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The Cambridge Companion to Jazz,

edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn,
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Review article by Peter Elsdon

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'*Jazz is a construct*' writes Krin Gabbard, in what is effectively the preface to the new *Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn. In the context of one of these volumes from Cambridge University Press's ongoing series which seeks to gather together a multitude of different voices in a discourse on one composer, tradition, or instrument, this is a bold opening statement. Rather than the editors opening the book with the usual introductory comments, instead they send Gabbard out to open the batting for them. Gabbard is a worthy choice in this context: as editor of two highly influential books (*Jazz Among the Discourses* and *Representing Jazz* (London, 1995)) he brought together critical perspectives on jazz which challenged many of the orthodoxies established in the literature. In doing so Gabbard became an important voice in critiquing practices and aesthetics within jazz studies. And in his opening comment to this book, rather than indulging in polite warmup strokes, he instead takes aim and immediately connects with a big hit.

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While Gabbard is right to point to the difficulty of this category 'jazz', it is also clear that within what for the sake of argument I will call the jazz community, the question of what musics qualify as 'jazz' matters very much indeed. To take one example from the country in which I write, parts of the British jazz press still indulge in frequent sniping at a London-based radio station called Jazz FM, entirely because its playlists consist of little of what is held to be jazz by such critics. The point to such writers is that any station giving itself such a name and agenda, has to a responsibility conform to quite exacting standards, and is lambasted when it is perceived to fail in its 'duty' to uphold those standards. These contests about the sanctity of the category of jazz are not somehow

peripheral to jazz scholarship, far from it. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the debate around a recent major documentary on jazz, produced by American film maker Ken Burns, and the role played by Wynton Marsalis both as adviser and major contributor. Marsalis has long been a controversial figure, largely because of his views on certain aspects of the jazz tradition. In the Burns program, many in the jazz community saw a history emerging which while rightly celebrating jazz as an African-American music, marginalised the modernist strands of the music particularly since 1960, and characterised the fusion movement as a move towards a debasing commercialism.

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The debate prompted by the Burns documentary has major repercussions for studying jazz, since what is at stake here is the way jazz history is written and its tradition constructed. Gabbard may point to the artificiality of the category 'jazz', but at the same time he does acknowledge that the term itself has come to be a useful one in designating '*a number of musics with enough in common to be understood as part of a coherent tradition*'. (6) But even if the word 'jazz' is necessary for scholarship in identifying a diverse and varied musical culture, it seems a dangerous precedent to assume that this constructedness and contingency is taken as a given. I would suggest that the way in which jazz scholarship has to respond both to Gabbard's point and the historiographical tendency the Burns documentary represents, is to acknowledge the amorphous boundaries of jazz as a musical style, and produce a discourse which accepts and historicises the constructedness of jazz. Coming at the time that it does, *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* provides an opportunity to survey contemporary writing on jazz, to see how it responds to these challenges. And in attempting to review this new volume I felt it apt to survey the different issues which arise from the discourse Horn and Cooke have presented. What follows is a series of short reflections on the different issues which seem to me to arise most pressingly from this book.

(Hi)stories of jazz

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Within jazz scholarship in the last ten or more years, there has come an increasing awareness of the way jazz and its history is being constructed, whether through texts marketed for universities and colleges, scholarly work on specific musicians or styles, or the marketing strategies of the recording industry. Robert Walser points to one particularly prominent tendency within jazz writing in his chapter from this book, 'Valuing Jazz'. As Walser says, Mark Gridley's much used text *Jazz Styles* (Englewood Cliffs, 1985) articulates the notion that exploring socio-cultural context and history too much may detract from the appreciation listeners derive from jazz. In this way, jazz is constructed as a musical tradition to be appreciated primarily through the music, and this inevitably means recordings. This tendency to construct jazz history through recordings finds particularly forceful exposition in the work of Gunther Schuller. John Gennari points out that the methodology Schuller advocates within his books *Early Jazz* (Oxford, 1988) and *The Swing Era* (Oxford, 1999), '*approach[es] individual works of art as self-contained, self-defining objects to be elucidated as autonomous aesthetic works rather than understood as documents created in specific socio-historical contexts*'. (‘Jazz Criticism’, *Black American Literature Forum*, Autumn 1991) Indeed, Schuller has come to act as the single most prominent symbol of this kind of tendency in jazz writing, and for that reason the subject of more criticism than just about anyone else.

