Book Reviews

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Reviews

ACROSS THE WAVES: How the United States and France Shaped the International Age of Radio. By Derek W. Vaillant. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2017.

Across the Waves is a detailed and richly researched history of the U.S.-French broadcasting debut, organized chronologically in two parts, each composed of three chapters. In the first part, Derek Vaillant, associate professor of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan, tracks key moments in the development of French radio broadcasting with the support of the United States between the 1920s and the end of World War II. In the second part, Vaillant turns to French programs made for American audiences in the United States. This dynamic spatial and temporal structure reinforces the engaging prose, bringing to life salient moments of conversations and exchanges between the two nations across the waves.

A historian at heart, Vaillant provides his readers with the cultural and political depth to better understand the necessary cross-border collaborations that led to the acceleration of cultural exchanges across the Atlantic throughout the twentieth century. To this end, Vaillant draws from a wealth of primary sources, both in English and in French: written (reports, correspondence of listeners of particular shows, news articles, etc.), oral (radio shows or interviews), and visual (archival photos of key protagonist are included throughout the book, as well as maps).

From the onset, Vaillant establishes his desire to resist "the persistent appeal of the "Americanization" versus "remaining French" binary" (3). To this end, he contrasts both countries' broadcasting techno-aesthetics, which allows for the technological and cultural aspects of broadcasting to be analyzed as one. The French is characterized by "quality, scarcity and deliberate pacing," while the U.S. American features "power, abundance and high-speed execution" (2). In part one, Vaillant centers the tension between American broadcasting specialists who assumed their knowledge and broadcasting ways were universal, with French technicians and listeners' frustration with the imposition of a different tempo on the French airwaves. The result of more than two decades of cultural and technical exchanges in the field of radio broadcasting is high quality broadcasting made in France by the end of World War II.

In the second part of *Across the Waves*, Vaillant does not describe the ways in which French radio shows might have influenced U.S. techno-aesthetics or the way U.S. broadcasting techniques shaped French airwaves before 1945. From the regular broadcasting of French sounds in the 1930s—"choir and organ concerts from cathedrals, musical segments from music halls, cabarets and other festive settings" (39)—to Bonjour Mesdames (1948-1964) or Legends and Wonders (1969), France has systematically constructed an image of itself that intentionally appealed to Americans. Vaillant makes it clear that this was a deliberate move in the post-World War II world as France needed to "resell itself" and "rebuild the respect of America" (151); he does not, however, inform his readers of the motivation for France to do so.

A full chapter is devoted to the first U.S.-French talk-show, first broadcast in 1948 from France and recorded in English for an anglophone audience. This show is hosted by Marjorie Dunton, a former fashion designer, and intended for a female-identifying audience mostly. Bonjour Mesdames constructs Paris as women's paradise and intends to "help make Paris once again a city that could be all things to all women" (103). It becomes rapidly clear, however, that the Paris of designers and models, dancers and artists was an exclusionary one, a Paris few of the listeners in the U.S. could aspire to experience. Vaillant sadly only makes a passing reference to the apt concept of the 'modern girls,' a neoliberal, apolitical shadow of an empowered woman, which Vaillant might have been well advised to use throughout this chapter. Instead, women's empowerment is framed within purely consumerist and objectifying practices, as illustrated by the recurrent description of guests' expensive outfits, or the references to particular designers' style.

While Chapter 5 appears to make the apology of an empowered French woman whose appearance she controls (though the show does little to convey her ownership over her body), the last chapter points to instances of France's evident lack of inclusion. By showcasing the only two episodes from a sports show title Higher, Further, Faster, focused on two North African athletes, Vaillant rightly points out the blatant racism of the broadcasters. He is also highlighting the challenges Marcel Cerdant and Alain Mimoun encountered in France, despite their talent and success. A very valuable addition to the narrative, it is regrettable that no more than four pages may be devoted to exclusion and racism. More work might be done on gender and race across the waves by future scholars, building on this important contribution to the scholarship on the complex U.S.-French relationship.

Anne Dotter
University of Kansas

THE LIMOUSINE LIBERAL: How an Incendiary Image United the Right and Fractured America. By Steve Frasor. New York: Basic Books. 2016.

