POST-COLONIAL AMBIGUITY

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Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, Columbia University Press, New York 1997, 268pp; $49.50 cloth, $17.50 paperback.

The recent proliferation of studies on the overt and cryptic dissemination of empire in English cultural life, has expanded the frame within which a range of metropolitan representational forms and social practices can now be discussed. It has also, in the interest of establishing the historical conjunction and mutual imbrication between ruler and ruled, extended the definition of 'the colonial subject' to include all who were constructed by colonialist ideology. In the words of Simon Gikandi, the experience of colonialism constituted 'the conditions of possibility for metropolitan and colonial subjects and cultures alike' (p191). One consequence of this move has been to foster the notion that colonialism *determined* the invention of Englishness.

Perhaps this condensation of a causal relationship is a response to the long neglect of colonialism in dissident rewritings of the making of English culture and society. However, to recognize that overseas empire was constitutive of the domestic space in ways material, symbolic and psychic does not substantiate the incautious assertion that the imperial project was the sole agency of metropolitan subject reformation in an age of accelerated modernization which also saw an intensification of class struggles, the emergence of a proto-feminism, and upheavals in cognitive modes precipitated by the revolution in scientific knowledge and technology. Hence, any proposition concerning a national subjectivity must recognize the role of other factors in producing what were articulations of disjunctive experiential registers: class location and political alignment, attachments to regional, religious and ethical communities, gender position and sexual affiliation, as well as self-definitions inflected by perceptions of resident aliens such as Jews and other minorities. A related reduction of the tangled web of causations is implicit in the assertion that the structures and codes of the colonial episteme also *determined* the identities of the colonized.

These axioms underpin the formal thesis of Gikandi's book. His brief is to trace the construction and securing of Englishness in the spaces of imperial alterity within a shared colonial culture; the verso to this narrative is the story of the colonized's self-representation which, he asserts, could only be written within the totality established by empire: 'Empire *robbed* colonial subjects of their identities ... but it also *conferred* new forms of

identity on native peoples' (p191). (My emphasis: to indicate the allocation of all power to the dominant ideology, a matter to which I will return). As I understand Gikandi's study, its achievement lies in exceeding the constraints of such *données* on the authority of colonialism's culture over 'consciousness, ideology and even language' in both metropole and colony.

The significant readings of Carlyle, Trollope and Froude, Mary Kingsley, Conrad and Graham Greene offered by Gikandi demonstrate both complicity and transgression *vis-à-vis* the authorized version, and his nuanced discussions are alert to the agency of the texts in inventing, underwriting, defamiliarizing and destabilizing colonialism's assertion of ascendancy. What emerges is that far more than English identity was secured in those writings which were instrumental interventions in legitimizing colonialism, and subverted in those which ventured critiques. Other critics may select different texts, but their discoveries will re-iterate his findings on both the entry of colonial spaces into multiple and contradictory discourses of Englishness, the tropological structure to the rhetorics of imperial authority, and the tortuous languages of nonconformity.

In Gikandi's discussion of Conrad's African writings, and in particular *Heart of Darkness*, the fictions are shown to perform the shift from the relative stability of realism in the English novel to the anxiety of modernist style. Here Gikandi, who locates changing inscriptions of empire in novelistic practice, examines how the novella, by relinquishing cognitive authority, narrates the failure of once-hegemonic theories of representation. This reading reprises the movement of Gikandi's book from the consolidation of empire as referent during the nineteenth century, to its 'state of terminal decline' (p164) in the modernist period. However, *pace* Gikandi, metropolitan anxieties about empire cannot be wholly attributed to the destabilizing of English identity precipitated by the collapse of colonialism's discursive structures. For social theorists, commentators and novelists such as J. A. Hobson, C. F. G. Masterman, H. G. Wells and Conrad, it was the aggressive pursuit of imperialist interests and the enthusiasm for empire this engendered in the populace, which were perceived as deleterious to the moral condition of the homeland.

By his declared stance, Gikandi situates himself within the mainstream of postcolonial theory, and by inference he affiliates his work to the dominant tendency in contemporary cultural studies. To cite one commentator, it is by now abundantly evident that despite its 'materialist inspiration', cultural studies have moved 'to an essentially textualist account of culture',[1] displaying an exclusive interest in culturally-based explanations of social processes, and giving little or no heed to material practices and historical conditions. A move away from social explanations of both the symbolic order and historical events has prompted Nancy Fraser to call for a restoration of political economy to its proper place in critical theory. Her argument is that the distinction is an analytical one, since in practice material processes are shot through with significations, and cultural practices

1. See Colin Sparks, 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism', in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London 1996, pp71-101; pp97, 98.

are never without political and economic dimensions.[2] Fraser then urges that the material and the symbolic be conceived of as interactive spheres, and she does so without denying the importance of attending to the exercise of signifyng power.

