

## Glenn Miller Declassified

Paige Lush

*McHenry County College*

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Midwest's culture, both in urban and rural areas. What, too, about the many midwestern authors of color? If the Midwest of this era is not to be regarded as a region justifiably left behind by the modernizing nation but rather as a place where issues relevant to the country's future were being worked out, more scholarship must be carried out about the conflicts and alliances among its various cultural groups.

Despite these shortcomings, this collection includes some good points. For one thing, the endnotes for a good number of the essays yield a rich trove of resources worthy of future exploration. A few of the essays also either bring to light extremely under-researched topics or offer intriguing revisions of previous ways of thinking about them. Paul Emory Putz's essay about Walt Mason's syndicated poetry is one highlight, for he astutely shows how Mason's poetry skillfully negotiated the boundaries of "high" and "middlebrow" culture. I was also fascinated by Kimberly K. Porter's article about radio station owner and on-air personality Henry Field, an Iowan I had never heard of. Allan Carlson's piece about "Midwestern Catholicism and the Last Agrarian Crusade" brings to light an influential, yet little-known, social movement and makes interesting connections to the Nashville Agrarians responsible for the similarly antimodernist manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). Jon K. Lauck himself provides a provocative revisionist reading of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, contending that neither one is actually the type of wholehearted critique of small-town midwestern life it has been made out to be.

This volume makes a number of valuable contributions to the ongoing project of making today's readers more aware of the cultural achievements of midwesterners in the past. Most important, its essays both draw attention to a number of lesser-known elements of midwestern culture that deserve to be examined in greater detail and indicate the type of scholarship that needs to be carried out on them.

*Glenn Miller Declassified*, by Dennis M. Spragg. Lincoln: Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2017. xvii, 386 pp. Tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Paige Lush is director of bands and instructor of music at McHenry County College. Her doctoral dissertation was "Music and Identity in Circuit Chautauqua, 1904-1932."

There is perhaps no more cinematic story in the history of American music than that of Glenn Miller's disappearance over the English Channel on December 15, 1944. The mystery surrounding Miller's dis-

appearance has led to considerable scholarly research but also to speculation and sensationalism. In *Glenn Miller Declassified*, broadcasting and media researcher Dennis Spragg separates fact from fiction and presents the reader with a compelling, insightful, and thorough narrative of Miller's military service, disappearance, and legacy.

Spragg is most effective in subtly countering conspiracy theories by reminding twenty-first-century readers that Miller's disappearance happened under circumstances far removed from our own. He quotes General Ray Barker exclaiming, "How the hell did we lose Glenn Miller?" (278). That is certainly a question that crosses the mind of the modern reader. The idea that a celebrity could be missing for days—especially on a short military flight—before anyone realized it seems incredible to us and invites speculation. Spragg, through exhaustive documentation, sets up the worst-case scenario that led to Miller's disappearance, making it comprehensible to modern readers.

*Glenn Miller Declassified* offers an invaluable look into the Allies' use of radio during World War II, including Miller's direct involvement in day-to-day decisions and operations. Spragg meticulously details the circumstances surrounding the broadcasts and live performances of the American Band of the Supreme Allied Command and the strategy behind the programming. Miller's civilian career was closely intertwined with the business of radio, so it is not surprising that his military life revolved nearly as much around broadcasting as it did music making.

Spragg's research relies heavily on military records, many of which are reprinted verbatim in the book. These can be hard to follow, despite Spragg's inclusion of a list of abbreviations. Because of the sheer number of abbreviations, it might have been better not to abbreviate items that appear less frequently, saving acronyms for frequently used terms of unwieldy length. Similarly, Spragg introduces readers to dozens of Miller's associates and colleagues, and it can sometimes be difficult to keep them straight.

Although *Glenn Miller Declassified* focuses primarily on Miller's service in World War II, Spragg includes enough early biographical information that a reader possessing little or no prior knowledge of Miller would not be lost. He is similarly thoughtful with his selective use of musical terminology and historical references. He does an excellent job of engaging readers whose interests in Miller's story are varied and specialized while still being accessible to casual readers.

Spragg spends considerable time addressing the once-popular theory that Miller was a victim of "friendly fire" (or, perhaps more accurately, "friendly bomb jettisoning") from the Royal Air Force (RAF).

That theory is based largely on the recollection of South African navigator T. E. "Fred" Shaw. Spragg's detailed timeline of RAF movements in the vicinity of Miller's flight and fact-checking of anecdotal evidence supporting Shaw's claim thoroughly debunk this theory and its underlying assumptions.

*Glenn Miller Declassified* will, of course, be of interest to scholars of military history and American music. But it is also an excellent resource for understanding broadcasting (both of music and spoken word) during World War II. Furthermore, *Glenn Miller Declassified* will be of interest to scholars of Iowa and the Midwest, as Miller was a native son of Iowa whose musical mind was shaped by the band culture of the interwar American heartland.

*Fixing the Poor: Eugenic Sterilization and Child Welfare in the Twentieth Century*, by Molly Ladd-Taylor. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. xi, 275 pp. Illustrations, tables, map, graph, appendix, notes, index. \$54.95 hardcover and ebook.

Reviewer Michael Rembis is associate professor history and director of the Center for Disability Studies at the University at Buffalo (SUNY). He is the author of *Defining Deviance: Sex, Science, and Delinquent Girls, 1890-1960* (2011).

Molly Ladd-Taylor has written a superb history of sterilization in Minnesota that has far-reaching implications for the study of both the history of eugenics in the United States and the history of the practice of sterilization throughout the country. Using a mix of archival sources, such as state institution records, the Social Welfare History Archives, and the collections of organizations such as the Eugenic Record Office, the Women's Welfare League of Minneapolis, and the Association for Voluntary Sterilization, as well as published works, such as the memoir of Mildred Thomson, who ran the state's sterilization program for almost 35 years (1925-1959) and was instrumental in the creation of the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children (MARC) in 1950, *Fixing the Poor* tells the deeply researched and carefully argued story of sterilization in a state that has not been known for its history of eugenics.

Because Minnesota's circuitous path through eugenic sterilization (1925-mid-1970s) was not as clearly lit as the more direct experiences of some states, such as California, North Carolina, or Virginia, it provides a unique and valuable opportunity to show how eugenics and sterilization were enmeshed as much with state welfare systems as they were with prevailing racialized, gendered, and class-based assumptions about proper or "fit" citizenship. As Ladd-Taylor argues throughout