Although titled 'Blackface Media', Chapter 8 is really a discussion of representations of blackface minstrelsy on the radio. *The Kentucky Minstrels* radio show, which ran from 1933 to 1950, was an adaptation of the successful minstrel formula. Pickering addresses the difficulties of adapting a primarily bodily and visual humour form for the radio. However I felt that more discussion could be given to the effect of a sightless medium on blackface performance, which had been a key theme of the book until this point. It is implied, rather than made explicit, that racial humour softened during these decades, and radio removed some of the focus on blackface. Pickering comments on the transition from racist humour to sexist humour in the 1940s, and the cumulative combination of racist and sexist humour reinforced the dominance of white men in society. The BBC programme *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, which ran from 1957–1973, is mentioned but merits further discussion.

Pickering's concluding chapter, 'Minstrelsy's Legacy', draws examples from many different times to prove that white forms of blackness have had many faces. He emphasises the anachronistic nature of minstrelsy in Britain, as exemplified by the long-running *Black and White Minstrel Show*. Pickering notes that 'Even after rock and soul changed popular music in Britain and America, performers in the *Black and White Minstrel Show* continued to sing songs and dance dances that had virtually nothing to do with African-American music, though they still wore blackface' (p. 219). This chapter could have benefited from a further discussion of the rock 'n' roll movement, which stemmed from white musicians imitating and adapting African-American musical styles.

While Pickering provides a fascinating and multifaceted overview of blackface minstrelsy in Britain, the book contains no notated music examples, and is very light on actual musical description. This may come as no surprise, considering the 'serious historical study' he intended, but seems out of place in the Ashgate Popular Music Series. However, this is only a slight criticism of what is an enlightening and very readable history of minstrelsy in Britain.

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***The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry*. By Diane Pecknold. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008. 312 pp. ISBN 978-0822340591 (hb), 978-0822340805 (pb)**

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During the 1960s, it became clear that the audience for country music, far from being beyond the reach of advertisers, actually represented a large and growing consumer base. The Country Music Association (CMA), formed during the latter part of the 1950s and effective from 1960, worked with country radio to provide a formula that would appeal to consumers. At the same time these consumers were sold to

advertisers as a lucrative market, one which was now presented as a sophisticated body with disposable income. Diane Pecknold's informative book charts the rise of the country music industry and the consumer base that accompanied, and in some ways constituted, its success. The book takes its title from a CMA-sponsored sales presentation ('The Selling Sound of Country Music') which toured a number of major US cities between 1963 and 1967 and whose objective was less about selling country music as culturally acceptable (although this remained a supplementary agenda) than about creating awareness of the audience as consumers. As Pecknold writes, 'The country music listener was no longer a simple hayseed, a poor but proud exile, or a dignified citizen; he was a Chevy owner, a Delta passenger, a Pepsi drinker' (p. 169).

The CMA also set out to convince critics and intellectuals that country deserved cultural respect, rather than criticism for cheapening folkloric practices. Moving on from debates around nomenclature, the Association realised that country would receive its greatest respect not by a pinning-down of generic descriptors (a tricky prospect for any genre), but rather via the attachment of a history. The development of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum allowed the industry to tell the story of country and thus to define it via posterity. Embracing history in this way allowed the commercial aspects of country to be recuperated as a vital part of the evolution of the music. This process was aided by those folk revivalists who looked to commercial hillbilly recordings as source material and also by academics, such as those whose work was collected in the 'Hillbilly Issue' of the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1965.

It had taken much time and effort to get to this point, however, and Pecknold begins her account earlier in the century, when the music was first being broadcast over the radio and fixed for posterity in the recording boom of 1920s. As many scholars have noted, what we now think of as country music was essentially a creation of this era, one in which the complex relationships between tradition and modernity, folk and mass culture became the focus of much debate. One of these paradoxes was the way in which hillbilly music was presented and heard as nostalgic in contrast to the modernity of jazz, even as its presence on records and radio broadcasts marked it out as modern. We could see the association between hillbilly music and the past as a collective fantasy, the first of many that would be projected onto the music over the 20th century and which continue to be projected onto it in the 21st.

Those who did see through the fantasy of nostalgia were often hostile to the music, finding in it yet another example of the commodification and cheapening of culture. Distinction was made by performers and critics between hillbilly and folk, the latter granted authenticity while the former was ridiculed for its refusal to be the kind of folklore folklorists were after. Even so, hillbilly had the chance, in the eyes of some folklorists and revivalists, to be a truer form of authentic American music than that of black or Native American people. If only it could be cleansed of its cheapness, hillbilly could be recuperated as an authentic voice of the people.

Still, the people require representatives and hillbilly was not without its stars. Recording brought about a transition from an emphasis on the song to an emphasis on the individual recording and certain recordings were valued above others. Setting a pattern that would be followed in subsequent eras of country music, broadcasters and hillbilly fan publications encouraged a sense of similarity between stars and fans, while simultaneously making sure to highlight the differences. Audiences received the message that success was, in theory, possible, but also that it required considerable work and application. Performer and audience alike were aware of the processes of fabricating authenticity – and fabrication, of course, refers to work.