2. 'Recognition and Redistribution', *New Left Review* 212, July/August 1995, pp 68-93.

Nowhere are the consequences of the discursive turn more apparent than in those postcolonial rewritings of colonialism and its aftermath from which modern empire as a coercive project of an expansionist western capitalism is absent. Where colonialism was the object of socio-economic and political examination, discussion of its elaborate strategies of legitimation and disseminated effects on the making of both metropolitan and colonial cultures, was secondary to questions of empire's economic trajectory, military conquests, exploitation of colonial labour and resources and institutional rule. With the new dispensation, the notion of colonialism as a system of power and control has become detached from its genesis in European expansionism and its consequences in facilitating the uneven insertion of once-colonized worlds into a global capitalist economy. Such erasures permit Simon Gikandi to cite at face value Nicholas Dirks' proposition that 'culture was what colonialism was all about' (p xi). (While faulting explanations which displace a cultural project of control 'into the inexorable logic of modernization and world capitalism', Dirks modulates his statements with references to the colonizer's military superiority, political power and economic wealth).[3]

3. 'Introduction' to Nicholas Dirks (ed), *Colonialism and Culture*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1992, p3.

Because Gikandi construes colonialism as a cultural project, his analysis is drained of the categories of political economy and structural political conflict, and this permits him to contend that 'the resonance of empire lay in its ability to evoke a horizontal identity for both the colonizer and the colonized even when they were imprisoned in strict racial and economic hierarchies' (p191). This same culturalist paradigm also prompts him to connect a collapse in the stability of 'the image of empire', with what he claims were the always 'unstable structures of empire' even when Britannia ruled the waves, thereby suggesting a homologous relationship between textuality and the historical world. But because colonial rule was not fragile until threatened by colonial struggles and changes within metropolitan state formations, this points rather to a disjunction between the discursive uncertainties of *fin-de-siècle* fiction, which can be read as a troubled literary response to a condition, and the energy with which Britain was pursuing territorial acquisition in Africa and implementing intensified bureaucratic rule in India, which were real events. It may also be as well to remember that when writers like Graham Greene registered a sense of imperial decline and deployed the figure of Africa to express their disenchantment with western civilization, Britain continued to fight colonial wars in defence of its empire.

The stated 'political motive' of Gikandi's study is to transcend 'the metaphorical and mythological binarism promoted by empire' (p17), and by rejecting the colonial borderland as victimized margin without a voice

in shaping events, to recover the agency of the peripheries. To this end he seeks instances of a traffic in cognitive modes from border to centre, citing the acquisition of African languages by missionaries, the reinvigoration of English cultural traditions through the return to British cricket of altered practices devised in the West Indies, and the texts of colonial subjects like Mary Seacole who 'rewrite themselves otherwise', even as they accept their imperial identity. But while foregrounding attenuated or compromised examples of colonial agency, Gikandi appears uninterested in those insurgent voices which *did* indeed 'shape events' – such as *marronage* in the Americas and peasant resistance in India, both of which were spoken in a vernacular idiom during times when Gikandi insists that the colonial subject could only utter what the dominant allowed it to utter (p142).

Furthermore, an anti-colonialism delivered in a modern vocabulary is seriously misconstrued by Gikandi as an atavistic discourse which insisted 'on the integrity and fixity of the national space and its boundaries and the sacredness of its genealogy' (p213), where 'the notion of *tradition*' was privileged (p227), and in which 'the trope of retour ... was lyricised as a gesture of self-affirmation' (p215). But far from failing to break away from the 'grammar of colonial culture', as Gikandi charges, the texts of decolonization to which Marxism was central (see the writings of Césaire, Fanon and Cabral), had deconstructed colonialism's ideology and teleology long before western theory got round to it. Theorists of anti-colonial movements certainly did recognize the significance of recuperating multiply-inflected indigenous cultures from colonialist calumny. But they did not advocate a return to a pre-colonial past, since they were fighting for a future condition in which the material and technical advances, inadvertently effected by colonialism, would be redeployed under egalitarian, postcolonial conditions.

