This welcome but uneven book, divided in three sections (music, film, and literature), has its origins in a 2006 UK conference on demonology. The introduction, by editors Partridge and Christianson, subtitled “A Brief History of Western Demonology”, does an excellent job at providing precisely what the subtitle says, and poses a couple of interesting questions along the way.

The first chapter, Asbjørn Dyrendal’s “Satanism and Popular Music”, is slightly problematic in that it largely accepts the claims to preferential right of interpretation made by the Church of Satan concerning the term Satanism. Hence, the point of Dyrendal’s argument is that black metal lyrics ‘are bad examples of Satanist ideology’ (p. 25). That holds true only if one accepts the Church of Satan’s self image as “the only true Satanism”. There is, however, little reason for a scholar of religion to do so. If black metal musicians and fans view themselves as Satanists, and their ideas also fall well within the boundaries of practically all established etic definitions of Satanism, why should a scholar allow the assertion of the Church of Satan, that “those are not real Satanists”, to enter the scholarly discourse?

It would be more proper to use the term to denote either all those who consider themselves Satanists, i.e. an emic definition, or to use a broader etic definition. The main thrust of the chapter, proving that “My Way” — due to its individualist lyrics — is a better example of a song with “Satanist ideas” in it than most black metal tunes, is highly readable as a comparison between the Satanism of LaVeyans and black metal Satanists. But to designate black metal lyrics as somehow representing an “incorrect Satanism” is questionable.

This is not to say Dyrendal’s article lacks valuable insights. One important thing that he brings up, and which is sometimes overlooked by scholars of Satanism sticking too closely to strict ideal types, is the common ground that exists between the LaVeyan and black metal varieties of Satanism. Dyrendal’s discussion of black metal lyrics is also solid, and he picks good and representative examples. For the part of the article where we get to learn about the views concerning music and the Devil held by the present leader of the Church of Satan, Dyrendal has contacted the gentleman in question, and we get the opinions straight from the horse’s mouth, which is always nice. In this context, Dyrendal has also monitored Church of Satan affiliated internet message boards to understand how LaVeyans think about these issues.
However, when it comes to the black metal milieu, no such efforts have been made. We get to learn nothing about how musicians and fans think concerning Satanism and music. This is hardly because their views would be more difficult to access (there are thousands of published interviews available, plenty of black metal message boards, and several of the most prominent black metal musicians even live in the same tiny Norwegian town as Dyrendal). Rather, it again shows a pro-LaVeyan bias, where Church of Satan opinions are considered much more important than those of any other Satanists.

Peter Mercer-Taylor’s “Between Hymn and Horror Film: How do We Listen to Cradle of Filth?” is a detailed structural analysis of the black metal band Cradle of Filth’s song “From the Cradle to Enslave”, from a musicological and narratological perspective, of a serious sort that black metal has seldom been granted. Especially interesting is the drawing of parallels to Charles Wesley’s hymn “Lo, he comes, with clouds descending”. Does the chapter then answer the question its title asks? Well, that depends on who the “we” in the title should be taken to refer to. If the expectation would be some sort of reader response analysis with a grounding in empirical study of how actual fans experience listening to the band, you will not get anything of the sort. The argument moves at a higher level of abstraction, utilizing various general theories about the functions and mechanisms of contemporary horror fiction. This is not necessarily a flaw, though, and the suggestions made appear very plausible and well-suited for the material at hand.

In “When Demons Come Calling: Dealing with the Devil and Paradigms of Life in African American Music” Anthony B. Pinn tackles a fascinating topic, focusing mainly on blues and rap music. Pinn claims that some blues artists ‘spoke of a bargain with demonic forces as the source of their musical (and social) prowess’ (p. 65). There is, however, little solid evidence to support Pinn’s assertion that ‘None represents this arrangement better than Robert Johnson’ (ibid).

Pinn references Robert Palmer’s 1981 book *Deep Blues* (which, incidentally, is not included in the bibliography), but seems unaware that there are several more recent studies of Johnson (Gayle Dean Wardlow’s 1998 *Chasin’ That Devil Music*, Elijah Wood’s 2004 *Escaping the Delta*, Barry Lee Pearson and Bill McCulloch’s 2003 *Robert Johnson: Lost and Found*) that have laid to rest the stories that the legendary bluesman himself ever claimed (seriously, jokingly or to build an image as a “bad man”) to have made a deal with the Devil in exchange for musical skill. These rumours, it would seem, were spread much later. The lyrics to Johnson’s songs do not say anything of the sort explicitly, and Pinn’s dead certain claim that Johnson ‘alludes to the consequences of securing musical abilities from the Devil’ (p. 66) rests on very shaky empirical