

Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, eds.
*Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation,
and Appropriation in Music.* University of California
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Reviewed by Aaron A. Fox

This is an important book, and deserves attention from ethnomusicologists, historical musicologists, and students of popular culture across the disciplines. It is the first collection I am aware of to situate issues of the politics, semiotics, and cultural dynamics of musical appropriation in a broad, interdisciplinary context attentive to the theoretical projects of postcolonial and post-structuralist cultural studies. There have been several monographic studies and edited volumes in recent years that have explored some of this intellectual terrain; Gerry Farrell's *Indian Music and the West* (1997) and Jonathan Bellman's edited collection *The Exotic in Western Music* (1998) each approach art musics in terms of transnational appropriations and Orientalist cultural dynamics. And a wide range of work on popular music and globalization has taken up the thorny problematic of "appropriation" in terms of issues of ownership and cultural imperialism (a good example is Timothy Taylor's 1997 *Global Pop*). However, the disciplinary and empirical articulations achieved in this volume are in many cases novel and, in their totality, quite progressive. Simply by virtue of its serious commitments to interweaving popular and art music subjects, "western" and "non-western" idioms and perspectives, and textual and contextual emphases, it sets a fine example for a more dialogic and less ghettoized future musicology. The volume is comprised of exceptionally strong papers from both very well known and younger scholars, and it is relatively coherent as a whole while covering a huge range of topics and issues.

Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh have fashioned a valuable contribution to general theory in musicology with the introduction to the volume, which perhaps covers more intellectual ground than any subsequent set of papers could fully occupy. I expect to use the introduction to this volume in my own graduate teaching for several years. The introductory essay manages to convey succinctly both the general outlines of postcolonial cultural theory and to refine a theoretical lexicon for discussing music in terms of (post)modernity, identity politics, the cultural logics of hybridity, and musical representations of modern social conflicts. The introduction is so attentive to the subsequent essays' relevance to these themes that it makes up for a relative lack of such theoretical work in most

of the essays themselves (significant exceptions include the papers by Richard Middleton, Steven Feld, and Simon Frith). In fact, it may be a virtue of this volume that the substantive essays that follow the introduction are relatively tightly focused on particular empirical cases. The result is that these papers should be usable for undergraduate teaching and interesting to non-academic readers concerned with the essay topics.

The introduction will be more formidable going for such readers, but it should be required reading for musicologists of all sub-disciplinary persuasions. Opening outwards from the broad question of how to approach "difference" (semiotically speaking, an effect of representation) in a "non-representational" medium such as music, Born and Hesmondhalgh quickly proceed to narrow the question to several specific genera of musical and cultural alterity with a specific emphasis on social power: "Orientalist" appropriations of non-Western musics and musical practices in Western musical discourses; the intra- and inter-cultural logics of musical "otherness"; the dynamics of power and inequality in the contemporary "global" era of musical circulation; the mutually contextualizing interplay of musical aesthetics and discursive constructions of musical meaning; and the specific disingenuously pluralist lexicon of "postmodern" musical discourse.

Cultural theorists might ask for more sustained consideration of the overdetermination of the principal axes of difference invoked; there are frequent mentions of race and class and less frequent mentions of gender. Ethnomusicologists might ask for a greater acknowledgment of the history of that discipline's role in stimulating the kinds of questions about power and difference in music history, and some might expect a bit more attention to the actual practices of the non-Western musics mentioned throughout the volume as objects of Western appropriation. Students of the philosophy of music might wish for more careful treatment of the questions of musical form and semiosis such questions implicate. But on the whole, this volume's introduction is a masterpiece of concise and erudite argument for a social approach to musical aesthetics and an aesthetic theory of music's social life in the contemporary world. In its equal attention to both the economic and political dynamics of cultural domination and resistance and to the semiotic and expressive dynamics of musical form, perception, and communication, the editors manage to make the problem of "appropriation" relevant to a wide range of musicologists and music theorists.