In turning to the subsequent effects of the imperial referent on the writing of identity after colonialism's passing, Gikandi appears to set up the 'alternative narratives' of the decolonizing moment which attempted 'a conscious rejection of an imposed European identity' (p194), against diasporic postcolonial writing where 'the impossibility of detaching oneself from such compromised axioms as empire, cultural nationalism and the postcolony' (p210) is performed in a move to transcend such categories. When Gikandi observes that a writer such as Salman Rushdie appeals to 'the authority of migration and displacement' (p195), and cites Spivak's remark on the migrant imagination not being paradigmatic of 'the historical case of postcoloniality', the reader may be led to anticipate dissent from the privileging of the postcolonial diaspora (p207). Yet his discussion does not extend to the literary production of the 'postcolonies', about which he has written elsewhere, and where very different stories are told of post-independence conditions within the reconstructed nation-state. Instead Gikandi embraces postcolonial theory and writing for its attempt 'to critique and detour the project of the nation, both at home and abroad'

(p236 n21) – although he himself makes a 'retour' to notions he has discredited in conceding that 'when all the deconstruction is done, and when all the tropes and figures have been split and hybridized, England and India, like the political realities they have come to represent, insist on their historicity, their social meanings, and configuration of memories and desires' (pp225-6).

Gikandi begins and ends his book with references to 'what at first appeared to be a huge chasm' separating poststructuralist critics of colonialism from Marxists, who are named as empiricists. His conclusion, that the gap now seems to him 'strategic rather than epistemological' (p226), will surprise adherents of both schools; and because he uses the postcolonial interchangeably to signify a condition that does not yet exist (p199), a state of transition and cultural instability (p15), and as descriptive of actual post-independence regimes, his generous move to effect a reconciliation between incommensurable theoretical positions may be a sign of the author's affection for indeterminacy in signification and his casualness towards the categories of materialist analysis.

Mapping the Sociology of Race

Caroline Knowles

John Solomos and Les Back, *Racism and Society*, Macmillan, Basingstoke 1996, 272pp; £12.50 paperback, £40.00 cloth.

The rationale for documenting the changing morphology of racial ideas and practices and evaluating the frameworks used for analysing racialised social relations in social and cultural theory is underscored by the enduring centrality of race at the end of the twentieth century. If Slavoj Zizek's chilling comment (p211) that the former Yugoslavia is not an anachronism but our first taste of the twenty-first century is anything to go by; and if race and nationalism, as David Theo Goldberg claims (p211), provide a basis of certainty and identity on the shifting landscape of our times, then we can expect the body counts from genocides and ethnic cleansing to go on rising.

Solomos and Back take their readers on a tour of thirty years of theoretical analysis and political action challenging racism – a tour which raises some interesting questions about the relationship between racialised and ethnicised atrocities and the frameworks through which they are grasped. It takes a certain political optimism not to draw the obvious conclusion that the better we *understand* the worse things get, and to set out a research agenda which fills some of the gaps of the last thirty years while not retreating from the theoretical insights which have accumulated and which require that race be understood in ways which pay attention to processes of constant social transformation, to social and political context, to ambiguity and multiplicity, and to local/global dynamics. This book is very much a critical summary of the field, and a bid to move forward in certain directions.

Threaded through the text is the demand for a better understanding of a politics of anti-racism, an agenda which is consistent with the authors' earlier work and which draws on some of the insights of Stephen Feuchtwang.[1] The problem with anti-racist politics, national liberation and black community struggles is that they use what Stuart Hall calls a 'grammar of race' which sustains notions of absolute human difference organized by culture, race and ethnicity: the categories also used by racist discourses to organize forms of social exclusion and privilege. Anti-racism, as the authors point out, must do more than just reverse the imagery of racism. Attempts to move away from the grammar of race prompt a crisis of anti-racist politics. The retreat from Hall's *essential black subject* to the multi-inflected identities of *new ethnicities* as a cultural and intellectual project deals with the fragmentation of black political mobilization by

1. Stephan Feuchtwang, 'Racism: Territoriality and Ethnocentricity' in A. X. Cambridge and Stephan Feuchtwang (eds), *Anti-Racist Strategies*, Averbury, Aldershot 1990.

maintaining racial identity as the 'fiction' which is necessary to make both politics and identity *work*. Solomos and Back (p113) flag the need for a politics which goes beyond opposition mobilized around even fictive racial identities, and which conceives of forms of social being which allow us to live with racialized and ethnicized differences – a truly multi-racial society. Feuchtwang's analysis, which calls for a politics which reasserts forms of humanity and social subjectivity as *citizenship* at the same time as pursuing a practical approach to policy interventions, comes the closest to conceptualizing a positive alternative vision of genuine multi-racialism.

