Hearing orientality in (white) America, 1900–1930

by

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Abstract

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The performance of gendered racial stereotypes is a powerful tool for fostering belief in essentialized human categories. In the early 20th-century United States, supposedly Chinese and Japanese orientality was enacted by white people playing Asian Others and by Asian and Asian American performers widely believed to embody authentic racial difference. As modes of representation and grounds for interpretive acts of reception, these practices could offer troubled meetings of music, ideology, and cultural hegemony. In many such moments, sonic experience gave specifically musical weight to raciological ideas about orientality, whiteness, and Americanness.

White Americans made diverse but hegemonically guided meanings from experiences framed by white nativist and other dominant discourses. In contexts fraught with anti-Asian racism, ideas about music, race, the voice, and the body could support belief in a dangerous (male) “yellow peril” or a safely distant, aestheticized (female) orient of kimono and fans. Reinscribing such tropes along with narratives of exclusion or assimilation, performance gave deceptively compelling support to typologies of difference.

Naturalizing rhetorics of authenticity suffused European American responses to Tamaki Miura and other Japanese sopranos performing “Madame Butterfly” and to Asian Americans in vaudeville. Many listeners heard Tomijiro Asai’s oratorio excerpts as singing his assimilation. Notions of mimetic skill underpinned reviews of white orientalist performers. Blanche Bates and Walker Whiteside recounted experiential grounds for their yellowface techniques. Pantomimes, operettas, martial arts, and society balls fostered children’s and adults’ amateur mimesis. The ta-tao, an ostensibly Chinese social dance, offered an antidote to tango-induced moral panic. Orientalism in popular music could promise exotic alternatives to the supposed dangers of African American practices or hybrid novelty with “jazz” gestures.

Some white performers sang orientality through mimetic practices examined as “yellowvoice.” Sheet music supported domestic singing, and recordings document professional acts ranging from comedy monologues to fox-trot choruses. Musical aspects of silent cinema exhibition supported orientalist spectatorship of works including Griffith’s “Broken Blossoms”; some presented scenes of music-making. Hollywood film scoring and other recent practices often echo earlier acts. This interdisciplinary work offers connections to Ethnomusicology, American Studies, Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, and Media Studies.
Acknowledgments & Preface

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I hope the meanings people have made from hearing those studies’ performed results (most to the point, those staged in Ghanaian or Javanese clothing) have not fallen prey to the raciological kinds of reception examined in this study. But in fact, this hope is futile—and its futility is crucial to unpack as a means of situating my own lived experience and social locations in regard to modes of experience examined here. Certain meanings ascribed to my own performing heart, mind, and white male American body must have taken precisely such ideological turns. This positions some moments of my own musical history as instances of the ordinary disjuncture between performers’ intentions and the meanings people make from their work.

This discomforting awareness can only be a useful thing. Knowing that we all are subject to hegemonic processes that link our own bodies and voices to racial ideology in the lived durations and lingering traces of musical performance and reception, we may find more humility in our acts of making, hearing, and writing about music. Encouraging us to let go of a false belief that we might control how people understand us, this humility is founded in a chain of three simple (but not simple) links: in performance one does what one does, people make from one’s practice the meanings they make, and to try to predetermine them in a totalizing way is to ignore the reality of social contexts far more massive than those directly audible or visible in one’s own immediate acts and interpretive environments.

In that sense, this analytical text is not unlike the sonic products of a musical performance. Both offer externally perceptible traces of internal practices of thought and feeling, and these traces in turn give rise to unforeseeably disjunct conclusions and affective states within each person who experiences them. This wide horizon of interpretive possibility underlies the richness of much aesthetic and other cultural experience. Within (and at times in tension with) this expansive field of reception, hegemony’s fences and its half- unnoticed casual nudges guide our paths downhill towards dominant meanings. This conjuncture of freedom with hegemony, and the specific matter of how the performance and reception of musical voices and bodies have served racial ideology, constitute this dissertation’s chief theoretical focus.

Although they bear only personally associative relationships to this study, certain recordings were so necessary to its creation that not to acknowledge their creators would be wrong. Among these sounds were those brought into the world by Nana Kwame Ampadu, the Asian Dub Foundation, John Coltrane, Ani DiFranco, Booker Ervin, Bill Evans, Bunky Green, Grant Green, Jon Jang, Sly & the Family Stone, T. Viswanathan, Wu Man, Wu Wenguang, Yamaguchi Gorō, and Youssou N’Dour. To these artists I owe a debt that may be invisible in this text, but one bound to it through an authorial process enabled by a parallel time of musical healing.

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Introduction

orient'ality [f. L. orientālis + -ITY.]
The quality or condition of being oriental.
—Oxford English Dictionary Online

Asking: How Does Music Mean the Social Body?
Music means more than its makers intend. Musical experience gains much of its consciously felt richness and its less evident or reflected-upon danger from the almost ubiquitous power of humanly made sound to support multiple interpretations. Because ideologically saturated contexts frame and suffuse so many musical experiences, this interpretive multivalence opens up abundant space for hegemony—for listeners to come away with the unquestioned and seemingly unquestionable feeling that dominant structures of knowledge and power are natural and true, not merely the way things are but the only way they could sensibly and rightly be. To unpack these processes in regard to any one moment is to ask two larger questions, one about how musical meaning is made and another about its wider significance: Where and how does music mean? How do meanings linked to music do ideological work in people’s social worlds? And then to ask: How might the body figure in all of this?

Framing: Aims & Assertions
A practical way of investigating these cross-linked queries is to listen closely to their implications in certain times and places. With the aim of contributing locally grounded answers to these huge and culturally contingent questions, this study examines certain early twentieth-century intersections of music and


dominant U.S. beliefs about an imagined orientality widely associated with Chinese and Japanese points of reference. It attends to practices and texts of the three decades from 1900 to 1930 and draws many of its closely examined cases from the teens and early twenties, years from which intriguing sources kept surfacing during early research into the years from roughly 1850 to 1960 and later.\(^1\) The analysis focuses more on reception than on authorial intent or production, but it travels back and forth between those poles, lingering at times on the texts (musical works, recordings, journalistic writings) and above all on performance practices and reception processes that connected them.\(^2\)

This attention to performance and reception, especially but not only of musical acts, underlies what may be this study’s chief contribution: a better understanding of how thinking musically—not chiefly in textual terms, or as an ancillary part of a general ideological critique—can offer specific kinds of knowledge about a familiar issue. While some of the performative and more broadly cultural moments treated in Parts 1 and 2 of this text have been examined elsewhere, here they are brought together in ways that lead to Part 3’s focus on sonic forms of representation. In varied contexts of use, sound helped many white Americans imagine a divide between themselves and people they heard as different in musical (as well as other) ways. In these settings, musical sound readily could signify race. Often it did so in ways that

\(^1\) This temporal span is arbitrary, as any would be; since it was necessary to narrow down the years on which this study would focus, and those from 1900 to 1930 offered interesting conjunctures of performance practices, media (with sheet music still strong and recordings massively in play), and potential case studies, it seemed a useful span within which to work.

undermined any apparent differentiation between such national, cultural, or ethnic categories as those of Chineseness or Japaneseness. While some acts and texts invoked below used images or words that were more specifically referential in that manner, many situated those signs in musical ways that made them attributes of a more bluntly racialized orientality. Professionals and amateurs alike could sing that raciologically imagined essence into and out from their own bodies, learning to know it as both a means of temporary amusement and a key part of longer-lasting structures of belief. Those musically supported beliefs concerned, among other matters, the relationships widely imagined between orientality, whiteness, and Americanness.

While this study relies on traces of cultural practices of decades past, and it examines certain historical moments, it is not a “history” in the usual sense of the word. Rather than attending chiefly to the narrative exposition of successive events or documents with the aim of tracing causal relationships among them, it focuses on long-sustained ways in which racial discourse intersected with musical performance and reception. Some of the case studies used to explore this include brief bits of chronologically arranged exposition to serve local interpretive ends, but this generally is not central to the larger points this study is meant to make. On the contrary, its main findings draw upon and concern the recurrence of certain kinds of raciological musical acts and interpretations throughout the decades in question.3 For this same

3. The fact that these recurred in ways that quite seldom were specific to any more narrowly delimited span of years also underlies the presentation of fewer specific dates in the body of much of the chapters’ main text than a differently focused work might offer. This is seen, for example, in Chapter 8’s in-text citations to examples of musical notation from popular songs (although years of publication are, of course, documented outside the main flow of its text). Because those examples illustrate practices common throughout these decades (and beyond), carrying songs’ years in the body of the chapter not only would be unnecessary. It also would suggest falsely that there was some larger significance to their specific years of production in
reason, the study attends to those sources (and aspects of sources) that best answer the questions it asks—above all, how experiences of music and other performance have made racial ideology seem credible—rather than seeking to present some sort of comprehensive story about any one source or moment it treats. This could seem to have the effect of making it focus on the negative, as it were; but (as discussed below) assessing texts and practices as negative, positive, or both is not the point; understanding how race figured in them is.

The central aims of this work are to show how performing voices and bodies can seem to offer compelling evidence for fundamentally mistaken ideas, to help expose the consequent power of musical performance and words about music to support racialized structures of belief and domination, and to foster more critical awareness of the deep roots and continuing presence of these processes, thus perhaps to render them a bit less efficacious. These aims’ social engagement situates this dissertation as a project of cultural critique as well as one of ethnomusicology—a double location that is not covert, and one that in its recognition of multiple readerships raises authorial issues of address. These arise from what Kay Kaufman Shelemay has called “the very complicated challenge of representations that cross audiences and intersect different frames of reference” (Shelemay 1999, 534).

Often, as in this dissertation, these kinds of positionality do not so much require acts of balancing between discrete and disparate disciplinary (and extra-disciplinary) footholds, but rather may offer an open and intentionally unresolved acknowledgment of the complex and multiple social locations,
meanings, and effects of music and musical study. By being so situated, this study may be a productive exercise in exploring in a historicized way some social positions and effects of music, of words about music, and of ideas that people often construct from both. In its attention to discussions and issues located outside usual fields of musical inquiry, I hope that it may contribute to interdisciplinary dialogues. This interdisciplinarity may be both the study’s area of promise, as it connects some ethnomusicological ways of thinking to types of performative practice, texts, and cultural moments that strain (or even break) the usual boundaries of that field, and its curse—due to the same strains. At any rate, making these connections is central to its aims.

The dissertation’s primary thesis comprises the necessarily paired and only apparently contradictory assertions that people frequently experience music in ways that exercise, at times consciously but often unwittingly, its hegemonic power, but also that many processes of meaning construction through musical reception are largely indeterminate and unpredictable on the micro-level of individual listeners’ experiences. In examining early twentieth-century dominant U.S. ideas about musical orientality, the study shows how certain beliefs about music have encouraged people to hear, see, and think about each other not as actual human beings with the subjective agency to define themselves, but as representative instances of essentialized human types—phantasms falsely known by means of vocal and bodily attributes

4. Many of its sources also are of relatively unusual types for an ethnomusicological work; methodological aspects of this are discussed in Appendix 1, but here it may suffice to note that this arises in part due to the temporal period with which this study is concerned, and to its theoretical focus on musical performance and reception more than on staff-notated texts. Certain sections of Chapters 4–7, especially, stretch or exceed the disciplinary limits of the field; this too arises from attention to socially embodied acts of representation, which may best be understood by considering together both more- and less-musical practices that were widespread in these social milieux, rather than drawing a line between them on that basis.
heard and seen as stock signs of social categories. This interpretive process and social problem—the essentializing interpretation of embodied cultural practice—binds together beliefs about music and race. This underlies the study’s attention to music not merely as notation, but as an aspect of diverse kinds of social experience (e.g., many of those examined in Chapters 1–7).

The project of demonstrating these general points requires attention to how these ideas were played out in different media, as well as to certain more specific, interwoven interpretive assertions and the intertwined sources and analyses that may support, complicate, or belie them. These assertions—not exactly hypotheses, for they are not absolute statements to be tested and unqualifiedly proved or disproved, but rather are tendencies and susceptibilities to be illustrated and demonstrated without suggesting that alternative modes of experience did not and do not exist as well—are:

1. The meanings of a musical performance, practice, event, or text often are many and varied because of the wide range of ways in which listeners and other participants may make sense of their experiences.

2. These varied meanings often are grounded in listeners’ implicitly held ideas about musical voices and bodies as compelling evidence for beliefs grounded in notions about embodied human essences.

3. When listeners perceive music as representing a human essence that they believe to be fundamentally unlike their own due to different national or cultural locations of origin or heritage associated with categorically perceived and ascribed bodily attributes, envoiced and embodied meanings readily assume racialized significance.
4. Despite their surface diversity of ascribed attributes, affective tones, and appeals to universality or particularity, these interpretations often rely on the same underlying systems of racial categorization.

5. This often unarticulated reliance on racial typology in accounts of musical difference further naturalizes these category systems as seemingly credible and useful tools for thinking about the world. The superficially varied interpretations these systems support can make them seem to be simply natural environments for feeling and thinking, not the specific, essentializing assertions they actually are.

6. The centrality of the voice and body to musical experience enables it to offer apparently credible audible, visible, and somatic evidence for these categorical beliefs about embodied essences of human groups.

7. Belief that the body constitutes the originary grounds and perceptible sign of racial essences combines with the body’s centrality to musical performance and listening in ways which deeply link music to race.

8. Particular musical practices and media have particular abilities and limitations as means of representing race directly in musical practice and indirectly in written and other mediated accounts of musicality.

9. Musical experience’s positioning as entertainment tends further to naturalize the belief systems infusing musical representations of race, which may seem merely to offer fun, diversion, or aesthetic experience divorced from social issues and thus not to require critical engagement. This renders music fertile ground for hegemony.
These overlapping assertions are framed by the understanding that while media representations may exert a mighty influence on the meanings we make from sounds we hear or read about, this is not entirely determinative. Individual people make their own kinds of sense from their experiences.

The importance of remembering this may be illustrated by bouncing the last point above off a way of thinking about mass media which for some time was common among “Frankfurt School” cultural critics. Often this mode of analysis could posit a top-down, almost wholly overdetermined direct transmission of ideological content into the sheep-like minds of popular media consumers. As has been abundantly shown since, this is a far too totalizing and elitist means of thinking about how audiences understand popular performance and mass media. In many cases examined in this study, the deepest and most consistently powerful ideological content many people constructed from musically racialized representations lay not in what might at first appear to have been their content as such, which listeners, readers, or amateur performers often interpreted in ways which differed widely in their particulars, but in the hegemonically communicated, supposedly good sense of racialized belief systems that not only underlaid musical processes and texts but also gained a specific and powerful kind of naturalized and seldom-questioned credibility from their entertaining embodiment in performance. But such credibility is an illusion—even if a sometimes persuasive one.

This study is pervaded by a relativistic and often particularistic, social constructionist belief that notions of racial character (often transposed to—or doubled in—national, ethnic, or cultural registers) are most usefully studied as products of ideological, performative, and discursive processes rather than
points of origin with any naturally determining or explanatory force of their own. While human groups do display statistically modal tendencies, the meaning of those lumped averages gains its social force as an effect of representation and negotiation, not as an originary cause of the beliefs and actions of people assimilated to any one category (although such meanings may become both cause and effect in cultural loops of representations presented, apprehended, interpreted, and re-presented). The traits ascribed to any one group may be understood as repertoires of performative moves available to producers of embodied and textual representations and of interpretive moves available to people making meaning from their practices and products. In the performed and mediated domains central here, national (racial, cultural) essences are treated as never-complete endings of musical practice and reception in the context of other social processes, not as their ultimate, causative, or explanatory beginnings.

The relevance here of sonic characteristics (melodies, timbres, etc.) predominant within any one musical system lies not in their utility for seeking origins or influences, but in their translocated or locally fabricated status as audible markers of racialized human difference—as shorthand for iconically tagging social groups with markers experienced as sound. Statistically predominant traits of musical sound in one setting may become abstracted and reified signs of difference when relocated into (or imagined within) another musical system. There they may serve as audible gestures indexical to constructed racial domains imagined to be coextensive with cultural groups mapped onto geographical spaces in the real world. This ideological convergence of fictive essential natures and the aggregated
individual human beings thought to be “typical” of those living in an actual or imagined place (whether Shanghai, “Old Japan,” Chinatown in a specific U.S. city, or a conceptual aggregation of all Chinatowns) often relies on a tacit equation of essential difference and spatial distance pushed into a conceptual past—something seen as well, for example, in the “itinerary for touring ‘Old Japan’” that “became well established” for Victorian British travelers (Yokoyama 1987, 154). This is common to engagement with various exotics, which consumers, listeners, and performers, professional or amateur, often find attractive in direct proportion to their perceived distance from home.

A common thread throughout this study is the role of music as a means of seeming to bring distance near without rendering it less distant, and thus without making it seem any less attractively different from locally familiar forms. This everyday paradox of domestication of the still strange was played out in its sources in diverse ways with varied social valences, but usually with a reasonable degree of fit with dominant U.S. discourses about Asia, Asian Americans, and orientality. These representations ranged from Asian, Asian American, or white American performers’ professional enactment of ready-made roles on operatic, vaudeville, or dramatic stages to lyrical, tonal, and rhythmic gestures in popular songs. In these and many other forms, they offered Americans—mostly, white Americans—musically mediated kinds of experience for constructing, reinforcing, and (less often) remodeling their beliefs in racial character types. To focus here on orientalist practice is not to argue that all cultural works and acts in which white Americans evoked Asia
were orientalist, but to attend to the many that were in order to explore some key connections between performance, its reception, and racial ideology.\footnote{As a point of clarification, where the term “non-orientalist” appears in this study, it refers in contextual ways to works or practices that did not refer to Asia. The study uses “Asian” and “Asian American” in ways now common in cultural analysis. In a way partially derived from its usage by writers including David Palumbo-Liu (1999) and Taise Yamamoto (1999), the dissertation uses “Asian/American” in contexts where transnationality between Asian and Asian American sites of cultural practice is to the fore (see also Lowe 1998). As a pragmatic means of not inadvertently reinscribing a rhetoric of alienation by using just the word “Asian” to refer to Asian Americans, “Asian/American” also is used (regarding certain moments involving ethnically Asian performers in the United States) to refer to people who may have been Asian performers on U.S. tours or may have been Asian American. In a broadly parallel way, it uses “European/American” in regard to some cultural moments encompassing various mixes of European and European American people or practices.}

\textit{Disclaimer: Four Cautions}

As may music, dissertations also can mean more than their makers intend. The meanings read from a text are not a writer’s to control, but a statement of intentions may avert certain misunderstandings, disclaim views which could be misread into this study, and discourage certain uncritical reuses of source material that could spill unhappily beyond its analytical frame. Warning flags to some such ends are embedded in the analysis, and some terminological guideposts are set out below; but four issues require general notice up front.

The first issue is the danger of reinscribing the ideological content of source material. This may—in fact, should—trouble readers of this study. Even selectively reproducing racist documents risks harming people and may enable others to reuse these materials for racist ends, but any analysis of texts unfamiliar to many readers must reproduce primary sources if its interpretation is to be critically assessed.\footnote{For a useful thinking-through of related issues in regard to using the film \textit{Slaying the Dragon} to teach critically about stereotypes of Asian American women, see Alquizola and Hirabayashi (2003), Hirabayashi and Alquizola (2003).} I can only hope that this study’s
contribution towards undermining still-prevalent racist tropes outweighs any negative effects that its reproduced source material may cause.

