

consideration as an example of a crossover star who faced problems when trying to appeal to a 'white' 'rock' audience. Shonekan here points out that black artists like Prince tend to weave in and out of 'black' music whereas country 'seems to have a virtual wall' (p. 90) around itself. An analysis of Taylor Swift might be instructive here. As a teenage country singer Swift achieved crossover success which led to her incorporating numerous musical styles on later albums. Keen listeners can identify house, dubstep, neo-soul and even hip hop in her more recent output, suggesting that country is not as limiting as is often assumed.

Perhaps I am being too harsh. As a primer or an introductory text, *Soul, Country, and the USA* has much to commend it. The book is a breezy read, not too heavy on the theory while treating musicology, semiotics and other cultural approaches seriously. Each chapter will doubtless spur readers to conduct further research and to listen carefully to the music of their choice.

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Radicalism and Music: An Introduction to the Music Cultures of al-Qa'ida, Racist Skinheads, Christian-affiliated Radicals, and Eco-animal Rights Militants.

By Jonathan Pieslak. 352 pp. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015.
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Jonathan Pieslak's 2015 monograph *Radicalism and Music: An Introduction to the Music Cultures of al-Qa'ida, Racist Skinheads, Christian-affiliated Radicals, and Eco-animal Rights Militants* follows his 2009 book *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War*. In *Radicalism and Music*, Pieslak builds on *Sound Targets'* exploration of the links between music and violence. Like a growing number of musicologists and other scholars, Pieslak maintains that music can influence human brutality just as it can foster social cohesion and heroic selflessness. To support this argument, Pieslak examines the music of four different movements on the violent fringe of contemporary politics. His findings suggest that many different human social groups use music for political ends, and that the connections between music and political violence are extraordinarily complex. In his words, 'The coercive uses of music are not isolated to radical cultures; they are at play in our own backyards, in political propaganda, sports rivalry and much of commercial music. By understanding the Janus-faced nature of music, I hope that we, as lovers of music, will be empowered in our listening' (p. 13). *Radicalism and Music* certainly does help empower listeners by discussing how music has helped and harmed individuals and societies in many different cases; it is therefore a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature.

Radicalism and Music delivers important findings for scholars of music, violence and extremism. Pieslak demonstrates that music can help attract new recruits to movements and ideologies across the political spectrum – but that recruits who join political movements simply because they identify with the movements' music are much less likely to remain involved long term than recruits who join out of pre-existing ideological commitment: 'For many, it appears as if the music of the subculture, on which many nonideological factors like social bonds and camaraderie are

based, becomes more significant in creating the (temporary) allure of the movement than the belief system' (p. 190). In other words, while music is a useful recruiting tool, it appears to be less effective in motivating sustained activism. For anyone who wants to combat violent fringe movements or to understand the radicalisation process, this and other aspects of Pieslak's analysis can contribute to a nuanced understanding of how people adopt and discard violent radical ideologies.

Another significant aspect of this book is that Pieslak discusses the reasons why music and violence so often seem to accompany one another. He explores the links between music and emotion, arguing that some universality exists among humans insofar as sound seems to elicit emotional response in healthy human individuals across cultures. He cautions, though, that the types of music people love and hate depend on cultural conditioning and environmental factors. This is why, as Pieslak states, 'listening to music is not simply a passive act' (p. 239). One listener may find a piece of propaganda music persuasive enough to join a violent radical group, while another listener may find the same piece offensive or terrifying. Despite this lack of a direct causal relationship between music and most acts of ideologically motivated violence, Pieslak's work in *Radicalism and Music* effectively demonstrates that music can be a powerful tool for bypassing audiences' logical reasoning and urging them to act instead on emotions like love and hate.

The book does have a few key limitations, however. Pieslak's decision to focus on four political groups instead of just one is both a strength and a weakness of *Radicalism and Music*. He finds parallels among the musical cultures of an impressive array of groups, including mainstream and historical political movements as well as his four focus extremist groups. Yet the daunting scope of this project means that Pieslak's interactions with some of his informants – and his resulting analyses of some movements – seem less nuanced than others. This is particularly true of his chapter on al-Qa'ida militants. By his own admission, Pieslak speaks only 'modest Arabic' (p. 11). Pieslak dutifully acknowledges the limitations of his white-American-male identity in gaining the trust of his al-Qa'ida informants. This is commendable. However, acknowledging this shortcoming cannot fully offset the fact that the al-Qa'ida chapter lacks the depth of other chapters in the book. Of course, the chapter is still useful on a number of levels. It explains for a Western audience the social impact of key aspects of Middle Eastern music and Islamist religious culture on jihadist music. In contrast to the chapter on eco-animal rights militants, however, in which Pieslak disentangles the distinctions among a wide range of little-known left-wing US militant groups, the al-Qa'ida chapter seems flat. Given that the other three of the four focus movements in *Radicalism and Music* are all US based, Pieslak's decision to devote a chapter to al-Qa'ida at all makes the book's structure feel less streamlined than it might have been if he had simply chosen to study a fourth US-based extremist group.

Still, in a year when extremists with tiki torches and swastikas have spurred violent mass protests in the United States and disgruntled environmental militants have watched the US government muzzle many of the environmental protections that might have safeguarded residents from a seemingly never-ending string of wildfires and hurricanes, books that help readers to understand political extremism and violence appear even more important than they normally would be. Jonathan Pieslak's *Radicalism and Music* – and especially its insightful fifth chapter, 'Music's Roles in Radical Culture' – is therefore a timely work with implications

for readers across a wide range of disciplines, professions and ideological orientations.

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Reference

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Music and the Myth of Wholeness: Toward a New Aesthetic Paradigm.

By Tim Hodgkinson. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016. 280 pp. ISBN 9780262034067

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This book, by the well-known and highly respected composer and improviser Tim Hodgkinson, is something of a *tour de force*, exhibiting a massively impressive grasp of a multitude of disciplines, all brought to bear on art practice in general and music production and reception ('listening') in particular. Written in a dense and sometimes elusive style, it is by turn assertive and evocative, provocative and poignant, with a multitude of subtly different voices phasing into each other, or 'colliding' as Hodgkinson himself would probably say. And it is this 'collision' of different selves or subjectivities that this book traces through its engagement with biology, neuroscience, information theory, anthropology, sociology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, existential ontology – the list goes on and on as the reader will discover! All of this laced together with the actualities of music practice, the account of which is noteworthy for the exquisite clarity and sheer believability that a lifetime of 'doing' brings to the discussion.

This is not to say that this is a fun read all the way: it is not. The first half in particular is quite daunting, not only thanks to the uncompromising complexity of Hodgkinson's theoretical groundwork established here, but also because of the almost exaggerated academic method adopted which bounces the argument around so many different secondary sources, with all of the dreaded references that academics (like me, although not me) love so much, that the radical dynamism of the underlying thought sometimes feels threatened from all sides. Mercifully, Hodgkinson manages to interject just enough 'personal' fragments to remind us that this is no ordinary academic tome, and that it is written by an improviser with excellent timing – most of the time.

The second half of the book which turns more specifically to the development of a 'new aesthetic paradigm', through a detailed and often brilliant discussion of both composed and improvised music practice, begins to reward the reader for all the hard work of the first half. Here one does get a genuine sense of moving 'towards' something, although it remains a moot point whether arriving at the destination would be desirable: isn't an anti-holistic paradigm a contradiction in terms? Without a word on paradigms in the text the question mark remains hovering. Anyway, I dwell on the writing because, at its best, it is true to the substance of