

the way that these are expressed, negotiated, or subverted in popular culture. These concerns, as always, are a little late coming to musicology, but they are coming.

Country is white working-class music, still largely associated (although much too narrowly) with the American South. It is still “white trash,” beneath notice, and it has consequently suffered from scholarly neglect. It is a field that is still largely untouched, and much mapping and marking remain to be done. *A Boy Named Sue*

offers a tentative step forward, although, as is frustratingly common in studies of popular music, the music itself is still left out of much of the discussion or sketched in with such vagueness that it evaporates upon scrutiny. I am left with a nagging sense of dissatisfaction with most of the essays. There is nothing unworthy about any of them. It is not that they are historically inaccurate; it is simply that, even within the tight confines of a book chapter, I feel that there’s so much more that could be said.

Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance.

By Tomie Hahn. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007. 224 pp.

WENDY HSU

After the recent release of Steven Spielberg’s blockbuster movie *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Björk’s CD *Homogenic*, and a series of music videos by Madonna, Missy Elliot, Ginuwine, and Christina Milian, the kimono-clad Asian woman has become one of the icons of Asian chic in pop America.¹ With the nineteenth-century French fad of Japanese art and culture known as *japonisme* in our nearly remote hindsight, the exoticized and eroticized bodies of Japanese women are certainly not a new trope in Europe and North America. One wonders what cultural impact this Western fascination with the Asian/Japanese female body has on women who practice traditional arts in Japan.

Tomie Hahn’s ethnography *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* provides a powerful dissonance to the widely circulated objectifying images of Japanese women. In the introduction Hahn invokes her subversive impulse to “reappropriate the exotic mystique of the ‘fan dance’ stereotype of the demure ‘Oriental lady’ who entices the

onlookers’ gaze by revealing and concealing her body . . . to reappropriate the fan, *kimono*, and hair ornaments to tell a very different story of Japanese performing women” (14–15).

Hahn’s monograph on the embodied transmission process of Japanese dance (*nihon buyo*)—narrating while analyzing the author’s fieldwork and experiences of learning the dance for over thirty years—is rhetorically captivating and intellectually nuanced. Hahn draws methodological and theoretical ideas from a number of disciplines, including “ethnomusicology, dance studies, anthropology, performance studies, and Asian philosophies of the body” (2). As Hahn indicates, the book’s organization poetically corresponds to the unfolding movement of a *sensu*, a paper fan supported by a bamboo backbone, often used in *nihon buyo*. The first chapter, “Introduction—Sensual Orientations,” outlines reflexive ethnographic methods and the framework of cultural transmission with a focus on body knowledge and multisensory experience. The second chapter, “Moving Scenes,” narrates the recent social history and structure of the practice of traditional Japanese dance. Chapter 3, “Unfolding Essence,” elucidates the relevant concepts and aesthetic principles of Japanese arts. Chapter 4, “Revealing Lessons,” details the transmission process, with a substantial sec-

1. Specifically, the cover of Björk’s *Homogenic* features a portrait of Björk with white facial foundation and deep red lipstick in a kimono-like outfit. And these music videos are of Madonna’s “Nothing Really Matters,” Missy Elliot’s “Get Ur Freak On,” Ginuwine’s “In Your Jeans,” and Christina Milian’s “Dip It Now.”

tion devoted to discussing each of the senses involved. The last chapter, “Transforming *Sensu*,” explores issues of codeswitching, identity formation and articulation, and cultural transformation involved in the embodiment practices of fieldwork and performances.

Hahn locates her body as a deposit of her field experience. The field site is conceived as a broad landscape, at the center of which is her own body and from which extend other important social actors such as her teachers, colleagues, and the audience of her performance. This frame of knowledge appears and disappears, depending on how her body engages with the history of the dance and the memories of her dance teachers (xiv). Echoing recent feminist dance and performance scholarship, *Sensational Knowledge*’s emphasis on the body as a key epistemological locus diffuses the historical mind-over-body baggage in Western scholarship.² Hahn’s adherence to the cultural specificity of the Japanese traditional practice and principles—the interdependence of mind and body, theory and practice—illuminates her implicit critique of the masculinist Western Cartesian split.