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Scott DeVeaux's seminal 1991 essay 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition' stands as probably the single most important piece in beginning a self-reflective and critical approach to historiography in jazz. (*Black American Literature* Forum, Autumn 1991) DeVeaux identified how an 'official' history of jazz was emerging, a history drawing on familiar narratives of organic growth and stylistic progression. What DeVeaux did was not only to warn against adopting generalising historical narratives which inevitably have a distorting effect, but advocated a focus on issues of 'historical particularity' (DeVeaux 1991: 553), thus not allowing jazz to become an isolated art form whose discourse fails to participate in dialogue with scholarship on other arts. This kind of critical awareness is

a theme which returns again and again in this book. Not only do many of the contributors recite some of DeVeaux's arguments, but perhaps more importantly the way in which the book explores jazz propounds what seems to me to be a very exciting and rich approach to considering this music as a cultural form. I say cultural instead of musical very deliberately, for that is exactly the point: historians have too often failed to rise to the challenge of situating jazz within a broad socio-cultural context, instead falling back on the familiar narratives of musical development which DeVeaux identified.

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The first section of the book, 'Jazz Times', presents four contributions which approach jazz by seeking to contextualise its development from a number of different perspectives. David Horn's chapter 'The Identity of Jazz' immediately confronts the question of what jazz is, naturally such a pressing issue in the context of this volume. Horn's agenda is not to attempt definitions, but while acknowledging DeVeaux's cautions against a history that can come to rely on ideas of organicism and stylistic evolution, nonetheless he is keen not to, as he puts it, '*abandon the idea that there may be consistent factors within the process by which jazz has achieved identity and within the component parts of that identity*.' (10) In confronting this issue of identity, Horn devotes particular attention to the idea of jazz as performance, suggesting that jazz '*constantly challenges ideas of set relationships between piece and performer*.' (19) This is to highlight how jazz problematises many of the norms musicologists are accustomed to in relation to the Western Art Music tradition. Horn is acutely aware of this issue, and so suggests that the term 'event' is more useful than 'performance' in relation to jazz, largely because of the vast range of ways in which jazz musicians use and adapt existing material.

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The contributions that follow on from Horn's chapter attempt, in different ways, to pursue a contextualisation of jazz which presents to the reader something of the sheer complexity behind the growth and dissemination of the music both in America and across the world during the twentieth century. Bruce Johnson's chapter 'The Jazz Diaspora' argues for using diasporic theory as a means of accounting for the spread of jazz. Johnson sees the benefits of such an approach as plugging a gap in jazz discourse: '*The tools of diasporic theory, even if not visibly deployed, are useful in illuminating the points of junction between culturalist (context-based) and formalist (text-based)*

narratives.' (34) And in developing this idea of the jazz diaspora Johnson explores a number of what he calls 'diasporic channels'; these include the flow of musicians from region to region as well as the importance of sheet music and film in disseminating jazz. Johnson also talks of the global diaspora, outlining the growth of the recording industry in Russia and Australia.

