Scott (who is quoted but who goes unnamed as beneath contempt). Klein does seem to be fair-minded in his critiques, catholic in his interests and tastes, conscientious in his listening, and possessed of an enviable ability to remember performances that took place decades earlier. As for myself, the fact that Klein was a man of vast experience regarding singing and singers does little to offset the mantle of authority with which he objectionably cloaks himself. Name-dropping is a favorite ploy in this endeavor (and an impressive one, since Klein seems to have known everyone who was anyone), as is deference to Tradition(s) left undefined. Although Klein on occasion "compares" a recorded singer with a famous unrecorded predecessor, such allusions usually do not enable one to gain a useful perspective on singing in the nineteenth century—for example, what do we really learn about either singer from reading Klein's assertion that Lotte Lehmann is "the best Elsa since Rosa Sucher" (p. 323)? Klein's technical analyses of singers are often apt, sometimes even illuminating, but his gift for describing the overall impression a singer makes is decidedly pedestrian, not to be compared to those of a number of fine critics of his generation, much less Shaw's. Inconsistencies abound; a significant general one is that Klein's implicit and explicit belief in a precipitous decline in the art of singing from the time of his youth to his *Gramophone* stint squares poorly with his unabashed enthusiasm for numerous new recordings, some of which we are today likely to find rather ordinary.

Although the typeface is photographically reproduced, *The Gramophone*'s original layout of Klein's material has been redistributed to avoid wasted space within this new anthology, and so understandably—if regrettably—the original pagination has been abandoned. Less fortunately, although individual essays in "The Gramophone and the Singer" are identified by month in the table of contents, the reviews are grouped together in chapters by year only, while other writings are not always granted even that small favor. Indexing is adequate. Moran's introductory essay typifies his thorough research and efficient method of conveying large amounts of information. Its propagandistic tone, however, suggests that the motivation for this volume is to restore to public consciousness a writer on singing whose pronouncements should go unquestioned and whose blend of long memory and comparative technique can help us better to parade the singing of the nineteenth century before our mind's eye. It is difficult to accept the former premise, and Klein's approach is more frustrating than helpful in achieving the latter aim. One should not force this material too far, since by less demanding standards it is a source that will be read avidly by those interested in finding detailed discussions of vocal recordings and singing from long ago, even if many of its comments must be treated warily for the dubious, or at least dated, critical stance they embody.

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The Blues Route. By Hugh Merrill. New York: William Morrow, 1990. [236 p. ISBN 0-688-06611-9. $17.95.]

Going to Chicago: A Year on the Chicago Blues Scene. Photographs by Stephen Green. Edited and with an introduction by Laurence J. Hyman. San Francisco: Woodford Publishing, 1990. [128 p. ISBN 0-942627-09-1. $19.95.]

Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in the Blues. By Paul Oliver. 2d ed., rev. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. [xxiv, 348 p. ISBN 0-521-37437-5. $39.50. ISBN 0-521-37793-5. $14.95 (pbk.).]

These three books on the blues represent as many approaches to their subject and exemplify its complexity as an art form. In spite of their disparate themes and agendas, however, the writers all share some fundamental conclusions: blues is the source of all contemporary popular American music ("like a Mother Tree," according to B. B. King in *Going to Chicago*); its importance as a social and cultural expression equals its purely musical significance; and the traditional audience for the blues is evolving, from poor, older, and black, to affluent, younger, and white.

For Hugh Merrill, a free-lance Georgia writer, the importance of the blues is primarily personal. In *The Blues Route,* Merrill traces the migration of the blues from the rural South to America's major urban centers. He begins his tour with the juke joints and plantations of the Mississippi Delta, stopping along the way in major Southern cities (Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans), on to the "promised lands" of Chicago and Los Angeles, where many blues musicians, with greater or lesser success, finally found reward for their energy and talents.

Among the first stops on Merrill's journey is the Dockery Plantation in the delta of Mississippi, home for awhile of Charley Patton, the pioneering blues artist whose recordings from the 1930s influenced a host of blues musicians, including Son House, Howlin' Wolf, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and Bukka White. He interviews not only the workers on the plantation who knew Patton, but also current members of the Dockery family, whose lack of comprehension regarding their employees' music seems on the face of it remarkable, until one considers the conventional attitudes of most Southern white landowners.

Merrill's concern and deep affection for blues performers and their music, as well as the informal, journalistic style of his prose, inform his whole work and make it easy and compelling reading. It should be emphasized that his is not a scholarly approach; there is no index, no documentation of facts, no bibliography. On occasion, Merrill is given to simplification and overstatement (the blues did not really begin on Dockery Plantation, as he rather cavalierly asserts). Yet, through his interviews (at which he excels) with performers, record producers, disc jockeys, and fans, Merrill captures the underlying emotions of the blues as it has evolved and has been disseminated throughout the United States.

