity, a service, intended for fun, physical and emotional pleasure. Over time, artists and consumers also appeared, in search of a more profound spiritual and intellectual experience.

We still do not have an overall economic history of jazz. The history of jazz is largely made up of individual destinies. The economy of jazz was easier to understand in the first jazz period, from the late 19th century to the emergence of bebop and avant-garde, after 1939, or during the 1950s. The emergence of jazz announced the era of the commercialization of leisure and entertainment. Jazz was a commercial and social element of the eponymous jazz era during the 1920s. The chances of prosperity and more leisure time led to social and cultural changes. Women gained the right to vote and, in public, their behavior became more equated with men’s, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking whiskey, and playing men’s games. Reforms and economic growth supported increased education, a reduced birthrate and smaller families. Already in the 1920s, the modern American standard of living was accessible to a broader middle class. After the collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression, the “swing era” coincided with the attempts in economic and social recovery.

The jazz avant-garde departed from the previous patterns of popular music, including “classic” jazz from the 1920s and 1930s. Its economic and social outlines were reflecting the emergence of a new, broader market in the post-war American capitalism and social development. Although measured in hundreds of thousands, eventually even millions of listeners, that market was able to adopt to artistic innovation. The US government sponsored jazz in Cold War propaganda purposes exclusively.

During the first half of the 20th century reducing social inequalities enabled the democratization of culture and the emergence of more diverse oriented cultural facilities. The jazz avant-garde appeared only after the previous economic and social conditions were fulfilled during the 1950s: the stabilization of the middle class, the gradual emancipation of African Americans, the development of universities. Intense cultural influences were brought by the immigration from Eastern Europe. European influences also encouraged elitist attitudes and behavior. However, jazz was already broadly democratized, thanks to the development of sound carriers, radio and the emergence of sound film. In the post-war period, after 1945, the strong American economy and political impact enabled even deeper cultural, educational and scientific contacts with Europe. New intel-

⁹ A trade zone where a large number of shares can be bought and sold without drastically affecting the price. Might also refer to the buyers and sellers following a particular issue as well.

lectual resources within American society confirmed that primordial capitalism has disappeared into the irrecoverable past.

The “Golden Age” of the American economy and social evolution, between 1945 and 1975, coincided with the West German “Wirtschaftswunder”, economic miracle, or “les trente glorieuses”, the glorious thirties in France. After the slow recovery during the 1930s from the 1929 crash, a new American economy was born from the previous history of stock and bank failures, unemployment and commercial paralysis, and also the new role of government during the Second World War. In 1958, John Kenneth Galbraith coined the phrase “the affluent society.” The first three post-war decades are also related to the reality, or impressions of a high growth and rapid expansion of the mass middle classes, new forms of social insurance and increased government regulation of banking, industry, the electrical supply system or interstate highway grid, together with the decentralization of production, work, shopping and housing. New household technologies (refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers) allowed the members of America’s new middle class to enjoy listening to the radio, watching television shows, and going to the movies. The South was gradually integrated as the federally sponsored infrastructural and agricultural modernization was followed by the civil rights movement. South and West were beginning to attract, again, immigrants and investors. Many of the African American and white farm laborers and tenants were migrating to cities in the South, or to the North, as new technologies, or even air-conditioning, accelerated the migration of Americans from the Northeast and Midwest to the booming states like California, Texas, and Florida. The federal government built great numbers of army bases, air bases, naval facilities, and defense-production plants in the South and West.

Postwar Americans enjoyed more personal space, and more personal time. The work week has declined to forty hours.

The major sectors of the American economy were organized as government-backed cartels or dominated by a few huge corporations. The industrial sector was largely privatized from government property after 1945. The largest industrial corporations were mostly successful between 1954 and 1976. The Truman administration adopted an antitrust policy. Investment bankers were separated from commercial bankers and forbidden to be on the boards of directors of corporations. Industry was financed primarily from within, as borrowing from banks and issuing securities accounted for only a quarter of capital. The economic boom allowed many firms to finance themselves to a greater degree from retained earnings, reducing the influence of the financial sector over corporate America.