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Jed Rasula's chapter 'The jazz audience' offers not what he describes as a '*demographic profile of various constituencies of fans*' (55), but instead a kind of reception history, which explores how jazz was represented, portrayed, and understood until around the 1950s. Rasula examines uses of jazz in literature and art (with reference to F. Scott Fitzgerald and Cocteau among others), as ripe for borrowing by European composers (as for instance in Krenek's *Jonny Spielt Auf*, 1927), and links between jazz and notions of degeneracy. He also chronicles the idea (which is developed in the following chapter) of the importance of links between jazz and dancing. Rasula also makes an important point in identifying how the aesthetics of musical progress in jazz became an important part of its history and reception: '*Beginning in the 1930s, a jazz press developed in Europe and North America, establishing criteria for the evaluation of jazz records and performances. Because these evaluations were musical not cultural, what passed for jazz was increasingly subject to a logic of musical progress.*' (66) Rasula attributes this trend to a tendency amongst white critics to align jazz to narrative models already existing in art criticism and literary history, while '*confining the African-American cultural background to a demographic footnote.*' (66) This is a crucial kind of understanding for jazz discourse, to appreciate the circumstances under which certain aesthetic and critical evaluations begin to emerge, and to ground such evaluations historically.

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Following nicely on from Rasula is Robert P. Crease's chapter 'Jazz and dance'. Crease starts out, simply enough, by stating that any serious consideration of jazz has to acknowledge and examine the relationship between music and dance. This is an unremarkable thing to say, but it is vitally important precisely because of the historiographical tendency which I mentioned earlier to regard jazz as a purely musical tradition. But Crease's point is a little more complex than this:

> *Popular dancing is an extremely important cultural activity, for bodily movement is a kind of repository for social and individual identity. The dancing body engages the cultural inscripting of self and the pursuit of pleasure, and dancing events are key sites in the working and reworking of racial, class and gender boundaries....* (69)

The jazz historian is tempted to see dance merely as an inconsequential activity which happens to have been closely attached to the music for a number of decades, before as the grand narrative would have it, jazz makes its definitive bid to escape commercialism through bebop and aspires instead to the category of pure music; indeed Crease points to the 'critical rejoicing' among contemporary jazz writers (78) which occurs as this move takes place. He draws attention to the fact that dance, as with any kind of cultural expression, is not a mere adornment to music, but is an important expression of identity through how it engages participants in a social context.

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If these four chapters serve a major role in laying out a broad contextualisation of jazz, there are two later contributions in the fifth and last section of the book which seem to me to fulfil a similar function. And while the placement of these chapters in the book might seem strange in this light, on the other hand it would be unfair to criticise the editors for this, simply due to the inevitable complexity of assembling a book with so many contributions which inevitably overlap in many ways. Dave Laing's chapter 'The jazz market' considers the economics of jazz, examining two frameworks, one of which Laing calls a 'horizontal' one, and the other a 'vertical'. The horizontal approach considers jazz '*in relation to the three general types of music market to be found in the twentieth century: those of traditional (or folk) music, of popular music and of art (or classical) music*' (321), while the vertical approach has more to do with considering how musicians relate to what Laing cites as the '*three main sectors of the music business – performing, composing, and listening.*' (322) It is in this discussion that Laing can point out how jazz musicians can be economically disadvantaged through the fact that performance and improvisation do not hold the same economic benefits as composition within the music industry. Meanwhile, Krin Gabbard's chapter 'Images of Jazz' examines representations of jazz in film, literature, and image, a theme which has made his work highly distinctive,

as well as extending many of the ideas presented in Rasula's chapter. The usefulness of Gabbard's kind of approach is that it can often reveal vitally important cultural stereotypes and preconceptions, all too easily missed in scholarship which emanates from a musicological or critical background.

