Both *Knowing Jazz* and *School for Cool* force us to reconsider our approaches to pedagogy, scholarship, and community and, as such, should be required reading for any scholar interested in the state of jazz in the twenty-first century. Together these texts paint a portrait of the cold, sometimes paradoxical realities of modern jazz education, but one that is worthy of being taken seriously. It is impossible to tell what the future of jazz education holds, but if nothing else, it is important that we are starting to tell these stories. And if the commercial success of *Whiplash* is any indication, the general public is starting to pay attention, too.

Brian F. Wright

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Dangerous. By Susan Fast. 33 1/3 Series. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

As Paul Théberge has pointed out, Michael Jackson was never quite treated by critics as a "mature" artist in the ways that more recently deceased stars like Prince and David Bowie were.[1] Following Jackson's death in 2009, that history of critical dismissal became obscured by the mass media's reluctance to speak ill of the dead. One of the important contributions of Susan Fast's *Dangerous* in the 33 1/3 series of books on individual albums is to remind us of how widely and ruthlessly people criticized Michael Jackson during his lifetime. By engaging closely with the arguments of Jackson's contemporary critics, alongside her own close readings of individual tracks, Fast shows how the extent of Jackson's unfair treatment extended beyond the tabloid press to affect his critical reception. Her sensitive analyses of each song on Jackson's 1991 album *Dangerous* reveal how his music and music videos played a more active role in the cultural politics of race and sexuality than he is usually credited for.

Fast emphasizes cultural debates about identity politics, drawing widely from the scholarly and popular literature on Michael Jackson as well as a breadth of critical theory. This critical approach is clear from her book's organization around five chapters that parse the album into four separate cultural themes and a coda: "Noise," "Desire," "Utopia," "Soul," and "Coda: Dangerous." Of the five, "Desire" and "Soul," concerning the topics of sexuality and race respectively, seem especially central to the book. These two chapters take up eight of the fourteen tracks on *Dangerous*, and their themes of sexuality and race reappear throughout the entire book.

Dangerous benefits from Fast's unique position as both a fan and an established popular music scholar. Her authorial voice comes across as passionate, thoughtful, and humble in the face of so much intensity (16): the passion she feels for Jackson's

[1] Théberge's comments were part of the summary that accompanied Susan Fast's IASPM-Canada book prize (2016) awarded for *Dangerous*.

music, the respect she feels for the challenges he faced during his life and career, and the complexity she recognizes in the controversial reception of his recordings when they were released. Fast seems invested in both aesthetic judgments about Michael Jackson and his relationship to scholarly arguments about identity politics—even when the two are at odds with each other. This investment is made clear through the honest, self-reflecting questions that she asks about why, as a feminist, she still loves Jackson's *femme fatale* songs the most (129–30). Fast shows an acute awareness of the limits of her own cultural experience compared to, for instance, those of African Americans (11). She frequently anticipates criticism and predicts how someone might misinterpret slippery theoretical terms such as "postmodernity" (28) and "queer" (58) while still effectively using those and similarly complex concepts to explain the cultural resonance of individual songs. Fast's readings are nuanced and open to the possibility of multiple interpretations depending on what contextual factors are present. This quality is evident in her explanation of how Jackson's "In the Closet" might invite an Orientalist interpretation with Jackson as either the exotic subject or object depending on whether or not one listens to just the song or watches the music video (53).

As a musicologist professionally affiliated with an English department, Fast unsurprisingly approaches analysis in a way that is interdisciplinary in scope and well balanced among different kinds of texts. Beyond musical recordings, she explores diverse forms of artistic expression such as concert pyrotechnics and staging (19), as well as album art (21). Her experience as a scholar of medieval and Renaissance music allows Fast to bring surprising, far-afield information to bear on *Dangerous* such as a brief discussion of fifteenth-century polyptychs at the beginning of her "Soul" chapter (97).[2]

This ability to make convincing arguments about meaning extends to the fine details of Jackson's music. Rather than simply describing each track, Fast uses musical observations as evidence to support her arguments about the songs' rhetorical and political significance. For instance, to explain the effect of a particular combination of voice and accompaniment during the song "Jam," Fast states that Jackson's "vocal is mirrored (not quite doubled) by a keyboard line played an octave above where he's singing, which intensifies the drama of his vocal" (40). This example conveys Fast's cautious and nuanced approach and her ability to explain why details matter.

It also raises a frustration I felt towards the book. While reading, I often wished that I could check my understanding of Fast's arguments against a musical transcription. Earlier in Fast's analysis of "Jam," I strained to hear the dissonant interjection that she talked about (38–39). She guided me along with the language of rhythmic notation ("on the sixth beat of the second and third groups of the eight"), but without a corresponding visual reference, I found myself getting lost. I tried to count

[2] See, for instance, Susan Fast, "A Critical Edition of Johannes de Muris' *Musica Speculativa*," Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1990; *idem*., "Bakhtin and the Discourse of Late Medieval Music Theory," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 175–91; and *idem*., "God, Desire and Musical Narrative in the Isorhythmic Motet," *Canadian University Music Review* 18, no. 1 (1997): 19–37.

along with the recording but could not decide what tempo matched the rhythmic subdivisions that Fast had in mind. Notwithstanding popular music scholars' sensitivity to the problems of notational centricity, a visual map of some kind would have greatly simplified matters here.[3] I say this, of course, while keeping in mind how transcriptions face the strict copyright constraints imposed by Jackson's megastar status and estate. Also, given that the publisher likely discourages music notation in the 33 1/3 series, Fast deserves credit for skillfully negotiating the significant difficulties of interpreting Jackson's music closely and sensitively with verbal text alone.