In 1969, amid a political realignment often associated with the erosion of the New Deal Democratic coalition and the ascendancy of the New Right, Mario Procaccino, a Democratic mayoral candidate in New York City, criticized his opponent, Mayor John Lindsay, for being a "limousine liberal." Portraying himself as a populist defender of oppressed working-class citizens, Procaccino introduced what historian Steve Frasor argues has been a remarkably malleable and persistent "specter haunting American politics" since the Sixties (1). In *Limousine Liberal: How an Incendiary Image United the Right and Fractured America*, Frasor chronicles the origins and enduring impact of mythical images of subversive economic and cultural elites threatening the lives of ordinary Americans.

Frasor contextualizes the right-wing populist use of the term within a long history of resistance to the social changes of the Progressive Era and the New Deal that includes Henry Ford, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin, as well as the cultural conflicts associated with the Scopes Monkey Trial and the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Such politics of resentment informed the rise of McCarthyism during the Cold War, as well as the appeal of George Wallace, Richard Nixon, and Phyllis Schlafly in later decades. While Frasor's narrative will be familiar to most readers, the value of *Limousine Liberal* lies in its ability to link this genealogy to far more recent developments, such as the popularity of conservative commentators Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh, the impact of right-wing donors such as Charles and David Koch, and the recent political defeat of Hillary Clinton. Although class conflict may have a long history in American political culture, Frasor stresses the crucial transformation of earlier economic populism to, after the Sixties, an increased emphasis on social and cultural issues such as religion, guns, gender, and sexuality. The transformation enabled "Sunbelt rebels," a new class of conservative economic elites centered far from the Northeast to harness class conflict while promoting neoliberal economic policies that threaten organized labor, the public sector, and the welfare state (127).

While Frasor's "history of an epithet" (247) demonstrates the persistence of the metaphor, his synthesis of published accounts of political and intellectual elites often fails to distinguish between the deep ideological roots of an idea and the political manipulation of the term for sheer "tactical convenience" (94). Frasor leaves readers wondering exactly who "retrofitted" (130) American populism and precisely who was the "vanguard" (223) against limousine liberals. The author provides little sense of the shifting perspectives and political behavior of voters who resented the image of the limousine liberal or, just as importantly, the larger number of Americans who rejected the stereotype.

For decades political liberals, perhaps to their detriment, have dismissed much of right-wing populism as thinly-veiled racism. Although *Limousine Liberal* acknowledges the historical importance of racism, Frasor, in an attempt to illustrate the complexity of American conservatism, emphasizes the economic and cultural components of the metaphor at the expense of race. However, the contested nature of American race relations is embedded in most controversial issues that dominate postwar America. Procaccino's grievances in the 1969 mayoral election that gave birth to the epithet focused on issues of poverty, crime, public schools, and the impact of the growing welfare system on neighborhoods and taxes. Elsewhere, Frasor's survey points to the importance of numerous issues often viewed through a racial lens, such as unemployment, affirmative action, immigration, crime, urban renewal, and school busing. Moreover, Fraser references "mainstream American culture," (151) "blue collar America," (170) "insular working class worlds," (171) and "Christian populism" (179) without acknowledging that these terms reflected powerful racial assumptions about American society. George Wallace's effective defense of the "little man" (130) in the South and beyond was always limited to whites, regardless of region, and yet the author never confronts the reality that African Americans, despite having arguably the strongest claims of exploitation by economic, political, and cultural elites, have rarely embraced attacks on limousine liberals. Ultimately, conservatives' appeals to African American voters before and after 1969 failed because the stereotype and "signifier" (5) of the "limousine liberal" was always inextricably linked to older and even more potent and pernicious myths about race in America.

Richard L. Hughes
Illinois State University

THE BANJO: America's African Instrument. By Laurent Dubois. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2016.

The sheet music for John T. Rutledge's "De Banjo Am De Instrument For Me" (1877) depicts a blackface minstrel jovially playing a banjo, a racist caricature of former slaves and their most closely associated musical instrument. Nearly 100 years later, banjoist Grandpa Jones performed an updated version of the song on the CBS television show *Hee Haw*, where it was transformed into a comic representation of the American South. In both instances, the banjo acted as a stand-in for the people who played it—the black slaves that originally popularized the instrument and the rural white southerners now most commonly associated with it. This shift in signification was a complex and contradictory process, one that developed gradually over the banjo's winding history. That history and those contradictions lie at the heart of Laurent Dubois's *The Banjo*.