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So where is the voice of the traditional jazz historian in all of this? Well, there are at various points in the book chapters which represent more conventional historical takes on certain time periods within jazz history. Thus, Jeff Pressing provides a chapter on free jazz, Stuart Nicholson a chapter titled 'Fusions and crossovers', Darius Brubeck a chapter which considers the significance of the year 1959, David Sager a summary of various debates and issues in the consideration of the origins of jazz, and Mervyn Cooke a chapter on Ellington's approach to arranging classical pieces, and particularly the circumstances surrounding his version of Grieg's *Peer Gynt* suite. Of these chapters, Brubeck's and Nicholson's point in different ways to a kind of jazz history that predicates narrative on recordings, a tendency many writers recognise in Gunther Schuller's work. Brubeck takes the year 1959 as marking a series of landmarks in jazz, and as he puts it, the point at which jazz '*more strongly resembles universal current practice, indicating … that this is the beginning of contemporary jazz*'. (177) He surveys four seminal recordings made that year (Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, Dave Brubeck's *Time Out*, and Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz To Come*). Brubeck also demonstrates the often intense nature of the debate crystallising in the jazz press around this time, a debate which centred around issues of formalism and modernism, and the question of whether jazz's primary allegiance was to musical development or its audience. But it is striking just how easy it is in discussing what are undeniably seminal recordings to contribute to their canonic status, reinforcing the idea of jazz history as a discourse built around recorded documents. What is necessary is to maintain a historical awareness of how such recordings have achieved canonic status, rather than simply accepting their place as part of some kind of 'official' history. This kind of discographical approach to jazz history is exemplified even more strongly in Stuart Nicholson's chapter 'Fusions and crossovers'. Nicholson's voice is a welcome one, as he represents a stream of writing on jazz which comes more from the critical than the musicological tradition, even though his narrative can tend to lapse towards being an extended series of record

reviews. Nicholson’s strength is in his ability to survey the landscape of contemporary jazz, even suggesting here that the way in which American jazz has 'turned in on itself' (249) (and Nicholson is referring to the kind of 'neoclassical' stance Wynton Marsalis has taken) might be taken as symptomatic of a shifting of the vanguard of jazz from the United States to Europe.

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Jeff Pressing's chapter on free jazz exemplifies to me just why the kind of approach outlined in the opening four chapters of the book is so important. Nowhere perhaps in jazz is it more vital to contextualise the music, to understand the nature of the political and sociocultural forces impinging upon it than at this point. The context of the 1960s, the extraordinary civil rights protest movement and the militant wing of black politics, all had a profound and yet complex impact on jazz. This is the case I would argue, whether or not one wants to agree with Frank Kofsky's controversial opinion expressed in his book *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* (New York, 1970), that free jazz was overtly political, a music which encoded protest in its sound. Yet while Pressing acknowledges this interpretation of free jazz as '*a movement shaped by extramusical forces of political, cultural, racial and spiritual liberation*' (202), his account of free jazz inscribes at its heart an examination of musical practice. While it is very well to point to the development of new freedoms in group interplay, and a radical approach to instrumental sound, it is equally important in understanding free jazz to see the manner in which these sounds and ideas were interpreted in the context. For many involved in the Black Arts movement for instance, free jazz posed a radical challenge to Western (and hence white) values, instantiating a kind of revolutionary aesthetic stance which staked out an exclusively black cultural territory. Constructing free jazz solely as a musical practice is to miss most of what the music meant at the time, and the ways it was being interpreted in a much larger socio-cultural context.

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Given all of these views on historiography, what comes through most palpably is the sense that jazz history should not be the kind of singular narrative of stylistic progression it has often been presented as. What I see emerging particularly in the first section of this book is an account of jazz consisting of a series of different perspectives onto a culture in which the music was but a small part. This is an account which attempts to give a

sense of the broad cultural history, as well as exploring the intimate connections between different forms of cultural expression, whether music, dancing, literature, or painting. This is to reflect what Gary Tomlinson calls in the title of a much-cited article, the 'web of culture', drawing on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz. ('The Web of Culture', *19th Century Music*, April 1984) As Tomlinson talks about cultural history's search for meaning, he points out that '*meaning... arises as a function of context, deepened as that context is made richer, fuller, more complete.*' (355) So it is that in understanding jazz through the lenses of dance, literature, film, its audience, and the economics in which it functions, we deepen our understanding of the way in which this music has arisen out of a context, bound up with cultural transactions. But equally these approaches have to deal with jazz as a fluid tradition emerging from a constantly changing and evolving context, or to return to Gabbard's remark, to understand the ways in which jazz has been and is being constructed. The kind of tendency emerging in Burns's documentary for instance, has to be understood and historicised as a specific kind of construction of jazz. It may be a controversial construction, but nonetheless it is part of a long history of debates which centre around the very identity of jazz.