Between the deaths of Jimmie Rodgers in 1933 and Hank Williams in 1953, the country music business 'had developed a publicity structure capable of recognising, absorbing, and promulgating the spontaneous expression of emotion' (p. 71). There had been a crucial shift from not just reporting events, but also predicting and creating them. Rodgers's death had been quite big news among fans of his music and the early country music press but was fairly quickly forgotten by the mainstream press. Williams's death 20 years later ran and ran as a story, but he was not the only star to be posthumously promoted. The first Jimmie Rodgers Memorial Day was held the same year as Williams's funeral and signalled, as much as any event, the creation of a sense of history for country music. Country music recordings would no longer be mere vehicles for the imagining of the past but would themselves be held up as historical objects. To a certain extent this had been proven the year before with the release of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a record that used the commercially released recordings of the 1920s as its source material. Pecknold does not make this connection, though she does discuss the influence of hillbilly recordings on the US folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s.

Pecknold is particularly strong in her analysis of the mass culture debates of the post-World War II era. One way in which her story intersects with such debates is in the continued attempts to present country music as folk music or to distinguish it from folk due to its commercial appeal. The academicisation of folklore accompanied and fed the folk revival and there was a need to invent the folk and give them an identity. Like any identity-forming exercise, this entailed the creation of an 'other' against whom the folk could be distinguished. The hillbilly became the perfect foil, especially the migrant to the city who fit neither town nor country: too much of a hick for the suburbs but too 'fallen' – too lured by television, consumerism and mass culture – to represent the folk.

Pecknold argues against the 'widely accepted notion' that the industry hid its workings behind the facade of authenticity. The audience were well aware, she argues, of the constructed nature of authenticity: 'The readily ascertained fact that the rustic image of friends and neighbors was a profitable theatrical illusion did not undermine its emotional utility' (p. 120). The point is well made, though we are not given enough evidence for this 'widely accepted notion', one of many the author wishes to debunk in her book. Is she referring to Richard Peterson's work on the fabrication of authenticity? A footnote suggests she has Joli Jensen's *The Nashville Sound* in her sights, but that work is not engaged with rigorously. Pecknold does, however, provide refreshingly useful evidence of fans' involvement in the discourse surrounding country, and this remains one of the strengths of her work in each era she covers. Here she does so by quoting letters sent to music magazines and material from fan clubs and associated networks (more widespread and more permanently available by the 1950s and 1960s than in the era of classic hillbilly). This makes her book an important contribution to fan-based studies of popular culture.

If anything indicated that country had made the transition 'from market to majority', it was its increasing appropriation by politicians. While the genre has most often been associated with right-wing conservative politics, there has always been a strong claim for the music's potential, via its supposed class politics, to represent the voice of blue collar workers' rights. Populist performers such as Merle Haggard have been claimed by right and left alike, both sides seeing the story they wish to tell writ large in the lyrics of such everyman philosophers. A complex web of class, gender and racial issues is always notable in the discourse surrounding the music. Pecknold picks her way through a number of these issues, particularly class

and race (her main discussion of gender in this book relates to the representation of fans and fan clubs; she has also co-edited a book on country music and gender), making some interesting points. On the issue of race, she suggests that 'country was resoundingly white without being expressly anti-black'. This was useful for theorists of 'the silent majority' as it 'allowed for a clear embrace of Southern traditions and values while still hewing to a moderate position on civil rights' (p. 226). Such a statement allows for a more nuanced position on the issue than has often been presented, though it still remains notoriously difficult to know where the borderline might be between explicitly 'anti' and 'anti'-by-association. And quite what is meant by 'black' here? Country's racism has also flourished via anti-Arab, anti-Hispanic and anti-Native American stances. There are too many unfortunate racial slurs in country's history, and in its current practice, to allow this borderline to go unpoliced.

To make such a point is no doubt only to confirm Pecknold's thesis that the rise of the country industry has led to a situation where a number of vested interests (politicians, industry players, cultural elites and fans) ensure that country is not allowed to get 'out of hand' or be too easily misunderstood. It is as carefully managed a spectacle as any other major cultural industry, from Hollywood to the Superbowl. Still, as other ethnographic work has shown, the industry's skilful stage managing does not do away with the genre's obscene underbelly; indeed, to paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, it is the reliance on unpleasant backstage shenanigans that allows for the smooth running of operations up front.

That operation is now very smooth and incorporates those who give country music cultural value as much as those who determine the financial side. The way that country's history is told has increasingly intersected with the way country music is sold. In her conclusion, Pecknold discusses the second, slicker Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and the way it blurs the lines between the curatorial and the commercial. In the museum, items are displayed as though they were on sale, while in the museum shop, it is possible to buy replicas of the exhibits. The Country Music Museum, then, is 'selling sound' as much as any record label or store. One may attach cultural capital while the other focuses on financial gain, but each is involved with trading on surplus value. Pecknold's well researched book allows us to consider the role of exchange in such a process. Readers may not come away from it any less cynical about the industry whose rise it charts, but they will be made aware of fans' active involvement in that rise. To what extent fans can continue to control the beast they helped nurture remains an open question.

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