The second issue arises from my own social positions within dominant U.S. category systems and their effects on my personal life experience.7 As a white man, I do not pretend to speak for any of the Asian American people whom many white Americans falsely believe orientalist texts to represent. Rather, I examine these representations and their reception to see how they worked hegemonically in ways which linked dominant beliefs about voice and body, authenticity and mimesis, performance and media, and music and race. This study’s sources, methods, and critical stance may situate my authorial voice in a location which in some ways is akin to those of certain scholars and cultural critics who are both Asian Americans and Asian Americanists, and who from that (sometimes more than) double position write against dominant U.S. constructions of Asianness and orientality; but this convergence is a matter of happening, I hope, to speak alongside—not of pretending to speak for—people who may themselves be more oppressively subject to the social effects of the orientalizing ideas they and I critique.8

Nor is there any intent here to speak from a spuriously objective place outside the society of which I am a part, and within which I am ineluctably

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7. This and other reflexive passages are not so much attempts to anticipate and deflect criticism—although they must appear as such, and thus become exactly that to some degree—as they are attempts to take to heart and engage locally with critiques of other texts caught up in related conditions of production, topics, and authorial identities, and to try to learn from those textual encounters how to craft this study in socially and ethically responsible ways. More on these issues may be found in supplementary text (not part of this dissertation) available from the author via email at <dissertation@humansound.org>. Those ancillary framing texts also survey related cultural moments and theoretical literature; this includes more detailed looks at a few points of connection to some works in Asian American Studies and American Studies more generally (e.g., Moy 1993; Okihiro 1994; P. P. Choy, Dong, and Hom 1995; Lowe 1996; R. G. Lee 1999; Tchen 1999; Tuan 1999; Yoshihara 2003).

categorized in often unmarked ways as white and as male. In a study of U.S. music and racial ideology, this matters. In an analysis of dominant cultural practices, it raises the specter of a tiresomely common and solipsistic white-centeredness that writes out the agency, subjectivity, and experience of more markedly racialized people in the United States, even in studies that focus critically on white enactments of stereotyped versions of them.\footnote{For two useful critiques of this process grounded in specific cases, see Gottschild (1996, 88–92) and Kondo (2000, 100–101). On the construction of whiteness, see such works as Roediger (1991, 2002), Delgado (1995), Delgado and Stefancic (1997), Hill (1997), Lipsitz (1998).} As a study of dominant modes of raciological representation and reception (in this case, of musical orientality) in a United States in which the dominant positions within racialized hierarchies generally are coextensive with (or a subset of) the social domain of whiteness, this dissertation necessarily attends chiefly to white producers and consumers. I hope that the way in which it does this does not deny the experiences of people not well represented here, but remains wide open to articulation with studies that represent them far better.

Arising in any study of dominant representations of often-marginalized social groups, the third issue concerns the insidious ways in which totalizing rhetorics of victimization can elide the agency of people who have been relegated in certain concrete ways and moments to victimized positions in certain histories, acts, and texts, but who were not in fact some sort of wholly disempowered victims too paralyzed by oppression to fight back against it. This is a common problem in works that devote their full attention to unpacking dominant discourses on race. It must suffice to state that while this dissertation’s focus on white Americans’ ideas about orientalized Asianness leads it to attend chiefly to media and sources that preserve scant traces of
Asian American resistance against the racist ideologies many such documents supported, and in some cases to invoke the idea of victimization when to do so is grounded in sources and analytically useful, this should not imply that oppositional words and acts were absent from these historical moments.\textsuperscript{10}

Rather, the same commodified channels of public discourse which distributed these dominant representations generally were unlikely to have carried such unmarketable critiques, and less widely disseminated sources (for example, critical commentary in personal correspondence by Asian Americans expressing countervailing views in the teens) have not been located for this study. I would be happy to know of such oppositional accounts, and the silence here in that regard should not write out the hope that such texts may be found. Many early twentieth-century Asian Americans probably found popular orientalist representations deeply offensive and may have left lasting records of their views in media (for example, community or ethnic newspapers) that were less, or at least differently, ideologically constrained—and perhaps less likely as well to have survived by reason of their smaller distribution—than the dominant media examined here.

The fourth issue has to do with the risk of confusing cultural critique with personal condemnation. Fans of people or music discussed here may at first perceive some analysis as an attack upon artists or works they celebrate, but to look at how someone’s musical practice played out hegemonic beliefs about race is not necessarily to fault that person for inhaling and exhaling the social air she or he inevitably breathed. I have no desire to make anachronistic (and either way, generally uninteresting) judgments of individual culpability.

\textsuperscript{10} E.g., see McClain (1994); on later times, see Lien (2001), Nash (2002).
A more grounded and interesting project than assigning retroactive blame is that of treating musicians seriously as historical agents who not only expressed personal creativity but also absorbed and retransmitted dominant beliefs of their time. Rather than expecting people to have transcended certain ideological limits of the discourses within which they built their professional and often their private lives, this analysis asks what their practices, products, and reception can tell us about their social worlds and the roles of music in them—and perhaps about music and racial ideology more generally.

Because of these aims, this study seeks neither to condemn nor to celebrate people, acts, and texts, but to understand how they meant some of what they meant, and to hear what those processes may tell us about the social production of meaning through musical practice and reception. While it picks apart some sources’ raciological content, it does so in order to show how ideas about music and race have been linked together, not to scold cultural producers who no longer are around to hear such anachronistic chiding. In this sense, I hope it may avoid falling into the authorial trap of, in the words of a reviewer of a study of U.S. representations of Chineseness, “repeated chastising of the dead.” As that reviewer wrote (not, to be clear, charging the book’s author with such counts), it is far more useful to try to understand how cultural products operated in regard to their historical contexts’ “regnant American ideas” about human difference than “to demonize and ridicule” the people who produced them (Paul 2001, 119). That being said, it remains important to critique racist discourse, without slipping into ahistorically ad hominem attacks. In this light, this study’s references to specific acts or texts as “racist” serve to mark their links to larger social facts.
Positioning: Words, Concepts, Issues, Theories, Fields

Identity is conjunctural, not essential. —James Clifford (1988, 11)
Race may be fictional, but racism is real. —Frank H. Wu (2002, 299)
Ignorance has many forms, and all of them are dangerous. —R. I. Moore (1992, vii)

Because of this study’s interdisciplinarity, diverse theoretical discussions frame and underlie many analytical terms that suffuse it. To elucidate these connections in detail as a means of positioning this text—and of giving credit where credit is due—would (and once did) expand this introduction beyond all reasonable size, so it now gestures only briefly in some of these directions. Readers familiar with the ideas and kinds of studies invoked in passing below may find this a sufficient means of locating this project in relation to certain other texts. Those for whom such streams of thought are less familiar, and for whom this study’s discursive locations may seem obscure, may wish to look at a supplementary text which treats some bodies of writing upon which this study draws. Mapping certain points that further situate this project, it also cites selected texts as a means of acknowledging studies that are not cited in this dissertation but which offered ideas that aided it in general ways.11 Here we may look more briefly at a few core ideas including hegemony, orientality, race, and mimesis to relate this dissertation to extant writings of other sorts.

This study is closely related to two bodies of writing: critiques of dominant representations of the racialized essences, appearances, and behaviors that many white American cultural producers and consumers ascribe to Asian and Asian American people, and musicological studies that trace composers’ intercultural musical influences, appropriations, and other

11. Supplementary texts (not part of this dissertation) noted above offer more such framing. Note 7 on page 12 offers more information about those texts and how one may acquire them.
authorial practices. The links between those areas involve performance, stereotypes, and intersections of music and race.

This dissertation’s main path follows neither of those well-charted thoroughfares, but explores terrain which often has divided them. It does this by building on some of those analyses’ findings, using them as a foundation for an interpretive shift away from cultural products and lineages of precursor texts towards processes by which lived and mediated experiences of the performing voice and body supported racial ideology. These processes have not been wholly neglected in earlier studies, to which this dissertation is indebted; but the means by which ideological power infuses performed orientality deserves more sustained attention.

This concern with the social meanings of musical practice and reception is both this dissertation’s analytical focus and the main attribute that locates it within ethnomusicology as a discipline. Despite the historical (rather than ethnographic) sources and methods dictated by its topic’s temporal distance, it asks questions much like those central to other ethnomusicological investigations. For example, in his preface to a very different study—a work unlike this one in its methods and topical content, but closer in some of its theoretical aims—Anthony Seeger asks questions including these:

Why do performances of songs have certain structures, timbres, and styles? Why do certain members of the community sing those particular things in those particular ways for that particular audience in that particular place and time? The answers are to be found both in the people’s ideas about sound and song, and also in the relationships of singing with other verbal forms and social processes in their society. The ways the questions are answered will suggest a methodology for ethnomusicological study. This book is a kind of musical anthropology as distinct from an anthropology of music—a study of society from the perspective of musical performance, rather than simply the application of anthropological methods and concerns to music.

A great deal of writing in musicology and ethnomusicology has been about products: Beethoven’s Ninth, Plains Indian song, and fiddle tunes, for example.
These studies usually begin with the question ‘What is it?’ and use musical transcriptions and other analytic methods to arrive at a description of the structure and performance of a certain genre or period. Detailed analysis of musical products can produce highly competent descriptions of musical forms from around the world, but rarely relate their musical analysis to other aspects of the social and cultural environment of which music is always a part. Very few studies ask ‘Why is the music performed in that way rather than another?’ and ‘Why perform music at all in a given situation in society?’ These are central preoccupations of this book. (A. Seeger 1987, xiii)

Seeger wrote this to frame an ethnography of singing among the Suyá people of Brazil, and the methodology he mentions is disjunct from the approaches suited to this historical ethnomusicological study of often more mediated experience; but his “preoccupation” with people’s musical processes and ideas, more than with their musical products, is shared here.

This interpretive emphasis on acts more than on things bears directly on this dissertation’s potential but misleading appearance as a study of “musical orientalism” in the usual sense of the phrase—that is, as an analysis of notated musical texts as orientalist products. Although that approach figures to some degree in Chapter 8, it plays no defining role in the study as a whole. While most studies that use the phrase take “music” to refer to compositions and their stylistic attributes, this dissertation attends to music more as practice than as text, and so it broadly construes musical orientalism to encompass aspects of diverse performative acts that involved both music and the embodied representation of orientality.

From this local perspective, “musical orientalism” is most usefully thought of as existing in cultural practices. It may be invested into texts as well; but the point here is to disrupt the paired assumptions that “musical orientalism” is equivalent to compositional orientalism—and that because of this equivalence, the answers to questions about its social meanings are best
sought in notated works. In contrast, here “musical orientalism” would refer primarily to performance; but because the phrase is so firmly associated with musical pieces rather than more fluid acts, it seldom appears in this text. Aside from its use in this contrastive exposition, to rely on it would tend to drag the study’s findings towards the idea of music as object, not practice.

For the sake of clarity, this study uses “compositional orientalism” in place of “musical orientalism” to denote composers’ staff-notated products. The focus throughout the text is on embodied acts and practices of orientalist representation that involved music, and on their reception and interpretation, far more than on musical texts as such—or on authors’ lives, intentions, acts, influences, creativity, or success within the terms of their own aesthetic worlds. This topical focus partners a defining theoretical concern with the body as the performative grounds of both music and race—with its routinely realized potential as a lived medium for representing ideology in recreational ways, and with how hegemony thus may flow through musical experience.

Framed by a schematic sense of this double relationship both to social analyses of racial representation and to writings on figurations of difference in musical works, a closer sketch of this dissertation’s relationships to the gravitational centers of selected studies will clarify these connections.

As do some Asian Americanist critiques of dominant U.S. media, this study seeks to unpack orientalist practice in ways that move beyond reciting well-rehearsed litanies of stereotypes or ranking them along a “positive” to “negative” continuum. Some studies with different specific purposes rank media representations of ethnic types against standards of the “positive” or “accurate” (both laudable aims in their own right) and in relation to ethnic
self-representations (e.g., C. C. Wilson and Gutiérrez 1985, 1995). But as Nicholas Thomas has written in a different context, focusing on stereotypes as things rather than on processes of representation and knowledge construction can impose unfortunate limits on cultural analyses with different aims:

While critical interest in colonial representation appears to be a recent phenomenon, there were many earlier studies of ‘images of’ non-European peoples. An array of stereotypes were identified, from the monsters at the edges of the maps and women with sagging breasts of medieval and Renaissance accounts, to the noble and ignoble savages of the Enlightenment voyages and the nineteenth century; from the simian cannibals of primitive tribes and effete despots of Asiatic civilizations, to representations prevalent today, such as the fanatical Arabs of terrorist journalism and the passive and beguiling women of tourism’s Asia. Some are debased, some are picturesque, some are seductive, others are threatening; all are evidently distortions that reveal more about the interests and motivations of observers than they do about whoever is notionally represented. Figures of this kind indeed abound in the media, and in colonial literature and art, but the idea of the stereotype is at once too static and too free-floating to have much enduring critical value. On one side, the stability of a figure such as the ‘noble savage’ distracts us from the differing values which idealized natives might bear in various narratives; on the other, the type is not linked with any particular colonizing or imaginative venture, but is generally present or available to certain cultural traditions. (1994, 22)

Thomas goes on to note the tendency for many publications on European images to be more documentary than analytical, and so to pass over “their discursive affiliations and underlying epistemologies” (22). In a sense, this dissertation reflects an effort to straddle these endpoints by offering documentation of certain broad currents of popular U.S. orientalisms but zooming in analytically on specific performative and discursive practices.

Modes of analysis and presentation that seek chiefly to parse favorable or veracious representations from their opposites, and by that means to foster the former types in future acts of cultural production, can yield results that are tactically useful to the important social project of moving away from media representations that both traffic in stereotyped characters and present
those figures in pejorative or openly insulting ways. But despite the liberatory intent behind these evaluative and ordering processes, such rankings—if they are read outside of their carefully delineated frames of intended use, and alongside their beneficial effects—also may inadvertently lend weight to the only deceptive truth of an underlying belief in the necessity of reified representations of any type, whether inflected with a friendly or abusive tone. This makes such approaches less useful in analyses designed to excavate and help debunk more deeply underlying representational practices and beliefs.

As social psychologists have shown, stereotypes are formed and operate through both individual mental and shared cultural processes, and they involve general aspects of human cognition. But while much psychological literature addresses how stereotypes fulfill cognitive, affective, and collectively social functions for the people—that is, all of us, in one way or another, despite our best intentions—who use them as tools for thinking and social interaction, to acknowledge this as a general principle leaves open the question of any one stereotype’s history of use, its precise means of construction and maintenance, and its effects on those to whom it is ascribed and those who ascribe it. Both levels of analysis are important, but the aims of most psychological work on stereotyping cause it to offer fairly few points of direct connection here. More apposite are more cultural than psychological approaches.


13. A notable, if indirect, exception to this is seen in studies of embodiment in learning, which—although not necessarily focused on stereotype formation—have clear implications for mentored acts of mimesis discussed in Chapter 6.
studies of orientalist stereotyping processes that long have been widespread in such areas as theatrical practice (e.g., J. Lee 1997, 10–15).

To realize that stereotyping is a “normal” human process—that it functions in many cultures by serving commonly felt or valued cognitive and social ends—is not the same as to understand how any one stereotype functioned in a particular time and place or how people enacted it in specific contexts. Nor is to demonstrate that any one such cluster of processes was locally normative to show that its cultural impact was good (and in fact, the commonplace can be more harmful than the unusual), or to help dissipate its lingering effects—although it does not rule out such related projects.

Parallel in a way to the analytical disjuncture between stereotypes’ normative status as a part of human cognition and the undiminished need for critical analysis of any one such construction, due to the social power it supports, is the importance of separating out the question of a stereotype’s surface appearance of being “favorably” or “unfavorably” inflected from that of its social power in either case. Racial stereotypes with a seemingly “favorable” affective charge can be as damaging as those with openly negative associations. As shown by critiques of “model minority” discourse but elided in some analyses, a “positive” stereotype is still a stereotype.14 Despite lacking openly pejorative content, it remains a reductive and constraining representation of the diversity and subjective agency of people assimilated to such ascribed categories as “Asian” or “Asian American.” This is as true of the ways in which stereotypes affect individual interactions as of

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their impact on public discourse. As Ellie Hisama has argued in regard both to orientalist song and to certain of her own life experiences, “Asiophilic” desire melds together “old-time sexism” with racist stereotypes that “force a loss of individual identity”; this blurs Asianness and Asian Americanness into one exotically orientalized state: “To be rejected because of your race and to be desired for just the same reason are both forms of racism.”

In this light, oppositional analyses that seek favorable but still reified images of racial identities may be co-opted as evidence for the rightness and utility of the category systems they seek to refill with more positive content. In an attempt to complicate such beliefs, this study seeks to understand performance and reception processes that enabled actual and mediated voices and bodies to support many white Americans’ faith in the categorical truth of orientality—faith that it existed and offered a means of knowing some aspects of the social world. Regardless of its affective charge, belief in that imagined condition figured in many white Americans’ entertainment and in their stances towards people of Asian heritage in more overtly political domains.

Just as this effort is broadly parallel to certain non-musically centered Asian Americanist critiques of dominant U.S. media representations but is roughly perpendicular (intersecting but proceeding on a different path) to others that rank representations’ favorability, it is more akin to a few studies of musical exoticism than to most such musicological projects. In contrast to many studies in that other neighboring discourse, it does not seek orientalist musical pieces’ antecedents in a quest for influences or appropriated sources. These are common objects of musicological desire in examinations of

15. Hisama (1993, 98). For a similarly trenchant critique of more recent recordings by one of the musicians discussed in that article, see also Hisama (2004).
intercultural practice, where a belief in the truths of origins or a concern
with judging the accuracy of musical representations often has given such
aims a great attractive charge. In its foundational concern with “authentic”
precursors and representational veracity, that musicological move offers a
semi-parallel analog to some analyses of stereotypical media representations
as being comparatively true or false, positive or negative in regard to human
types still seen as inhabiting the real social world. With critical framing, all of
these approaches can be useful; but this dissertation joins some other projects
in looking off in a different direction. It does this in order to analyze certain
performative means by which racial category systems have been constructed,
not to redefine the particular contents of their constituent ideological bins.

These specific connections between this and other works exist within a
frame of studies with more inclusive topical but more precise temporal foci:
those of early twentieth-century U.S. cultural history. As a text concerned
with historically situated acts of musical signification and raciological
meaning construction, it focuses on moments of representation and reception
in the United States during these years to understand how these concrete
processes did broader cultural work. In moving from locally contextualized,
specific examples to more general assertions, it explores relationships among
music, ideas about a differentiated or singularized mind/body/voice, and
racial ideologies. Rather than seeking to analyze popular discourse about
music as a means of recasting in any fundamental way the findings of cultural
historians who focus on these decades, this study leverages and interweaves
itself with their more general interpretations in an effort to shed light on the
ideological workings of beliefs about music as a tool for constructing racial
difference. This remains a marginalized and undertheorized area, despite the welcome appearance of important works on these processes.

Writings on race and music have attended in close and critical ways to their linkage in specific cultural domains. The most visible instance of this in U.S. texts is in writings about the African American tradition often called jazz.\textsuperscript{16} However, comparatively few such works have situated their specific topics as potentially bearing on general questions about why and how ideas about musical practice and the body so often can and do support dominant (as well as more oppositional) ideological constructions of race.

Many more studies address the use of music in constructing group self-identities in racially charged social contexts, for example by linking expressive cultural practices and political cultures in South Asian dance musics in present-day North America or Britain.\textsuperscript{17} In ways that go to self-identity and the construction of racial meaning through reception, some writings on European American composers and performers attend to how the often unspoken notion of whiteness has situated race in relation to music.\textsuperscript{18}

A major work that grapples in theoretically sophisticated ways with broadly framed questions about race and music is Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman’s co-edited volume of essays on \textit{Music and the Racial Imagination}


\textsuperscript{17} E.g., Maira (1999, 2000, 2002); many of the essays in Sharma, Hutnyk, and Sharma (1996).

\textsuperscript{18} As well as figuring in studies of discourse about “jazz,” related connections have been elucidated regarding such topics as the reception of Roy Harris’s works and the presence-through-elision of whiteness in many avant-garde aesthetics (Levy 2001, Whitesell 2001).
(Radano and Bohlman 2000b). Massive in scale and deeply engaged with the racialized political meanings that many people construct from musical experience, the book brings together 20 essays on diverse histories and practices. Certain aspects of each of those studies offer points of connection here, and two are especially helpful to invoke at this juncture.19

Radano and Bohlman’s introduction lays out key issues that undergird intersections of music and race. As Kofi Agawu has noted in his review of the book, some of their “admirably comprehensive and wide-ranging” chapter’s claims and language fall prey to the kinds of rhetorical excess—as similar aspects of this dissertation probably do as well—that often attend attempts to address large social questions; but that issue aside, it offers a tremendously useful survey of crucial terrain (Agawu 2001, 686–87).20

Calling music “a key signifier of difference,” Radano and Bohlman note that in this capacity “music for America—in its wonder, in its transcendence, in its affective danger—historically conjures racial meaning” (2000a, 1). They argue that musicology (in the broadest sense) too is complicit in processes of racial signification, but that its practice generally elides these connections (1–5). They consider many ways and moments in which music has meant race in specific historical contexts. One of these discussions is highly apposite here:

19. A third, Radano’s essay on modernism and the idea of Black Rhythm, is cited above. On other intersecting ideas of music and blackness, see such studies as Waksman (1999, 167–206).
20. On another topic central here, Agawu notes the book’s “puzzling” emphasis on reception, although that interpretive bent seems to arise reasonably from the facts that racialist beliefs are ideological and that ideology’s impact on perceived musical meaning occurs chiefly through the social contexts within and through which listeners’ acts of interpretation construct these meanings; but this may go more to general debates about processes of musical signification and communication—and a desire not to yield ground in that intellectual contest may underlie his protestations of puzzlement. For another useful review, one especially attentive to issues of gender and of the construction of whiteness, see Gaunt (2004).
Race, as we have seen, accrues meaning around spaces of Otherness. In these other spaces, race sounds different, that is, foreign and distant—displaced from the familiar. It has, nonetheless, an arresting quality because, its foreignness notwithstanding, race enables access. Its “logic of form” seems to sound across temporal and social distances, fulfilling for a legacy of Western observers an appropriative desire for the authentic, the universal. Throughout histories of culture contact—in travel accounts, in colonial encounters, in missionary and military excursions—music has arrested the attention of observers because of its putative accessibility and universality of meaning. For colonizing listeners, the music in spaces of Otherness seemed both remarkable because of its primordial foreignness, which identified the site of an original culture, and unremarkable because of its “primitiveness,” which precluded its value as a cultural form. This paradox would inform cultural reports into the twentieth century, as European expansion brought with it new, contradictory imaginations of global sound. (16; emphasis in original)

As a generalized account of some massively recurrent modes of hearing difference racially, this is right on the mark (even though, as such an account, it necessarily elides some aspects of case-by-case experiential heterogeneity).

