



ployee/servant. Some female employers are kind and fair while others are either indifferent or downright malicious and cruel. Why do differences occur? How do class and race erect boundaries between women? Are well-to-do women displacing their own frustration at being responsible for devalued (house)work onto their domestic servants? Do they deliberately conspire with their men or act out of economic and cul-

tural necessity? Any answers will require feminist dialogue. Books such as *Silenced* must be incorporated into a productive exchange between minority and majority members of the feminist movement of Canada.

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WINTER EPIGRAMS & EPIGRAMS TO ERNESTO CARDENAL IN DEFENSE OF CLAUDIA

by Dionne Brand
(Toronto, Williams-Wallace, 1983)

Marlene Philip and Dionne Brand are feminist/activist poets. They capture in sparse haunting prose the frustrations and anger of being black women in Canada. In *Winter Epigrams*, Trinidad-born Brand reacts to the harsh realities of a Canadian winter, a coldness she associates with the stiff rigidity of Anglo-Saxon culture, with racism, with death. Yet winter also unleashes her creative energies as she defies the climate and seeks warmth (but is sometimes disappointed) in intimate relationships and in her work.

Her *Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia* resonate with ironic wit and impassioned pleas on behalf of third world women whose complete liberation will require much more than the silly platitudes offered by liberalism and selfish male lovers. Defending 'Claudia' against the claims of her Nicaraguan Marxist/humanist/poet 'lover' that she has become seduced by bourgeois culture, Brand shows us a woman struggling to survive in desperate conditions, a woman whose sex, race and class makes her dependent on men and marriage for survival. Brand also reveals herself, her anger at past lovers who selfishly took her nurturing and love but failed to reciprocate, her frustration with old political battles for civil rights in America and South America whose victories have been erased, and her anger with sexism and racism in leftist politics.

SALMON COURAGE

by Marlene Philip
(Toronto, Williams-Wallace, 1983)

In *Salmon Courage*, Marlene Philip describes the economic and emotional poverty of family life in Jamaica, the long-suffering mother who 'Pulled me taught, like a bow reluctant', the father who naively believed oppression could be overcome by achieving professional respectability (by becoming a school teacher), and she links her current struggles as a black feminist lawyer in Toronto to the battles of her mother and her people.

Philip is torn between her identity with West Indian men and her frustration with their sexism. As a mother she agonizes over how she can protect her son from the cruel outside world yet teach him to respect his roots and reject the sexism and materialism of the dominant society. She speaks also of the dignity of domestic workers and captures the flavour of an Italian neighbourhood in Toronto. In one of the most powerful poems, 'St. Clair Avenue West', she addresses the necessity that all victims of oppression unite. During a stop at a Jewish upholsterer's shop located in her largely West Indian community, she notices 'the numbered wrist' and is sure he has likewise taken stock of the history of slavery written on her colour. Symbolically, they exchange each other's oppression: exchange 'one Roots for a Holocaust', and their solidarity is expressed by striking a fair deal on the cost of re-covering her chair.

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RED AND HOT: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union

by S. Frederick Starr
(New York, Oxford University
Press, 1983)

In 1926 a young Leningrad pianist set sail for New York on a cultural mission. Not long after the first visits of American jazz bands to Russia, Leopold Teplitsky had been sent to the US to study the music, to buy arrangements and instruments, and to return to build a jazz orchestra for the city of Leningrad. His sponsor was the Commissariat of Public Enlightenment, headed by Anatoli Lunarcharsky, who had not yet decided whether the jazz being enthusiastically embraced by urban Russian audiences was a decadent bourgeois insect in the side of Russia's national culture, or the seeds of a genuine new popular form.

And so the stage is set. Meanwhile, in Canada (this is very much off-stage) no such emissary was needed. There were Canadian delegates in Washington in 1926, though. They were trying to negotiate regulation of radio broadcasting frequencies so that Canadian stations could broadcast over the interference from American stations pouring into Canada. While Canadian editorialists (and later, Royal Commissioners) pondered whether the entertainment thrilling Canadian audiences was antithetical to the national spirit of Canadian citizenship, no one was in a position to legislate whether such enjoyment should continue. Russians, however (we're back to Starr) would be intermittently paranoid, idiotic, totalitarian and xenophobic enough to try. They wouldn't succeed, however, for they had nothing better to offer.

This is the major distinguishing feature of the controversial reception of jazz in the Soviet Union, according to Starr, a specialist in Soviet history and amateur jazz enthusiast. His detailed account of the musicians, movements and ideological controversies punctuating the long history of jazz in Russia offers a fascinating portrait of the conflicts engendered in one country (there is no comparative perspective, which I think is significant) by the reception of the United States' foremost cultural export in the first half of the century. American jazz symbolized there, as elsewhere, more than a rousing new musical style: it represented a whole complex of cultural values and preferences, invariably infected with its Americanism, but also given life by the local pleasures and drives of musicians and audiences. That was true here, too. But Russia was then, as now, the United States' foremost political, ideological and cultural opponent. It's hard to tell where that is more evident: in the stories, or in the storyteller. We'll begin with the stories.

