

recent analysis of the motivation and expectation of Christmas churchgoers, are largely ignored by Johnes or treated in a brief and rather peremptory manner. Indeed, given the fact that Johnes presents stemming the secularization of British society as one the main functions of Christmas, it is curious that he does not devote much more space and attention to analyzing and exploring church attendance, the changing pattern of Christmas services, and other aspects of the religious and specifically Christian dimension to the season.

Somewhat strangely, Johnes writes almost entirely in the past tense, as though Christmas celebration has somehow now come to an end and is entirely a historical phenomenon. This seems at odds with the overall thesis of the book, and it is a pity that Johnes does not allow himself some closing reflections on the current state of the British Christmas and how far it still underlines and embodies the fundamental values of decency that he sees as so important. Maybe he is himself overwhelmed with the nostalgia that he rightly sees as one of the key elements in the spirit of Christmas.

In the introduction, Johnes writes, “if there is a big idea in this book, it is that Christmas, just as Dickens had tried to convince people, is a good thing” (xvii). In the conclusion, he lists four main functions that the British Christmas has fulfilled over the last one hundred years: economic benefit in terms of generating significant levels of spending; stemming the secularization of society by ensuring that Christianity still had an inescapable public profile; constituting an integrative experience by bringing people closer to their family, friends and neighbors, community and compatriots; and making people happy. A rather romantic, Dickensian, rosy glow pervades the book as a whole, perhaps justifiably, but it might have been good to have acknowledged and cited more critical voices (both religious and secular) about the British celebration of Christmas and not to have set out with quite such a preconceived Dickensian agenda that it is a good thing.

Ian Bradley  
 University of St Andrews  
[icb@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:icb@st-andrews.ac.uk)

ANDREW KELLETT *The British Blues Network: Adoption, Emulation, and Creativity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. Pp. 263. \$75.00 (cloth).  
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Andrew Kellett’s *British Blues Network: Adoption, Emulation, and Creativity* examines the impact of African-American bluesmen on white (male) British teenagers in 1950s and early 1960s England. Carefully researched and well supported by case studies and extensive end-notes, this cultural history complements other work in the growing body of study of English society and identity through popular music.

Mutual fascination with each other’s culture between Britain and America goes back centuries, but the phenomenon accelerated in the years after World War II. Having lost its predominant political and economic place on the world stage, Britain regained influence culturally, especially in America, through the so-called “British invasion” from 1964 onwards. Britain exported music, fashion, and European cultural sophistication that the United States readily embraced, returning the favor as American film and popular music had strongly influenced British popular culture in the 1950s. Key to the 1960s phenomenon were Britain’s indigenous rock and roll musicians—not the American rock-and-roll imitators of, for example, Larry Parnes’s venerable stable of the late 1950s, who were fashioned after Elvis et al., but rather next-generation musicians inspired by recordings of African American bluesmen—*rara avis* usually accessible only haphazardly via film, precious records acquired from US servicemen,

relatives traveling abroad, or mail order. The influence of the likes of Robert Johnson, B. B. King, and Big Bill Broonzy on Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Ray Davies, and others appears throughout (auto)biographies of these artists. Kellett investigates how and why working and lower middle-class white British teens and men, at that particular place and time in Britain, claimed to identify with these African American bluesmen, when ostensibly they had nothing socially, culturally, or economically in common.

Kellett first explains how white, mostly middle-class British men managed to acquire African American blues music to begin with. It was a haphazard process in the time before instant communication and the systematic information overload of the twenty-first century, but this random appropriation of the music and culture was beneficial as it allowed the English to fill in gaps with their own bricolage of musical and cultural influences. Kellett sets up the context for this cultural assimilation by introducing the social and economic setting in which the white British blues enthusiasts came of age in the 1950s.

Next, Kellett considers the effects of blues music and performers on issues of gender and social mobility. He argues that part of the appeal of the idealized bluesman was his absolute masculinity—in manner, performance, and musical theme. The masculine image allowed musicians to take on sociological importance as father figures. Young blues enthusiasts did not necessarily lack fathers, but their admiration for the bluesman character reflected frustration with their parents' generation and the grayness and austerity of postwar Britain.

In the next chapter, Kellett considers the keen sense of rivalry among English popular musicians in the 1960s and early 1970s—competition that sparked creativity and led to British domination of American music charts, especially between 1966 and 1972. Living on a small, densely populated island, these English artists tended to cluster. Physical proximity led to musical exchange, innovation, and development of hybrid genres in ways not possible for the much larger and more geographically spread music industry in the United States.