After looking at intersections of the book’s topic with such analytical tropes as authenticity, migration, and mediation (and the social processes they involve), Radano and Bohlman address the ways in which “the transnational mix has not erased race from music, but rather has recontextualized it” in such domains of social practice as “world music” marketing and cultural studies (36–37). Their chief point in doing so is to argue (persuasively) that attending to the presence of “music in the racial imagination” offers a grounded means of resisting the all too frequent calls for supposedly “ending” racism by willfully denying its presence:

Rather than closing the spaces around the human suffering wrought by racism, the musics examined here suggest that music may provide one of the most powerful media for listening to and understanding what it is that racism continues to do on a global scale. Music gives voice to racial difference, and music ring[s] with the rupture and fragmentation that afflicts humans because of their race throughout the world. We don’t deny that there is an alternative to listening to the music that is so inseparable from the racial imagination, but we would struggle against invoking it. That alternative is, of course, silence. (37)
This brings out a crucial difference between studies of music that examine (as does this dissertation) the oppressive racial imaginings that members of dominant social groups often ascribe to others and, conversely, texts that focus on racialized identities that are embraced and mobilized by oppressed groups (as Radano and Bohlman refer to above). While all of these processes gain credibility from ideas about the body, their political and human effects differ radically in ways that enable Radano and Bohlman to celebrate musical utterances and hearings of race as potentially progressive and liberatory—a far cry from the social meanings and effects of most of this study’s sources.

Despite these partial differences of focus and subtopics (which are clear enough to need no further explanation), their project and this one share the aim of engaging musicology “in the emerging national and international conversation on race, for it is in music that the racial resonates most vividly, with greatest affect and power” (39). Setting aside the potentially troubling language of superlatives, their point regarding the need to challenge racism in musical and non-musical domains is central to both their text and this study.

*Music and the Racial Imagination* presents as its first actual chapter “The Asian American Body in Performance,” by Deborah Wong. Her essay offers a wealth of theoretical insights and arguments that are germane to this study. In topical connection with late twentieth-century Asian American cultural production, some of these are mentioned briefly in the Conclusion/Epilogue; but we should note here a few of the essay’s main threads. Wong attends closely to the idea of the performing body as a socially constructed site of supposed authenticities and racialized acts (and many other things), taking as her main examples certain practices embodied by Asian American jazz
musicians and hip hop artists. She shows how practices of embodiment can assume forms that may seem at once oppositional and appropriative, potentially liberatory but nonetheless littered with reinscriptive hazards.

Attuned to the complex meanings of performance in ideologically fraught zones of racial mimesis, she ends by acknowledging her desire “to believe that Asian American incursions into African American forms are conscious attempts to link different ways of knowing and reconfiguring race.” “This activation of the body politic is no small thing,” she states: “If we regard these performers’ efforts as pedagogical rather than appropriating, we can see anger, interrogation, coalition, action, revolution, in motion.”

Attending to the multivalence and social situatedness of performative acts that embody race, studies such as Wong’s contribute to a crucial discussion of the ways in which performance often is central to embraced and ascribed identities, and to tensions, contradictions, and negotiations among them.

The primary intellectual domain to which I hope this dissertation may contribute is this broader conversation, ideally in ways which ground theoretical conclusions in concretely historicized examples. While I hope that these sources and interpretations might aim a few new shafts of light onto the decades of this study’s focus, my main goal is to show that ideas about music and the body can be all too supportive of ascribed notions of racial difference. Building on other writers’ insights about raciological beliefs that suffused these moments of U.S. history, I hope to illuminate how musical experience contributed to those beliefs’ hegemonic construction and maintenance. If this study does its job, it will show how music and words about music lent

seeming credibility to dominant U.S. ideologies, and it will adduce this American context as evidence for the general argument that ideas about embodied and envoiced musical difference can give deceptive credence to almost any belief in racialized human types. This may give us all cause to think about the kinds of sense we make from moment to moment during and after our own intercultural experiences in musical listening and performance.

These aims raise and resituate specters of the four dangers discussed above. The risks of reinscription of sources’ racist content, supercultural-to-subcultural and anachronistic ventriloquizing, tacit denial of Asian American agency through unintended subtexts of passive victimization, and apparent slippage from ideological critique to personal criticism haunt this text from beginning to end. This condition is endemic to such studies, as reflected in comments by authors of two such works. As Mireille Rosello has written, “Stereotypes do not allow scholars to pin them to the wall like some dead insect. Their venom is intact and can infiltrate any text that wants to contain it” (1998, 39). Domenika Ferens makes a similar observation in her study of how authors Edith and Winnifred Eaton respectively presented characters largely as “representative types” and marketable fictive commodities while passing literally for “Japanese” with a fictitious autobiography and “dressing the part”: “Along with anthropologist Dorinne Kondo, I argue that orientalist discourse cannot be contested from an untainted place located safely outside it and that any contestation involves recirculating the terms of the dominant discourse” (Ferens 1999, 268, 207, 216; see also Kondo 1997, 9–14).

These verbs of infiltration, recirculation, and so on reflect the power of cultural hegemony, a concept central to this study. Hegemony means many
things, but here one of its key meanings revolves around the idea that in any historical context, certain beliefs that serve dominant structures of social power come to seem merely natural—and as a result, come to be all the more powerful, to become in a sense what we might call nearly “not unthinkable.” This naturalization of what are actually ideological assertions linking power and cultural practice in almost unimaginably complex, slippery, and nuanced ways can lead virtually all texts and acts in some settings to engage in nearly continual reinscription of dominant beliefs. This can happen despite the intentions of the people involved, for whom they may seem as natural and unworthy of note as the air one breathes. As Raymond Williams has written:

> Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology’, nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination’. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of our living: our sense and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a ‘culture’, but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (1977, 110)

The ideas of ideology and hegemony offer a means of understanding key connections between cultural practices and social power.22

A key aspect of the concept’s utility bears on the fact that recreational practices can perform hegemonic work regardless of the conscious aims and desires of those who enjoy them. As a general illustration, we may consider the historical conjuncture of a time when U.S. media disseminated both political calls for cutting off Asian immigration and musical texts that

22. In this study, these terms’ usage follows that developed by Antonio Gramsci and writers who build on his work (see Gramsci 1989 [1973], Adamson 1980), not the ways they function in much political discourse; this is discussed further in the supplementary text noted above.
encouraged Americans to sing about faraway Japanese Butterflies or subterranean goings-on in shadowy Chinatown opium dens. The concept of hegemony offers a means of illuminating the relationships that enabled such songs (while remaining as entertaining as ever for those who liked them) to help construct and naturalize a belief that while Asianness could be charming if gendered as female and kept at a safe distance, any actual presence of Asian Americans—especially working-class men—in the United States was sufficiently dangerous to require exclusionary legislation and urban policing. Without ascribing conscious and specific political intent to the musical authors or consumers involved (or even the newspaper publishers who on occasion printed such songs as Sunday supplements, and whose actions in doing so may more likely have been guided in part by conscious political views), the idea of hegemony allows us to attend to how racialist ideology could infuse and gain support from such (more than just) recreational texts.

This study uses the word “culture” in ways familiar from much recent cultural analysis and critique, so there is little need to discuss it here. The same is not true of “discourse,” which figures similarly prominently in this dissertation but may seem more opaque to some readers. While the term has become so widely and recurrently used as often to be annoyingly tiresome, it serves analytical ends and representational necessities that no other word can.

This study uses “discourse” to refer (loosely after Michel Foucault, e.g. as developed in 1982 [1969], 3–76) to social aggregations comprising huge numbers of individual minds, beliefs, ideas, bodies, acts, practices, texts, and moments that were saturated with certain relations of social power. In this dissertation, it denotes especially groups of such things related to dominant
U.S. ideology pertaining to Asia and Asian America. As with hegemony, any monolithic notion of this discourse as an undifferentiated unity would be mistaken, and to note its internal differentiation may enrich rather than undermine our understanding of its cultural and political workings.

Many contexts of thought, utterance, performance, and publication central to this study were permeated by racialist ideologies then dominant in the United States. These contexts supported far more congenially the communication—producers’ representation and consumers’ interpretive construction—of meanings that reinforced those ideologies than that of meanings opposed to them. This was not the result of some consciously formulated and micromanaged master plan (which would posit an absurd scenario in a context of media and event producers’ frantic contestation for market share), but these ideas, texts, and practices did clearly—and fairly consistently—serve certain interests of dominant U.S. social power while seeming simply to be fun. This suggests that these contexts, acts, works, and mental processes and objects did constitute a discourse in Foucault’s sense, and that hegemony afforded an ideal means by which the socially powerful interests it served could affect the many people who enjoyed it.

Situated in this way, the point to using the often wearying word “discourse” instead of less fancy alternatives is to keep visible the presence and workings of power. As Terry Eagleton writes, “Ideology is a matter of ‘discourse’ rather than of language—of certain concrete discursive effects, rather than of signification as such. It represents the points where power impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them”
This study’s use of “discourse” is meant to help keep power that once was tacit now exposed to plainer view.

People usually understand a discourse’s power-inflected significance in relation to specific historical contexts, and interpretive frames, within which they construct meanings that may vary but tend to cohere around certain dominant interpretive moves and conclusions. With this in mind, we may move on to “orientality”—a word nowadays in little use, but one useful here for its ability to denote an imagined racial essence more than stylistic traits or ideologies, which spring most readily to mind as meanings of “orientalism.”

The discourse central to this study consists of U.S. representations that explicitly or implicitly linked beliefs about a fictive orientality to certain ideas and lived realities of American society. This dissertation’s working sense of “orientalism” proceeds from Edward Said’s and certain subsequent scholars’ work. Many analyses have developed Said’s idea of orientalist discourse as comprising representations of human difference linked to an “orient” in ways which offer—as if they were merely common sense—ideological assertions about power, gender, and race, yet in ways that need not constitute that discourse as univocal or monolithic. Other key studies have explored American orientalist moments from this study’s main span of years, but have not drawn directly on Said; one important such work is No Place of Grace, in which T. J. Jackson Lears situates late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

23. Ideas of interpretive “frames” and “moves,” used here much in senses Erving Goffman and Steven Feld set forth, are discussed in a supplementary text noted above. These concepts may be familiar to many readers; two key texts are Goffman (1986 [1974]) and Feld (1984).
24. This theoretical background may be familiar to most readers, and is not rehashed here; those unfamiliar with critiques of orientalist practices and texts as bound up with social—often, but not always strictly, colonial or imperial—power may wish to consult a survey of some of Said’s and selected post-Saidian writing in the supplementary text noted above.

Especially apposite here due to overlapping contexts and sources are Asian Americanist studies that invoke Said’s book as a backdrop to analyses of U.S. orientalisms situated in distinct historical and theoretical ways (e.g., Okihiro 1994, 10–11). In Asian/American, David Palumbo-Liu calls Orientalism in passing an “enormously influential book...which opened the way for a thoroughgoing critique of the discursive production of ‘other’ spaces” (1999, 304). It also affords a point of reference for locating some Asian American cultural products. This is seen in Dorinne Kondo’s reading of how David Henry Hwang’s play M. Butterfly “explicitly links the construction of gendered imagery to the construction of race and the imperial mission to colonize and dominate” as being “suggestive of” Said’s critique: in both texts “Asia is gendered, but gender in turn cannot be understood without the figurations of race and power relations that inscribe it” (Kondo 1997, 47).

Some Asian Americanists integrate Said’s arguments into analyses of texts that circulated widely in the United States, using them as tools for demonstrating, as Henry Yu writes, “the ways in which ‘not being Oriental’ defined what it meant to be white.”25 In his book Orientals, Robert G. Lee leads into a section on early U.S. representations of Chineseness by noting:

Edward Said has argued that Orientalism is an imaginative geography and history which “helps the mind to intensify its own sense of self by dramatizing

25. H. Yu (2000, 147). Since the 1960s, the use of “oriental” to refer to Asian Americans has been a subject of well-founded everyday contestation; historically associated with the rise of the Asian American Movement and played out in untold numbers of local moments, this redefinitional process also has been pursued by such means as a Washington State Senate bill (State of Washington SB 5954, 57th Leg., 2001 regular sess., first read 9 February 2001). On the history of the movement, see studies including Wei (1993). For a theoretically apposite look at litigation over use of the terms “redskin” and “Injun,” cf. Spindel (2000, 200–210).
the difference and distance between what is close to it and what is far away.” In this respect, Orientalism reifies the relationship between the West and Asia by constructing the Occident and Orient as cultural polarities defined by (real or imagined) distance. (1999, 27–28)

Lee also brings Said’s Foucauldian linkage of knowledge and power to bear on his analysis of Sax Rohmer’s stories (written in England but widely read in the United States) as a racial contest played out in part on a field of arcane knowledge of the Other (114); and in his reading of a Fu Manchu narrative as being based upon “Rohmer’s Orientalist sexual fantasy” of “domination by the Orientalized woman,” he again invokes Orientalism: “The Orient, Edward Said reminds us, is constructed as a feminized object of desire” (117).

Certain Asian Americanists have brought into sharp focus specific issues that arise when building on Said’s work in ways attuned to U.S. contexts. One such writer is historian John Kuo Wei Tchen. In New York before Chinatown, Tchen notes Said’s primacy but attends to the historical specificity of early U.S. orientalism, which lay outside the scope of Said’s book. He “…was the first to formulate the critique of ‘orientalism’ in his analysis of how Western European literary and university elites define their own civilization in juxtaposition to their perceived and imagined Middle East—a world of opulence, harems, and all-powerful patriarchs,” Tchen writes; but crucially:

To adapt Said’s concept to the United States requires an understanding of how this phenomenon of orientalism was transplanted and took root in the Americas. In the Anglo-American world it was commonly believed that human civilization originally arose, like the sun, in the farthest reaches of the East and advanced progressively westward. Hence, the ancient civilizations of China, India, and the Arab world represented cultures that were past their glory. Following the arc of the sun, ardent nationalists proclaimed Europeanized America the next great occidental civilization; manifest destiny was in this sense not only a colonizing vision of the frontier but also an occidentalist view of extending European American Protestant civilization into the Pacific. The formulators of U.S. identity, while greatly influenced by European ideas, sought to advance a unique form of American nationalism that often used China and the Chinese symbolically and materially to advance a revolutionary
way of life—to make a culture infused with this faith in individualism and progress. Orientalism, therefore, became a cultural phenomenon intrinsic to American social, economic, and political life. The criteria for defining the basis of this nationalist narrative, however, need to be contextualized before we can understand how this orientalist other played against the American occidentalist self.26

While the early period on which Tchen’s book focuses renders these precise connections between European and American orientalist thought more apposite to that study than to this one, his contextually minded stress on locally historicized interpretation is a—or even the—key issue in making grounded use of Said’s theoretical contributions to the critique of orientalist practices when bringing them to bear on Americanist studies.

This goes to geographical proximity, among other things. As many authors have noted,27 Said’s formulation of orientalism addressed situations in which great spatial distance separated most texts’ areas of reference from not only the ideological but also the physical home turf of their producers and consumers. This all changes in politically and analytically significant ways, however, in U.S. historical contexts of Asian immigration, Asian American communities, and highly visible public discourse about both.

An important issue in thinking about how orientalism in Said’s sense has operated in U.S. settings arises from the central place the concept gives to unequal power relations of political domination as a context for orientalist cultural production. In the historical contexts examined here, there was plenty of power inequity. A few of the American texts and moments treated below were located in specifically imperial and colonial spaces such as the Philippines and Hawai‘i, and many more were enacted in imagined or actual

connection with politically often-dominated Asian American communities. But beyond these obvious structures and relations of power, we should note that in a democracy—even one that often leans towards practical oligarchy dressed in populist rhetoric—representations of race in popular performance and media also play directly, or nearly so, into the exercise of power by the elected and appointed agents of the nation’s white-dominated government.

As a categorical example of this web linking orientalist entertainments, democracy, whiteness, the state, and Asian America, we may consider the effects of massively disseminated U.S. media portrayals of citizens of Chinese or Japanese heritage as self-evidently alien and knowable as such by the evidence of the body. One specific case is that of songs set in Chinatowns constructed as domestic sites of racially embodied danger. It would be naive to imagine that such representations failed to encourage, in subtle or not so subtle ways, many white Americans not only to engage in such acts of everyday racism as casual anti-Asian utterances, but to support exclusionary immigration laws, race-based domestic inequities in political spheres, and candidates who stood (in all senses of the word) for such things.28

Doing this kind (among other kinds) of cultural work at a conjuncture of recreational pleasure, racialist social settings, and an electorally governed nation, popular orientalist practices and products can have strong political effects even if the individual people who produce and consume them are affiliated neither with the government nor with elite socioeconomic strata. This returns us to hegemony. “The idea of hegemony,” as Raymond Williams has written, “is...especially important in societies in which electoral politics

28. Cf. 1990s moments of outcry for selective investigation of some campaign contributors and federal employees based on their Chinese names (see Conclusion/Epilogue).
and public opinion are significant factors, and in which social practice is seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which in fact express the needs of a dominant class” (1985 [1976], 145). This illuminates a key theoretical link between U.S. popular orientalism and political power, one which will become clearer throughout this study.

So, any specific moment or instantiation of orientalism, as of any other general category of cultural practices, is historically situated. Despite the unified singularity such categories may suggest, it is necessary when deploying these terms to attend to the precise conditions and contexts of the cases at hand. The dangers of not doing so—the risk of offering poorly supported interpretations and a parallel tendency to end up parading ancillary illustrations of findings already offered elsewhere—have been realized in a few comparatively uncritical applications of Said’s approach and his conclusions to texts far removed from those he himself studied.

Fortunately, however, many studies attend closely to context. Even more than the matter of precisely which orient any one source invoked, a crucial point for studies of U.S. practices is one to which Tchen attends so carefully: the distinction between American and European orientalisms (which were themselves internally differentiated). As Lisa Lowe has stated:

U.S. orientalism of the twentieth century—the institutional, scholarly, and ideological representations of “Asia” and of “Asians in the United States”—may be rhetorically continuous but is materially discontinuous with an earlier European orientalism, which relied on representations of non-Western otherness as barbaric and incomprehensible, as well as with narrative teleologies of universal development. … U.S. orientalism makes use of some of the representational and narrative regimes of an earlier orientalism that mediated European colonialism, but it has been transformed by a quite different state apparatus and a different global and national context of material conditions, purposes, and possibilities. (Lowe 1996, 178n7; on European orientalism, see also Lowe 1991)
Noting for clarity here that the passage’s “earlier European orientalism” was one specific part of European orientalism, that other European orientalisms continued alongside more recent U.S. representations, and that some material connections (for example, in the production and dissemination of some print publications and sound recordings in international circuits for selling and apprehending such commodities) did and do exist between these transatlantic loci of representational activity, Lowe’s idea of plurality is right on the mark.

That is, there are multiple, historically situated orientalisms, even if specific kinds of material and ideological interpermeability have tended to leave no one of them as a truly bounded island of wholly local or national representational practice. David Palumbo-Liu offers an example of this simultaneously intertextual and protean quality in his reading of the palimpsestic traces invested in dominant media images of armed Korean American property owners during the Los Angeles uprising of 1992:

In U.S. history the Asian has served as a powerful signifier—at first, as a local illustration of European orientalist mythologies, and...later, as a “model minority” used to vindicate American ideology. Nevertheless, there is a hard residue of old-style orientalism—the notion that Asians have no concept of the sanctity of human life (as articulated endlessly during the Vietnam War) plays a crucial role in the representation of the Korean American “cowboy.” For if the whites are too “refined,” too attached to western Enlightenment notions of law and order, then Asians, genetically bereft of such encumbrances, can act out the violent imperatives of capitalism. (1999, 190)

In moments of social crisis (and in photographs which long outlast their lived reality), the multiply layered and heterogeneous racial essentialism of U.S. orientalist thought can become perceptible in new ways.