Jazz as practice: inclusion, exclusion, and pedagogy

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If there are well signposted dangers in writing jazz history, dangers which can result in reliance on certain grand narratives which run the danger of distorting what is a complex reality, there are similar dangers in discussing and teaching jazz as a musical practice. These dangers centre again around issues of definition, pertaining particularly to the ways in which codifying musical practice can create normative standards which effectively result in exclusionary tactics. Take for instance this statement by Jeff Pressing at the start of his chapter on free jazz: '*The nucleus of all jazz is creative improvisational expression... a process that brings into the music the joy of discovery, the magic of communication, and the uniqueness of both the moment and the individual.*' (202) Pressing's assertion runs the danger of imposing a restrictive definition upon jazz by begging this question: if all jazz has as its basis 'creative improvisational expression', does that by definition exclude any and all musics which lack improvisation?

Pete Martin makes exactly this point at the beginning of his chapter, by noting that '*the presence or absence of such a component [a substantial amount of improvisation]... will not do as a distinctive criterion in determining what is, or is not jazz.' (133)* The question, therefore, is as to how jazz can be described as a musical practice without resorting to such generalising tendencies. Travis Jackson's chapter in this volume, 'Jazz as musical practice' takes as one of its major subjects how any definition of jazz might be broached. Drawing on an article by Mark Gridley, Robert Maxham, and Robert Hoff, he considers using a family resemblance or dimensionality approach to consider a definition of jazz. After identifying problems with both approaches, Jackson instead suggests that rather than attempting definitions of jazz based on musical characteristics, jazz might be better understood in another sense: '*[T]he most fruitful understanding [of jazz] might result from shifting emphasis from static characteristics to a focus on the processes involved in jazz performance...* ' (90). Among the 'processes' Jackson specifically refers to are swinging, improvising, group interaction, and so on. Performing jazz is, he says, an act of transformation, and he concludes that '*[d]efining jazz as musical and cultural practice, then, seems more a matter of defining an aesthetic, a set of normative and evaluative criteria utilised by musicians in performing and judging performance.*' (94) Jackson's discussion of how this aesthetic might be described is disappointingly brief, but he mentions notions such as developing an 'individual voice', and being 'open' to different musical possibilities. The idea of moving from process to aesthetic is certainly an interesting one, but this seems to risk substituting vague metaphors in place of solid insights.

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Even so, within such an approach it is all too easy for a kind of exclusionary tactics to operate, even if in a subtle and largely unintentional way. The approach Jackson cites has much of a debt, as he acknowledges, to Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson. Yet, Scott DeVeaux, as so often it seems a vital force in critiquing jazz scholarship, points in a review of Berliner's *Thinking In Jazz* (Chicago, 1994) to what he calls '*Berliner's indifference to the complications of historical context.*' (*Journal of the American Musicological Society* Summer 1998, 395) DeVeaux is simply pointing out how what is usually represented as the mainstream jazz tradition is itself historically specific. By discussing the ways in which jazz musicians transform compositions in performance,

Jackson comes close to a kind of historical indifference, by predicating the whole idea of jazz performance on there being a pre-existing tune or composition. But this is to exclude many avant-garde forms of jazz in which the idea of a pre-existing composition is altogether alien. Exclusionary tendencies can operate in subtle ways, as here, but need to be guarded against.

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Ingrid Monson's approach in her chapter on improvisation in jazz is a little different to Jackson's, in the sense that she is keen throughout to foreground the historical, and rather than trying to construct normative and defining aesthetics, she locates improvisation in terms of certain stylistic traditions within jazz. Monson's chapter exemplifies not the kind of academic stance taken by Jackson and most other contributors, but a much more practical down-to-earth attempt to foster, as she puts it, '*a way of hearing that will stress the interactive interplay between the soloist and the accompaniment.*' (114) This kind of approach may come across as aimed at the non-specialist reader (indeed this is very refreshing in the context), but at the same time Monson manages to convey the richness and variety of harmonic, formal, and melodic practices within jazz improvisation, as well as discussing concepts such as licks and riffing, and in an entirely straightforward and jargon-free way. In this way Monson avoids any trend towards generalisation, emphasising the fact that jazz is a broad ranging musical tradition.