The unresolved problem of the lack of viable alternatives to the social categories mobilized in racist discourse and practice surfaces again as the authors (p152) deal with some of the global/local dynamics of race, noting the intensity of local forms of nationalism which accompany the global transmission of signs, symbols and structures of expression around racialised differences. There is a distinct lack of convincing accounts in social and cultural theory of the racial dynamics of globalisation. From images of Empire and Englishness on biscuit tins and 'glory matches' to the corporate multi-culturalism of Benetton posters, they note the emergence of a transnational advertising aesthetic in which there is an 'unprecedented level of enchantment with difference' (pp159-186). As Kevin Robins says: 'The local and "exotic" are torn out of place and time to be repackaged for the world bazaar' (quoted p185). But the messages of a common and transnational humanity embedded in these images are also premised on notions of absolute racial and cultural difference invoked in racism's categories of personhood, and which reaffirm black people as a 'race apart' (p192). Kobena Mercer rescues popular culture's ambivalence as a site where racist images are both perpetrated and challenged in much the same way as Hall rescues political blackness from the fragmentation of multi-inflected identities, by suggesting that the images of corporate multi-culturalism disturb the racist assumptions of popular culture with aesthetic irony. The tension between racist and anti-racist concepts of social subjectivity and personhood still needs to be resolved both theoretically and politically.

The importance of understanding the racialisation of whiteness, deflecting the analytical gaze away from blackness, is also marked by the authors for further investigation. In societies such as Britain and the United States where racialisation is intense – because race is a factor in how people are seen and treated and consequently in the ways in which they see themselves – there is a proliferation of *racialised* and *ethnicised* identities and forms of subjectivity. The situational development of English ethnicity, and its links with global colonial expansion which fashioned subjectivities in national terms, provides and provokes an interesting empirical discussion of some of the historical aspects of globalisation. The political contexts in which whiteness becomes an object of scrutiny – and which are marked by the authors for analysis – however, are not just about redirect-

ing the critical gaze from blackness and challenging the positioning of whiteness as a norm. In the United States, and to some extent in Britain, there is a political momentum to reframe whiteness in more positive terms. This momentum is part of a 'yearning for a useable past':[2] a yearning which has 'resurrected the "white man's burden" at the turn of the twentieth century, only now it is claiming the status of victim.'[3] Clearly, whiteness, also an essentialist category of racist discourse, is invoked by some diverse political projects including the demand to dismantle equality and affirmative action programmes. We need to tread carefully around the politics of whiteness.

That race and racism permeate every social and political exchange has guaranteed their place in the social and cultural theory through which Solomos and Back guide us so eloquently, providing a skilful and thoughtful summary of some of the key intellectual shifts in thirty years of race theory. As well as providing a route-map through some key literature and ideas they sketch out research agendas which stress the need for *empirical research* and a *grounding in politics*. This is a timely reminder. The ubiquity of race, however, is something in which social theory, *as well* as the social trends it seeks to explain, is implicated. The ambiguity of social theory *talking-up* what it criticises and marks for political opposition is also something worthy of discussion. One of the key shifts in British and American race writing is the extent to which racism no longer needs to be demonstrated because it has become an accepted, if not acceptable, part of social landscapes. This embeddedness makes analysing and challenging it yet more difficult. This excellent book also misses an opportunity to extend the existing literature by reflecting further on the social implications of a politics of difference based on citizenship and multi-culturalism which does not rely on essentialist racialised or ethnicised categories.

A broader account of the racial dynamics of globalization – which goes beyond popular culture – is also desperately needed. This is something to which Howard Winant hints at but does not deliver.[4] The focus on popular culture throughout this book, while correctly highlighting the need to understand the racialisation of the banality of everyday life, implicitly directs any potential research agenda away from concern with the racialised forms of social regulation and exclusion which marked sociology in the 1980s. Concern with racial inequalities embedded in forms of social distribution may seem analytically dated, but they are still a serious social and political problem. Finally, there is the troubling relationship between genocidal acts and the development of race theory which suggests that in addition to understanding racism in popular culture we need better accounts of human behaviour.