The 1920 census confirmed that urban Americans outnumbered rural Americans. By 1950, two thirds of native-born white Americans lived in urban areas. After the war, Americans were more educated than the previous generations.

American society was stabilized in the 1950s as the previous reductions in European immigration reduced the average flows between 1915 and 1950 to only one-fifth of its earlier rate.

From the 1950s, the federal program of Social Security and the federal state unemployment and welfare programs created a modern safety net for a new urban society. Mostly thanks to the welfare programs, as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which promoted jobs and training for the poor, from the 1960s until the end of the 1990s, black poverty declined from a little more than 40 percent to 22 and 24 percent. Between 1966 and 1969 alone, black poverty fell from 40.9% to 30.9%. The poverty persisted mainly due to the mass immigration that followed the 1965 immigration reforms, as the immigrants originated mainly from Latin America. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota system, replacing it with a preference system that focused on immigrants' skills and family relationships with citizens or U.S. residents. More as a consequence of the various unexpected results of this act rather than due to this act itself, the new immigration wave changed America's demographics, economic and social structure, enabling immigration from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The Latin American population also dramatically increased from 1965. In the long term, the new immigration involved changes in cultural preferences. In other words, the new structure of immigration focused the artistic direction towards entertainment and ethnic music. The American "world society", instead of jazz, introduced new "world music". Globalising artistic movements, jazz and rock died together with globalisation, also within American society.

The new immigration stimulated economic growth, which had been very dynamic since the beginning of the 1980s. During the seventies a transition took place towards the sector of services, information technology and a market knowledge and skills. Changes in the employment sector ranged from a decline in agriculture, 68% of total employment in 1800, to 41% in 1900, 15% in 1950, and only 2% in 2012, while industrial production was rising from 18% in 1800 to 28% in 1900, and 34% in 1950, and falling to 18% in 2012, to a steadily growth in the services' sector, from 13% in 1800 to 31% in 1900, 50% in 1950, to 80% in 2012.¹⁰

Income inequality in the US fell between 1941 and 1945, since the state, faced with wartime needs, was redirecting financial and production activities.

¹⁰ Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014, 69.

Inequality continued to decline slightly in the early 1950s, and remained mostly stable until the beginning of the Reagan-Thatcher era in the 1980s.

In the absence of a national program of higher education, distribution, a diffusion of knowledge in American society, especially during the jazz avant-garde era, roughly between 1940 and 1970, was mostly spontaneous. But also the emergence of jazz, from its roots, and the emergence of the avant-garde, belonged to the general flows of cultural association, social assimilation, immigration and urbanization. In the absence of governmental intervention, forces of divergence, and the growth in differences, were more dynamic than in Western Europe. The calming factors that contributed to the appearance of jazz avant-garde audiences, institutions and markets, were the huge accumulations of capital, arrivals of educated immigrants from Europe between the two world wars, and private investments in universities. Income inequality in the US largely decreased from 1950 to 1955, stagnated until the end of 1960s, slightly declined between 1968 and 1970, stagnated during 1970s, and rapidly grew in the 1980s and 1990s, to be temporarily halted at the beginning of 2000s.¹¹

The postwar era of American capitalism was coming to an end during the 1970s. Americans had been losing faith in the New Deal order “constructed by Roosevelt and Truman, ratified by Eisenhower, and expanded by Kennedy and Johnson”.¹² Oil shocks, following the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, deeply disturbed, but also diverted the global economy. American domination over world trade also came to an end, with the economic rise of Japan and Western Europe. From 1973 to 1996, American economic growth fell dramatically, compared to the previous two decades. All the industrial economies suffered a productivity slowdown around the same time, perhaps as a result of the maturity of second-industrial revolution technologies like electricity and automobiles. “The unchallenged supremacy of the US economy in the world could last only until America’s industrial rivals recovered from the devastation of World War II – in large part because of generous American help”.¹³