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David Ake's chapter 'Learning Jazz, Teaching Jazz', addresses the issue of how the jazz tradition is represented within pedagogical practice. Ake in effect describes how jazz as it is written about and taught in conservatoires and universities across the world, is often subject to politics of exclusion through what is at worst ignorance of historical complexity. Ake describes how bringing jazz into a university or conservatoire environment involves establishing norms, norms which can all too often exclude or denigrate forms of jazz which fail to conform to those standards. Thus for instance, he describes how inevitably performance programs emphasise getting 'a good sound', when so many jazz musicians, as he puts it, '*earned their reputations through unique manipulations of timbre.*' (265) Elsewhere in this book Robert Walser describes the same tendency this way: '*When jazz enters the institutional context of the academy, it*

must contend not only with the classical measuring stick, but also the tendency to teach whatever can be easily or efficiently taught and measured.' (311) And just as importantly, aspects of jazz such as techniques associated with the avant-garde are entirely sidelined in such approaches; indeed Ake points out that free jazz presents many challenges to established conservatory values, creating a gulf that may be very hard to bridge.

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The tendency to establish norms which Ake describes has advanced rapidly throughout the enormous jazz pedagogy market, from universities and colleges to the books produced for the eager consumption of aspiring young jazz musicians. But the normative standards being enforced within academia and much jazz pedagogy construct an extremely exclusive idea of the jazz tradition (as I have already suggested a post-bop mainstream approach which isolates avant-gardism in particular), as well as enforcing a set of benchmarks, which as Ake points out derive as much from the classical tradition as they do from jazz. This is not to imply that normative rules or standards have never operated in jazz, far from it. Indeed Pete Martin usefully applies Howard Becker's idea of art worlds in his chapter 'Spontaneity and Organisation': this idea is, he says, '*concerned to illuminate the cultural practices and institutional constraints that become established in any field of creative activity.*' (135) In this way, Martin shows us how musical values are socially grounded, and how the jazz world in which Charlie Parker worked maintained a certain set of conventions, ways of doing things, which Parker had to learn in order to gain a level of acceptance. Perhaps one way of looking at all of this then, is to acknowledge that jazz now operates in a profoundly different kind of art world to what it used to, an art world in which educational institutions play a major role in establishing and reinforcing standards.

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Writers like Scott DeVeaux may have warned against the grand narratives and canonising tendencies which can operate in the construction of jazz history, but this kind of exclusionary tendency operating within pedagogy still goes largely unchecked. And perhaps both problem and solution is down to a disciplinary division in which historians teach history, and musicians the practise of performance. If as I have suggested jazz history needs to deepen its involvement in exploring cultural context, so jazz pedagogy

similarly has to place musical practice in a historical context. It is only natural to have college and university courses on jazz history and jazz performance taught separately, yet it is in this kind of division of labour (which extends to the jazz literature) that such problems can begin. Perhaps if teaching and writing on jazz practice can be historicised, so that rather than exploring a single set of normative standards, pedagogy insists on tracing the continual flux of musical practice throughout jazz, and rather than establishing a set of benchmarks for excellence, attempts to emphasise the fluidity of practice in jazz, then a new and more inclusionary conception of jazz will emerge. Of course this is easy to preach and hard to put into practice, but it may be that post-Burns those of us who teach, write about, and perform jazz have become much more aware of just how high the stakes are.