2. Robert Blauner quoted in Charles Gallagher, 'White Reconstruction in the University', *Socialist Review*, Vol 24, No 1-2 1995, p181.

3. *Ibid.*, p177.

4. See his 'Racial Formation and Hegemony: Global and Local Developments' in Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood (eds), *Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front*, Polity, London 1994.

NOISY ASIANS

Steve Sweeney-Turner

Sanjay Sharma, John Hutnyk and Ashwani Sharma (eds), *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music*, Zed Books, London 1996, 248pp; £12.95 paperback, £45.00 cloth.

> Cultural Studies remains inflected with ethnocentric dimensions and is limited by the analysis of culture within homogeneous national units (p8).

In mapping the complex terrain of contemporary British Asian dance music, *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* takes on a series of problematics which, the editors claim, have tended to characterise the critique of its genres within the discourses of cultural studies. According to Sharma et al., their 'risky project ... exposes the Eurocentric limits of the celebration of hybrid Otherness' (p1). Within this agenda, the emphasis is on dis-orientalising the discourses on Asian musics, simultaneously highlighting the problematics of orientating oneself within their geographic, national, and ethnic boundaries, while acknowledging the properly disorientating nature of such a generically profligate field. Against the simplistic idea that 'ethnically' hybrid forms are inherently and unproblematically postmodern or politically radical, *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* aims to lance the boil of 'liberal multiculturalism' (p3) and to open a space in which the Asian practitioners, consumers and critics of these musics are given their own voice, rather than being the object of the sometimes unconsciously ethnocentric discourses of British academia. In this, the 'risky project' nevertheless claims to work towards 'a pedagogy committed to the construction of forms of political engagement that do not reduce popular culture to the scrutinized Other' (p3). And in attempting to speak from 'within' the culture of Asian dance musics, the project becomes an exploration of 'how these musics may be identified or (re)claimed as being "Asian" in Britain' (p8).

Ashwani Sharma's paper, 'Sounds Oriental: The (Im)possibility of Theorizing Asian Musical Cultures', begins from the idea that '[t]he corrosive hybridity of post-colonial Asian dance music ruptures the ordered silence of contemporary Britain' (p15). This at once risks a position which the book as a whole claims to disavow, but also apparently flattens out the field of musical culture with Asian Britain into a mute homogeneous anonymity barely recognisable in actuality. No doubt this passage has a certain provocative power, yet while Sharma succeeds in qualifying his concept of hybridity and extending it beyond simplistic assumptions as to its radicality (as well as engagingly traversing the problematics of authenticity within his chosen hybrid), he nevertheless fails to qualify his claim of

Britain's 'ordered silence' in the multiple spaces beyond the confines of Asian musics.

Sanjay Sharma's 'Noisy Asians or "Asian Noise"' deals with the thorny issue of how one remains a politically, culturally envoiced subject under the sign of postmodernity. On the one hand, there has been the traditional tendency to read identity through the lens of essentialist historiography, while on the other is the postmodern tendency to de-essentialise the subject, simultaneously risking the dissolution of crucial aspects of identity and the political vocality which is attendant upon it. For Sharma, essentialism and its concepts are intimately tied into colonialist attitudes: for example, certain 'white' writers tracing the shift from Bhangra to post-Bhangra have often discursively risked 'an authenticity problematic that sustains a neo-Orientalist understanding of anterior Asian youth cultural formations' (p36) due to their over-emphasis of the primacy of Bhangra's Punjabi 'roots'. For Sharma, however, the contemporary reality lies within the plural, rather than an originary singularity, yet without necessitating a theoretical investment in 'the relativist pluralism of a status quo multiculturalist politics' (p55). Rather, Sharma recommends that we shift into a 'third space' (p55) between identity politics and its supposed postmodern erasure, a space of discursive 'risk and possibility' (p55).