Jazz was introduced to Russia in the 1920s by Russians who had travelled to Paris, or Berlin, and had heard American groups touring Europe. Valentin Parnakh, Futurist poet and dancer, returned to Moscow in 1922 with a collection of instruments (saxophones, being rare, were important iconographic symbols for jazz; later they would be restricted by the government) and began a press campaign in praise of jazz music and dance. The Futurists initially adopted jazz as

'noise music', while more traditional composers adapted its harmonies and syncopations to the framework of nationalist modernism. Dance bands quickly became the site of a more public negotiation, alternately flaunting American costumes and 'updating' Russian classics of folk or classical music, alternating also between the 'sweet' banalities of conservative jazz orchestration and the 'hot' swing of driving improvisation. By the time Teplitsky landed, the pattern for subsequent struggle had already emerged.

Jazz was associated with dancing, with working-class entertainment, and thus with popular emancipation; it was also embraced by more 'serious' composers, and thus identified with musical innovation and artistic freedom. But it was also attacked—at times with all the force the Soviet regime could muster—as an instrument of commercialization, Americanization and the corruption of popular working-class culture. To some extent these conflicts (as Starr points out) resonated with those being fought in the US: moral, sexual and musical degeneracy was debated by Americans with great intensity through the 1920s. But the Soviet orientation was different; it questioned the music as an exported (and not only that, but American) form, and interrogated it intensely in terms of its complicated effects on proletarian culture and the development of socialism. While some musicians were powerful (musically and strategically adept) enough to protect themselves and their audiences from such interrogation, there were periods, particularly in the late 30s and the late 40s, when the state intervened. Here the stories, not surprisingly, are pretty bleak.

The problem of defining what was clearly a popular form in relation to what was conceived as a proletarian project was fought out in the Russian press for some decades. Starr's reconstruction of this debate among critics, musicians and party officials may be the book's more interesting and useful contribution. As one might expect, the official stance towards jazz warmed and cooled in tune with larger political dynamics within the Soviet Union. The high point of officially-endorsed popular dissemination of the music was during World War II, when Red Army troops were commonly treated to touring or resident *dzhaz* bands as part of the campaign to build morale at the front (a strategy, I might add, not unique to the Soviet Union). But as recently as 1936 the journals *Pravda* (representing the Communist Party) and *Izvestia* (representing the Soviet government) had fought an extended ideological battle over the Party's position on jazz, while Moscow theatres were simultaneously purging their repertoire of 'the objectionable American numbers'. *Pravda* defended jazz, incidentally—only a couple of years after attacking Shostakovich for exploiting jazz to produce 'noise instead of music'; its editors argued that jazz's apparent

displacement of the classics (and of the economic security of contemporary classical composers and performers, as jazz musicians were then far better paid) didn't justifiably negate its power as a genuinely popular force and as a legitimate source for musical innovation. The two journals exchanged heated blasts; expressions of popular support for *Pravda's* position won some respite from the government and helped to legitimate the widespread political, economic and popular support for jazz during the war. By 1947, that approval would be withdrawn entirely, though later again the state effectively gave up its attempts to intervene.

Starr's accounts are fascinating to read; they are replete with excerpts from critical reviews, debates, letters and more recent interviews and, like other jazz writing, they tend to focus on the careers and cavortings of particular musicians whose work opens up, and speaks to, a kind of contemporary *Weltanschauung* in a way that no other art form can do (or could do, until it was displaced by other popular musical styles). This makes for richly textured reading, though every story seems to follow the same structural plot (happy genius meets underside of hammer of Soviet regime) in the long run. The 'plot' suffers more from what is left out. This is where the problem of the storyteller becomes crucial.

In 1945, Americans were humming to recordings (or visits) of the Red Army Chorus, and learning the tunes to 'Meadowlands' and other classics of Russian folk and political music. By 1948, American musicians, performers and artists who had shown sympathy to Russian culture had disappeared from the public sphere. In 1947 publication of the US's most popular book of folk songs marks the transition: readers are reminded that the songs made popular by the Red Army 'belong to no particular time'; subsequently they will disappear from the repertoire. And do you want to talk about censorship? Border crossings? Passports? Trials?

And so on. The 'unfairness' of Starr's account, which neglects this time to mention the precisely parallel, and similarly dramatic, rise and fall of cultural reciprocity in the US, that fountainhead of universal liberalism (i.e. birthplace of jazz), is empirically objectionable: there is no reference to McCarthy in this text. But behind this selection of facts hides (as always) an ideology whose perspective suffuses the account as a whole.