Sensational Knowledge confronts the challenging task of translating movement into text head-on with keen descriptive details written in elegant prose. “I crave specificity and a semblance of physical presence in dance scholarship. Limbs. Breath. Shoulders. Muscles. Gaze” (6). Inspired by the dance writing of Barbara Browning and other dance ethnologists since the mid-1980s, the moving quality (physically and affectively) of Hahn’s prose achieves kinesthetic sensation and evokes the reader’s empathy.³ In Hahn’s writing dance is not just composed of movements and techniques but is a stream of sensations, experiences, meanings, and emotions.

Hahn follows feminist ethnographers Lila

Abu-Lughod, Ruth Behar, and Michelle Kisiuk to write with vulnerability and reflexivity.⁴ Rather than making passive, nonparticipatory, quantifiable, and objectifying observations, Hahn foregrounds social relationships, revolving around those with her teachers. Her framework and analysis are informed by the poststructuralist and feminist critical requisite of elucidating authorial positionality. In relevant ways Hahn explicitly exposes her identity and authorship, allowing her reader to position herself or himself in relation to her point of view to navigate through the passages. The social particulars of Hahn’s position(s) within her research field shed light on “the complex process of comprehending the relationship of self to other, and the embodied knowledge of the participant-observer-researcher, as a resource within the research” (10).

Dance, expression, and embodiment are all multisensory experiences. In chapter 4, “Revealing Lessons—Modes of Transmission: Visual, Tactile, Oral/Aural, and Media,” Hahn analyzes the transmission process of *nihon buyo* by providing a multisensory account of physical and social structure of her dance school in Tokyo and then unfolding the embodied process based on each of the senses involved. In the section on oral/aural transmission Hahn discusses dance and music as one inseparable practice. Many dancers learn a musical instrument in order to understand the nuances of the musical composition and musical vocabularies. During transmission dance teachers sing a dance language comprised of “instrumental mnemonics blended with fragments of the vocal line and verbal dance directions (instructional and emotive)” (122–24). To *nihon buyo* practitioners musical knowledge is translated into an oral form of dance instructions and then transmitted through embodied gestures.

2. See Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). See also Diedre Sklar, *Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Michelle Kisiuk, *Seize the Dance!: BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

3. Browning, *Samba*.

4. These citations include Lila Abu-Lughod, “Writing against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991); Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); and Kisiuk, *Seize the Dance!*

Hahn recognizes the recent incorporation of video technology and media in *nihon buyo* pedagogy as she self-consciously incorporates them in her field research and ethnographic representation. The ability to rewind and watch the video in slow motion allows a close-up access to the subtlety of the transmission process and the embodied practice of dance.

Curiously, kinesthetic sensations (the sense of motion and orientation) often fell over me when I observed the videotapes, and some guided me through the analysis. It seemed that the videotapes were reinforcing my physical understanding of movement/sound while my body also informed the analytical process. (78)

Hahn's convincing argument that video (and other forms of media such as dance notations) can be consumed in holistic and kinesthetic ways has a feminist implication. Hahn's intimate implementation of video technology and media in her body-centered study implicitly ruptures the historical Western gendered dichotomy between the feminized body/nature and the masculinized machine/technology.⁵

Overall, Hahn is concerned more with gendered embodiment than with gendered meanings. As noted in the beginning, Hahn is not interested in producing a narrative that risks reinscribing the age-old Orientalist prototypes of the sexualized Asian female body. Instead, she aims to carve out a legitimate discursive space for Japanese women dancers to assert their agency through the practice of *nihon buyo* in their contemporary lives. The issue of embody-

5. The gendered dichotomy of feminized nature versus masculinized technology often assumes men to be technologically oriented while separating women from technical tasks. See Beverley Diamond, "Media as Social Action: Native American Musicians in the Recording Studio," in *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*, ed. Paul D. Greene and Thomas Porcello (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005); and Charity Marsh and Melissa West, "The Nature/Technology Binary Opposition Dismantled in the Music of Madonna and Bjork," in *Music and Technoculture*, ed. Rene T. A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).

ing stylized stereotypes in Japanese dance is contentious. Hahn argues against the assumption that these women merely perpetuate or are confined to stereotypical images of themselves and thus reinforce male domination in their society. She asserts:

The metaphoric shifting present in *nihon buyo* choreography empowers women through the transformative, shared, embodied experience of multiple identities as well as flexible notions of self, within a society that has historically restricted their expression. (162)

Codeswitching, a self-conscious performance and shifting of identities in creative and everyday life, is thus a product and means of survival. Moreover, Hahn's formulation of codeswitching implicitly presents a theoretical dissonance to Judith Butler's work on gender performativity.⁶ Hahn's theorization of the process of transforming into an "other," derived from observing the practice of *nihon buyo* in Japan, requires a "clear knowing and establishing of self" (162). Contrarily, Butler's critical interpretation of (North American) drag performances in *Gender Trouble* lacks a convincing account of the role of self-knowledge and reflection.