Aside from wanting a transcription of some kind, my other criticism of the book is that I am not completely convinced that Jackson had the intentions that Fast credits him with, at least not consciously. Her attribution of deliberate political intent arises subtly, as in the introduction to the book's chapter organization around "a number of themes that Jackson *wants to* explore" (11, emphasis mine). Later on, it comes out in similar language such as how Jackson "set out to challenge ideas of gender, ethnicity and 'normality' as these are written on the body" (103). I agree that he achieved these things, but I cannot say to what extent he meant to; nor do I think that *Dangerous* (the book) provides sufficient evidence that he did. Characteristically, Fast anticipates this criticism (104), but I am not entirely convinced by her dismissal of it.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge how Fast's role as a pedagogue enhanced my experience of her book. It came through in how regularly she credits her seminar students with ideas in her citations and main text. It also came through in her willingness to explain complex concepts in everyday language, such as Baudrillard's views on hyperreality and the marketplace: "We're so bombarded by this crap that we no longer have a sense of what's real and what's not" (30). In this way, Fast effectively uses colloquial language to bridge difficult readership gaps between scholarly thoroughness and the personal engagement of fans, spicing her prose with moments of humor and creativity: "[Fred] Astaire's going to stay the tough, detached, stock character detective guy, hear?" (129). Rarely do I laugh out loud while reading an academic text as I did during Fast's quip about YouTube searching (42), which I won't spoil here. The value of this kind of irreverence became clearest in her ability to write about sexuality with wit, emotion, and sensitivity, all the while foregrounding how diversely fans and critics have interpreted Jackson's performances.

Ultimately, Fast has provided a model for how to reach a broader audience with scholarly writing. Despite the obvious relevance that pop culture has outside of the academy, it is not that usual for scholars of popular culture to reach non-scholarly audiences. Attempting that can be very difficult, even "dangerous," but I think Fast pulls it off. Her willingness to take such a risk seems likely motivated by her

[3] For discussions of notational centricity (Philip Tagg's term), see Tagg, *KOJAK, 50 Seconds of Television Music: Toward the Analysis of Affect in Popular Music* (Göteborg: Studies from the Department of Musicology, 1979), 28; David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1995] 2000), 27–28; and Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 1990), 104–6.

admiration for Jackson's own risk taking—and it is inspiring. In addition to its scholarly contributions, accessibility for non-scholarly readers, and usefulness in the classroom—I assigned "Desire" for a term paper on race and sexuality—Fast's book might open possibilities for younger scholars, who have not yet achieved her professional level of recognition and seniority, to write a book in this hybrid genre.

Eric Smialek

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Harry Partch, Hobo Composer. By S. Andrew Granade. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014.

Since the 1990s, music scholars have begun only gradually to grapple with the American maverick Harry Partch and his seminal theoretical, music philosophical, and compositional ideas. Besides Partch's own comprehensive treatise, *Genesis of a Music*, and his collected journals, essays, introductions, and librettos, we have the work of the late Bob Gilmore, who authored a biography and a study of Partch's early vocal pieces, and Thomas McGeary's catalog of Partch's works, scores, bibliography, and discography.[1] Most other Anglophone publications are limited to individual aspects of Partch's works.[2] In the German literature, articles by Manfred Stahnke, a composer and musicologist, explain Partch's intonational and aesthetic ideas

[1] Harry Partch, *Genesis of a* Music, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo, 1974); Harry Partch, *Bitter Music: Collected Journals, Essays, Introductions, and Librettos*, ed. Thomas McGeary (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Bob Gilmore, *Harry Partch: a Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1998); Bob Gilmore, "Harry Partch: the Early Vocal Works 1930–33" Ph.D. diss., The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996; Thomas McGeary, *The Music of Harry Partch: A Descriptive Catalog* (New York: Institute for Studies in the American Music, 1991). The main sources of Partch's materials are the Harry Partch Estate Archive, 1918–1991, and the Music and Performing Arts Library Harry Partch Collection, 1914–2007, both in the the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music of the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. The special collection Harry Partch Music Scores, 1922–1972, which is located at the University of California in San Diego, contains facsimiles of Partch's music composed between 1922 and 1972.

[2] See for example, Harry Partch, "Experiments in Notation," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music,* ed. Elliott Schwartz, et al. (New York: Da Capo, 1978), 209–221; Ronald V. Wiecki, "12-Tone Paralysis: Harry Partch in Madison, Wisconsin, 1944–1947," *American Music* 9, no. 1 (1991): 43–66; Bob Gilmore, "The Climate since Harry Partch," *Contemporary Music Review* 22, nos. 1–2 (2003): 15–33; Ben Johnston, "The Corporealism of Harry Partch," in *"Maximum Clarity" and Other Writings on Music,* ed. Bob Gilmore (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 216; Ben Johnston, "Harry Partch/John Cage," in *"Maximum Clarity" and Other Writings on Music,* ed. Bob Gilmore (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 232; Ben Johnston, "Beyond Harry Partch," in *"Maximum Clarity" and Other Writings on Music*, ed. Bob Gilmore (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 243; Philip Blackburn, "Harry Partch and the Philosopher's Tone," *Hyperion* 2, no. 1 (2008): 1–20.