According to Starr, the Communist Party's crackdown on jazz after the war was due to the fanatical paranoia of Stalin, who imagined American popular music to be the tool of a deliberate conspiracy by the American government to weaken and disperse its enemies and to colonize their cultures. Starr can't help being amused by this xenophobic image of that spontaneous, apolitical, popular music and of the causes for its global dissemination by the American corporate empire. He thinks that such a theory can only spring from the terroristic paranoia inherent in the structure of the authoritarian mind. There may be something to this. He also thinks that Russia's real problem was a failure to produce an equally effective popular music because of its commitment to anachronistic and authoritarian politics. There may be something to this, too. Nevertheless there is evidence that the massive export of music and films after the war was part of a strategy of international dissemination of American culture that was officially sanctioned by the

US government, with strategic assistance from the CIA. If the effectiveness of this strategy (or the seemingly politically independent economic goals of the industries themselves, which are absent actors here) appear to absolve that government, this is only another way of saying that the American government, or rather capital, is the agent for a different kind of radicalism than that proposed by the Soviet Union. This radicalism continually produces (or rather expropriates, since the American government has not been known until recently for its kindness to popular musicians!) new symbolic forms that celebrate the destruction of those being replaced. For this reason, every political-geographic force active in the war used jazz to solicit popular support. None of this is examined by Starr, whose 'educators' were, of course coincidentally, staff



ing culture is no less partial than the officially sanctioned myths Starr attacks, and no less distorted in terms of analysis, though by placing the music within the contours of Soviet history it is all too easy to argue.

The analysis would be advanced by two streams of investigation: first, how jazz actually related to, built upon, found a response in, took the place of and in other ways affected Russian music itself; Starr seems incapable of moving beyond the essentially American concepts of 'sweet' and 'hot', and describes Russian syntheses and adaptations (or rather, refers to them) with barely concealed malicious irony, except where such adaptation are sanctified by the rubric of art (rather than that of na-

and the oppressive industrial individualism of western capitalism. Wallis and Malm's *Big Sounds from Small Peoples* (London, 1984) brilliantly analyses the effects of western music (and its technology and its money) on the musical culture of receiving nations. We might begin to surmise, on the basis of such research, that the Soviet musical 'vacuum' referred to by Starr to justify the increasing hegemony of American music was itself produced as an effect of the successful settlement of jazz and rock in Russia as in countless countries across the globe.

In short, Starr's account, while useful and moving, suffers from a radical lack of reflexivity. It reproduces a complex set of assumptions



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'Image-rich poster'

members of the Voice of America and the International Communication Agency, and who provides in the illustrations, as sole exception to the photographs of Russian musicians and jazz posters, said Voice of America representative.

These are important and indeed indispensable issues; but they don't explain why jazz was so warmly embraced by Russian (and German and Japanese and Canadian) citizens in that period, as rock was in a later era. Starr draws his own explanation from the work of the Leningrad philosopher and jazz enthusiast Efim Barban, and from Alexi Batashev's *Sovetskii dzhaz*, neither of which have been translated, and which Starr refrains from translating as 'many things had to be explained for Western readers'. Starr suggests, rightly I think, that jazz's appeal lies in its 'erotic and Dionysian element', its universality despite claims to the opposite by American black nationalists (though as I will explain this avoids the issue), and by its major assault on mainstream Western aesthetics and form. His opposition of jazz's 'individualism' to the bureaucratic monoliths of state-supported official culture is inviting, because it exposes the attractiveness of 'forbidden fruit' to the spirit of oppositional culture. But precisely there the missing link might be pieced together; the myth that jazz arises from a freedom-lov-

ing culture) which elsewhere he seems to dispense with.

Secondly, Starr's concept of jazz as a cultural force is unbearably romantic. It's difficult to understand the music without the social history. If it became a flag-bearer for American culture, it surely didn't start that way—American performers toured Europe because they couldn't survive at home, for one thing. But more fundamentally, the struggles between different cultural practices that took place in the arena of American popular music actually began at home. It is that struggle that makes the music work as effectively as it does, though the industry can be thanked for making its global discovery possible. Other views of history can be found in a number of texts not cited by Starr; for instance Francis Newton (i.e. Eric Hobsbawm)'s *The Jazz Scene* (1964), which offers a poignant political analysis of jazz within the context of American racism and economic exploitation; or, closer to the source, Jaros Marothy's *Music and the Bourgeois, Music and the Proletariat* (Budapest, 1974), which attempts a Lukacsian-Marxist analysis of musical history (with varying degrees of success) and which explains jazz as the product of an imposed confrontation between a historically collective black culture

about Western culture within which the dismissal of others is built in without even noticing—he even claims Russian appropriations of Mexican or Chicano songs as victories for American freedom and individual liberty. These assumptions are even less capable of producing an understanding of the traditions, structures or impulses of other cultures (i.e. the bad guys) than of critically deconstructing those of his own (the good guys). The reader is left with a series of vivid portraits and compelling tales. These remain to unsettle the imagination but fail to answer the important questions except in the most predictable and self-serving manner. The book also leaves this reader wondering what the 'International Communication Agency' or for that matter the CIA have on file about the Massey Commission. In 1951 (in a spirit of obvious xenophobia) the Commission expressed some concern about the cultural and ideological effects of American imports, and even deigned to talk about borders.

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