Hahn makes a few explicit observations about gender, commenting on the recent transition from male-headed schools to female-headed schools and the fact that most *nihon buyo* practitioners have been women. In a close reading Hahn notes that a man feels awkward or "verdant" in his dancing attire, whereas female dancers feel quite at home with the fashion and movement of the practice (92). Confronting these observations, I wonder if the feminine connotations of *nihon buyo* produce anxiety for (heterosexual) male practitioners. We learn from Hahn that women seek liberating moments in *nihon buyo* apart from their everyday life. But how do men relate to the traditional dance form? Is there any linkage among the gendered movements, the

6. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

gendered relations within the group, and the gendered identity of the participants? How has the gendered dynamic within the *nihon buyo* social system changed over time? What role does the gendered dichotomy between modernity and tradition play in the contemporary practice of traditional Japanese dance? This line of inquiry can be assisted by certain postcolonial feminist critiques that have investigated the oppressive feminization of non-Western and “traditional” practices and values in contemporary postcolonial, transnational settings.⁷ It would be fruitful, for instance, to examine the ways in which women participants negotiate the gendered expectations of perpetuating “traditional” Japanese rather than Western arts and culture in relation to the patriarchal ideology of nationalist, ethnic, and racial purity.

Sensational Knowledge reveals its politics and

7. In her ethnography of Indian American youth culture Sunaina Maira discusses the double standards for Indian American women of bearing the burden of perpetuating the patriarchal ethnic purity (of India) by remaining sexually pure or only available to men of Indian descent. Femininity or womanhood is mapped onto nationalism or ethnic purity. This ideology is informed by the modernity-tradition dichotomy, with the former being gendered masculine and ethnicized as American (Western) and the latter as feminine and Indian (non-Western). See Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002). See also Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity.

By Nadine Hubbs. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 282 pp.

JUDITH TICK

Nadine Hubbs has written a deceptively short book. Its 178 pages of text and 69 pages of endnotes are as dense with questions as the woods in a German opera. She draws on gender studies, queer theory, feminist cultural theory, and gay history to seed musicological scholarship about gender and music with challenging ideas.

ethics when Hahn narrates her embodied experiences of being biracial in her performance and everyday life in chapter 5, “Transforming *Sensu*—Presence and Orientation.” Multiracial individuals must negotiate the boundaries of ethnic, national, and racial construction not only in performance situations but also in their daily lives, which perform, or display, an interruption of cultural and ethnic lineage. Not only that, mixed-raced individuals represent the threat of miscegenation and ethnic and racial impurity (169–70). In her reflexive and persuasive examination of the ideology of race, ethnicity, and nationality, Hahn’s theoretical parallel between performance and everyday life deconstructs the biologicistic definitions of the body. She takes seriously the body as a site of accumulation, transmission, and transformation of cultural knowledge, ideals, and ideology. Embodiment is a meeting ground between social structure and human agency. Politically, this project not only deconstructs the oppressive ideology of the biologicistic notions of the body, it also points at the body as a potentially triumphant site of human agency.

In *Sensational Knowledge* passages flow, pages turn, concepts resonate. Reading and interacting with it, my mind is engaged and my body touched. Hahn’s monograph on Japanese dance positively illuminates the relationship between the flow of cultural knowledge and the body; it also demonstrates the possibility of coalescing text and performance, mind and body, theory and practice, and research and ethics.

If her questions resist definitive answers and her book is not exactly “linear,” it is partly because few writers and thinkers these days claim to have answers to the kinds of questions Hubbs raises. Thus, Hubbs involves herself in some of the prominent intellectual debates of our era, among them the extent to which sexual-