

Watson's song work is akin to the conceptually sophisticated music of Jim White, whose *Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus* uses mythic tropes of the Deep South and Badlands authentically to construct a persona located in a, by now, imaginary America. Despite the apparent ideological distance, this kind of artistic practice is in step with the Art School approaches to making creative work in the 1960s and 1970s, a good example of this being Roy Ascot's Ground Course which helped form the working methods of Brian Eno. This, it seems to me, is a way forward in the ways of making and thinking about songwriting that could very usefully be developed. This is because, no matter how many different ways there are in which the practice of songwriting can be described, analysed and taught, there is something that works in a successful song that is beyond simple mechanics. Somewhere there needs to be an approach to writing songs that seeks to apprehend the kind of conceptual, pop-art derived practice of music making, as described in Frith and Horne's *Art Into Pop*.

Or, as Tom Waits once memorably said, 'Songs are funny that way. You take off your hat and all these birds fly out of your head' (Flanagan 1990, p. 393). As songwriters and educators, understanding those birds is what we need to do.

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***The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music*. Edited by Christopher Partridge and Marcus Moberg. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. 425 pp. ISBN 978-1-4742-3733-8.**

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From an insight into the relationship between religion and emotion to an outlook on the ambiguously religious in Goth music, this volume offers a summary of many areas in which popular music has been influenced by the sacred. It reinforces the growing discourse that refuses a hard distinction between sacred and secular, presenting a wide selection of case studies from complementary but varied areas of expertise.

Editors Christopher Partridge and Marcus Moberg begin by highlighting the role of critical musicology in the study of the sacred, presenting it as an 'emerging, but still neglected, area of study' (p. 7), to which their compilation makes a remarkable addition. The volume marks a step forward in addressing research areas related to the implicitly or explicitly religious, when religion is obviously exposed or strategically camouflaged, in music genres and scenes all around the world.

The contributions of the 32 participants are divided into three parts: 'Theoretical Perspectives, Methodologies and Issues', 'Religious Perspectives' and 'Genres'. In many chapters, the reader will find cross-references that foster consideration of complementary perspectives. For instance, several contributions address the sacred in Rastafarianism, discussed by David Moskowitz and Christopher Partridge,

as well as diverse contributions on the role of Church in the creation of new and alternative music scenes. Many of these references can be tracked back at the end of the volume in a lengthy discography outline, which offers a wide and suggestive selection of examples.

The first part, 'The Study of Religion and Popular Music: Theoretical Perspectives, Methodologies and Issues', not only makes an introduction to existing problems and historical perspectives in musicology as a broader field, but also introduces much needed arguments such as new possibilities in ethnographic research, or the essential role of Christianity in the unfolding of musical narratives, both in the West and in the rest of the world. Censorship and protest make a strong appearance, and present the unfolding of new musical developments as a reaction to the exclusion of certain collectives and ideals, as with the rise of blues (p. 33) or the demonisation of genres such as heavy metal and rock, often hand in hand with a political statement.

Alison Stone finishes off this first section with an essential gender-focused chapter, in which she explores the role of women in popular music, the use and influence of media in defining this role in the music industry and in society, and the conception of the spiritual and the emotional as related to the feminine. In exposing the binary contradictions between pop and rock, between the feminine and the masculine, Stone concludes that 'these contrasts are not confined to popular music but are features of the Western aesthetic tradition more broadly, and indeed of the Western philosophical and religious tradition' (p. 64), thus exposing once again the vast influence of the sacred and its blurred limits with the secular.

Moving on to the second part, 'Religious Perspectives', the reader finds a collection of religious streams and world areas, which introduce some of the main issues to take into account in the relation between the two concepts. The section begins by emphasising a Bible-focused discourse, its influence both on Christian bands and detractors of the perspectives that the sacred book offers according to some of its branches, and the impact of the same in further areas of influence, at least until recently. Christian pop, punk, or heavy bands are pinpointed only in contrast with detractor discourses in which the anti-religious or the 'occult' is in the spotlight, while putting on the table two sides of a similar coin.

However, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism appear along with smaller streams such as Paganism, or the conjunction of possibilities found in countries with a strong sense of tradition and an amalgamation of discourses, such as in the case of China discussed by Vicky Ho. Once again, the presence of media and its influence on the development of popular music is highlighted for its role in shaping the experience of the listener, both in the environment in which it takes place and beyond. Some paradigmatic examples of this are to be found in Hinduism and in its remarkable influence on Western popular music, 'ranging from an authentic desire for spiritual enlightenment to frivolous fascination with its superficial attractions' (p.143), and in Buddhism, whose complex relation with the West is further highlighted by Jeffrey W. Cupchick (pp. 148–9).

Departing from these landscapes is 'Genres', third and last part of the volume, which covers pretty much every big genre or group of genres in the West –and some other world areas in less depth – from hip hop to ambient music. The section begins by introducing the relevance of peak experiences and musical strategies to create specific states of mind, as underpinned in heavy metal's 'sensory overload' by editor Marcus Moberg (p. 229). Music and emotion follow in the discourse of pop and

rock offered by Clive Marsh, and identity is put under the lens both by Vaughan S. Roberts and Leigh E. Edwards in their respective chapters on folk and country, finally offering an overall sense of the particularities of each genre and their more or less evident relation with religion.

Other issues for the whole volume, such as the participation of the researcher in some case scenes, discussed on the first part from a theoretical perspective, become especially relevant here. The emic vision of the religious elements in Japan's psychedelic scene, or the Goth scene in Amsterdam described by Isabella Van Elferen, offer a complementary and purely ethnographic perspective which illustrates the range of possibilities, complementing the contribution by Andy Bennett on 'Ethnography, Popular Music in Religion' as well as other methodological inputs in the same section.

The importance placed on online research and other technological tools cannot be overstated, and is one of the binding topics of the volume: introducing alternative possibilities for the study of a strongly media-tied world, new online possibilities and the use of reformulated methods such as that posed by Graham St John in his redefinition of the figure of the shaman, affirming that 'the art of sampling is connected to the practice of call and response' (p. 310).

The presence of questions for further research and the outlining of existing problems both in method and content are proof that the opening line made by the editors, that 'the relationship between religion and popular music has been a somewhat under-researched subfield within the broader interdisciplinary study of religion and popular culture' (p. 1), is systematically undertaken. Adorno and Simon Frith are included, along with other familiar recurrent thinkers on the field of religion such as Paul Heelas and Jeremy Begbie.

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music offers a panoramic view from the crossroads of two extensive fields, presenting a point of departure for those willing to dig deeper into their inter-relationships. As stated at the beginning of this review, the issue of the separation of sacred and secular is reformulated by putting them on a no man's land, and letting them appear according to their perception from different scenes, areas and genres. In a few words, this is a much-needed contribution for those working on, and trying to push forward, a field with ever growing extension and interest.

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***Men, Masculinity, Music and Emotions.* Sam de Boise. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 253 pp. ISBN 9781137436092.**

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Ron Swanson, the pillar of hypermasculinity on the American television series *Parks & Recreation*, admits to having cried twice in his life. The first time, at age seven, was after being hit by a school bus. The second, occurring within the show's timeframe, is upon hearing that beloved miniature horse Lil' Sebastian had died. During a musical tribute to Lil' Sebastian, Ron reveals himself as local jazz icon Duke Silver. Ron hides his musical persona from his co-workers as long as he can, as it threatens his staunch