

Laurie Stras (ed.), *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010). 266 pp. ISBN 9781409436652.

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In the canon of 1960s popular music, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and the Beach Boys are probably among the names that first come to mind. But in the superb collection *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music* edited by Laurie Stras, the eight essays bring women to the forefront. Dealing with girl groups such as the Shirelles, the Chantels, the Ronettes and the Bobbettes and individuals such as Dusty Springfield, Marianne Faithful, Sandie Shaw, Mary Hopkin and Tina Turner, amongst others, this anthology rightly shows that 'girl singers still matter' (29) and have mattered all along.

The collaboration began as a conference panel in 2002 and continued in further email correspondences over the following years. This close partnership amongst the contributors shows up in the connections of the essays. The authors explore the subject from perspectives as different as cultural studies, musicology, biography, women's studies and others, but they each incorporate aspects of femininity and adolescence.

Laurie Stras begins by discussing voice as the key aspect of the girl sound. She notes that almost all girl singers were adolescent or younger, which highlighted the not-always-in-tune sound. Whilst few singers had good 'technique', most had an innocent quality to their voices. Robynn J Stilwell continues this theory by examining Brenda Lee. Recognised as child prodigy, she often sounded older than she

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was. Stilwell points out the dichotomy of a voice that can sound both innocent and knowing, white and black, young and mature. Later, Sarah Hill explored the voice of Mary Hopkin as a Welsh voice, an ‘Other’ among the Anglo-American voices popular at the time. Similarly, Susan Fast examined the qualities of Tina Turner’s voice, highlighting the qualities that go about ‘signifyin(g)’ her as black. Implicit throughout all these essays is the predominant social ideal of white, middle-class women as the target to which to aspire. Fast recognises this in underlining Tina Turner’s transformation as her career progressed from an outrageous black woman to a blond bombshell-type performer, even having a nose job to appear whiter.

Visual appearance was also a major theme throughout *She’s So Fine*. Annie J Randall dealt with Dusty Springfield’s change from folk singer Mary O’Brien to the mod icon ‘White Queen of Soul’ and how her visual representation paralleled her rise in popularity. Jacqueline Warwick noted how the girl groups were expected to fit a certain artistic style, often employing wigs and matching dresses, as well as choreographed dance moves. The Supremes’ performed ‘Stop In the Name of Love’ with hand gestures and dancing that was often considered the epitome of this style. Similarly, Patricia Julian Smith noted the sartorial styles and visual appeal of the ‘female “Fab Four”’ of Britain – Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Sandie Shaw, and Lulu. The four women were variously wholesome, fashionable, fun, vulnerable and adolescent. Yet despite these images, or perhaps because of them, Smith claims these women were ‘pivotal figures in a transition of female pop stars from girls to women’ (138). The tension inherent in appearing both vulnerable and strong, wholesome and sexy, girlish and womanly all at the same time is considered aptly in Norma Coates essay on Marianne Faithful. Using Faithful’s autobiography as a main source for recollections into her image as an ethereal beauty, angelic and the height of English class, Coates deftly argues how the image of the artist was often more important than the actuality. These themes were mined in each essay of the collection, pinpointing the often precarious knife’s edge on which these women singers had to balance to be successful.

Despite these laudable tactics and the ambitious scope of the book to fill a gaping hole in the canon of popular music, its audience could be limited by two issues. The first revolves around some of the rather technical aspects of music theory, especially in Stras’ work.

For all but the musicologically inclined some phrases will sound incomprehensible. For example, Stras discusses the differences in vocal performances and uses musical scores to elucidate musical qualities associated with the singing. The second issue, in a way, ties directly into the first. Having a companion CD would enhance the experience of the reader, not only to follow along with the songs presented, but also to make the whole project *more* fun, rather than having to resort to finding the songs on the internet or hidden away on old albums.

These two minor critiques do not take away from the extraordinary work *She's So Fine* accomplishes. It skilfully lays down the groundwork for a new field of inquiry, and it manages to touch upon issues of femininity, class and adolescence, whilst the racial aspects could fill volumes. In her introduction, Stras points the way to future research, but the list is (sadly) incomplete. There is still much to discuss, not only in more depth on the singers raised in *She's So Fine*, but also other aspects of female musicianship. The book challenges the prevailing myths of a 1960s feminine ideal (especially in music) and provides the first step towards what will hopefully become a wider discourse on the subject.

**Sean F. McEnroe, *From Colony to Nationhood in Mexico: Laying the Foundations, 1560-1840* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
x+252 pp.
ISBN 9781107006300.**

Charles Angelo*

From the time frame of this study alone, one can discern Sean McEnroe's 'primordialist' approach to the question of nationalism in