As capitalism is a general economic and social order characterized by private property, the exchange of goods and services ran by free individuals and their enterprises and associations, jazz was both a product and reflection of the American economy. The spread of capitalism generated a general leap in human progress: living standards, cultivation and investment in human potential, development of individualism and the concept of human rights and freedoms, including the democratization of arts. Artistic individualism was exposed directly to

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹² Michael Lind, *op. cit.*, 207.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 208.

the market. In the long term, the post-war rise of American capitalism, including post-industrial trends, affected the growth of inequality. Inequality has spawned a social and cultural elitism, economically powerful enough to support new experiments in arts or humanities. On the other side, even the very distinguished jazz individualism was promoting a specific form of inequality, underlying personal success based on abilities. "Interviews with 118 randomly selected jazz musicians and four months of participant observation" in 1967 confirmed that:

jazz musicians are becoming less hostile toward audiences and the larger society, that in-group norms promoting cohesiveness are weakening, and that jazz musicians are becoming less inclined to interact only with their own kind. These major attitudinal shifts are attributed to an increased positive valuation of jazz music by the general public.¹⁴

Jazz was gaining an increasing degree of public recognition and approval as a serious musical form, and that has been confirmed by the proliferation of jazz education at schools and universities, the increasing use of "jazz tours" by the State Department's cultural exchange programs, and the increasing number of jazz concerts held at prestigious locations, such as the White House or the Carnegie Hall. Jazz transition in more formal educational circles was "in part, an outcome of demands arising from increasingly critical recording techniques, the increasing complexity of jazz music, and the development of more sophisticated public tastes."¹⁵

The rise of the jazz avant-garde must be considered also in the context of economic and cultural relations with Western Europe. Since the late 1940s to the late 1970s, during the "famous thirty" years, economic growth in Western Europe was spectacular, and almost permanent. The US growth was more moderate, just over 2% from 1950 to 1970, and slowed to less than 1.5% between 1990 and 2012.¹⁶ The two economies were approaching each other, the two markets were balanced, and the two technological systems were coordinated. From the beginning of the 1960s, the US was again under a strong and important European cultural influence, which culminated in a "British wave" in 1964. Europe was the most important foreign market for American goods. It even became a market for the jazz avant-garde. The mutual relations in this regard probably culminated when Manfred Eicher founded in Munich, Germany, in 1969, a record label ECM (Edition of Contemporary Music). Also in 1969, the English guitarist, bandleader and composer John McLaughlin joined Miles Davis on his

¹⁴ Edward Harvey, "Social Change and the Jazz Musician", *Social Forces*, 1967, Vol. 46, No. 1, 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁶ Thomas Piketty, *op. cit.* 73.

landmark electric jazz-fusion albums *In A Silent Way*, *Bitches Brew*, *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* and *On The Corner*. English bassist Dave Holland joined Miles Davis in 1968, recording in September 1968, and appeared on half of the album *Filles de Kilimanjaro* (1968, with Miles Davis, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter and Tony Williams), undoubtedly a high point in modern jazz. The *Down Beat* critic John Ephland estimated *Filles de Kilimanjaro* to be a turning-point album for Davis, with only five tunes, and with a mood and rhythms that change gradually from start to finish. And while considering free jazz as grating and unpleasant, Miles was nothing short of an avant-garde spirit in his need to find a wider audience. “For the first time, his bebop roots were essentially severed, rockier rhythms, electricity and ostinato-driven bass lines now holding sway”.

Is jazz one of the best products of American capitalism, and not just the most authentic outcome in American culture? Is it possible to establish a correspondence between cultural development and economic cycles? Was avant-garde jazz confirming a deep social diversification?

During the postwar period, there arose a new generation of consumers. The appearance of this generation was a consequence of the social and educational diversification. Jazz artists benefited from the stabilization of economic development and income inequalities, although their personal features, habits and life style were exceptional, sometimes even eccentric. They still managed to survive on the open market, deprived of governmental or foundational aid, support which might have suffocated their innovation or excellence. Moreover they could enrich themselves. Miles Davis had a collection of Ferraris, Mercedes and Lamborghinis, and remained uncompromising, compelling and unique.

