

Another take on food, literally, is found in Anne-Lise Francois's account of genetically modified foods and the desire for a modern reenchantment of the world. Francois argues that one way that late modernity is trying to free itself from the cage of mechanized ordinariness is to create a magical world of perfect foods. She brings in Wordsworth to demonstrate how the "natural piety" he speaks of could be seen as a justification for keeping natural things (genetically) "as they are," without succumbing to the typical "ascetic" stance of the whistleblower against genetically modified organisms.

Goi's essay on Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt argues that McCarthy depicted a much more nuanced idea of "the social" than did Arendt, and that the normal everyday social lives of her characters offered stepping stones toward Arendt's much vaunted (or heroic) idea of political action. Ramona Nadaff's essay on Flaubert's writing of *Madame Bovary* looks at the process of writing and rewriting in the midst of censorship, and how Flaubert adapted to the demands of his censors while also subtly resisting them. She chronicles the political process of the negotiation between publishers and authors, and how the story itself comes to reflect these negotiations in Flaubert's case.

Stow uses Philip Roth to reflect on the difference between "written and unwritten America." Most of us inhabit unwritten America, but we use literary figures, the written characters, to capture our experiences in the (unwritten) real world. Roth peoples his written world with plenty of "real-world" figures, and allows the reader to step out and judge the depiction of the problem in this written world. Stow's piece is a subtle reflection on the power and limits of literature as a stimulus to political judgment.

The problem with books of this sort is that the whole is less than the sum of its parts. While the individual essays are very good, the themes that they share seem cobbled together under duress. The initial introductory essay frames the book as especially necessary in the aftermath of September 11. Yet political theory has always been framed as a response to a crisis of or in modernity, to the point of cliché. The collection, filled as it is with imaginative readings of the kinds of books few but academics read anymore, panders to its readers by evoking terror in order to get us to care. It thus succumbs to some of the failings of literary criticism powerfully exposed in Stow's book, to the detriment of its own interesting essays.

Calvino may advise us to read books rather than to read about them. And he is right about the danger of overpoliticizing literature. All the same, as I read these essays, I was repeatedly struck by how much I learned about the original texts under discussion, and by how previous assumptions about politics were called into question. In that sense, the essays themselves exemplify the sophisticated "pedagogy of indirection" endorsed by Stow's *Republic of Readers?* and demonstrate the value of linking politics and literature.

Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans. By Charles Hersch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 256p. \$35.00.

Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire. By Bob W. White. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 328p. \$84.95 cloth, \$23.95 paper.
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— Simon Stow, *The College of William and Mary*

Musicians, as Karl Marx might have said, make their own music, but they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing. Bob W. White and Charles Hersch both examine the ways in which social and political structures influence musical forms and, to a lesser extent, the ways in which those forms impact the social and political. Despite addressing two ostensibly different genres—Congoles dance music and American jazz—there are considerable areas of overlap and intersection in the methods employed and insights offered by the two studies. Both eschew simple content analysis and situate their claims within a detailed understanding of the music's historical context, and both identify the ways in which the agonistic relationship between social constraint and individual creativity spurs artistic production. Such similarities suggest, perhaps, the fundamental validity of their respective conclusions. Neither book is without its flaws, but the overwhelming impression is of texts that make a significant contribution to our understanding of the long-standing—but understudied—relationship between music and politics. As Plato observed in *The Republic* (424c), "Never are the ways of music moved without the greatest political laws being moved."

Beginning with what he calls an "Opening Riff" (p. 1) on Jelly Roll Morton's performance of John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever," Hersch foreshadows the themes of his next five chapters: place, reaction, musicians, music, and dissemination. He argues that Morton, an Afro-French Creole from New Orleans, transforms the song using African-based musical devices, setting up "a multilayered musical conversation with his country" that helped to change the nation (p. 2). Situating himself in opposition to previous histories of jazz that depicted it as either an expression of racial essence—an argument made by both black and white critics—or the product of an ethnic melting pot, Hersch aligns himself with the more recent creolist perspective that stresses the dynamism of the music and the ongoing interactions between races. He nevertheless offers a corrective to what he perceives to be creolism's excessive focus on openness. "There is," he notes, "something creative and open about creolization, but the openness is bounded by power relationships" (p. 9).