We should also note that in the twentieth century’s early decades, the word “oriental” had in some U.S. contexts a specific association with what was called the “Oriental Problem,” notably by Chicago-school sociologists.
Henry Yu has written a wonderfully thorough account of that aspect of U.S. orientalism, which produced texts and ideas generally more academic in both their authors’ intent and their contemporary readerships than were the more entertainment-oriented popular works and audiences treated in this study.29

With all of this in mind, here are some local working senses of these “o-” words, glossed not to propose general definitions but only to clarify how they are used to pragmatic interpretive ends within the limited scope of this study:

**orientality:** an essential condition imagined to inhere in actual people, fictive characters, musical sounds, and other practices or artifacts, one which renders them oriental and causes them to bear audible or visible signs of their supposedly oriental essence. Heard and seen as being communicated by those sets of significant attributes, orientality may be sung or otherwise embodied in performance in intentional or unintentional ways that enable audiences to perceive a performer’s supposedly authentic or mimetic oriental identity. (This recuperates from disuse the less critically inflected word “orientality,”30 resituating and theorizing it as a term useful for understanding the raciological referent—and product—of certain processes of meaning construction.)

29. H. Yu (2001); for insightful reflections on his work on the topic, see H. Yu (2000). The scholarly and often deeply racialist work of the writers Yu discusses did find some points of crossover into certain media central to this study, and these are noted as appropriate.

30. Generally unfamiliar nowadays due to its lack of use in recent times, “orientality” may appear at first to be a new coinage here; but it is not. The word was more common in the nineteenth century, when its referent often was held credible as an essential nature and set of attributes belonging to people in the real world, not as a raciological construction (a phrase that would, of course, have meant nothing at the time). Its utility here is in part theoretical and in part grammatical; in both ways, it provides a noun for “what it was” that many people felt they heard or saw or embodied in moments of orientalist performance. In this regard it is a more precisely targeted word than “orientalism,” which can denote the same imagined essence, but more usually—and often far more strongly—signifies representational styles and traditions. Several examples of its earlier usage may be found in the entry for headword “orientality” in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (http://dictionary.oed.com).
**oriental**: people, characters, practices, and so on believed to have their origins in the orient, and thus (on the one, deterministic hand) to have an essential nature determined by what is believed to be oriental, and (on the other, tautologically confirming hand) to be actual and particular signs of what the orient is thought to be in general terms.

**the orient**: an imaginary cultural, ethnic, and ultimately racial space that exists only in people’s minds—for the purposes of this study, in the minds of many people in the United States. Belief in this space has been in large part conceived in terms of representations disseminated in diverse media, and has led to the production of more such images.

**orientalism**: an ideology underlying cultural practices and discourses that propagate notions of the orient, the conceptual beliefs at the core of this ideology, and the putatively referential stylistic markers which signify the orient in diverse particular U.S. texts and practices.

**orientalist**: cultural practices, documents, beliefs, and discourses that display ideological or stylistic markers of the orient.

Much of this dissertation examines practices by which, in various U.S. social contexts, performance and reception have created orientality as a seemingly authentic or mimetic attribute of people. In this sense, this text may be read as a study of performative, and often musical, aspects of that idea’s construction.

U.S. media long have been rife with representations of distinct or overlapping orients. Most central here is the one often called “The Far East.” Its real-world points of reference are chiefly China, Japan, and Korea, and its creators often have drawn undiscerningly on stereotyped markers of difference—music, gesture, bodily attributes, clothing, food, names, etc.—
from all three countries, but especially the first two, as raw material for
(white) American representations of oriental difference.

In a far from absolute way, U.S. references to the orient were a bit more
likely than were European ones to invoke more eastern locales. This more
eastward referentiality within a domain of semi-distinct orients associated
with East Asia or with West Asia and North Africa also was true to a limited
degree of twentieth-century vis-à-vis nineteenth-century sources (see
E. Wigen have noted, this partial “eastward displacement of the Orient” in
public discourse may have occurred in part due to “the rise of biological
criteria as the basis for partitioning humanity”:

Most inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean look more European than
Chinese, and in the “racial science” of the early twentieth century, they were
increasingly classed as Caucasians (although Turkish-speaking peoples
occasionally appeared as “Mongolians”). Oriental peoples, by contrast, came to
be defined by most lay observers as those with a single eye fold. It is perhaps
on this grounds that Burma (Myanmar) continues to be thought of as Oriental,
while India is usually excluded. This pseudo-racial Orient is now well
entrenched in public perceptions. In consequence, the lingering scholarly
tradition of referring to the area between Morocco and Iran as the Orient has
come to seem quaintly archaic. (1997, 55)

This conveys well how nineteenth-century pseudo-sciences of the body laid
racial foundations for ways in which many people still conceive spatially
of the geographic world.31 Those notions’ bodily grounding offer a nexus
whereby ideas about musical practice seem to offer evidence for such
spatially distinct, racially telling, imagined essences as orientality.

Some of this study’s analysis broadens to include sources evoking a
more southerly orient, one representationally linked to real places in South or

31. As Lewis and Wigen observe, this has been complicated in recent decades by such things
as Japan’s positioning as contingently “Western” in certain economic senses (1997, 282n27).
Southeast Asia. At times these evocations exhibit major slippage with “Far East” references, and at times they are useful for their contrasting invocations of a safer exotic: one linked ideologically to conceptions of distant Asian peoples represented by fewer immigrants or descendants in the United States. To comparative and contextual ends the study occasionally mentions musical representations of other orients, chiefly the one that gestures towards Islamic West Asia and North Africa, especially Egypt. It does not use any of these referents and contexts to evaluate sources’ representational accuracy or “authenticity” (see below), but to analyze their local U.S. meanings. These limits of scope support a sustained focus on a manageable body of material diversely related to U.S. historical contexts that involved both dominant orientalist representations and immigrant and Asian American cultures.

In U.S. discourse, the binaries “Orient/Occident” and “East/West” often were synonymous. As one example, a 1926 article on “Creative Ideas in the Orient” slipped effortlessly back and forth from term to term:

The East has sent her sons to the white man’s schools and learned his ways. First it scornfully rejected them, then it began to imitate, now it says it can follow them as well as we. The repressed and suppressed Orient is coming out of the inferiority complex and calling to its aid its old sense of racial and cultural superiority. In India, there is a revival of Hinduism. In China, the Renaissance Movement is turning itself to the task of critically analyzing and revivifying the ancient cultural heritage of that land. In Japan, there is a Buddhist reformation. All these are signs of self-assertion, of the vindication of the rights of the indigenous culture of the East to live, even in the critical days of a scientific world.

Along with this movement goes the rejection of Western ways. Gandhi challenges the very nature of our industrialism, our science, our education. China, having embraced all these, is now looking back again to its own original sources. Young Japan, disillusioned by the effect of militarism and industrialism, is no longer thinking or talking of itself as the link between the cultures of the East and the West…. 32

This illustrates the massively homogenizing tendencies of these terms, as well as the sorts of interpretive errors to which they so easily may lead.

Within the “East,” many sources distinguished subregions with the Eurocentric adjectives “Near,” “Middle,” and “Far.” Ideas about the last of these often coherently imagined areas—and especially about China and Japan, then the countries of personal or ancestral origin for most Asian Americans—constitute this study’s focus. In 1919, one curious reader of a national magazine wrote in to ask precisely what its journalistic usage of the term “Far East” encompassed. The editor’s reply offers an apt sense of the meaning many Americans understood from the phrase: “The Far East comprises Eastern Siberia, China, Japan, Korea, Indo-China, the Straits Settlements, and the islands adjacent to the above countries. Sometimes India is also included.”33 A key context within which people made meaning from sources examined here, this contemporary understanding grouped together an area of nations and peoples often believed to have something more than just physical proximity in common. That “something” was a fictive racial essence, one widely ascribed based on bodily appearance and made credible in part by appeals to musical and other performative practices.

Some U.S. writers on Chinese or Japanese topics demarcated a “Far East” within a larger orient, and they invoked musical sound in order to position texts for American readers whom they thought might associate the “Orient” with more western locales. The book *Realism in Romantic Japan* (Beard 1930) situated this demarcation within a common self-authorizing—and conveniently overstated—frame. An extended passage conveys the

atmosphere of such detailed mullings-over of clusters of early twentieth-century popular associations invested into two primary orients:

Fashion urges us to de-bunk nations as well as their heroes. Tired of blowing bubbles of romance for generations about Asia, the West begins to prick them suddenly with indignant pen points. We recognize with our critical spectacles the famine and corruption in "placid" mammoth China; the disease under the mystic veils of India; the rags protruding through Persia’s poetry; the cruelty in necromantic Tibet; the grim monotony of industrial machinery in “flowery” Nippon. But one of our chief errors has been a too vague expectancy. When we use the word “Orient” we must know what section of the globe is implied—Near or Far East at least. Brought up on the Arabian nights, Omar Khayyam and Chu Chin Chow, the Bible stories and sundry detective fiction, we paint the whole East in terms of Asia Minor. The very name “Orient” summons to our vision pomp and blare, glass bangles and veils, raw colors and considerable tinsel, thrumming of gourd-drums and convolutions of dusky dancing-girls, all little sisters to the serpent. Our minds are stocked with names and images from “Bible Lands”; our histories frequently treat merely Turkey, Egypt and Palestine as the “Orient.”

When we use the much abused adjective “Eastern” we may mean only the traceried walls of the Saracen, the pyramids of Egypt, the Arab’s domed mosques. We may be thinking of bazaars in Bagdad or Cairo, of Damascus, Samarcand or Ctesiphon…. We may use the word as a synonym for the dazzling extravagance that accompanies power, forgetting that, in such a sense, New York is one of the world’s most “Oriental” cities to-day. This is poor preparation for Japan.

Another good reason for many of our misconceptions is the fact that we forget there is a barbarian and a classic East. [This distinction seems to have been fairly idiosyncratic.] The greater part of all Asia has been overrun by nomad tribes of Central Asia, by the Golden Horde, Tamurlane, Genghiz Khan, the Arabs, the Seljuk Turks, the Kurds, the Manchus and Khitan Tartars. Spreading their savage splendors, tribal music and legends, love of bright hues and heavy jewelry—the “new-rich” taste of the barbaric conqueror—they have trampled much of classic Asia under their horses’ hoofs. Japan is one of the few corners of that hemisphere to escape invasion; it was her peculiar good fortune that the Mongol armada was shattered on her shores by “divine winds” and valor such as dispersed Spain’s navy on the coasts of Elizabethan England.

It is the classicism of Japan which one learns to value—that severely good taste and sober charm, such as ancient India, old Hellas, or antique China must have possessed. Her theater is not half so gaudily sensual as a Broadway extravaganza; its moral atmosphere would have suited our Puritan forefathers. Moderation is the essence of her art; her painters would make a single pine cone symbolize a forest; her poets condense their dreams into thirty-seven syllables. Her courtesans are more demure in manner than many a fashionable London sub-deb. Her music, compared to the blare of a jazz band, is but a low, melancholy thread of song.

Japan is a living museum in which we may divine what China must have been before the Northern invaders subdued her to their mood. China’s greatest painter, Wu Taotzu, for instance, is known to us chiefly through copies now in
Japan. No building in China “earlier than the eleventh century A.D. is known to be extant to-day”; yet Japan has a surviving temple founded in 586 A.D. The musical dramas now heard in Peking were probably “introduced from Central Asia in the wake of the Mongol conquerors”; but in Tokyo we may listen to music much older, more nearly like that Confucius recommended…. (48–50)

This author’s emphasis on Japanese exceptionalism probably arose from her prior interest in that country and a desire to validate her own text; differently focused writers made similarly strong assertions of Chinese primacy. These kinds of authorial self-positioning all recounted and leveraged distinctions within white America’s orient as a rhetorical means of strengthening claims to representational authority and to being the bearer of new rather than old news—self-validating moves seen to this day in the long stream of books that promise to tell of a “real” essentialized China or Japan that somehow every previous American author was insufficiently adept to discern and explain.

This entire dissertation investigates how dominant U.S. ideas of orientality were connected with both musical and other constructions of difference, but we should note in a general way how prevalent were nonmusical ascriptive conjunctures of orientality with conditions and attributes that indexed both race and gender (as is implicit in much of the adjectival language in the quotation above). The body has been the defining site for constructing ideas about—and assigning people to locations within—both of those category systems. This may be seen in U.S. visual culture of the decades preceding and continuing through those on which this study focuses. Constituting an interpretive backdrop for many moments and sources treated in this study, untold numbers of periodical illustrations, advertisements,
event souvenirs, stereo views, postcards, and printed images in other media offered such visions to virtually all Americans (e.g., figs. IN.1–IN.47).³⁴

The importance of intersections among the topics of music, race, and the body with that of gender also arises throughout this study, but may be illustrated here by critical writings on one such type of conjuncture. As an example that Traise Yamamoto has critiqued, many white American men’s writings on Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and in recent times—discursively positioned Japanese women and the Japanese nation in ways that infantilized and feminized both (1999, 16–19). The tenor of those processes alternated between urges towards repression and idealization in a form of ongoing representational instability, one Yamamoto explains by using Homi Bhabha’s work on stereotypes and colonial fetishism.³⁵

In her persuasive reading, many such representations of fantasized difference were objects of desire and fear, a tension infusing innumerable U.S. texts that evince a gendered split within a racialized “Japan.” These offer polarized representations of Japanese men as embodied danger, a sign that must be “discursively erased” in order for that of the body of a reified “Japanese woman” to be “inscribed as the pleasurable site of racial and sexual difference that can be appropriated and mastered”: “She herself becomes the site of accessibility and domination, a site personifying the Japanese feminine

³⁴. For an illustrated essay on such images, see Lancefield (2003). Especially interesting as traces of popular reception as a process of sometimes-redefinitional use by individuals are postcards, which encouraged people to add personal commentary to published images; this may be seen in figs. IN.39 and IN.44. More discussion of this visual culture may be found in supplementary surveys (not part of this dissertation) noted above. For important work on more recent images of the body vis-à-vis constructions of race and nation, see Creef (2004).
³⁵. Cf. Bhabha (1994, 74–84); for a related but distinct articulation of Bhabha’s work on stereotypes to dominant U.S. constructions of Asian Americanness in terms of abjection rather than fetishism (with that model seen as a better fit to colonial discourse as such), see Shimakawa (2002, 15–17, 167–68n21).
that affirms and reaffirms its opposite: white Western masculinity” (21–22).

This enables the figure of an exoticized, sexualized, and categorically singular “Japanese woman” to stand for that of a nation constructed as “hungry for contact with the West” (22). Yamamoto writes:

Gendering Japan as female is central to the ease with which Western discourse, informed by both nationalism and misogyny, shifts between the romantic and the brutal, between structures of reciprocity and structures of mastery. This gendering is also the primary mechanism through which the body of the Japanese woman is conflated with and becomes a metonymic representation of Japan itself. The assignation of the feminine to Japan is thus literalized through the body of the Japanese woman, which is then metaphorized as a cultural/national landscape. The shifting interplay among metaphoric and literal registers—feminized nation/female body, geographic landscape/orientalized woman—rhetorically constructs a site that may alternately or simultaneously be inhabited by country and woman. (23)

Some implications of this for the U.S. reception of certain female Japanese singers become clear in Chapter 1. For now, we may take it as an example of one relevant strain of U.S. orientalism and a key theoretical framework for understanding many cultural moments central to this dissertation.36

As well as suggesting how central gender has been to orientalist figurations of race, these representational modes link back to such durable and usually metageographical notions as “race mind,” “mentality,” and “national character.” Those ideas could be signified by tales of such fictions as “oriental music” and by a whole slew of binaristic, unilineally evolutionary, or otherwise hard-and-fast typological rhetorics that differentiated self and other in uncompromising terms. Imagined group essences often intersected in such texts (and in people’s minds) with belief in music as a sign of orientality.

This leads back to race as “a cultural construct,” in the words of George Lipsitz, “but one with sinister structural causes and consequences” (1998, 2). Without taking an extended trip through critical approaches to it and such terms as “Asian,” “Asian American,” and “white,” the main point is that race is a socially made rather than a biological fact, that this constructed condition renders it no less socially real or powerful, and that people have enacted its power throughout complex histories of ascriptive and self-applied usages of racial categories. As scholars including Lipsitz have shown, some interlinked issues here involve racialized groups’ marked or unmarked status, their public representation as enjoying or lacking subjective agency, and those matters’ links to structures of power and to lived experience. While U.S. media generally mark Asianness as a noticeable and significant attribute, for example, whiteness usually goes uncommented-upon as a quietly normalized condition and quality. A desire not to reinscribe that practice underlies this dissertation’s frequent use of such phrases as “many white Americans,” rather than just “many Americans,” in some places where the shorter phrase would be equally true (in demographic ways) but would subtly equate whiteness with Americanness. Mapping a dominant (unmarked) racial identity onto a national identity that should be more inclusive, that also would elide the fact that the practices and beliefs at issue were, in overt or covert ways, bound up with the construction of whiteness itself.

The ways in which these categories are constructed and assigned to people—or are asserted by them, with the grammatical shift from “to” to “by”

37. This tactical use of language responds to issues seen as well in such texts as the Call for Papers for a March 2005 New York University conference, which called for “broadening the considerations of links between race, ethnicity, and performance—not least by adding much needed concern for critical whiteness studies” (SEM Newsletter, September 2004, 4).
marking a meaningful shift from object to agent status—implicate and play upon the body as a visible sign and a means of action, and so they link race, performance, and the body as all, in fact, socially constructed. Even the body, with all its genetically guided materiality and interior somatic sensibilities, lives life in ways structured by learned behaviors. Many of our embodied practices consist of culturally normative means of marking one’s identity within category systems of race, gender, class, and so on. The same is true of the voice as it rises from and sounds beyond the body’s dense commingling of tangible physicality, internalized ideology, social learning, individual will and creativity, and the uncountable consciously and subconsciously performed acts by which we all communicate these things.

Paul Gilroy’s concept of raciology is useful here (Gilroy 2000). It would far exceed this study’s scope to assess the overall vision and argument of Gilroy’s book Against Race, but his positioning of the last several centuries as a raciological era characterized by such historical moments as the rise and reign of fascism is crucial. The ideas central to U.S. raciology have been brutally and subtly put to work in a huge variety of social practices from slavery to military actions on and off the continent to quotidian processes framed as recreational, with musical activities among them. In all of these contexts and by articulated or implied means, “race” has marked particular kinds of human difference; but more than functioning just as a marker of something—some biological condition, some social location, some collection of perceived or ascribed traits—that already existed in the world, “race” in a raciological world has been more a constructively (that is, mostly a destructively) powerful than merely an indexical thing.
The bodily linkage of racial ideology to musical practice relies on socially situated processes by which people construct general meanings from specific experiences. Such moments of meaning construction usually entail some mix of creative acts of interpretation with a kind of steering by those dominant meanings that are most readily accessible in a given performance or text. Seldom do they consist of any sort of mechanistic transfer of belief from a cultural producer through a text and straight on into the minds of consumers. Rather, complex and multiply nuanced kinds of representation and reception tend to intermingle in ways that are rarely documented and thus are difficult to pin down definitively.

This may be especially true of musical kinds of meaning, for which a usual absence of any strictly semantic referentiality often makes things all the fuzzier. The meanings of almost any one musical text or practice or moment are many, and they may arise in diverse conjunctures of representational and interpretive contexts and practices. This study examines some of these to understand certain ways in which musical performance and its reception could and can, in and through the body and its interpretation, signify race.

Many of these signifying and interpreting moves involve mimetic practice, or mimesis. Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf have written that, among other things, mimesis “has an indicative character, with attention repeatedly turning to the gestural,” and that “that which is indicated or represented” is rendered “into a spectacle”; and they note that “the physical aspect of mimesis” is “associated with…its performative aspect, as an actualization, a presentation of what has been mimetically indicated” (1995, 5). Although the word has been used in a multitude of ways for thousands of
years, it will suffice for now to note that the type of mimesis most central here is that of racially mimetic performance, which is to say any act or practice that gestured—or was understood as gesturing—towards a racial identity not thought to be the performer’s own (for instance, as in blackface minstrelsy; gender-based examples include cross-dressing and drag practices). Evidently enough, mimesis often has crossed over with cultural appropriation.