Finally, Kellett considers authenticity and the “processes” Kellett calls “experimentation, refiliation, and augmentation” (142). Mere emulation of the blues was not enough to satisfy; by 1966–1970, the musical marriage between British middle class white men and African American bluesmen became a fusion of two cultural strands—and here is where Englishness was most instrumental in transforming American blues into distinctively English forms. English musicians lacked the cultural baggage of racism and civil rights, and instead folded together their experience with social mobility, class consciousness, and frustration with the generation gap. In this period, Kellett argues, blues music in the United Kingdom became aggressively British, “full of British characters speaking in specifically British voices,” “supercharged with volume” and themes of “sex, violence, and power” (142).

This last chapter is subtitled “I Just Can’t be Satisfied”—but Kellett’s work here is eminently satisfying as he examines the complexities of this cultural-musical fusion. He discusses the effects of the “other” in British blues—and here his own perception of this process as an “other” (Kellett is American) enhances the argument. Britain, he notes, was in a unique position with regards to the United States—same language, shared history, shared cultural background—but there was also enough distance in time and space for both Britain and America to be fascinated with each other’s cultural exports and “coolness.” These British men who took to American blues, emulated it, enhanced it, and gave it back to America illustrate the vibrant creativity among a small and closely packed population of artists. Britain’s small size fostered the “explosion of musical creativity” as Britain urbanized in the 1960s (177); the results allowed Britons to return to the world scene, not as political or economic heavyweights, but rather as cultural leaders: “the epicentre of a veritable revolution in first musical then cultural taste,” and “arbiters of international ‘cool’” (178).

The *British Blues Network* is a solid piece of cultural and musical history, recommended not only to scholars and students of twentieth-century British cultural history, but also to the general reader.

Carey Fleiner  
 University of Winchester  
[carey.fleiner@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:carey.fleiner@winchester.ac.uk)

ALAN MACLEOD. *International Politics and the Northern Ireland Conflict: The USA, Diplomacy and the Troubles*. London: I. B. Taurus, 2016. Pp. 262. \$135 (cloth).  
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In *International Politics and the Northern Ireland Conflict: The USA, Diplomacy and the Troubles*, Alan MacLeod provides a compelling narrative of the early era of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, highlighting the role of the United States. He begins his analysis with the acceleration of conflict associated with the British policy of internment (beginning in August 1971) and ends with the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement (May 1974). After a careful and insightful reading of a wide array of government documents and the extant scholarly literature on the US policy toward Northern Ireland, MacLeod makes a convincing case that American policy was not driven by blind loyalty and deference to an important Cold War ally but “the result of the [American] Administration’s internal policy-making process” (22). Rather than seeing American policy makers and members of Congress as relying on official British policy and diplomatic exchanges, he shows that the Nixon administration developed American policy based on the influence of important Irish-American lobby groups as well as on diplomatic and other political exchanges with Irish, British, and Northern Irish politicians.

MacLeod contends that internment forced the American government to consider abandoning its previous policy of avoiding intervention in the conflict in Northern Ireland. The Nixon administration resisted efforts to become involved in the conflict—both domestic political pressures and the active diplomatic measures taken by the Irish government encouraged the US government to challenge the British internment of Irish Republican Army suspects. According to then secretary of state William Rogers, the conflict in Northern Ireland did not directly impinge on American national security interests. While the United States was therefore not interested in directly intervening in Northern Ireland, it was concerned that the resources the United Kingdom devoted to Northern Ireland undermined its contribution to NATO, which was of utmost concern to the United States in the context of the Cold War.

MacLeod’s reading of US government documents provides a contrasting analysis to that of Joseph Thompson, who has stressed that US officials slavishly deferred to the British government and Unionists in Northern Ireland. Statements coming from the US ambassador in Dublin and the Consul General in Belfast indicated that the military policies of the British government (especially internment) were not bringing peace in Northern Ireland and suggested that the United States should encourage a political initiative. While the American government representatives recognized that no outside power, including the United States, could impose a solution, it did support political negotiations among the parties in Northern Ireland. This position coincided with the position of successive Irish governments during the early to mid-1970s.

One of the strengths of MacLeod’s analysis of US policy making toward Northern Ireland is his recognition of the role Congress played in this context. While senators and members of the House can attempt to influence foreign policy in numerous ways, some foreign-policy entrepreneurs attempt to influence a policy based on a specific