Building on a detailed history of the development of jazz in New Orleans, Hersch argues that jazz—which, he suggests, ultimately helped to break down racial barriers in the United States—emerged from social and political

regulation aimed at enforcing racial purity. It is, he suggests, no coincidence that jazz emerged during the nadir of postbellum racial oppression. Racial separation, he argues, precipitated both the development of several distinctly different styles of music and a creatively productive agonistic relationship among them. The latter was facilitated by a complex economy of social transgression in which black often passed as white or Creole; Creole as white and black; white as Creole; and, in one case, child as midget. As the last example suggests, the transgressions were not all racial. Hersch also pays close attention to the boundaries between sacred and secular, across classes and between genders. In addition, he also identifies the important role that Jewish and Sicilian performers played in the development of the genre.

For a book offering compelling accounts of the problems of categorization, boundary crossing, and performance, *Subversive Sounds* offers very little by way of extended theoretical discussion. Nevertheless, there are occasions on which a more developed discussion of theory might have proved useful. For example, Hersch repeatedly invokes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "carnival" (pp. 5, 29, 47, 163, 167, 169) to describe the circumstances under which jazz developed and the ways in which it affected racial categories. His argument implies a subversive and transfiguring understanding of carnival, but for some, carnival is escapism that simply reinforces existing power structures. Noting this alternative reading might complicate the author's account of the development of jazz in productive ways, just as, in the final chapter, his discussion of Louis Armstrong's use of racial stereotypes complicates his discussion of the political effects of minstrelsy. Overall, however, his argument is convincing, his writing engaging, and his musical analyses compelling and seductive: Easy access to iTunes meant that this reviewer was considerably poorer after reading the book than before it.

Bob White saves his readers from such expense with an innovative strategy aimed at overcoming one of the inherent limitations of such writing: the absence of music. At judiciously chosen moments in the text, White references a Website where the reader can listen to audio or watch videos of many of the musical performances he discusses. It is a wonderful innovation, and for those unfamiliar with the genre, a very useful device. Building on a detailed ethnography of the music scene in Zaire during the latter stages of Sese Seko Mobutu's 32-year rule, White argues that social and political conditions played a significant role in shaping musical forms. First, he suggests, deliberately engineered social and economic inequalities forced musicians to alter the structure of their songs. Facing declining record sales resulting from generalized poverty, musicians were forced to rely upon live performance to make their living. Consequently, he argues, songs developed a unique two-part structure—a slow lyrical section, followed by a fast-paced dance sequence—that engaged their

audiences and assured the performers of a regular clientele. A second consequence of this social deprivation was the growth of *libanga*, a practice in which wealthy patrons and public figures offered money to musicians in exchange for being cited or sung by name. Libanga, argues White, became a tool of Mobutu's social control: generating support for his policies through the words and praise of musicians who were reliant upon the state for financial support. In effect, he suggests, Mobutu privatized propaganda. Central to this propaganda was *authenticité*, a policy claiming that economic development could be achieved only by drawing on Zaire's vast reserve of cultural traditions including, of course, music. Popular dancing and patriotic songs—part of what became known as *animation politique et culturelle*—became a key and obligatory cultural practice: reinforcing authoritarian rule by making the dispossessed dance in a manner not dissimilar, perhaps, to plantation slaves in the American South.

Although White's ethnography might offer a little too much thick description for those schooled in the disciplinary demands of political science, he is a charming narrator: His account of his efforts to master Congolese rhythms on insecticide-can maracas is simultaneously entertaining and instructive about the intricacies of the music. Disciplinary differences become more significant, however, when, in the final two chapters of the book, he tries to draw a causal connection between Mobutu's style of leadership and a more general problem of leadership in Zaire. Drawing on the literature of "micropolitics" (p. 196), White argues that Mobutu exhibited a domineering, irresponsible, and narcissistic form of leadership that affected all levels of society. This might be true, but the author's use of band organization to prove his point seems dangerously close to reasoning by analogy. He argues, for example, that the tendency of bands to splinter into different groups over status conflicts reflects Mobutu's own irresponsible leadership. Similarly, he connects this leadership to "the tendency of musicians to appropriate official symbols of political power (as opposed to projecting an image of power as a 'gangster' or a 'rebel')," which, he suggests, "may be unique to the Congo" (p. 233). Michael Jackson's self-proclaimed status as "King of Pop," and Aretha Franklin's jealously guarded status as "The Queen of Soul" both suggest, however, that imperiousness comes with musical success, regardless of the political system. Similarly, White's suggestion that conflicts over leadership in Congolese bands reflected the bad example of leadership under authoritarianism seems to ignore the similar splinterings of bands under democratic systems. Few would, perhaps, blame Harold Wilson for the breakup of the Beatles.

If from a political science perspective, however, some of White's causal claims about the impact of economics and politics on musical formations require more rigorous argumentation, some of the weaknesses implicit in his arguments about the reverse relationship might be forgiven.