This characterization’s brevity elides usefully complicating factors that raise interesting questions (for example, about mimetic acts in which a performer consciously embodies a stereotyped racial essence which some audience members feel to be that person’s own authentic identity), and these will become clearer in concretely historicized ways. It also could suggest that the identities such practices invoke actually exist as homogeneous biological or social facts; but that essentialist misstep may be avoided by remembering that all group identities—whether one to which a performer was believed to “belong” in real life or one widely known to have been enacted temporarily—are constructed ideas. This circles around to the fact that authenticity, so often the silent partner of mimesis (a partner that stands semi-concealed behind it in the near-background of many mimetic acts), is every bit as much a matter of cultural consent, personal belief, ideological pressure, and contextually guided interpretation—not some genuine essence that predates those things.

The bundle of racially mimetic practices central here are those that have come to be known in recent cultural criticism as “yellowface,” by way of parallel to the blackface acts to which they constituted an equally lamentable (and in some settings, longer-lived) orientalist counterpart. Both of these practices typically involve white performers wearing facial makeup meant to
index racial categories by means of coarsely schematic associations of skin color with race. To state the necessary obvious, these practices were rooted in socially constructed racial belief and imagination, not in some natural and socially unfortuitous correspondence of greasepaint colors with real-world skin tones; and in this context, the canonical way to represent orientality was with a yellow face. “Only the racialized Oriental is yellow,” in Robert Lee’s words; “Asians are not.” The exclusionary and other ideological significance of yellowface was as severe in its way as was that of more overtly political, and equally racialized, social histories of which it was an important part.

As a locally useful term spun off from the visually centered idea of yellowface, in this study “yellowvoice” refers to practices that constructed or evoked orientality in ways perceptible by the ear rather than the eye. Both representational modes often were presented and perceived together, but it is useful to have a means of denoting the specifically vocal and aural aspects of certain musical acts and moments of experience. Neither term, to be clear, implies that there was some real “yellow” essence out in the world serving as a lived foundation and originary referent for white performers’ racially mimetic acts. More precisely, they both assert that the essence of this sort that did exist in a different but very real sense was found in dominant ideologies

38. R. G. Lee (1999, 2). For a primary source invoking “yellow” skin and blood quantum in apposite ways, see Ellen N. La Motte, “The Yellow Streak,” Century, March 1919, 607–12. 39. An important recent study of many related cultural moments, some of which involved yellowface as such (but many of which did not), is Mari Yoshihara’s Embracing the East; cited in specific connections throughout this dissertation, its subject and approach also bear a more general relationship to the present work. In different but related ways, both of these texts seek to understand how white Americans’ orientalist practices were part of their larger social contexts—in Yoshihara’s words, “not to chastise or champion” such people, “but rather to critically analyze a set of ideologies that defined the discourse” at issue (Yoshihara 2003, 196). Her project focused on specific white women’s agency, while this one attends more centrally to performance practices and modes of reception as such; but both overlap in many ways.
of racial difference, not in any of the Asian or Asian American people who
encountered so many white Americans’ unwelcome mapping of that wholly
imagined but still efficacious essence onto people of Asian birth or heritage.

Explaining: Five Local Customs
Having glanced at a few potentially troublesome terms, it will be helpful
to explain five local conventions of usage, grammar, and typography. These
concern two particularly vicious terms, forms of personal names, the word
“actress,” “scare” quotes, and the use of past and present tenses.

The casual abundance of two especially racist words in some sources is
analytically significant and requires interpretive comment, but to repeat those
words ad nauseum could slip into uncritical casualness and suggest that such
language is not so bad after all. Writing at a time when white racists in the
past twenty years have murdered Asian Americans including Vincent Chin,
Ly Yung Cheung, Jim Loo, Ram Chun, Sokhim An, Rathinar Or, Ouen Lim,
Navroze Mody, Tran Thanh Thuy, Luyen Phan Nguyen, Yoshihiro Hattori,
Henry Lau, Jim Ming Hai Loo, Thanh Mai, Thien Minh Ly, Ji-Ye Sun, Thao
Pham, Anil Thakur, Thong Hy Huynh, and Joseph Ileto (to name just a few),
to blithely reinscribe the hateful words “Jap” and “Chink” even in analytical
contexts would constitute an unthinking verbal assault.40 Having spelled out
those words just once in the preceding sentence to locate them explicitly in

40. See Matsuda (1993; 1996, 170, 178–79); for essays on the 20th anniversary of Chin’s murder
and its later social resonance, see Ngai (2002) and other articles in the same issue of Amerasia
On related social currents, see Vijay Prashad, “America Loves Migrant Labor but Hates the
Immigrant,” Hartford Courant, 7 May 2000. On these and other anti-Asian hate crimes, racially
motivated murder in general, and the double need not to gloss over histories of racist
violence but also not to reinscribe the idea that people killed in these ways were passive
their violent discursive and historical surroundings, this study will refer to
them in the few places where it is analytically useful to do so (aside from their
appearance in direct quotation) as “J*p” and “Ch*nk.”

While this may strike some readers as a distracting breakage of textual
flow, this distancing (a kind of typographic alienation effect) is precisely the
point. Racist language too easily slips beyond analytical frames to foster real
violence against real people. Even read within critical surroundings, these
words can be instruments of hate and pain, capable of opening old or new
wounds for readers with first-hand experience of their antagonistic uses.
As Janice Mirikitani has written in the poem “Generations of Women” (in
part about the War Relocation Authority’s concentration camps): “Some
imprisonments are permanent: / white walls encaged her / with a single
syllable: / JAP.” (1995, 92). In this light, what might seem at first a needlessly
distracting typographic conceit is founded in the most practical of reasons.

Personal names are presented here with spellings and order consistent
with the primary sources central to the analysis. In most cases, this ends up
following the lead of U.S. newspaper accounts and advertisements. Most of
these sources put family names last, as did most performers themselves in
U.S. professional contexts. Thus the majority of Japanese and Chinese names
are presented in this way—for example, as Tamaki Miura rather than Miura Tamaki. There are exceptions such as Long Tack Sam, who led ensembles
billed with his family name first; but his daughters performed as Nee Sa (or
Neesa) and Mi Na (or Mina) Long, so references to them follow those forms.
The same locally flexible principle governs diacritics, which most of these
musicians did not use in their self-presentation to American audiences. For
example, based on the singer’s own seemingly self-published promotional materials, this study refers to Tomijiro Asai rather than Tomijirō Asai (or Asai Tomijirō). This leads to some inconsistencies, but to follow performers’ forms of public naming offers the best chance—despite the likely interventions of managers, agents, and public-relations hacks, in some cases—of respecting their wishes regarding this aspect of self-presentation. It also supports clearer point-by-point comparison of interpretive text with primary sources.

For similar reasons, despite a recent move towards gender-neutral use of the word “actor” to describe female and male theatrical performers (and despite my agreement with this shift and the reasons for it), this study often uses “actress” for female actors to preserve clarity. While this practice has the ancillary effect of conveying a more accurate sense of early twentieth-century public discourse, its main purpose is to avoid triggering a thousand small moments of confusion when crossing into and out of the many direct quotations embedded in this study’s analysis (cf. Kano 2001, 231n1).

Scare quotes seldom are used in this study. All of the words central to it denote ideologically laden concepts which often have been deployed as if they index naturally preexisting biological or social facts with names such as “race” or “the orient.” To put all such terms in quotation marks would render nearly unreadable a text with a sustained focus on unpacking them. The framing of a few especially troublesome words in this introduction also helps to support minimal use of scare quotes, as does the tactical use of modifiers such as “supposedly” where they are most needed.

This study’s interpretation of historical sources is cast in the past tense except where it would be too awkward to do so. By marking their historical
situatedness, this avoids the documentary equivalent of an illusory and reifying “ethnographic present.” Past-tense references to orients imagined in the early twentieth-century United States should not suggest that many of these mental landscapes or their descendants do not survive to the present. Many do. This study uses the past tense not in an exclusive sense to convey closure (“this is how things were, but are no longer”), but to maintain temporal focus and distance while leaving open the question of the longevity of practices and beliefs (“this is how things were, and may or may not be to this day”). This may help to keep the analysis enmeshed with sources and their contexts, and to steer it towards sensitivity to local meanings rather than enabling it to gesture too easily in sweeping ahistorical ways. It also may help to avoid tacitly attributing an orientalist timelessness, as it were, to early twentieth-century materials. Avoiding that kind of misreading may, in turn, support better-grounded comparisons between earlier and later sources.

Left at a historically bounded, past-tense point, this strategy could diminish the utility of this work as a study of modes of representation and reception that do foreshadow current acts and texts in significant ways, and in some cases continue virtually unchanged a century later. The Conclusion/Epilogue begins to address this by tracing threads of representation that cross into the present time and tense. I hope that this enables the study to suggest certain connections and disjunctures with recent events and practices while not conflating past and present in its historicized analyses of older sources.

**Telling of Tales or Not: Narrative Analysis & Discursive Neighbors**

The invocation of other texts leads to this last framing section, which touches on interlinked questions of narrative analysis and of certain other studies
with which this project is allied but from which it remains distinct. In order to maintain its focus on performance-centered ways in which ideas about the musical voice and body afforded ideal opportunities for reinscribing racial ideology, this dissertation foregoes any protracted narrative analysis of the stories underlying many of the documents that constitute its heterogeneous body of sources. Many of its sources—concert reviews, children’s pantomime scripts, and so on—presented, documented, or structured performances of musically racialized human difference strung along orientalist narrative threads. Most drew upon a reservoir of representational tropes already well examined in studies of these and more literary types of documents. The existence of those narrative analyses (and their predominance among extant studies of such sources) is unsurprising, due to the intellectual roots of much cultural analysis in literary theory and to its consequent methodological strengths. Many scholars’ tools of choice are best used to take apart narrative as a means of discovering its inner workings and the ideological connections which link it to social facts that exist beyond the texts being examined.

Along with its theoretical relevance (seen in specific connections noted throughout this dissertation), that extant work is tremendously useful to this project in a practical way insofar as it offers en masse a reasonably complete understanding of the general nature of these orientalist narrative practices, the particular universes of dominant social meanings they invoked, and their common means and forms of textual signification. That body of narrative analyses of U.S. orientalist texts enables this study to focus on processes of ideological transmission that were active in performance and its mediated representations, and thus to complement more textually oriented analyses
without repeating their interpretive work or presenting core findings that offer only old news about what were often, if considered in narrative terms, genres and media of orientalist production only slightly distinct from—or in some cases identical to—those already thoroughly dealt with elsewhere.

An analogous relationship to work on cultural production is played out here as well. Many studies that focus on narrative are centered also on textual authorship, while this study attends as much as possible to use and reception. Many of its sources do have their clearest significance as traces of production; but here a reasonably steadfast analytical intent and practice is to push these materials—texts, but not just words on paper—in order to discover what they can tell us, or enable us to imagine reasonably, about what their listeners, viewers, enactors, and readers did with them. These practices included both social use through embodied acts and more psychologically interior processes of making meaning with hegemonic guidance. The imaginative spells and patches of interpretation below do not disavow their speculative nature, but treat provisionally grounded speculation as a useful means of opening up space for understanding plausible but undocumented modes of use and reception—while making no claim to evidentiary rigor where the sources that spurred such musings necessarily fall short of actually proving them.

The narrative-centered studies that this work presupposes and which it may complement include those not only of printed texts such as novels and newspaper journalism but of theater and film as well.41 Most critical studies of U.S. orientalism in those media—even of sound film, in which audience

41. As examples on literature, theater, film, and television from among works cited elsewhere in this dissertation or in supplementary texts (available from the author) that survey selected contextual topics, see W. Wu (1982), Du (1992), Marchetti (1993), and Hamamoto (1994); for relevant ideas about narrative and ideology in non-orientalist music, see McClary (1997).
experiences of a performed script are intimately wrapped in the signifying practices of vocal inflection, other modes of bodily expression, and accompanying musical sound—tend to focus resolutely on narrative elements. These analytical foci include such things such as story lines, plot twists, and essentialized attributes made evident by characters’ narrated thoughts and words—and sometimes through their actions, but seldom by the specific performative means by which they enact them. Although often neglected, intentional and unintentional ways of envoicing and otherwise embodying race can be central to how people make heterogeneous (but hegemonically guided) meanings from these practices, and to the sometimes astounding credibility which many audience members invest into performed representations of human difference made categorical in such ways. Many of these studies engage seriously with iconographic aspects of their sources, as do studies of orientalism in the visual arts; but generally this engagement still attends more to textually static than to performative aspects of representation, and more to cultural producers and products than to reception processes. This is not to criticize narrative analyses for doing what they do (and doing it well), but to clarify by a more neutral kind of contrast this dissertation’s aims.

In its emphasis on practices of and responses to musical voices and bodies trained, experienced, and documented through diverse media, this performance- and reception-centered study also occupies an interpretive location mutually complementary with those of other analyses focused on notated musical texts—chiefly U.S. popular sheet music—and their histories of authorial production (e.g., recent or current work by such scholars as Judy Tsou, Anthony Sheppard, Darren Brown, Krystyn Moon, and Charles Hiroshi
Garrett). Chapter 8 looks at some compositions as background for analyses of certain issues they play out, but it does not seek to replicate studies that focus more on histories of musical production than does this one—which may offer a more performance-centered complement to their findings.

So, while this study is indebted to the literature on orientalist producers and their texts, it has a different focus on the practice and reception of performance, with some areas—useful ones, I hope—of overlap regarding historical and theoretical contexts, (differently approached) primary texts, more diffusely distributed textual and iconographic tropes, and a desire to undermine some small part of the power of racial ideology by exposing to view processes of representation and reception which know their greatest efficacy if left undisturbed. With the general form and content of white America’s persistently racialized oriental characters already well understood through literary analyses, this study seeks a performance-centered understanding not of what those ideologies were (which would be news to almost no one) but of how ideas about the often musical embodiment of racial essences offered deceptively compelling evidence for many white Americans’ belief in those imagined categories and for the wholesale ascription of those phantasms’ oriental attributes to Asian and Asian American people.

While recent scholarship has brought into better view the core materials and principles of textual and iconographic representations broadly associated with these musical processes, less closely examined have been the especially convincing and analytically intransigent processes of performed embodiment, its second-order published traces, and its seldom fully-conscious reception. This dissertation reflects one exploratory effort to help address this disparity,
with special attention to the roles of music and other sonic cultural practice. Trying to craft a contextualized account of musical practices and processes of meaning construction in varied cultural domains has led me to trespass in a worrisomely large number of disciplines. I hope that in these ventures I have not misused or misrepresented work by researchers far better grounded in them than I am. I also hope that some interpretive bridges half-built here may offer useful means of looking back across into more musical concerns from often less musical areas—from what still are to me those bridges’ other sides.

**Mapping: Traversing This Text**

A sketch of this document’s organizing structure may be of use in keeping one’s conceptual place while traversing it. Its analytical text consists of ten chapters in Parts 1–3.† These parts are organized by a purposely fuzzy and transgressed analytical separation of reception and production processes into those centered on notions of authenticity (Part 1) and mimesis (Parts 2 and 3). In a crosscutting way, Parts 1 and 2 focus on the idea of the body, while the first two chapters in Part 3 attend chiefly to that of the voice (with a final

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† Before continuing on to these chapters, some readers may wish to look at supplementary texts (available from the author as noted above on page 12) that survey contextual topics. Supplement 1 considers some key terms and theoretical literature on race, musical meaning, and other relevant subjects. Supplement 2 surveys historical and representational contexts for moments and sources treated in the dissertation. These include Asian American histories and representations; scholarly work on U.S. domestic orientalism; advertising trade cards and related performance; world’s fairs and expositions; U.S. imperialism in the Philippines and Hawai‘i; elite U.S. consumption of Asian visual arts and commodities; stereo views and picture postcards; travel lecturers’ representations of Asia; the U.S. reception of The Mikado and related English works; Ruth St. Denis; the Salomé craze; the U.S. reception of Sada Yacco; representations of the Russo-Japanese War in U.S. culture; and Asian musics in general histories of music and other textual publications. It then discusses a chronological compilation of excerpts from diverse U.S. texts, presented separately in Supplement 3. Supplement 4 presents chronological newspaper items bearing on the ta-tao (cf. Chapter 7), Supplement 5 lays out the keyword indexing system developed to serve this project’s specific needs, and Supplement 6 lists all references cited in the supplements or in the dissertation. For reasons of length, this dissertation as such sets aside all of these topics and materials.
chapter broadening out to glance at musical aspects of cinematic practice). This gives the parts successive primary concerns with dominant ideas about the authentic body, the mimetic body (as a hinge between ideologies of the authentically visible and the mimetically audible), and the mimetic voice.

That being said, the theoretical and the lived relationships between authenticity and mimesis and between voice and body do not remotely resemble binary oppositions. These ideas’ reciprocal and nearly constant irruption into each other’s textual turf below reflects this complexity. As an example of their mutual permeability, Part 1 attends not only to some white Americans’ understandings of certain performers’ bodies as authentically oriental but also to attendant notions of orientally authentic vocality sung to mimetic musical texts composed by Europeans or white Americans. Nonetheless, these successive thematic foci offer a convenient trajectory, one along which we may consider diverse practices and moments that often played in differently weighted ways to the same underlying issues.

Within each of these three parts’ top-level groupings of interpretation, the analysis is structured in response both to the forms and ideological aspects of defining performance and reception practices and to the major media which now preserve those histories’ most useful documentary traces.

Centered on white Americans’ well-documented spectatorial experiences of embodied musical orientality and leavened with scarcer traces of Asian and Asian American perspectives on such moments, the three chapters in Part 1 pass through genres and venues in which people could see and hear supposedly authentic racial difference in diverse interpretive contexts. Beginning with an operatic domain in which many listeners
perceived racial authenticity in Japanese sopranos’ performances of orientalized roles, the first chapter explores those reception processes’ internal complexities and disjunctures as traces of heterogeneous interpretive responses that still were centered on a fairly consistent ideological core. The second chapter considers the less profusely documented, non-orientalized self-presentation of another Japanese singer of European music in America, a man many white Americans probably heard as singing his own assimilation; the third examines constructions of supposedly authentic orientality as one among many flavors of familiarized racial novelty in vaudeville.

Part 2’s four chapters on the mimetic body gradually move from the reception of professional yellowface productions to representational acts that were internalized by far greater numbers of amateur participants, following a practice-centered path through processes of watching, staging, becoming, and being. Its first chapter surveys orientalist spectatorial opportunities presented on various stages; its second looks more closely at professional performers’ tales about their practices of mimetic embodiment; its third shows how racially imaginative bodily practices were widely taught to American children at school and at home; and its fourth follows related modes of instructed orientalist mimesis into adult amateur performance.

The first two chapters in Part 3 explore the idea, one held by many white Americans, that orientality could be made audible in the mimetic voice. These chapters offer media-centered analyses of orientalized voices and bodies in sheet music and recordings. Chapter 10 follows this media-centered approach beyond the voice (and its instrumental counterparts) to consider music’s ability to orientalize voices and bodies in silent and sound film, as a segue to
later decades. In all ten chapters, media-focused issues shadow their practice-oriented counterparts in acts of publication and response. The dissertation ends by listening to later echoes of earlier practices, mulling over how these histories of performance and reception shape raciological hearing to this day.

Woven through this study are five dyads: music/race, voice/body, authenticity/mimesis, performance/media, representation/reception. These denote ideas and processes connected in tension—at times pulling or pushing each other, at other moments bonding into conceptual or lived entities. Their shifting relationships guide this text, which follows their moves in order to explain them. Chapter to chapter, sentence to sentence, it pans within and among these pairs of nonidentical twins, here zooming in on one for a close-up look, there pulling back to see that it is bound historically and analytically to its steadiest partner even as it shares functional space with other terms from other pairs (and with other ideas and processes; to attend to these dyads is not to posit a closed system). These are not opposed terms of any static sort, but something more slippery, nuanced, and interesting to try to unravel—less minimal than maximal pairs. The connective and distancing bonds between and among these dyads as units vary radically from moment to moment, as they seem to define each other through disjunction, or meet on intersecting trajectories, or drift apart into loosely linked domains of meaning, or dissolve into complementary angles for viewing a single hazy interpretive object—but one made no less massive or less consequential by its haziness (and this object itself may in turn be one of their components—music, race, the body…).

This swirlingly atmospheric flux of signification, a space and a condition and a process in which interpretive tools may become interpreted things, is an
ordinary part of musical reception and other aspects of daily life. Or more accurately, rather than being a part of individual and broadly cultural, social, and political ways of living, these and other fuzzy ideal bodies in motion constitute the interpretive environment within which so much human activity is lived and felt and thought—that is, within which we each and we all live and feel and think it in ways our own but not in fact always only our own.