His recording of reminiscences by Chicago blues artist Koko Taylor, for example, is particularly revealing. Over a meal of ham hocks and fried chicken, Taylor discusses with poignancy the sacrifices she has made for her career as a blues artist, while others with whom she began—singers such as Tina Turner and Aretha Franklin—"crossed over" and reached the superstardom she has never been able to achieve.

Although Merrill's work is infused with a certain snappy, light-hearted tone, he addresses some larger, more serious issues. In interviewing record producer Chris Strachwitz, founder of Arhoolie Records in California, Merrill notes that the days of discovering unknown blues artists are past. Part of the reason is desegregation and the subsequent acculturation of many blacks into mainstream white America. As many African-Americans improve their status, they feel less kinship with those forces and conditions that produced the blues. Black music itself has evolved; the younger generation has its own music (disco, rap, hip-hop, etc.) and has little interest in the music of its grandparents. As a result, the blues has become increasingly tenuous to modern African-American culture. Merrill points out the irony in the fact that it is white audiences who are keeping the blues alive, an assertion borne out in his interviews with black performers, all of whom comment that they see few members of their own race at their concerts. There are signs of hope, he maintains: the proliferation of younger zydeco players in Louisiana and the increasing number of younger blues musicians in Chicago attest to the power of the blues as a perpetually relevant art form.

That the blues is alive and well in Chicago will be apparent to anyone perusing Stephen Green and Laurence Hyman's *Going to Chicago,* which profiles seventy blues artists currently active on the Chicago blues club scene. Primarily a photographic essay, this work includes brief explanations by Hyman of blues form and lyrics, as well as introductory remarks by such well-known artists as B. B. King, Koko Taylor, and Johnny Winter. This commentary adds

substance to the work and should increase its interest and usefulness to scholars and librarians.

Green's photographs, all shot on location in various Chicago blues clubs over the course of a year, emphasize (according to a press release of the book) the blues as performance art. The photographs themselves contain no references or captions other than excerpts from blues lyrics, which lend a certain artiness to the work. It is for this reason that the prefatory material makes such a valuable addition. A certain graininess to the photographs, whether or not intentional, complements the raw vitality of the musicians in their milieu so expertly captured by Green.

Although Paul Oliver's *Blues Fell This Morning* is a very different book from *Going to Chicago,* one might consider it in some ways a complement to the latter. Oliver's landmark work, which first appeared in 1960, focuses on the lyrics of the blues and their social and historical contextual significance. By quoting and analyzing more than 350 blues lyrics that he grouped according to various common themes (the Depression, work, homelessness, love and sex, social relationships, etc.), Oliver attempted to capture the essence of African-American life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Perhaps what is most remarkable about *Blues Fell This Morning* is that Oliver, who is English, wrote it without ever having traveled to the United States. Instead, he meticulously transcribed the words of hundreds of 78-rpm blues recordings, collated them into various groups of themes, and set about to demonstrate how closely these songs reflected social and historical events in African-American history. Perhaps because of his remoteness from his subject, as well as his more scholarly approach, Oliver's study lacks the intimacy that we find in more anecdotal works such as Merrill's. Yet one cannot help but feel that Oliver shares Merrill's deep affection for the blues and its performers.

Oliver and his wife visited America shortly after the publication of his work in 1960. He writes in his preface to the revised edition that he made this trip "with considerable trepidation," fearing that his perceptions and descriptions had been off the mark. Instead, he found them "often too painfully accurate" as he toured the South, viewing the terrible poverty and standard of living there.

While the social and political status of blacks Oliver described in his original work are in many ways improved, the struggle for a better life among many African-Americans continues. Yet, Oliver notes, the classic twelve-bar blues that was his chief focus was somehow left behind during the turbulence of the 1960s. He points out the irony Merrill also observed, that it was just during this period of unrest that the blues began to gain an international audience, as blacks themselves were developing other musical expressions.

That the blues and its audience have both changed during the past thirty years is no doubt an important factor in Oliver's decision to revise *Blues Fell This Morning.* He states also that he felt the need to update the book's language—"Negro," for example, has been replaced with less offensive terms. More liberal attitudes allowed a franker discussion of such sensitive themes as lesbianism and homosexuality. The author confesses to a certain moralistic tone in the first edition (in his discussions of the black family, alcoholism, desertion, and other topics) that he attempted to avoid in the second.

Comparing transcriptions of lyrics in both editions also reveals changes, no doubt because of Oliver's much greater acquaintance with African-American English and regional accents, as well as the editorial assistance of other blues collectors. Finally, he notes that the subtitle of the second edition, "Meaning in the Blues," as opposed to the editors' insistence on "The Meaning of the Blues" in the first, more accurately reflects his original intent.

Contemporary sociologists might question Oliver's central thesis, that the life of a particular ethnic group may be analyzed and described through its songs and music, as being too simplistic. Yet it is the remarkable efforts of such writers as Oliver that have kept interest in the blues alive and have, in many ways, allowed it to continue flourishing.

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