Seeking to identify the ways in which cultural formations affect politics is, as Marx noted, considerably more complex than the other way around. It is, perhaps, for this reason that both books are much stronger when they focus on the former rather than the latter relationship: Hersch simply suggests, rather than demonstrates, that jazz undermined racial categories in the United States (p. 206), and his claim that jazz rhythms undermined conceptions of time under capitalism remains plausible but necessarily impressionistic (p. 45).

“Writing about music,” it was once said in a comment often attributed to Elvis Costello, “is like dancing about architecture.” The statement is meant to suggest the futility of the exercise. Both of these books belie the claim, not only offering penetrating insight and analysis but also providing a firm foundation for future study.

Fat Rights: Dilemmas of Difference and Personhood.

By Anna Kirkland. New York: New York University Press, 2008. 224p.

\$65.00 cloth, \$21.00 paper.

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— Ruth Abbey, *University of Notre Dame*

This short book is more speculative on the topic of fat rights—rights people might claim because of their weight—than its title suggests. Anna Kirkland puzzles through the various ways in which the issue of weight could be incorporated into American antidiscrimination law. The book’s major contribution is therefore to identify a number of frameworks, or logics, as she calls them, for thinking about the legal recognition and protection of difference and to reveal the strengths, shortcomings, and possibilities of each. The book is not a detailed study of cases in which weight has been the basis of a legal dispute, although a number of such cases are discussed briefly and reiterated throughout the text. Moreover, those cases Kirkland does discuss are drawn exclusively from employment law. Despite its subtitle, *Fat Rights* is not an exploration of the ways in which weight might influence identity: Neither the views of people who perceive themselves as fat nor the views of others are discussed in great detail. Instead of connecting the conception of personhood mentioned in the subtitle directly with weight, Kirkland unearths different conceptions of personhood in the different logics she adduces for thinking about difference, rights, and nondiscrimination. In general terms, she posits that “[l]aw’s stories about why people are different and what justifies their differential treatment are explained through logics of personhood” (p. 72).

There are six such logics, according to the author. The first is “functional personhood.” According to this style of thinking, what matters is whether a person can fulfill a specific task, such as driving a bus, rather than what his or her size, race, gender, or ethnicity might be. The second logic is “embedded personhood.” The insight here is that

features that appear arbitrary from a functional point of view can actually be constitutive of identity and are not, therefore, readily bracketed as irrelevant. Gender is one such facet of embedded personhood, for, according to Kirkland, “appearances in the world as visibly gendered persons are so foundational to identity . . . that it is difficult to imagine ourselves without gender. . . . [O]ne might want gender to be very different from what it is now, but . . . it is hard not to place it centrally in one’s self-concept” (p. 77).

In what strikes me as an unfortunate choice of terminology, Kirkland calls her third logic “blame shifting.” Focusing solely on what a person can or cannot do is too atomistic—there might be wider structural forces that influence a person’s capacities. So if whole groups of people have been excluded from certain social functions on the basis of race or gender, just focusing on what an individual can or cannot do occludes the bigger picture of systematic injustice, privilege, and disadvantage. Kirkland depicts the civil rights movements of the 1960s as exemplifying this logic of blame shifting.

The fourth logic is “diverse personhood”; accordingly, organizations should have a wide array of different sorts of people on their staffs, and so a mixture of races, ethnicities, and genders is desirable. This, in turn, sheds additional light on the idea of embedded personhood because from the standpoint of diverse personhood, it matters greatly what race, gender, or ethnicity the employee is. These features are not arbitrary; rather, recruiting employees with a range of such identity traits is seen as enhancing an organization’s strength. In the cases of blame shifting and diverse personhood, what we have are not, however, merely alternative logics. Instead, Kirkland suggests that diverse personhood has superseded blame shifting as a way of thinking about race in American law (p. 56).

“Actuarial personhood” is the fifth logic. This perspective amasses information about groups, calculates averages, and draws conclusions about individuals on these bases. Thus, the logic of actuarial personhood might recommend that irrespective of his or her actual capacities or condition, an overweight person should not be employed because of the greater risk of health problems. Such a person is therefore likely to cost the organization more in insurance payouts. Finally, the logic of “managerial individualism” has grown out of the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. According to this style of thinking, workplaces should make reasonable accommodation for disabled employees, and a process of negotiation between employee and employer is needed in order to decide what these accommodations are and what is reasonable for each side to the employment contract to accept. This process can be carried out only in a case-by-case, context-specific way.

As indicated, these different logics underpin the ways in which factors like race, gender, and ability have been