On its latest cover, *Kind of Blue* is pronounced ‘perhaps the most influential and best selling jazz album of all time’. The sales figures for the album support at least the second part of this claim: the latest estimates provided by Sony Music put total sales at about 4.5-5 million units.¹⁷

James Collier challenged assumptions that jazz was “a people’s music” and “a ghetto music”, reminding that:

Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, and Count Basie were growing rich and famous playing the music, and dozens of others (such as Billie Holiday, Art Tatum, Roy Eldridge, and Dizzy Gillespie) were buying Cadillacs and furs from the proceeds of their music.¹⁸

¹⁷ Samuel Barrett, “‘Kind of Blue’ and the Economy of Modal Jazz”, *Popular Music*, 2006, Vol. 25, No. 2, 185.

¹⁸ *Idem*

Coltrane was treated with almost religious adoration.

John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, which borders on jazz-rock and on free jazz, is after all one of the most popular jazz records of all time, and probably not thanks to Coltrane's many beboppish technical excellences. Like much free jazz, *A Love Supreme* is appreciated as an unrestrained musical bacchanalia, a prequel of 1960s psychedelia, a sort of jazz *Sgt. Pepper*.¹⁹

Coltrane's *Love Supreme*, often listed amongst the greatest jazz albums of all time, was sold in about 500,000 copies by 1970.

In the post-war period, each wave of development in economy or technology generated new waves of social temptations, political turmoil and artistic responses. Jazz avant-garde did not oppose the application of technological innovations, and was open to cooperating with related movements, such as art and industrial design, poetry, film or photography. Even, at its peak, jazz avant-garde was using rock culture experiences, or direct cooperation, while establishing communication with the market and broader audience.

Jazz avant-garde took advantage of the adoption of new technologies in music and art production. Historically, in the very foundations of HiFi culture, modern jazz albums also belong to the best sound recordings ever realized, as the recording technology of modern jazz was dependent on valves and tapes. Avant-garde jazz recordings rank within the heights of artistic sound processing and the convergence of direct musical expression towards broader audiences. Contemporary Blue Note, Prestige, Impulse! Riverside vintage vinyl pressings from the 1950s and 1960s remain also physically exceptional musical experiences.

The economic crisis in 1974 increased the cost of vinyl, while impure recycled vinyl, reduced the vinyl thickness, the excessive numbers cut before changing the stampers or insufficiently frequent quality sample checks, contributed to lowering the quality of the sound transmission. Finally, the gradual introduction of transistors to replace valves, and the definite predominance of solid state circuitry from the mid-1970s impoverished the hitherto warm, immediate and dynamic sound of the previous era, which also belonged to the jazz avant-garde.

The jazz avant-garde highlights were reached with the superb, unique artistic individualism of Miles Davis, Bill Evans, John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner. Their personal appearance cannot be explained by economic forces, market or social structure. But the economic strength, urban development, maturing of American society and the rise of educational resources enabled their popularity and the survival of refined, elitist art within a free market economy. Their uniqueness, sometimes considered as "the death" of jazz, remains, however, definitely excluded from economic explanation.

¹⁹ Dmitri Tymoczko, *op. cit.*, 76.

With regard to the previous research that places the jazz avant-garde in the context of the specificities of American society as a free market and free audience, unfettered by governmental pressure or influence, many important questions still remain unsolved and subject to eventual future concern. Does American jazz avant-garde marginalization, or even irrelevance, obvious in the 1980s and after, accidentally coincide with the rise of economic inequality, as a product of economic growth? Did economic growth democratize popular music styles to such an extent that the avant-garde has been virtually lost within the mass commercialization of matter? Does capitalism afford opportunities to those more competent, such as jazz avant-garde leaders have shown in their ability to create and survive the unregulated market challenges?