Like Karen Linn's *That Half-Barbaric Twang* (University of Illinois Press, 1991) and Philip F. Gura and James F. Bollman's *America's Instrument* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Dubois chronicles the banjo's contributions to American culture. However, unlike these previous texts, *The Banjo* takes a much more expansive view, plotting the instrument's story across more than 400 years.

Dubois begins with the banjo's historical antecedents in West and Central African string instrument traditions, before situating it as a distinctly North American invention—one born of the horrific, brutal, and bewildering conditions of slavery. He argues that the banjo's versatility and its vague resemblance to previous African instruments made it a tool of solidarity among enslaved communities in the 18th century, where people without a shared language or culture recognized it as a common reminder of their distant homelands. The banjo's early history is poorly documented, as the instrument was played exclusively by slaves; yet Dubois has impressively reconstructed a vibrant account of its role in slave life by scouring the historical record, incorporating discussions of eyewitness accounts, paintings, theatrical productions, poetry, songs, and more. In the second half of the book, Dubois charts how the banjo entered the American mainstream. The instrument, as a signifier of slave culture, became a key component of blackface minstrel shows, and minstrelsy's popularity, in turn, made the instrument more respectable among white audiences. These factors fostered a wave of mass-produced banjos in the 19th century, which supplied inexpensive instruments for a burgeoning movement of amateurs. These banjos then found their way into later styles of American popular music, including string band music, early blues and jazz, folk music, and bluegrass.

The Banjo's massive scale allows Dubois to contextualize the instrument within larger changes in American history. Yet, this breadth inevitably means that not every subject is covered with the same depth. This is felt most palpably in the book's final chapter, which covers the twentieth century. Focusing primarily on Pete Seeger and his political battles during McCarthyism, Dubois too quickly glosses over other important threads, especially the banjo's role in country music.

Overall, *The Banjo* is an immensely rich and detailed work. Dubois's previous research on French Caribbean slave communities provides him unique insights into the instrument's early history and the book should appeal to anyone broadly interested in the development of American vernacular music.

Brian F. Wright
Fairmont State University

THE KIND OF MAN I AM: Jazzmasculinity and the World of Charles Mingus Jr. By Nichole Rustin-Paschal. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 2017.

The Kind of Man I Am creatively juxtaposes people and events in Charles Mingus's life, exploring the expanse of his influence while simultaneously considering the ways in which Mingus and his circle exist in and around jazzmasculinity. Throughout, Nichole Rustin-Paschal listens carefully for gender (and race) across eras of jazz using Mingus as a nucleus. In doing so, Rustin-Paschal offers answers to crucial questions within jazz studies: How do we write inclusive histories of jazz and its "greats"? How do we critically and empathetically analyze past histories?

The Kind of Man I Am begins by introducing the theoretical frameworks guiding the book, including self-portraiture, jazzmasculinity, and emotion. The first chapter focuses on Mingus's 1971 memoir, *Beneath the Underdog*; one of Rustin-Paschal's strongest chapters, it offers a nuanced interpretation that fleshes out the autobiography's "sensational" stories, granting Mingus credibility not often given by critics. Rustin-Paschal continues this empathic treatment of Mingus in the second chapter, which challenges the limited range of emotions commentators have expected from "The Angry Man of Jazz," and considers those emotions as crucial elements of his compositions and improvisations. The third chapter expands the concept of jazzmasculinity to the business of jazz: specifically, Debut Records, the small independent music label owned by Charles Mingus, Max Roach, and Celia Mingus. By focusing on Celia Mingus, Rustin-Paschal extends the experience of jazzmasculinity beyond jazzmen, per se, to women who are jazzmen. Chapter four continues this focus on women's jazzmasculinity through a case study of Hazel Scott. Though the link between Scott and Mingus is perhaps among the most tenuous of the book's actors, this chapter is particularly valuable for its consideration of how black women struggled to balance the demands of performing as both jazzmen and race women. The final chapter positions Mingus among a variety of other musicians, including Al Young, Joni Mitchell, and Buddy Collette, completing the book's focus on emotions by exploring that which Rustin-Paschal argues motivated Mingus most of all: love.