In an attempt to interpret certain views of this ideological flux in ways that convey a sense of its motion, analytical form here follows the circuitous vapor trails of its objects. I hope that it does so in ways which may repay with grounded and open-ended interpretation any debt they incur to readers as the price of chronological nonlinearity. And with that commercial metaphor, we may embark on an experimental interpretation of often commodified U.S. representations of racial ideology through musically hegemonic means.
Imagining Authentic Musical Orientality

Essence, Body, & Voice in the Dominant U.S. Reception of Asian & Asian American Singers

A strident, deafening racket crashes into my ears. Stringed instruments, wind instruments, percussion instruments, sound all together. It is neither a symphony nor a tom-tom, but an avalanche of discord cascading into the street from the open windows of a night restaurant. The rattling of dominoes on the tables punctuates the noise, and in the distance rises the treble voice of a singing girl.

—Leon Werth (“Anam Nights,” Living Age, 4 September 1926, 513)

Madame Tamaki Miura stands supreme as Japan’s prima donna. Her “Madame Butterfly” and other operas have achieved her a fame throughout the whole world. …She has thrown the native reserve to the winds and opened the springs of her soul. These feelings are there all the time, but are held in strictest leash under Japanese customs. The Japanese woman is probably the most feminine woman in the world, and the opera is one means of expressing this wealth of tenderest affection in her heart.

—Allen Faust (1926, 91–92)
Chapter 1

Hearing Reinscription, Imagining Authenticity

The U.S. Reception of “Japanese Sopranos” as Native Butterflies

I live and feel Madame Butterfly. — Tamaki Miura

To the friends who visited us in those days, I felt myself to be a comicality, a toy. I was often spoken of as a “Japanese doll”, or worse still as the “cute” little Japanese. My mother’s guests found in me what Pierre Loti found in all Japan, “qui n’a pas l’air sérieux, qui fait l’effet d’une chose pour rire.” I felt this more keenly than I understood it. I had never been to Japan; I was as innocent of any real knowledge of the Japanese as those who visited us, but whatever I did, of good or of bad, was sure to be because I was Japanese. — Kathleen Tamagawa (1932, 24)

Early twentieth-century accounts of Chinese or Japanese singing as heard by white Americans could betray an almost visceral defensiveness. This aversion to Asian voices not under the influence of European traditions was contemporary with discourse on the yellow peril and on Americanization through assimilation—processes effected in part by excluding certain practices. Some discussions of Asianness and Americanness used metaphors of violent collision, while others used a more subtly hegemonic language of transformation. This doubleness infused many white Americans’ reception of Asian and Asian American singers.2 This history of audition was more than just an epiphenomenal reflection of ideology; they could hear the voices of

2. The use here (and below) of such phrases as “white American,” “white men,” and “white women” is intended as a means of not leaving whiteness in its usual position as an unmarked norm in discussions of U.S. culture, and of attending to the fact that it was a frequently silent discursive counterpart to orientality in many of these texts. This should suggest neither that there was some unitary “white” way of hearing any given performance or performer, nor that any one listener and writer’s views arose in some essentialist way from her or his social categorization as white—but that those kinds of social roles often are related, in ways that are complex and difficult to untangle with certainty, to how people may tend to hear difference.
people susceptible to construction as oriental (due to physical appearance or national origins) as providing direct musical testimony for racial difference.

Hearing an uncontrolled Asianness marked by timbre, melody, and language they found incomprehensible, white listeners could perceive singers as part of an invasive threat. Or, hearing a contained orientality known from its mimetic embodiment in such genres as opera and vaudeville, they could enjoy comforting spectacles that supported tales of assimilation. The latter scenarios confirmed racial categories in new ways which many white Americans found persuasive. These modes of hearing difference used embodied metaphors of musicality to assert the possibilities and limits of assimilation of Asian Americans into U.S. society. The meanings many people made from such experience built on the voice’s bodily grounding. As the audible sign of a body categorized in racial terms, the voice was an ideal source of affective content for the orientality many white people ascribed to Asian/American musicians. European Americans often wrote of the voice as sounding an oriental essence. Such rhetoric was part of a context in which writers invoked Asian/American voices as signs of orientality in fiction or journalism. These texts could tell of audible orientality as a sign of exotic desirability or of an unbridgeable difference in musical and racial identities.

In these decades, U.S. audiences had growing opportunities actually to hear singers of Asian birth or heritage. Many white Americans heard these performances as reassuring or troubling convergences of subordinate (Asian) and elevated (European) racial musicality. In heterogeneous but overlapping ways of hearing, and writing about hearing, these moments of reception show how music’s grounding in the body made singing a key site for constructing
and ascribing racial identity. Working its way through a variety of texts that show how certain often-overlapping rhetorical moves figured in differently nuanced accounts, this chapter explores some of the specific means by which white Americans’ responses to Japanese opera singers linked music and race.

Hearing “Japanese Sopranos” as Native Butterflies

...Mme. Miura...is innately winsome and winning and invariably graceful, and she made an exquisite picture of Oriental femininity. She is a diminutive woman and she has a tiny voice—a voice that would be completely lost, probably, in another opera and character. But it is just such an infantile voice as the Butterfly of John Luther Long’s conception might be expected to possess and so there is no shock to illusion.3

Japanese singers of orientalist roles in grand opera offered some of the earlier opportunities for white Americans to hear Asian-born performers embody musical orientality. People attending such performances often thought they would hear voices that would validate their ideas about oriental musicality.

A New York Evening Post critic wrote of this belief shortly after the 1915 arrival of the most prominent Japanese soprano who performed in the United States:

“Many of those who went to hear the Oriental Butterfly doubtless expected to hear an Oriental voice. In the medium the suggestion is there, the rolled ‘r’ which would liberate this part of the voice is sometimes used, but usually not. The result is a little reedy, but when Mme. Miura’s voice rises into the upper register, all whiteness vanishes. It soars true as a bell, up and up, with no effort, with unusual volume, and a warmth that thrills. It would be most interesting to hear her in some Occidental rôle, tho no other part could suit her as Butterfly does.”4

4. Quoted in “A Japanese ‘Butterfly’,” Literary Digest, 13 November 1915, 1085. The fact that this and many review excerpts below link music and race both reflects a recurrent aspect of such writing and serves this study’s topic. Since the main question this dissertation asks is how ideas about music have helped make those about race seem credible, it attends above all to ways in which many acts and texts offered such preferred readings. This could have the effect of seeming to stress “negative” over “positive” aspects of these reviews, but the aim here is not characterize them in encompassing ways; rather, it is to understand raciological aspects of the cultural work they did. This chapter does not offer a general history of these singers’ reception, which would swell it further or lessen its ability to ground its findings in readings of a sufficient number of sources. For a less narrow study that offers a useful sense of Miura’s life, career, and reception in many contexts, see Yoshihara (forthcoming [2004?]).
This passage displays recurring themes in the U.S. reception of these singers. Most evident is a belief in a unitary oriental voice, one signifying a gendered and racialized essence doubly located in a singer’s body and her nation of origin. As Traise Yamamoto has shown, similar processes of “metonymic embodiment” have been central to much U.S. orientalism (1999, 22–23). In Miura’s reception, this process gained the suasive force of what many listeners heard to be embodied and thus incontrovertible evidence.

In his study of a film version of the Butterfly story, Nick Browne locates cultural authenticity as a central concern of the reviewer above, for whom “the quality of voice, as distinct from acting and gesture is the central site of a cultural contradiction: At the lower end of the register, the voice hints at an impurity—an Oriental residue—which gradually disappears with increasing volume and warmth in the higher end” (1996, 232). Browne notes another comment on the distinction between Japanese and orientalist Italian music, and its presumption that singers such as Miura had to unlearn Japanese traditions in order to sing opera. Music’s grounding in the body located such reviews’ meaning in a raciological domain where whiteness was unmarked and other marked identities were ascribed to the body and the voice.5

In the context of other responses to Japanese singers of Butterfly, reviews such as this communicated an unproblematized awareness that these events

5. These practices extended in various ways beyond these decades and the racial identity many white Americans ascribed to Miura. As Lisa Barg has shown in regard to reasons for casting African American singers in a 1934 production of Thomson and Stein’s Four Saints in Three Acts, an “excessive focus on black voices depended upon the presumption of a white norm, and it is significant that neither Thomson nor the reviews ever name the ‘racial qualities’ of white voices except in the language of negation.” Those ways of thinking about voices were musical versions of a process which normalized whiteness and naturalized its power: “This seeming inability to mark white voices as some-thing is precisely how whiteness as a racial category in representation wields its power and dominance” (Barg 2000, 152).
were sites for performing racial identities of two types: involuntary ones assigned to people in the real world and openly fictive ones constructed by operatic narratives. While these categories could constrain singers’ careers in rigid ways, tales of exceptional performers’ ability to move between them could support other interpretations. Those stories used intercultural musical transmission and performance as metaphors for the possibilities and limits of the (European) Americanization of a select few Asians and Asian Americans.

Most accounts presented such singers as having learned operatic vocal techniques almost as passive vessels filled by their European masters, while a smaller number located agency in these performers themselves. Many authors believed that an unusually talented Asian person could take in non-Asian practices under the proper tutelage. Most tales of European orientalist musical texts and Asian singers’ voices and bodies meeting on the U.S. stage were bound up with debates about race, gender, and class. These links to social issues and discourse often were implicit but powerfully apparent.

An account of soprano Tamaki Miura’s San Francisco debut provides a leaving-off point for analysis of her dominant U.S. reception. It offers a sense of the often favorable response to Miura and of recurring themes in her press. Titled “California Audience Warms to Art of Japanese ‘Butterfly’: Voice and Charm of Nippon Girl Bring Glory to Boston Company,” the review included:

“Madame Butterfly,” with the daring realism of a Japanese born Cio-Cio-San in the fascinating person of Tamaki Miura, was the second offering of the Boston Grand Opera Company, and last night’s affair at the Cort Theater was a real opera night, with people shouting from all parts of the house their enthusiasm for the dainty girl who portrays her own quaint land through the medium of a story of American origin, set to music by an Italian and vocalized in the French tongue.

Miss Tamaki Miura was presented as the novelty of the Boston Grand Opera season and folks are apt to consider that novelties have no great wearing qualities. But the qualities of the little girl’s voice and the splendid sincerity of
her acting, together with the prettiness of her manner and the grace and charm of her movements, won the audience to a far higher pitch of enthusiasm than was displayed at any time on Monday night when “L’Amore Die Tre Re” was presented with its beauty and tragic majesty.

The Japanese girl’s voice is not robust. In contrast with the full mezzo soprano of Elvira Leveroni’s Suzuki it seemed frail, but it is a true soprano, capable of beautifully interpreting the lyrics of “Butterfly.” And the lady so excellently filled the picture. Not since James G. Corbett played the pugilist in Shaw’s “Cashel Byron’s Profession” has there been such realism on the stage as when the Japanese girl sang “Madame Butterfly.”

Possibly politics has no place in a theatrical review, but it was interesting to note the sympathy and friendliness the Japanese singer found in the California audience. There in itself is proof that California land legislation is an economic measure and not one of race prejudice. No question of economics is involved in the work of so rare an artist as Tamaki Miura, so she is welcomed into the universal republic of art without question. Her voice is her naturalization paper, her art gives her freehold in the hearts of America. The applause was a Japanese “inclusion” movement. The Japanese who were in the audience last night must have been highly gratified at the success of their compatriot in the alien vehicle of Italian grand opera.6

Many aspects of this writer’s sense of what Miura meant as Butterfly recurred in her other press. These include the attraction of seemingly realistic oriental novelty, a paternalizing view of a small Japanese body (that of a “little girl” in her thirties), and perceived correspondences of performers’ bodies with both picturesque representations and systematically racialized national types.7

This review articulated other meanings often seen as more tacit subtexts. One positioned Miura as a role model for Japanese and Japanese American people said to be “highly gratified” by her performance. Another is clear in the rhetorical claim that Miura’s “voice is her naturalization paper,” which distilled the idea that musical ability and training enabled her to come to the United States and foresee a long professional residence in a period of anti-Asian discourse and immigration acts. Other accounts of Miura occasionally

made similar points, but this review may have been unique in its linkage of her San Francisco reception to debates over California state legislation which would forbid land ownership by anyone not eligible for naturalization—under federal law of the time, primarily immigrants from Asia.8

By invoking one audience’s approval of Miura in an orientalist role as evidence that Californian support for Alien Land Acts was not motivated by “race prejudice,” this exculpatory interpretation of the applause and shouting of a full house of opera fans on a single night elided the difference between many white Californians’ opposition to allowing Japanese immigrant farming families to own the land on which they were building new livelihoods, versus transitory enjoyment of a singer making brief use of a tiny plot of stage (and it presupposed that economic motivations cannot coincide with racist ones). While some writers enlisted Miura’s rhetorical figure to support other social agendas, this invocation of her in defense of anti-Asian legislation shows that even seemingly favorable moments of intercultural reception can bear chilling messages if constructed in raciological terms. With this in mind, this chapter examines some white American listeners’ explicit and implicit interpretations of what Miura’s performances of Butterfly meant to them, the ways in which they constructed those meanings with frequent recourse to notions of racially authentic embodiment made audible by the voice, and the diverse ideological uses to which they could put these musically constructed arguments.

Butterfly as Text, Trope, & Role: Contexts for Hearing “Japanese Sopranos”

The Butterfly story predates Puccini’s opera. In the century since its creation, the character and its spinoffs have circulated in media and venues that range from Broadway to Hollywood, sheet music to records, silent to sound film to television, and just about everywhere else from postcards to cigar labels.

The story tells of Cho-Cho-San (Butterfly), a fifteen-year-old Japanese girl who marries Pinkerton, a white American sailor. She understands the marriage to be real, but Pinkerton believes otherwise and returns to the United States. Butterfly pines for him for several years. He returns with his white American wife to take his and Butterfly’s child to the United States. The despondent Butterfly kills herself in despair, in a sort of aestheticized suicide that was a routine response to adversity by orientalist tales’ Asian characters.

Recent decades have seen many oppositional invocations of the Butterfly character as the forebear of a long lineage of racist and sexist representations. Some critiques invoke the character as a resilient stereotype seen later in self-sacrificing geisha and Lotus Blossom characters (e.g., Tajima 1989). Much Asian American feminist criticism has found Butterfly to be an early and long-lived incarnation of ideas which many white Americans uncritically ascribe to women of Asian heritage.9 These tenacious beliefs have been bound up with figurations of Japan as a feminized nation subordinate to the United States. In Traise Yamamoto’s words, “the ‘geisha-ized’ Japanese woman as both racial and sexual other is not merely a distasteful expression of Western

stereotyping but the necessary mechanism of a paradigm in which Japan, femininely infantile and sexually exotic, may be mastered” (1999, 61).

These critiques have foci different from this study’s, but they share an approach of unpacking raciological discourse to undermine essentialist ideas. They offer key contexts for this work and look towards social aims which I hope it may serve as well. Taking as a fact the idea that representations of submissive Asian (American) femaleness encourage the imposition of daily unpleasantnesses and worse on many Asian and Asian American women in the United States, this chapter aims, in part, to show how ideas about music, the body, and authenticity often have supported such notions of difference.

“Madame Butterfly” was first published in 1898 in the Century magazine as a story by John Luther Long, and it was reissued in book editions. Long had never been to Japan, but his sister had lived there as a missionary (Groos 1991). He based his story loosely on one by Pierre Loti (Julien Marie Viaud), Madame Chrysanthème, published in France in 1888. Loti had based his story in part on his experiences living in Japan, where he had arrived in 1885, coincidentally just a year after Miura was born. In 1900 the dramatic producer David Belasco and Long developed a play based on his version of the story. The two would collaborate again two years later on another tale of Japan, a smash success called The Darling of the Gods. Henry Krehbiel’s comments on

10. E.g., see K. Wang (1996), Cho (1997a, 1997b); for a New York judge’s reflections assessing how Madame Butterfly and Dragon Lady tropes figured in public perceptions of her identity and her work on the civil and criminal bench, see Chin-Brandt (1997).
12. For a French edition, see Loti [pseudonym of Viaud] (1927); a recent reprint of an early English-language translation is Loti [pseudonym of Viaud] (1985). Reputable sources give conflicting dates from 1887 to 1893 for the first publication of Loti’s story, but this apparent inconsistency has no bearing on the present analysis; Szyliowicz (1988, 30) has 1888.
the earlier play suggest how music figured in that version of the tale: “Mr. Belasco’s emotions, we know, find eloquent expression in stage lights. But the ear must be carried off to the land of enchantment as well as the eye. ‘Come, William Furst, recall your experiences on the Western coast. For my first curtain I want a quaint, soft Japanese melody, pp — you know how!’” (1917, 171). Upon seeing Long and Belasco’s play in London in 1900, the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini decided to write an opera based on it.13

Puccini finished an initial version of the opera in 1903. After a disastrous 1904 premiere and two years of work on revisions, the opera came into its published form in 1906. Ever since, Madame Butterfly has reigned as the most-loved operatic vehicle for enacting orientality.14 It became hugely popular in the United States, and a profusion of parodies and burlesques referred to it.15

13. For a Belasco-centric account, see Winter (1918, 1:489–92); see also Krehbiel (1917, 172). The precise relationships of textual borrowing involved are not significant here. Many studies consider this intertextuality; e.g., Rij (2001, 57–138, with a summary graphical representation at 87); see also Honey and Cole (2002, 1–21), Krehbiel (1917, 169); for authorial musings on the work’s pre-operatic incarnations, see J. Long (1903, ix–xv).

14. This chapter focuses on certain U.S. reception histories, setting aside the opera’s broader history of production and reception. While, within the U.S. contexts at issue in this study, this Italian work was a vehicle for enacting orientality, it may well have been one for enacting occidentality in many Asian performance contexts—where its fictive Japanese trappings could so reasonably be swamped by its actually far more defining European musical and stage practice, as well as grand opera’s more general cultural and institutional associations. For an illustrated introduction to its production history, see Lehmann (1984); see also Julian Smith (1984) and the rest of John (1984a); on related aspects of Puccini’s Turandot, see Carner (1984) and the rest of John (1984b), Ashbrook and Powers (1991). General studies of Puccini and this work offer further background; e.g., Carner (1936), Marek (1951), Groos (1989, 1991, 1999), Budden (1992), Tambling (1996, 136–44); see Browne (1996) on the opera and the 1915 Mary Pickford film. Also useful are studies that attend in theoretical ways to certain aspects of these or later production histories, e.g. P.-h. Liao (1990), Shevtsova (1995), Woo (1997), Yun (1998); on ideological relationships to later works, see Heung (1995).

15. E.g., Hoity-Toity featured a story line “flexible enough to include John T. Kelly as...an Irish cannibal, and Fay Templeton as Cho-Cho-San in a brief travesty of Madame Butterfly” (Fields and Fields 1993, 171). Other derivative works were varied and many; one was billed as “the greatest success of the Panama Exposition,” “a Japanese romance” with “lyrics from the opera” and “fan and umbrella dances by the complete Russian ballet” (Bijou Theatre, “The Greatest Success of the Panama Exposition: Madama Butterfly” [playbill], n.p., 4 March 1916).
The Butterfly trope was reenacted for a century of instances of, in James Moy’s words, “The Death of Asia on the American Field of Representation”: 

In Madame Butterfly, then, the Asian ceased to be a novelty from which the West could learn or at least find amusement. Asia ceased to exist as a place whose ancient wisdom might provide secrets to help America. Rather, Asianness was reconstituted as an object to be looked at, still, but now pinned to a board with a precisely placed needle through its heart. (1993, 82, 84)

The defining teleology of the character located her death as inevitable and aesthetically pleasing. As one of Miura’s contemporary listeners wrote:

She has been singing before Occidental audiences just a year—this little Japanese prima donna, who made us realize Madame Butterfly on Tuesday night as we never realized her before, by showing us her blithe trustfulness that by its very nature inevitably must end in swift tragic resignation to circumstances, just as a flower lies broken-stemmed from the storm.16

While such ideas could bear transformed relationships to certain Japanese works that made suicide an aesthetic thing, these scenarios had quite different meanings in U.S. contexts where Japanese heroines were racialized others.

The distancing of suicide as an oriental act was common in literature and journalism. Lafcadio Hearn presented an aestheticized tale of this sort:

When she goes out again it is that hour of heaviest darkness which precedes the dawn; and there is a silence as of cemeteries. Few and faint are the lamps; strangely loud the sound of her little geta. Only the stars look upon her.