Towards a jazz discourse

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Throughout the pages of *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* there emerges a vast variety of different themes, many refracted again and again through the viewpoints of different contributors. But sometimes in a context such as this, one or two lone voices stand out, either by virtue of the clarity of tone they exhibit, or by the challenging, controversial, or even polemical nature of what they have to say. Thus it is that Bruce Johnson's chapter, 'Jazz as cultural practice' stands out as a piece unafraid to ask difficult and controversial questions. Ultimately the question Johnson's piece articulates (even if never quite as directly as I think it should), is what a jazz discourse should look like, what aesthetic values it should subscribe to, and what disciplinary traditions it should draw on. Johnson characterises jazz from the outset as a music which has '*travelled back and forth across the disputed terrain between high and low culture, variously located as folk, popular, art music and permutations.*' (96) The tension between jazz as a commercial music and an art form thus figures large in the discussion which follows. What is most forcibly articulated at the outset is the sense in which jazz defies what Johnson calls '*Eurocentric models of value*' (96) in the most comprehensive sense. But what Johnson follows up with is nothing less than a damning indictment of what he sees as an aesthetic agenda entrenched within musicology, an indictment which is worth

quoting at length:

> *Because of its distinctive practices and taxonomic ambiguity, jazz (like other related musics) has not enjoyed artistic recognition commensurate with its character and influence.... The gatekeepers – traditional musicology, the forms and practices that it has canonised as the aesthetic and moral apogee of music, and the policies and attitudes arising from these – are in turn the musical agents of an Enlightenment epistemology. Although under increasing interrogation during the twentieth century, this epistemology remains dominant in the public discourse of western cultures and their satellites, the conditioned reflex that governs ways of thinking and practising culture.* (100)

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Johnson proceeds to discuss how jazz fails to fit with a classical musicological model, by denying the primacy of the score and privileging the act of improvisation. And the point all of this is leading to is a final section in which he rues the lack of a discourse on jazz. He cites the advent of popular music studies as the birth of a discourse on music capable of, as he sees it, investing in cultural meanings and contexts rather than subscribing to the classical aesthetics of musicology. Yet, as he rightly points out, popular music studies has largely failed to engage with jazz. But Johnson seems to want to rue this as a profoundly missed opportunity, and in doing so appears to hold to the idea that jazz studies has essentially '*tethered itself to one of the most conservative of all critical discourses, gradually internalising and adopting its models even as they were being profoundly problematised.*' (112)

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The kind of broadside Johnson launches on musicology leaves me in no doubt that he would have taken issue with Thomas Owens's chapter 'Analysing Jazz'. Owens represents a particular branch of jazz scholarship which has been largely concerned with analytical models derived from musicology. Owens's survey of different approaches to analysing jazz in his chapter is a useful piece in giving the reader an overview of this literature, but at the same time it never really addresses what Johnson would probably take as being the key question: what relevance does a mode of discourse which grounds all discussion in

musical structure have to do with jazz? On the other hand, I would suggest that it is all too hasty to simply disregard the insights that this kind of literature has produced. After all, Owens has contributed mightily to understandings of jazz improvisation through his work on Charlie Parker. Johnson's approach would apparently be to entirely discredit such modes of examining jazz, when to my thinking, even if they are adopting classical musicological models they have contributed to understandings of jazz improvisation.

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Johnson's damning critique of musicology is nothing new in itself, but therein I think lies the problem; it does ignore much of the new thinking in the discipline over the last twenty or so years, thinking sometimes described under the slightly unfortunate label of the 'new' musicology. One of the primary facets of this new thinking is an awareness of the aesthetic values scholarship can inscribe, an awareness musicology has been faced with in relation to issues of analysis in particular; the valorising of musical unity, organicism, textual autonomy, and so on. Johnson has a point in his argument, but his apparent dismissal of any musicological discourse on jazz seems to me all too hurried and simply unfair. He is willing to admit to the importance of Krin Gabbard's books in bringing new critical perspectives to bear on jazz, but even this seems to be too little too late for him. Overall, his essay is powerful in tone and well argued, although I am in no doubt that many readers will take issue with much of what he has to say. But ultimately I find it hard to see exactly what he is arguing for, rather the whole piece comes across as a lament on the current state of scholarship on jazz.