In 'Repetitive Beatings or Criminal Justice?', John Hutnyk traces through the politics of that most notorious of anti-dance music shibboleths, the 1994 Criminal Justice Act, with its infamous clause regarding 'sounds wholly or predominantly characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.' However, Hutnyk's main emphasis here is on the parliamentary debates surrounding the Act, specifically as they related to issues of racist attacks and the control of youth culture. In an often amusing, if slightly journalistic, style, he recounts a number of highlights from his own experience of the debates as a visitor to the House, homing in on a number of essentialist assumptions which various MPs based their speeches on. Overall, Hutnyk continues the assault on 'racist, essentialist, head-in-sand nostalgias for authenticity', but claims that '[b]ands like FunDaMental blow this kind of neo-Orientalism out of the water' (p161). The basis for this claim derives from his reading of the video for their song 'Dog-Tribe', 'banned' by TV stations for its allegedly Islamic fundamentalist response to racist attacks against Asian youth. For Hutnyk, the 'banning' of FunDaMental's video becomes symptomatic of the ways in which political and media discourses operate in the vague space of double standards. Moreover, he attacks academic complacency and silence on these issues, accusing 'comfortable intellectuals' (p186) of a tacit acceptance of the political status quo under the Tory government: '[t]he task is to wake up from this stupor – this book is not simply an essay in cultural studies' (p161).

More canonically academic in tone and purpose is the final paper by Raminder Kaur and Virinder Kalra, 'New Paths for South Asian Identity

and Musical Creativity', which aims to lay out 'a theoretical tract for localized and transnational forms of identity' (p218) in order to analyse Bhangra enthnographically. In so doing, they coin a number of new terms, such as 'Br-Asian', replacing what they call '[t]he over-used and poorly defined category "British Asian"... problematic as it essentializes both terms, as well as hierarchizing the former against the latter' (p219). Evidently, 'Br-Asian' truncates the hierarchical term while leaving the specificity of the heading 'Asian' intact. Yet while the potential essentialism of a term evidently does lie in its definition, surely this is grounded more in its usage, which is inherently multiple in itself? Equally, 'Br-Asian' still seems rather loose (or essentialising – take your pick) in its retention of the second term in full. Subsequent to this, however, Kaur and Kalra shift their focus onto their 'deconstructive term', 'Transl-Asia', reflective of the multiplicity contained within the concept of the Asian, as well as the diasporic, cross-national multiplicity which marks the 'Asian' experience documented within the book as a whole. Citing these two new theoretical terms in the final paragraph of the book, Kaur and Kalra claim that such terms 'enable us to slash out new paths, new routes by which to challenge media and other ideological formations and their reliance upon unproblematized "ethnic" categories' (p230).

Overall, the papers discussed above (and those not discussed) attempt to carve out a theoretical territory marked by a feeling of radical newness. However, while the authors tend to approach all standard critical theories from a sober and considered critical distance, never fully coming down in favour of one or the other modish orthodoxy, very little in the way of new theory *qua* new theory has been achieved here. The main strength lies in their engagement with a field of musical genres marginalised within the mainstreams of academic discourse; in this, it is one of the first important collections of essays on Asian musics within 'Britain'. Yet here we come up against an interesting site of ethnic contestation once again. This is, in fact, not really a book about Asians in Britain. Its concentration on England and its assumption of a hegemonic 'white' culture in Britain betrays a certain anglocentrism lurking beneath its quest for the problematisation of Br-Asian culture. Little is made of the question of what Britain itself today is: a question of particular importance to, amongst others, Asians in Scotland or Wales who have two basic reasons for mistrusting the 'white' centre of Britain, and at a time when the whole constitutional and cultural fabric of the so-called 'United' Kingdom is being debated (often with the terms of post-colonial theory). This is a debate which has an impact upon all cultural groups within the UK, and which might suggest a shift in discourses on Britain away from an exclusively anglocentric perspective. In writing so blithely of 'the invisibility of whiteness', it would perhaps be wise – particularly today – to avoid assuming an invisibility of Englishness. Britain, particularly in the 1990s, no longer speaks with an English voice.

Nevertheless, this passionately written and ground-breaking text is a

timely addition to the growing corpus of post-colonial writings on music. Musicology is often a late-starter in coming to terms with critical theories prevalent within other humanities disciplines, and post-colonial theory is merely the latest in a series of musicological late starts. The fact that this book is written from within the discipline of cultural studies rather than from within musicology itself merely confirms once more the pattern of influence which has tended to mark the rise of popular musicology. It is all too easy for the musicologist to dismiss a book such as this in terms of its failure to engage analytically with the formalist shibboleth of 'TMI' ('The Music Itself'), as if sociological, ideological, political and overall cultural contexts were not intimately bound up with the production and consumption of music. However, it is perhaps time for musicologists *qua* musicologists to wake up and take notice of the genres discussed within *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*. Hopefully, this book will serve as a text of disorientation to provoke just such a response, and many others.