



Johan Fornäs, *Moderna Människor: Folkhemmet och jazzen*

Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 2004

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At a time when contemporary genres dominate the field of popular music studies and its surrounding mass-mediated urban spaces, it is refreshing that one of its major Scandinavian representatives pushes the boundaries a little bit. On the surface, this book (*Modern People: Jazz and the Swedish Welfare State*; in Swedish, with a short summary in English) is a cultural history of jazz in Sweden 1920-50, but it has a wider perspective in that it makes an effort to show how jazz cultures in that era have shaped contemporary culture and society. Jazz was an emerging cultural formation that left its mark on Scandinavian culture and its early history teaches us something about issues that many people encounter in contemporary life, issues such as the importation of African-American genres, divisions in stratified youth cultures, art and pop, cultural difference, and gender. The book is an important contribution to Scandinavian popular music studies and has great relevance for projects such as the current research project on rock culture in Denmark.

The book is written for a broader audience than a small community of fans or scholars, although they too will surely learn a lot from reading it. Key concepts are introduced so that even beginners can understand them, and there is no discussion of scholarly literature except from a brief survey in a separate section in the back of the book. The style of writing is clear and straightforward without being too reductive. There should be no doubt that this book is a successful result of serious research. What we have is a solid and well-informed analysis of an extensive material that includes song lyrics, criticism, literary fiction, visual representations, and a dozen of interviews conducted by the author himself (most of them 1981-82). The author adopts a rather text-oriented approach and focuses on broad historical tendencies in linguistic discourses of singing and writing. Practices such as experience and performance receive little attention.

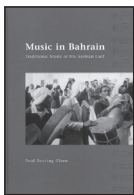
In some ways, history is filtered through a British-Scandinavian cultural studies paradigm. Above all, this is reflected in the decision to make identity the central concept and theme of the book, a choice that is legitimate but by no means self-evident. The overall structure of the book is organized around a systematic distinction between five dimensions of cultural identity in such a way that each of the major sections is devoted to one dimension (history, age, social status, race/ethnicity, and gender). In this regard the book resembles the author's earlier book *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* of 1995 which was organized around different dimensions of culture. While it creates a clear thematic framework, it is a very different framework than the ones shared by the historical subjects, and it separates things that were closely connected by means of abstraction and, sometimes, decontextualization. The author has a great sense of the semantic and narrative contexts that defined identities but he does not really explore how they are situated in the social networks and communities of the subjects. Raymond Williams, the father of cultural studies, would probably have been impressed but he might also have been critical of some aspects if we think of his holistic approach; his relentless effort to understand connections between all areas of culture and society.

Only a few aspects of the subject are left understudied by this book. An obvious question that is not raised or discussed is why no one listens to the music anymore. Is the music not interesting as music? If music was a major force in the social changes, how can we understand history without examining the musical dimensions? This problem is pertinent to jazz studies

as the interwar period is now the most studied period in European jazz history, but the music is the least heard. Moreover, it would have been useful to pay more attention to the discontinuities between past and present. This book is not a general cultural history of jazz but a more select, albeit very comprehensive, history of the meanings and roles of jazz, with many discussions of song lyrics but very little about musical experience, practice, performance, and style.

One explanation for the outlook of the book lies in the author's disciplinary orientation. For some reason he ignores the field of anthropology, even though it has contributed greatly to the very identity issues that this book contemplates. For instance, little attention is paid to the spatial dimensions of culture and the situatedness of cultural practices (this critique is also applicable to *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity*). Subjectivities are treated with great care in many respects except perhaps in terms of the power dynamics of representation. Swedish society imposed a postcolonial imaginary on African-American culture and performers. It was always about what jazz and black performers did for the Swedes and what it meant to the Swedes, not about how things were experienced from a black perspective. Although sources on this are sparse, more could have been done to recognize the subaltern perspective and the fact that it is still being ignored in the public sphere and even in many academic discourses. One of the many strengths of this work is that the author is free of the insular character of much jazz discourse, and he draws fruitfully on his extensive knowledge of popular music, social history, and media studies. A specialist in jazz studies would have been expected to say more about jazz cultures in other Scandinavian countries as well as in the United States. Occasionally, the reader had deserved to know how the situation in Sweden differed from that in other countries, and more could be said about how it was typical of Scandinavian countries. National narratives tend to obscure the regional character and transnational connections of a given culture, but despite any such limitations, the educated reader will surely recognize the broad relevance of this book and its powerful arguments about why jazz is important to modern Scandinavian history.

Fabian Holt



Poul Rovsing Olsen, *Music in Bahrain. Traditional Music of the Arabian Gulf*, ed. Scheherazade Hassan, Tourif Kerbage, and Flemming Højlund
 Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter, 42; published by the Jutland Archaeological Society in association with the Moesgaard Museum and the Ministry of Information, Kingdom of Bahrain; Århus: Aarhus University Press, 2002, 183 pp., illus., music exx., incl. 3 CDs, ISBN 87-88415-19-4, ISSN 0107-2854, DKK 288

In 1958 Poul Rovsing Olsen (1922-82) participated in an archaeological expedition to Kuwait and Bahrain, marking the start of his work collecting in the Persian Gulf. The preface by the Danish editor outlines Poul Rovsing Olsen's work collecting music and comments on the posthumously published manuscript. Then, Poul Rovsing Olsen's own written material starts with a short introduction about Bahrain, and a chapter dealing with musical instruments. The nine subsequent chapters are devoted to individual musical styles and revolve around three areas: first, *taqsim* music, sung dance music, and other festive dances; second, the work songs of pearl divers, music of African origin, as well as an aerophone drum ensemble; and third, religious music, and songs performed by women. The book also contains a bibliography and a reference list of notation numbers relative to the archive registration of the tape recordings, and information about the 41 music samples recorded on the three attached compact discs, based primarily on material collected in 1972 and 1978.