Soon the deep gate of the Government edifice is before her. Into the hollow shadow she slips, whispers a prayer, and kneels. Then, according to ancient rule, she takes off her long under-girdle of strong soft silk, and with it binds her robes tightly about her, making the knot just above her knees. For no matter what might happen in the instant of blind agony, the daughter of a samurai must be found in death with limbs decently composed. And then, with steady precision, she makes in her throat a gash, out of which the blood leaps in a pulsing jet. A samurai girl does not blunder in these matters: she knows the place of the arteries and the veins. (Hearn 1895 [1899], 339–40)

16. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing That We Looked for from Far Off Japan: Yet Here She Is — Like a Figure Out of Print — Showing Us How Butterfly Really Looked and Loved and Sorrowed and Died,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.
And along with attending to Butterflies’ staged deaths, the U.S. press often played up real suicides by Japanese citizens. For example, a 1919 Associated Press item was titled “Sumako, Japan’s Great Actress, Kills Herself.”17

The best-known U.S. exponent of the opera’s leading role was Geraldine Farrar (fig. 1.1, recs. 1.1–1.3).18 In her autobiography, she evoked categories through which many saw the world in which she sang the part, writing in another connection of having “sensed...the great difference in the Occidental and the Oriental—or Asiatic—reactions.”19 Farrar took up the role of Butterfly as a vehicle that would enable her to sidestep parts locked up by established top-tier singers. She had passed up a chance to sing Strauss’s Salomé, more out of concern for her voice than because of the opera’s then-daring subject (86–87, 102). Butterfly fit her lyric range and had not yet been sewn up by any of her rivals on the U.S. operatic stage. A writer in 1923 quoted Farrar as saying:

“...I have scored a most intimate personal success in Puccini’s Mimi, in ‘Bohème,’ and his ‘Madame Butterfly,’ both more saccharine, musically, and both scores quite different from the exquisiteness of Massenet’s art. ‘We adore Butterfly,’ is the flappers’ refrain, and there you are. I am by no means the first or last to present a successful Butterfly. At least two singers vocally my superiors have sung the part. I knew that if I was to make a mark with it, I would have to give my listeners something more than voice—for that my colleagues had already done. So I strove and worked to give them something that went beyond mere vocal expression, which is soul expression. This I feel I have been successful in doing.” (Martens 1923, 101)

19. Farrar (1938, 72); this passage concerns Russian acquaintances, but its broader meaning is clear. Elsewhere Farrar characterized the United States as potentially devoid of racial distinctions, almost locating the nation itself in an aesthetic domain outside the tumble of society. She “wondered why it was, that musicians insist upon furthering grimy politics and questionable partisanship when the world of their choosing is the real sphere for harmony and understanding.” This was especially true “in our own great land of opportunity where the old world barriers of caste and racial frontiers do not prevail” (85).
This urge to portray the part not only with her voice would require intensive work on other bodily practices with the instruction of a Japanese mentor.

According to her autobiography, in the winter of 1906–1907 she “was busy with Puccini’s Butterfly—which...involved her in an expenditure of enthusiasm and research” in Manhattan. She had the help of a mentor for kinesthetic emulation, “a co-worker, a delightful little Japanese actress, Madame Fu-ji-Ko, whose dainty personality and grace were her model for authentic gestures and carriage” (102). Farrar’s mother told of this work:

Those cold winter days, when the bitter winds howled around our corner apartment at the old Hotel Netherlands, Geraldine padded about our rooms in gay silk kimonos, the heavy wig elaborately dressed, her feet in the little one-toed canvas shoes used by the Japanese. She shuffled, posed, danced and gesticulated under the watchful eye of the Japanese artist, herself in native costume. A mighty pretty picture they made. These two were so eager and intent upon their work, I had their luncheon and tea brought to them on trays, insisting that they stop long enough to have some nourishment. What the waiters thought of these exotic goings-on, I could well imagine!

To conform to the correct physiognomy, Geraldine had shaved her own eyebrows, and drawn the thin arches of substitutes well above their natural place. This was as it should be in costume à la Japonaise, but when the inevitable hour came to cease play-acting and resume Occidental dress, the effect was very strange indeed. It was many years later that the plucked eyebrow effect was to become a decided fad for the screen professional, with no special indication in courteous acknowledgment to its Oriental source.

Ricordi and Puccini also had their particular views to impart, and were kind enough to add their personal visits to the hotel, as well as being the high irritants of those scheduled meetings for general company rehearsal....

The actual performance came at last—and Geraldine scored another great triumph.

The picturesque Belasco, the genius of our theatre who was responsible for the play in which Blanche Bates had one of her most poignant roles, rewarded her dramatic interpretation with warm praise. For many years he was to be her friend and admirer, and often voice a tempting plan to induce her to a dramatic career under his expert guidance.

And another charming gentleman of wide travel and culture, Mr. Burton Holmes, was moved to genuine admiration of Geraldine’s assumption of the little geisha maiden. He supplemented his compliments by presenting her, after one of his tours, with a complete wardrobe of lovely kimonos including all the pretty toys which Butterfly must withdraw from her voluminous kimono sleeves in the first act with Pinkerton. And among them was the beautiful blade
for the final _hari-kiri_ [sic], sheathed in an exquisite lacquered case, embellished with her monogram in Japanese, signifying Butterfly. (102–105)

“Signifying Butterfly.” If applied metaphorically to the singer, this phrase suggests how this white soprano’s performance offered up to U.S. view the opera’s orientalized leading role while extravagantly displaying her ability to embody it. After her debut in the part, her “success became an established fact”: “This charming and pathetic figure of the deserted Japanese bride fitted her like a glove; no one else seems to have usurped the memory” (106).

One last aspect of Farrar’s association with Butterfly offers a contrast to Miura’s. This went to typecasting. Farrar stated repeatedly that the role became her “own property” (64), but she was aware of the risks this entailed. “Butterfly was rapidly becoming my personal property, by reason of box-office acclaim,” she wrote; “but I was hoping gradually to be allowed an extension of my repertoire” (112). While “not easy” due to other sopranos’ claims on other roles, this was possible. “While I was human enough to enjoy the furor _Butterfly_ created, I visualized the danger of too close association with one role” (113). Her autobiography’s subsequent 200-some-odd pages tell the tale of Farrar’s long career playing a wide range of characters—something her racial status as white enabled in often unnoticed ways.

Typologizing Sopranos: Nation as Race as Sung Identity

Despite its Italian origins, _Madame Butterfly_ has long been a paradigmatic text for U.S. musical orientalism. Most relevant here is the reception of its leading role when sung by sopranos born in Japan. U.S. performances of the opera cast in this way date back at least to 1915. Prominent among these singers was Tamaki Miura. Others included Nobu Hara, who sang the role at the Panama-
Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, Haruko Onuki, and Hizi Koyke, who sang it from at least 1927 until 1950 or later with one of Miura’s former ensembles, the San Carlo Grand Opera Company. Hara and Miura were far from the first Japanese performers to appear on U.S. stages. Japanese jugglers and acrobats long had toured the country, and Sada Yacco and Otojiro Kawakami had presented Japanese dance, theater, and music at the turn of the century. The *New York Evening Post* invoked Sada Yacco as a precursor to Miura, calling the latter “a fine actress, reminding one of her great countrywoman….” But while some writings on Miura invoked ideas of authenticity similar to those elicited by other performers, distinctions between their reception histories arose from Miura’s sustained U.S. presence and her embodiment of the European-scripted role of Butterfly.

An important interpretive context here is that of related mimetic acts. By the time Hara and Miura appeared on the U.S. stage, The *Mikado* had been a recurring fixture for 30 years, Ruth St. Denis had been performing orientalist dance for nearly a decade, Farrar had been singing “Butterfly” for almost as long, and Salomé dancers had been active for years. But although white

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20. Early in her career Onuki was billed as Haruko Onuki, later shortened professionally to Haru Onuki; for a photograph, see Nellie Revell, “Why Vaudeville Need Never Fear the Movies,” *Theatre Magazine*, February 1917, 100, 120. For traces of a few moments in Koyke’s career, see “Aurelio Gallo Presents the San Carlo Grand Opera Company” [program], n.p., 19–20 October 1927; “The Civic Light Opera Company Presents ‘The Geisha’” [program], New York: Erlanger’s Theatre, beginning 5 October 1931; Hizi Koyke (“as related in an interview”), “Love and Marriage First, But Then—On to Work!”, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1 September 1931; “San Carlo Opera Company Golden Anniversary: ‘Madame Butterfly’” [program], Chicago: Auditorium Theatre, 12 October 1939; see also notes in Bishop (n.d.).

performers long had embodied female orientality for U.S. audiences, their enactments had a different relationship to audience notions of authenticity. This difference was one not of degree, but of categorical type and ideological effect. White performers were wrapped in costume, scenic atmosphere, and music that conjured up a sense of orientality, but their audiences knew them to be representing something other than themselves. Many white Americans who heard Miura as Butterfly perceived her as an authentic Butterfly—as a living example of a gendered national type. Even without literally conflating the life stories of the singer and her role, such listeners believed they were witnessing a performance of coincident staged and lived identities. This belief in embodied national (racial) characteristics was the crux of a key difference between the reception of performers such as St. Denis and Miura.

U.S. newspapers and magazines commonly referred to each of these singers as a “Japanese soprano” or “Japanese prima donna,” often with additional adjectives—for example, “the wonderful Japanese soprano.”22 This did more than convey facts about nationality. Many singers were publicized with their country of origin and vocal range (“American baritone”), and at times these identities assumed a stereotypical charge.23 The phrase “Japanese soprano,” however, had more specific and sustained meaning. This could underpin comparative accounts of singers. One reviewer wrote of Onuki:

Tamaki Miura has a rival in Butterfly perfections. Her name is Haru Onuki, and she sang the role of the forlorn, night-watching Nipponese for whom the

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23. E.g., in 1916 Paolo Ananian, a bass performing in the same company as Miura, received press attention for his arrest as a masher after an incident involving a 17-year-old girl. Phrases such as “the Turk continued to pursue her” freighted his role in the story with the load of centuries of tales of European women’s abduction to harems; see “Singer Taken as a Masher,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 April 1916; “Turkish Singer Out on Bail as Masher,” *San Francisco Call & Post*, 15 March 1916.
blossoms never come again. She made a big sensation last night at the Curran, singing right along with a representative of ‘bel canto’ as it is pronounced and sung in the land that gave it birth—Italy.

The critic elaborated: “Less lyrical perhaps than the other Japanese singer’s Cho Cho San, the presentation of last night was fuller, more dramatic and more passionate: that is to say, it was more occidental.”24 Reviews such as this compared these singers’ authenticity and their travel along an oriental-occidental continuum of representational style.

The category also was put to promotional use. An announcement for this 1919 engagement characterized Onuki as its latest occupant: “Comes Haru Onuki, the new Japanese soprano with the San Carlo forces, to sing her delightful ‘Cio Cio San’ role....”25 Taken from over her shoulder, an accompanying photograph emphasized her hairstyle and clothing, with only a near-profile of her face. The image’s caption reinforced its sense of generic Japaneseness by referring to Onuki as “the Japanese soprano” but naming the other singers, just as it showed their faces from nearly straight on.

Beyond such capsule phrases as “American baritone,” writers sometimes did use national language to characterize white singers in more precise ways. Some such references to U.S.-born vocalists evinced the nationalism of a time when many people sought to create an American music based on European models but not beholden to Europe. This is evident in a 1916 article with the subtitle “Miss Florence Hinkle, American Soprano.” Its text included:

HAS AMERICAN TRAINING
The arrival of Miss Hinkle will strengthen the confidence of believers in the future of American music, for the soloist is American born and trained. She has the temerity to admit—or the privilege to boast—that she has never studied

abroad. If she sings as well as report says she does, she will confirm our opinion that American teachers are the equal of any, anywhere.26

A related example is a 1916 New York Hippodrome advertisement which billed Maggie Teyte as “The Irish Prima Donna.”27 But such notices did not do this consistently, whereas references to Miura were nearly unwavering in their attachment of the qualifier “Japanese” to “soprano” or “prima donna.”

The article quoted regarding Hinkle told of upcoming performances by Miura in categorical terms and Teyte by name: “much interest naturally centers in the appearance of a Japanese prima donna in the role of Butterfly; much eagerness of attention is manifested in the operatic appearances of Maggie Teyte.”28 Another announcement for the engagement stated:

‘L’Amore Dei Tre Re’ will be sung; a real Japanese prima donna will be heard in ‘Madame Butterfly’ and the Pavlowa ballet russe will appear. And, were this not sufficient, Maggie Teyte will sing, and Zanatello will be heard as Canio in ‘I Pagliacci.’

‘L’Amore Dei Tre Re’ is an innovation for San Francisco; so is a real ballet; so is a Japanese prima donna. And Maggie Teyte is to sing in ‘La Boheme,’ which promises music lovers a treat. Tamaki Miura is the Japanese songstress to be heard.29

This presented three references to Miura in redundantly typologized terms: “a real Japanese prima donna,” “a Japanese prima donna,” “the Japanese songstress.” In contrast, Teyte was simply Teyte, who would simply sing. This may have been due to Teyte’s greater fame (perhaps everyone who might have cared was presumed to know already that she was Irish), but a single reference to Miura as Japanese would have addressed that difference. Something more than plain description was going on here.

Although some San Franciscans had heard Nobu Hara sing at the 1915 exposition (or read about her appearance in *Sunset* magazine), in 1916 the notion of a “Japanese soprano” still was fairly new. In this light, the paper’s insistence on Miura’s nationality may be a trace of the energy needed to establish such a category. Hand in hand with promoters seeking audiences and singers striving to build careers, the press constructed this category of “the Japanese soprano,” “Japanese prima donna,” or “Japanese diva.”

The reiteration of Miura’s Japaneseness functioned as more than just biographical shorthand. It rendered her an embodiment of a racial type that could encompass Japanese singers and orientalist roles, conflating people and fictive characters together in such language as “…the little Japanese soprano not only acted, but she lived Madame Butterfly.”

The *Literary Digest* spun together Miura, her role, and Eastern fatalism: “Like a true Oriental, she makes less of meeting death than other *Butterflies*. Quite simple, yet poignant, is this release from her despair. …she hides all the ugly part of it with screen and scarf, and merely staggers out to meet the lover whose voice she hears.” Other singers’ on- and off-stage identities seldom were so strongly linked.

In performing Butterfly, these sopranos’ voices and bodies readily were invested with dominant notions of female orientality. Having seen and heard it embodied and envoiced by a Japanese performer, audience members—and at a mediated remove, people who read newspaper and magazine coverage of these performers—were primed to map the opera’s imagined orientality onto

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30. “‘La Bohème’ Delights Oakland Opera-Goers…,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 March 1916.  
33. These linkages were, however, common in regard to certain vaudevillians such as some Irish acts, as seen in Sylvester Poli’s praise for “singers Polly Holmes and Nellie Waters for the ‘real Gaelic’ they combined with their stage-Irish dialect songs” (Oberdeck 1999, 98).
Asian Americans, who often already were cast as objects of racialized spectatorship by many white Americans in offstage social domains.\textsuperscript{34}

Many Americans learned of these performances of difference through articles and advertisements. These singers’ Japaneseness was marked even in brief announcements and notices. One review of other performances ended by stating that “To-night we shall see ‘Madam Butterfly’ with a Japanese Cio Cio San,” conveying with telegraphic brevity that evening’s major point of interest.\textsuperscript{35} This marketing role of Japaneseness figured in an advertisement for a concert by the Sousa band with Miura as a soloist. For that concert she sang excerpts from Puccini’s opera, an aria from Mascagni’s \textit{Iris} (also set in Japan), and “several songs in English.”\textsuperscript{36} The large advertisement had abundant space for national descriptions of the three featured singers, but selectively marked their origins—perhaps along a European/Asian divide:

\begin{center}

GIUSEPPI GAUDENZI \hfill Tenor  
JOSE MARDONES \hfill Baritone  
TAMAKI MIURA \hfill Japanese Prima Donna  

\end{center}

The concert’s \textit{New York Times} review repeated this move: “The soloists with Mme. Pavlowa at the Hippodrome were Mme. Tamaki Miura, the Japanese soprano; Giuseppe Gaudenzi, the tenor, and Giorgio Polacco, bass.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} E.g., such slumming trips as a “specially conducted automobile party to chinatown” advertised in a program for a “Japanese-American Musical Comedy”; departing New York’s Casino Theatre at 11:15 P.M. after each night’s performance, the two-dollar tours included a “Chinese supper” (“The Jefferson De Angelis Company in the Japanese-American Musical Comedy, Fantana” [program], New York: Lyric Theatre, week beginning 10 April 1905).

\textsuperscript{35} “New Italian Opera Without Flaw…,” \textit{San Francisco Examiner}, 14 March 1916.


The description of Miura probably arose from a hope that concertgoers for whom European singers were nothing special might find the novelty of a “Japanese Prima Donna” intriguing. The phrase’s conjuncture of identities evidently was of wide interest. A San Franciscan who interviewed Miura described her as “unquestionably Japanese and as unquestionably a grand opera prima donna,” writing that her “experience of luncheoning” with the singer was “unique” “not only because she is a prima donna—and prima donnas always are interesting (and likely to be unusual) from some point of view—but because she is THE Japanese prima donna and the definite article in designating her is the absolutely correct one to use, for Mme. Miura is the only one of her kind in the world.”

In its contrast of an Asian femininity construed as shy with an Italian stereotype of over-the-top vocal femaleness, the use of “Prima Donna” rather than the less-loaded “soprano” suggests a further attempt to capitalize on the drawing power of an apparent paradox. Sitting at home on that cold Sunday morning in January 1916, what might white American newspaper readers have imagined would await them were they to venture out to the opera that evening? A prima donna was a known type of musical femaleness, and Japanese women had long been represented in orientalist works—but a Japanese prima donna? How could such a convergence be possible in one body? What might such a singer look like, and what could be the sound of her voice? An aural window into authentically oriental difference? A ghastly joke arising from irreconcilable racial essences? Or a new musical experience less freighted with ideology than spiced with transient spectatorial novelty? The

38. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.
simple way to satisfy this curiosity would be to get one’s self over to Sixth Avenue when the box office opened at 10:30 that winter morning, buy a ticket for anywhere from 50 cents to two dollars, attend the 8:20 performance that evening, and hear and see the answers with one’s own ears and eyes.39

In summary so far, in a context of facile slippage among ideas about Asian cultures (ideas themselves falsely monolithic), the phrase “Japanese soprano” conveyed essentialist notions of race and gender. Other non-white sopranos also were framed by their nationality (read as race) and gender, and such descriptions laid groundwork for the marketing of “native” Butterflies.40 While many who attended these singers’ performances were upper-class Americans or aspired to such status, even larger numbers of people could read about them in articles and reviews.41 Some of these invoked nested ideas of Japanese, Asian, and universal womanhood. Almost all of them presented the spectacle of a Japanese singer of an Italian orientalist role in ways which spoke implicitly to U.S. social issues—for example, to views of Asians and

40. Such interpretations also were related to Miura’s reception in much of her European press as a supposedly authentic Butterfly, as noted by Wasserman (2000, 35, 45); they gained specific meaning, however, in the United States, where relationships among whiteness, Americanness, and Asianness were widely contested. Ten years before Miura’s U.S. debut, San Francisco audiences could hear “Mme. Nani Alapai, the dusky Hawaiian prima donna,” described as having “a natural soprano voice of wonderful quality that fairly thrills in her interpretation of the quaint native songs” (untitled clipping, San Francisco Evening Post, 24 June 1905). Turn-of-the-century references ascribed “dusky” skin to female types ranging from African American to Filipina to Chinese; one evoked a “dusky Cathay maid” (J. Arndt Morris and Mary Wood, “In the Land of Far Cathay,” Chicago: Chicago American, 1903).
41. Some national magazines reprinted reviews from city newspapers. An Evening Post article reused in the Literary Digest also was quoted in the Musical Courier, which reported that the critic “said that she was ‘one of the greatest living artists,’ and that ‘she achieved the best and most thrilling operatic singing heard in New York this season’” (“Tamaki Miura” [photograph], Musical Courier, 6 February 1919, 5). Other magazines offered original pieces. Some were primarily reviews; others presented brief narratives of Miura’s life and career, sometimes in a mediated first-person voice based on interviews.
Asian Americans as desiring assimilation to Eurocentric norms but as being less than completely assimilable. A general look at Miura’s U.S. career and some close readings will show how these tendencies took various forms.

*Introducing Tamaki Miura, Interrogating Her Reception*

Tamaki Miura (figs. 1.2, 1.3) was born in Tokyo in 1884, coincidentally just a year before the London premiere of *The Mikado*. She began her musical training in Japan and later studied in Germany. In 1903 she sang Eurydice in Gluck’s *Orpheus and Eurydice* after graduating from the Musical Academy in Tokyo. After making her formal debut in 1909 with the Tokyo Imperial Opera as Santuzza in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*, she sang in Japan for several years. She then went to Berlin, but soon left for England upon the beginning of war in 1914. After performing the leading role in *Madame Butterfly* in London that year, she came to the United States in 1915 to sing the part on tour with the Boston Grand Opera Company.