Rustin-Paschal asserts that jazzmasculinity can account for the experiences of "jazzmen" like Celia Mingus, Hazel Scott, Joni Mitchell, and Adrian Piper, along with male musicians. But despite the evident theoretical importance of jazzmasculinity throughout the book, I was often left wondering how Rustin-Paschal defined the term. An initial definition could read "authority, creativity, truth-telling, self-determination, and authenticity" (4), and another includes "authority, freedom, and agency" (5). Later, Rustin-Paschal describes collaboration as masculine (69), and then explains that Celia Mingus "modeled jazzmasculinity by putting into practice the values of innovation, collaboration, expertise, and emotionality that defined the culture" (128). These descriptions offer insight into Rustin-Paschal's meaning, but a more clearly defined explanation of "jazzmasculinity," along with a critique of the term "jazzmen," may have been helpful to future scholars looking to engage with the concept in other contexts.

Still, Rustin-Paschal offers a much needed critical interpretation of Mingus that marshals an array of archival sources to create an empathetic portrait that pays particular attention not only to the ways in which Mingus portrayed himself, but also to how Mingus's self-portraits challenged and fulfilled typical notions of jazzmasculinity. *The Kind of Man I Am* invites jazz scholars to consider how to engage with an overwhelmingly male canon while creating inclusive histories that simultaneously listen for gender.

Kelsey Klotz
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

CONGO LOVE SONG: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State. By Ira Dworkin. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2017.

In *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State,* Ira Dworkin, assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University, presents a rich text about Black transnationalism building upon the important theoretical contribution of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993). In this well-structured and well-argued book, Dworkin argues that African-American anti-colonialism found a straight channel to the Congo that also flowed to criticism of the whole of European colonialism during the twentieth century.

The work begins with the writings of historian George Washington Williams and Presbyterian missionary William Sheppard, who both arrived in the Congo in 1890, thirteen years after Leopold II of Belgium claimed the Congo as his own personal real estate. Both men wrote of the atrocities committed under Leopold's personal rule, namely the extraction of rubber using cruel means and punishment: chopping off of Congolese hands. The writings of Williams and Sheppard are the origins of African-American anti-colonial writing on the Congo. From this starting point, Dworkin masterfully analyzes Booker T. Washington's protests of colonialism in the Congo, the translation work of missionary Edith Edmiston, the literature of Pauline E. Hopkins, the poetry of Langston Hughes, the African-American publication of the writings of Patrice Lumumba, and the speeches, interviews, and letters of Malcolm X. These sources all substantiate his argument that African Americans possessed transnational sensibilities when it came to protesting against colonialism in the Congo, and even the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in early 1961.

One weakness in this study is Dworkin's tentative engagement with Ethiopianism. In his chapter on Pauline E Hopkins, Dworkin discusses her use of the Ethiopian trope that reflects a tradition in African-American writing dating from the middle of the nineteenth century. Dworkin fails to define this literary tradition, though he relies somewhat on Wilson Jeremiah Moses' *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, which includes a robust discussion of Ethiopiansim.

The strengths of this work far outweigh the weakness. Quite significant is Dworkin's treatment of Washington's transnationalism. Not only did Washington write in protest to the atrocities committed in the Congo, but he envisioned the expansion of the "Tuskegee Model" there. These insights challenge recent scholarship that has argued that Washington's interest in Africa was "secondary" to his Southern concerns. Dworkin provides convincing evidence that Washington's Southern commitments and African concerns worked symbiotically. Another strength of the book is the chapter on Langston Hughes that centers on his poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." Dworkin painstakingly engages a rich trove of evidence that leads to the conclusion that this famous poem contains anti-colonial references.

This work adds to existing scholarship on African-American connections to Africa such as Campbell's *Songs of Zion* and *Middle Passages*, and Kevin Gaines' *African Americans in Ghana*. What this work does that is different from those historical monographs is that Dworkin is able to construct a corpus of African-American writings dedicated to the Congo crisis. This work should spark more scholarship on African-American discourse, both cultural and political, on Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Eric M. Washington
Calvin College