The papers that comprise the body of the volume are too many and too varied to be fully summarized in a review, but a quick inventory gives some idea of the intriguing scope of the concerns voiced in the introduction. Richard Middleton, in the first and most wide-ranging essay in the vol-

ume, examines work by Mozart, Gershwin, Ellington, and Abdullah Ibrahim to ask a general psycho-cultural question: what does it mean to say music "belongs" (to someone) in the first place? Simon Frith frames the volume with his concluding essay on "world music" that is similarly magisterial in its emphasis on the ironies of discursive constructions of authenticity (otherness) and innovation (hybridity), finding strange and disturbing parallels between the business of global pop marketing and the obsessions of academic musicology.

Jann Pasler's contribution, "Race, Orientalism, and the Distinction in the Wake of the 'Yellow Peril,'" complicates the tarring and feathering of nineteenth-century European high culture as uniformly "Orientalist" in its relations with non-Western music through a comparison of the composers Albert Roussel and Maurice Delage, each of whom appropriated "Indian" music in ideologically and aesthetically distinctive ways. Julie Brown ("Bartók, the Gypsies, and Hybridity in Music") traces Bartók's political evolution in relation to his studies of Roma (Gypsy) music as a cultural resource for Hungarian nationalism. In "Modernism, Deception, and Musical Others: Los Angeles circa 1940," Peter Franklin explores the deliciously complex and ironic musical and cultural loyalties of expatriate European composers (Rachmaninov, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Korngold, with Adorno as a frequent bit player) working in the United States during and after World War II. Franklin concludes with a fine reading of Korngold's score for *Deception* as an allegory for the tortured conflicts between decadent European high modernism and ascendant American pop culture.

John Corbett ("Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others") unpacks the dubious Orientalist legacy of the American "experimental" music tradition and various Asian refractions thereof. Philip Bohlman's "Composing the Cantorate: Westernizing Europe's Other Within" explores the engagement of Jewish musical practice in Austria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as an example of an ultimately futile and dangerous engagement with a dominant culture by an "internal other" (neatly inverting the issues raised vis-à-vis Gypsy music in Brown's essay). In "East, West, and Arabesk," Martin Stokes continues his significant record of contributing to the study of musical identity politics with a fine essay on the "Arabesk debate" and the shifting polarities of Turkish modernity. Claudia Gorbman provides a survey of the techniques used to represent and signify Native Americans in Hollywood film music, ranging from the 1920s to the 1990s ("Scoring the Indian: Music in the Liberal Western"). She concludes that even the most progressive shifts in such techniques have lagged behind other representational modalities and have ultimately had more to do with the musical and

cultural frameworks of white audiences than with the lives of real Indians. Steven Feld's now classic (and still shocking) 1996 essay on the uncompensated circulation of fragments of Central African "Pygmy" musical practice in the global marketplace for "world music" commodities is reprinted in a shortened version here. It reminds us, simultaneously, how much is at stake in academic and popular discussions of appropriation, and how little academic musicology has done or can do (as currently practiced) to affect blatant practices of cultural imperialism. Finally, in "International Times: Fusions, Exoticism, and Antiracism in Electronic Dance Music," David Hesmondhalgh provides a rich, ironic—and ultimately fairly hopeful—ethnographic perspective on the politics and economics of appropriation in a relatively progressive branch of the global music business, *viz.*, the British independent label Nation Records.

The essays, then, span a diverse range of topics, time periods, theoretical problems, methodological approaches, and political engagements. For the most part they present nuanced and ironic critiques of what must be called imperialist (and often racist) appropriative dynamics at work in Western music history. The book as a whole lacks nuance specifically in the tendency of the authors to ignore the diversity of non-Western and subaltern perspectives on the appropriations they describe (even when the descriptions are critical). However, this presents a fine opening for further research both by these authors and by future generations of musicologists. There is great resistance in modern Western musical culture, and certainly in academic musicology, to the kind of resolutely social critique advanced in this book. Indeed, from a careful reading of this volume one can see why the Western philosophical defense of musical autonomy and authenticity has been so passionate and even strident in the twentieth century. The force of denial is often proportionate to the severity of the crime denied. If we begin to accept that music "belongs to someone," or (as Middleton cleverly puts it) if people "belong" differently to music, we must ask why musicology has generally ignored the typically unfair (and sometimes violent) imbrication of musical meaning in the logics of power—colonialism, imperialism, global capitalism, racism, sexism, classism—that define the culture of modernity. This book raises this question seriously, if gently and mostly by implication. It demands careful attention for doing so.

References

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