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There is an obvious question remaining here, as to what kind of scholarship or discourse jazz studies should aspire to. It is probably quite clear that I disagree with Johnson on many points, but he does set the cat among the pigeons, and lays down a challenge as to what it is jazz studies as a discipline should be attempting to do, and how it should position itself. How can jazz be represented in scholarship in a way which can acknowledge its undeniable strengths and major facets, while at the same time not bringing to bear notions of value or other agendas which may have the result of distorting jazz, or performing cultural work by attempting to enshrine it within one particular scholarly tradition or another? It is this kind of question that is perhaps best posed in the context of a volume like this, for it is possible to see exposed many of the

different viewpoints on jazz, and for the reader to critique them for themselves simply by comparing the work of one contributor to another. I see part of the answer to this question emerging already in my comments earlier on the kind of historiography this volume represents; a de-centered multi-perspective approach, which weaves together different strands in a narrative which attempts to convey some sense of the true complexity of the cultural web. But at the same time, I would like to close by referring to Robert Walser's chapter 'Valuing Jazz', a piece which I think answers many of these questions, and provides an exemplary model for jazz scholarship.

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The claim Walser makes in his chapter, crucially in the light of Johnson's charges, is that '*self-awareness about our values is important, at least as much so for historians as for anyone else*.' (318). Self-awareness that is, of the way in which scholarship has sometimes attempted to argue for the value of jazz based on classical aesthetics, or equally the way in which pedagogy has come to value certain musical aspects over others. And thus Walser's discussion of the 1987 American Congressional Resolution which called for jazz to be celebrated as a major American artform lays bare the way in which jazz is constructed both as specifically American in nature, yet universal in appeal. Walser then turns, as he puts it, to examining '*how values are performed*', or put differently, '*what are jazz musicians saying*?' (313) He engages first of all through borrowing from Elizabeth LeGuin, in what he calls a 'carnal musicology'. That is, he talks about the physical demands of performing Louis Armstrong's famous cadenza from 'West End Blues', thus engaging with the physicality involved in performance. But he also explores the rhetorical sense of Armstrong's playing; the declamatory nature of the trumpet fanfare and its almost operatic grandeur, put alongside Armstrong's crooning vocals. Furthermore, Walser situates this recording in terms of advances in recording just around this time, and the way Armstrong's playing '*recalls the pre-amplification days during which he developed his style so as to include the commercially advantageous attribute of volume*.' (315)

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And this, it seems to me, is a profoundly insightful way of discussing jazz. It locates the meanings of this piece of recorded jazz not in the musical details, but in how those details relate to the context of when it was recorded. Walser's approach to recognising

value is to understand that scholars cannot be truly objective, and that the subjective voice is inevitable and must be acknowledged: so it is that he positions himself as a musician and comments on what it feels like to play the 'West End Blues' cadenza. The value of this kind of approach is exactly in how it brings together many of the different themes in this book: appreciating Armstrong in the context of the New Orleans he grew up in, and the many different cultural influences impinging on his work. Walser may represent musicology in terms of his disciplinary allegiance, but this is nothing like the caricature of the musicologist writing about jazz which Johnson presents. This is a musicology which is unafraid to engage with the music, but rather than constructing it as an autonomous musical text, it is eager, even greedy, to assimilate as much context as possible, to understand what the music sounds like, what it is like to play, how it is constructed, and how it was and is being disseminated. And it is here that I see the clearest signs of what jazz discourse should aspire to. This is an approach to jazz which at all times grounds the music in an awareness of the values we as scholars are promoting, and recognises that the context in which the music was performed and recorded has a vital role in our understanding of the music. What *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* demonstrates is that there is a wide ranging discourse on jazz which brings together musicologists, anthropologists, sociologists and critics, and that put together these different perspectives provide a perspective on jazz rich enough to acknowledge its many diversities. It is not necessarily to the detriment of jazz studies that its disciplinary allegiance is so vague and hazy, indeed this volume demonstrates the opposite, that it can be one of the great strengths of a jazz discourse.