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Andrew S. Berish, *Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams: Place, Mobility, and Race in Jazz of the 1930s and 40s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 312 pp. \$27.

Berish's work reflects the dual tendencies current in scholarly writings on jazz. From the vantage point of foreign theories—critical and literary studies—he examines the recordings and repertoire of the bands playing the Catalina Ballroom on Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California, of the Duke Ellington and Charlie Barnet orchestras, and of electric guitarist Charlie Christian. His musicological analysis of the artists' recordings is a variant of this approach. The second tendency is based upon consideration of the musicians' origins, migration, and movement, an analysis utilizing recordings, interviews, and other material at hand.

Berish analyzes the concepts of space, place, and mobility represented during the heyday of jazz's swing era. The idea that music shapes our perceptions of space and geography is certainly an interesting one with racial as well as spatial dimensions. His first chapter focuses on the famous Southern California ballroom that showcased some of the most famous bands of the time, but never black bands, or even the white bands that presented music with a strong African American flavor. Berish summarizes the lyrics and different versions of the 1920 hit, "Avalon" (by Al Jolson, Buddy DeSylva, and Vincent Rose), and concludes that Catalina Ballroom operators created a very special space for its patrons, a nostalgic Avalon, like the popular song, that was a comfortable refuge for white middle class concertgoers during the crises of Depression and World War.

He also examines the historical and social contexts, lyrics, arrangements, and themes of two of the leading swing bandleaders. At times his analysis is superb, as in his insights regarding the train motif employed by Duke Ellington in his spoken and written introductions as well as in the musical arrangements. His analysis, we might note, is based on close examination of Ellington material.

Charlie Barnet's choice to feature Ellington's and other black composers' music distinguished him from most white bandleaders, and the author's discussion of his recording, "Pompton Turnpike" (Bluebird 1940), named for the New Jersey route that brought jazz fans to the famous Meadowbrook Inn in Cedar Grove, New Jersey, is rich and original in its deep analysis. To his

credit, Berish often analyzes the music using terms and diagrams that non-musicians can understand.

More technical musicological analysis is also critical to his ideas, and he tries to combine this with the dominant motifs of place, migration, and mobility. Certainly place and migration, trains for example as well as roads ("Route 66"), figure significantly in the music of the swing era, but how do you prove that Charlie Christian's music embodied mobility and forward movement? As Berish acknowledges, African American folklore is rich in traditions of flying, so the hit "Flying Home" might just as well call to mind the Golden Chariot of Black worshippers instead of the more mundane introduction of Christian to air travel. Such interpretations are difficult if not impossible to prove.

In considering Christian's musical background, the author overlooks the fact that the guitarist came from a musical family, as both parents, a grandmother, and two uncles were all musicians. As a child, Christian (1916-1942) performed, sang, and danced with his father, who was blind, through the streets of Oklahoma City with his two brothers, one of whom, Edward (b. 1906), became a bandleader.

Christian's biographers go into some detail concerning his family, his dancing abilities, the guitarists who influenced him, and those he jammed with before he joined Benny Goodman in 1939. For example, Wayne E. Goins and Craig R. McKinney's *A Biography of Charlie Christian, Jazz Guitar's King of Swing* (New York: The Edward Mellen Press, 2005) presented his life and influences from his childhood. One must ask: does the author neglect these facts because of a deficiency in his theories or because of shortcomings in his analysis, or both? In any case, it is a serious problem if you want to comprehend the sources of the electric guitarist's artistry and traditions.

How can one understand the music culture while ignoring such institutions as family, school, and children's, minstrel, and circus bands as well as the work of those who are close to the subject matter? Then too, the author makes no mention of the studies of Alan Govenar [*Deep Ellum and Central Track: Where the Black and White Worlds of Dallas Converged* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 1988)] or Dave Oliphant's recent publication [*Jazz Mavericks of the Lone Star State* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2007)], which detail the history and music scene in the southwest. Finally, why don't those puzzled about the music of a region go to that area, listen to live performances and consult local musicians and archivists? John W. Work used this methodology nearly a full century ago in *Folk Song of the American Negro* (New York: Negro Universities Press 1915), but it seems some scholars prefer to depend primarily upon recordings.

Moreover, often the language burdens and obscures the analysis. We need a translator for the following:

A hermeneutic of place helps deconstruct this prevalent bias conveyed in jazz writing that Ellington *is* his orchestra and helps reinterpret the band's music as dialogic, reflecting the basic heteroglossia of social practice where the meaning is always contextual and contingent. (123)

There are other problems. Christian was twenty-five when he died, not thirty-two as stated. Edward died a few years after his brother—both of tuberculosis. Possibly poverty and high mortality rates are irrelevant in some theories and analyses of jazz, but what is curious is that they are so rarely taken into account.

Additionally, Berish relies considerably upon theoretical and secondary sources instead of primary evidence. Though he mentions a concept developed by George Lewis ("Afrological") [see also Lewis's *A Power Stronger than Itself: the AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)] and refers to Gena Caponi-Tabery's "cultural trope of ... 'jump,'" [Jump for Joy: Jazz, Basketball, and Black Culture in 1930s America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008)], both derived directly from African American values, he does not use either. While utilizing critical theory, he accepts it as gospel truth without modification for the specifics of jazz culture.

Given the author's interest in flight, one might wonder how he would interpret "Jumpin' at the Woodside" or "One O'clock Jump." Finally, he might have consulted more primary source material such as the scores of oral history interviews with musicians at the universities of Chicago and Missouri, Kansas City, and at UCLA, Rutgers, and Tulane.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

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