An early U.S. article mentioning Miura incipiently codified her operatic and social roles in ways that whetted audience expectations:

> Among the passengers arriving here aboard the steamship St. Paul was Miura Zukkury San (Miss), the only Japanese grand opera singer in the world, who is making her first visit to this country to fill an engagement with the Boston Grand Opera Company, under contract with Max Rabinoff.

43. For background on European concert music and its institutions in Meiji Japan, see Nomura K. (1956) and other discussions in Komiya (1956); Malm (1971); Eppstein (1994).
44. On some moments in Miura’s earlier work (especially European performances) prior to her U.S. career, see Wasserman (2000, 13–49) and especially Yoshihara (forthcoming [2004?]). See also Machida (1956) and Lane R. Earns, “Italian Influence in the ‘Naples of Japan,’ 1859–1941,” at http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/earns/italian.html, cited there as having been published in *Crossroads: A Journal of Nagasaki History & Culture* [Nagasaki: Crossroads, Inc.] 6 (Autumn 1998), 71 (not located). As of early 2000, the City of Lake Yamanaka Tourist Office provided a brief biographical tribute to Miura on the Web at http://www.infocr.co.jp/hometown/yamanakako/miura-e.html; that resource was offline in early 2004, but the page (and related ones) may be seen in cached form via Google.
Miss Zukkury was educated at the Conservatory of Music in Nagasaki and had her operatic training in Italy and Russia. Last season she sang the title role of ‘Madam Butterfly’ at the London Opera House.45

Another piece noting her arrival offered a premonitory, condensed precipitate of characterizations which would follow her throughout her U.S. career:

Mme. Tamaki Miura, the first Japanese soprano to sing in grand opera in this country, reached New York last week and immediately left for Chicago to join Max Rabinoff’s Boston Grand Opera Company. She will be featured in “Madame Butterfly.”

Mme. Miura is the first of her race to have had a career in the European opera houses and her appearance in this country is waited with great interest.46

Accompanied by a soon-to-be iconic image of Miura in kimono, this brief notice managed to invoke her prototypical stage role, and her status as the “first of her race” to attain a certain mastery of opera. On a page of items about singers whose national origins went unnoted, its title of “Japanese Soprano with Rabinoff Forces” anticipated categorical interest in her.

A 1923 book presented “heart-to-heart talks” with opera singers as advice and inspiration for aspiring prima donnas. Frederick Martens, “who presented their ideas” in language based on their spoken words, quoted Miura at length (Martens 1923, vii–viii). This account offers a production-side sense of practices that underlay her performance. The chapter devoted to Miura is reproduced here to convey a sense of her own self-representation (as edited by Martens), and of her often-elided agency and serious work:

MADAME TAMAKI MIURA, the only Madame Butterfly whom one might call “to the manner born” in a racial sense, since the charming little prima donna is a Japanese artist, gave the writer many study and interpretation hints by which the student might profit, when he visited her at her apartments in the Hotel Ansonia in New York. First of all she made clear that there is a vast difference between native Japanese singing and the occidental art song as it is cultivated by a Japanese artist singer.

REAL JAPANESE SONG

“Real Japanese song is beautiful—if you have a Japanese soul with which to understand it. But I am afraid that if you have not, then it is apt to mean nothing at all to you. There is a great difference between the art songs of the native Japanese professional singers and the simple little folk songs which Japanese girls sing to their samisens or guitars. The professional singing is all very artificial, and when a professional street singer or a singer on the Japanese stage in Tokio, is singing an air she will roll her eyes and twist her neck, and use the Japanese grand theatrical manner to drag up notes from her body, such as an old bullfrog might sing, in a hoarse and hollow voice. This shows she is a real virtuoso. But there is nothing theatrical in the little folk songs, and even if you are not Japanese you can enjoy them, for the melodies are always plaintive and appealing, and the girls’ voices, though they are always pitched in a high register, are usually very sweet and delicate. Of course, the Imperial Academy of Music in Tokio, where I studied, had excellent teachers, who developed the voice along the best European traditional lines.

“At the Imperial Academy I studied, with Professor Junker, foundation exercises, Concone, German and Italian songs; and coloratura and French songs with Madame Petzold, a Norwegian. Signor Salcoli, an Italian operatic tenor, was the first to coach me in ‘Cavalleria Rusticana.’ Then, too, while I was in Tokio, Madame Loudon, the wife of the Dutch ambassador, a very fine singer and artist, coached me in the part of Eurydice in Gluck’s ‘Orfeo’—a rôle I have always been fond of, because I made my operatic début with it in Tokio.

“Later I studied with Sir Henry Wood in London, and I still like to remember that I made my London début in Albert Hall singing ‘Caro nome’ from ‘Rigoletto,’ at the same concert in which Adelina Patti made her last public appearance, before the King and Queen of England. Patti was charming to me, and she took the pains to give me a special lesson in singing ‘Home, Sweet Home,’ which I still sing as she taught me. I then spent some time with Madame Albani, in London—a wonderful teacher—studying opera rôles and Irish and Scotch songs with her. It was she who coached me in the first Madame Butterfly which I sang in London. I have also studied with Moranzoni, Jachiya, Madame Viafora—a very fine teacher—and Strani, here in the United States; and at present am taking lessons from Aldo Franchetti, who has done a great deal for my voice. No, I do not think I have suffered from having a number of teachers; each one of them has taught me things worth knowing.

THE MATTER OF DAILY PRACTICE

“Formerly, the day before I had to sing Madame Butterfly in opera, I used to practice a whole hour; but now I do not practice when I am to sing Madame Butterfly the next day. You see, it is a great strain to sing continuously for three hours on the stage, and I cannot help putting so much feeling, so much emotion into that rôle—it is a rôle that is all sentiment—that I find I do best with a whole day of rest before the performance.

“Otherwise I have a regular routine for the days when I am to sing in the evening. I get up at ten o’clock, sing my exercises—scales and difficult vocal phrases—in the bathroom and music room. Then at eleven, I have coffee, eggs and a roll, and take a walk. At four in the afternoon I eat a real meal; good
spaghetti, lamb chops, spinach, with a cup of tea; and at six I have a cup of coffee and some chicken sandwiches. Then at eight o’clock I sing on the stage, taking a couple of eggs again in the theater, for they are very strengthening.

ADVICE TO THE OPERA STUDENT

“First should come breathing exercises, which are absolutely necessary for the diaphragm, and while doing them attention should be paid to the position of the throat and body. One should be sure it is natural and unconstrained. Then vowel practice: sustained notes from the lower register to your highest tone on the a and sustained tones on a, e, i, o, u. Next scales and arpeggios, with crescendos and decrescendos, marking the pianos and fortes. For flexibility and finish, quick scales, staccato and trills, and Concone or Marchesi are best, I think. I always practice before a mirror, because it is very easy unconsciously to get in the habit of making faces or grimacing, while if you can see your face you will not do so, or run the risk of contorting it on the stage in some big aria. I always use the following mechanical exercises in sustained notes and also difficult phrases from my operatic rôles....

“Daily exercises are absolutely necessary to keep the voice fit, but the student should be careful not to overexercise. When the singer is tired—whether she be singing in opera or in concert, or merely tired from practice—she had best give the voice a complete rest for the time being. Twenty minutes’ hard work in the morning, when I am fresh and interested, I find better than a couple of hours later in the day.

THE FIRST JAPANESE OPERATIC SINGER

“It is natural, of course, that Madame Butterfly should be my favorite opera rôle. She is a Japanese heroine and I am a Japanese artist and have the figure and also an understanding of the part from the racial angle which, perhaps, no other opera singer can claim to have. I do not have to imagine how poor Butterfly feels, I really know. Her soul and mind are Japanese, as are my own. There was no Japanese operatic singer when I began to study singing in Tokio, and it is one of my greatest joys to think that—aside from other rôles—I have been able to identify myself with one so ideally suited to my racial, human and artistic personality as that of Puccini’s Butterfly. I have one difficulty as a Japanese artist with which most other opera singers do not have to contend. There are many rôles I could sing and would like to sing, but I cannot, of course, undertake rôles for which my figure is not adapted.

DO NOT PLAN A CAREER IN ADVANCE

“Why should the vocal student try to plan her career in advance? The first thing is to be able to sing. The vocal student who is beginning can decide when she has reached the end of her study period whether her gifts are best adapted to the operatic or the concert stage. While studying she should concentrate on developing a beautiful tone. Of course, once she is clear in her mind as to her final goal—opera or concert—then she must bring all her strength, love and enthusiasm to bear on reaching it. There is no absolute specialization, in a way, which the real dramatic soprano need strive to attain until she is well advanced.
in her studies. If she has the gift, she can become a great artist in various types of rôles, dramatic, lyric or coloratura.

PREPARING AN OPERA RÔLE

"Whether the music I am preparing is operatic or meant for the recital stage, the first thing to do is to get right at its meaning. When I have a new opera rôle to prepare, I read the story of the work, and then read the music. After that, day by day, I memorize a few pages and as I do so, study the dramatic action with my teacher and correlate it with the musical moods and their expression. All these details, and there are many of them, I rehearse each day before my mirror, so that my stage action and every movement of my arms, head and body will be natural and effective. Yet that is by no means the end of studying the rôle. I always find, after I have sung it on the stage, that all sorts of new possibilities in the way of singing beauty, movement and action develop. There are new points of view, new angles of approach to the interpretation of an operatic rôle which only actual performance on the stage brings to the notice of the artist. She can never discover them by herself in her music room while practicing.

RECITAL HINTS

"The greatest thing in recital work is self-control, poise and self-confidence. And the singer must be in good spirits when she steps out on the platform. There should not be a single thing on her mind but the spirit and meaning of her songs. Yes, every audience I have sung for has shown that it likes to have operatic arias included in the recital program. So I usually begin my recital with an opera aria. Then comes a group of French songs, and another of old classic Italian bel canto arias and German Lieder. After that, and ending the first section of my program, I have a group of songs by modern composers, men who are writing to-day, American, English, etc. After these four groups I like to make a short break, an intermission, before starting with the second half of the program. I usually begin it with an opera air in French; then I sing some English, Irish or Scotch songs, and after that present a third group of Japanese folk songs—and there are some lovely Japanese folk songs—singing them in Japanese. I like to conclude my program with my Madame Butterfly aria. More important than anything else in recital is for you really to love your audience. If you love your audience your audience will love you and your singing.

ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESS

"And you want me to tell you what I think is the most important thing for the girl who wishes to succeed vocally to bear in mind? Well, she must sing in tune, and in time and have good, clear diction, that stands to reason. But what is more, as I see it, is for her to be able to give meaning to every tone she sings, expression! Without expression the loveliest tone in the world amounts to nothing, just nothing at all. And the singer’s expression must be absolutely natural. She must be living whatever she is singing at the moment—and this holds good for the song sung on the recital stage just as well as for the operatic rôle.” (Martens 1923, 209–19)
Even through the filter of an editor and editorially elided interviewer, this suggests how Miura’s racialized status affected her choices of repertoire to sing on U.S. stages and the modes of self-promotion most available to her.

When reading responses to her singing as a sign of a natural essence made audible, however, it is well to remember her close attention to the minutiae of the craft with which she created her operatic voice—something lost in most U.S. accounts, which often vested agency in European teachers and racial essence in Miura. For her or for anyone to sing an operatic leading role took immense work. In contrast to many U.S. readers’ desire for tales of innate orientality, this book’s anticipated audience of budding sopranos led it to afford uncommon space to the nuts and bolts of Miura’s craft—while still quoting her regarding how “natural, of course,” it was for Butterfly to be her favorite role, and framing her in racial terms which she appeared to embrace in support of her claim to be the one singer to know Butterfly’s inner self.

This eager grasp of real and fictive selves squeezed the two together in a way consistent with a competitive musical scene and public demand for such assertions. Feeding the latter hunger was one way for Miura to claim certain turf in the former professional domain. Playing up her own categorical identity over and against those of the other singers of such a prominent role could elevate her credibility in that part at the price of locking herself more securely within it. This dynamic was seen in her foregoing of roles “for which [her] figure was not adapted”—a constraint which had scant force in regard to white singers who played Butterfly in various bodily forms.47

47. The broad sense of this is reminiscent of positions many African American performers found themselves in the heyday of blackface; and as Brenda Dixon Gottschild has stated, to “fault the black minstrel for stepping into the stereotype” is an “unfortunate”
Over the decade and a half until Miura returned permanently to Japan, she sang with the Boston, Chicago, San Carlo, and Manhattan companies. Throughout her U.S. career, she was known for singing orientalist Japanese roles in operas such as Madame Butterfly, Messager’s Madame Chrysanthème, Mascagni’s Iris, and Franchetti’s Namiko-San, as well as musical plays such as The Geisha. She also sang non-orientalist parts including that of Mimi in La Bohème; but it was as a singer of Japanese roles that she was best known. Her appearances in them often were met with enthusiasm.

The companies with which she worked toured extensively, enabling her to perform for audiences across the country. For example, in the fall of 1924 she was featured in Madame Butterfly on a 24-week national tour of one-night local performances by the San Carlo company. An advertisement targeting potential presenters and audiences for her previous season’s tour played up her status as “The Distinguished Japanese Nightingale,” portraying her in character with kimono and fan. During the years in which she was based in the United States, she also toured abroad; her 1918 correspondence from Cuba to the Musical Courier preserves a trace of one such trip.

historiographical move—for from such a racialized performer’s perspective, “What else was there to do? The white power structure dictated the terms of entry” (1996, 109).

48. For a material trace of Miura’s work on tour with Anna Pavlowa, see fig. 1.5 for the verso of the photograph in fig. 1.2; it bears stamps from her time on the road with the dancer.


After returning to Japan in the early 1930s, Miura continued to sing professionally; she died in Tokyo in 1946. The role of Butterfly loomed largest in her career, but U.S. audiences often blurred their understandings of it into other roles which she performed increasingly often in later years. Her media coverage in the title role of *Namiko San* gives a sense of this. Photographs of the singer as Namiko San before the opera’s 1925 premiere deployed fans and other tropes in ways akin to her portrayal as Butterfly.

Miura toured widely in both roles; in 1926 she sang both as the star of the Manhattan Opera Company’s national tours. The following April, an

53. This biographical sketch is based chiefly on such sources as “A Japanese Prima Donna,” *The Outlook*, 8 December 1915, 827–28; Alice Woodbrough Chapman, “A Japanese Butterfly,” *The Musician*, January 1916, 45; E. Moore (1930); Wier (1938); Max de Schauensee, “Tamaki Miura,” *Opera News*, 21 October 1946; Eaton (1965); Rosenthal and Warrack (1979); Steane (1992); Bishop (n.d.). While her relevance to this analysis lies in her dominant U.S. reception, more information about the singer and her career in Japan presumably may be found in three Japanese-language works not consulted for this study: two biographies and the singer’s autobiography, *Ochô Fujin,* which has been reprinted by various publishers (see Takahashi 1995, Tanabe Hisayuki 1995, Miura 1947). Not seen, that memoir (the title of which translates as “Madame Butterfly”) presumably offers her own views on her U.S. career, and could provide a complement to this study’s analytical focus on the meanings many white Americans made from hearing, seeing, and reading about her. A book also useful in this regard is a French biography, *Le tour du monde en deux mille Butterfly* (Wasserman 2000).


55. These began with ten weeks in southern and eastern states, singing Namiko San as many as eight times a week. This was followed by a tour to the West Coast and back through the South, presenting these and other operas. A long list of cities was scheduled for return visits: “Pittsburgh, Richmond, Norfolk, Wilmington, Altoona, Greensboro, Charlotte, Lexington, Louisville, Cincinnati, Knoxville, Winston-Salem, Durham, Johnson City, Indianapolis and Toledo” (“Manhattan Opera Company’s Second Tour Covers Thirty Weeks: Tamaki Miura, First Star of the Organization, Successful in New Opera,” *Musical Courier*, 3 June 1926, 17).
advertisement for her appearance as Namiko San at the Brooklyn Academy of Music quoted reviews by Oregon and Kansas critics. These show how her reception as Butterfly, or any “Japanese” part, built on audiences’ association of her prototypical role and Miura herself. The review excerpts were arranged into two categories; one was headed “Comments on Miura’s Impersonation”:

Tamaki Miura was even more wonderful as the young bride than she was a Madam Butterfly. The little Japanese prima donna possesses a voice of unusual quality and beauty, and she carried the difficult role in a manner which elicited the most enthusiastic praise.—Atchison Daily Globe.

Mme. Miura displayed her usual artistry. Her voice has never been lovelier and in her colorful costume she looked like a little Japanese doll come to life.—Portland Telegram

Mme. Miura sang in the same captivating unaffected style that has won her audiences here many times before in Madam Butterfly, and her voice is as crystalline and pure as ever, remarkably even in color and resonance through its entire wide range.—Oregon Daily Journal, Portland

Viewing these as excerpts chosen to publicize Miura’s upcoming Brooklyn performance, it is clear that she and her promoters used this association and her “Japanese prima donna” status as combined marketing devices. This is confirmed by the longest of the four comments in the other list of excerpts, “Remarks on the Opera.” It quoted the Oregon Telegram as stating that “This opera composed especially for Tamaki Miura is based on an ancient Japanese tragedy and gives Mme. Miura a part equal in charm to Madam Butterfly.”

These recurrent comparisons show how her performance as Butterfly laid groundwork for later enactments of orientalist roles. U.S. discourse on her significance in the earlier role gave subsequent audiences a clear set of meanings they could ascribe to her embodiment of other characters. One of these moves represented Miura as being vanishingly close to disappearing

56. All as quoted in “Tamaki Miura Following a Successful Coast to Coast Tour in Franchetti’s Namiko San…” [advertisement], Musical Courier, 10 March 1927, 17.
into the parts she sang. This elision of real-world into staged identities offers a window into the hegemony of the “authentic” in meetings of music and race.

Throughout the late teens and the 1920s, Miura received a great deal of press (e.g., fig. 1.4). Much of it gave middling praise to her singing, but invoked her Japanese origins, physical appearance, and often her acting ability. When referring to dramatic skill, some reviewers demonstrated their awareness of the fictive nature of her role and enactment of it, yet still betrayed a belief in her authenticity. In its writer’s own conclusions and the reviews it quoted, an article from after Miura’s first New York performances shows how this tendency already was underway in the first months of her U.S. career. A photograph of the singer in her dressing room was captioned:

This picture of the Japanese prima donna of the Boston Grand Opera Company was made…in her dressing room at the Manhattan Opera House, when she was making up for the part of Madama Butterfly at her début before the critical New York public…. The little Japanese woman was nervous at the thought of facing the public and the critics in New York; but her nervousness soon left her when she found how cordial and appreciative her audience was.

The article proper dwelt on Miura’s charms and her reception:

…principal interest in the engagement of the Boston Grand Opera Company attached to the début in this city of Tamaki Miura, the Japanese soprano, as the heroine of “Madama Butterfly.” …

Mme. Miura’s advent here had been preceded by marked successes obtained with the Boston company in Chicago and other cities on tour and last season in London with the Beecham company. The fact that she was the first Japanese prima donna to appear in opera in Europe and America, with the additional consideration that she was interpreting a Japanese character, though in a distinctly occidental medium, naturally drew much curious attention to her performance. In every instance, curiosity was transformed into lively admiration.

Let it be said at once that the verdict of other cities was echoed and emphasized in the reception given the singer here. Mme. Miura was called numberless times before the curtain and, especially when she appeared alone, the volume of applause was nothing short of tremendous. Cheers were intermingled and flowers were thrown at her feet. Nothing was lacking to demonstrate the complete and unreserved capitulation of New York opera-goers.
And all this admiration was well earned. In an opera the conventions of which are so firmly fixed as that of Puccini, anything revolutionary in the interpretation of the principal rôle could hardly be expected. Nor did Mme. Miura attempt anything revolutionary. She was a much less sophisticated Cio-Cio-San than we in New York have been accustomed to, however, and in that her interpretation approached much more closely to the ideal. In all her actions, she was the fifteen-year-old child-wife. The doll-like elements in the character were appropriately emphasized. In the tragic dénouement, the pity of Cio-Cio-San’s fate was intensified immeasurably because it was essentially the abiding faith and trust and love of a child that were torn and sacrificed. Her performance here was not remarkable as tragic acting, but it was inevitably touching and evocative of heartfelt sympathy.

In everything Mme. Miura did, charm of personality was irresistibly operative. It was not merely the charm of exoticism, either, though that, of course, contributed. But she is innately winsome and winning and invariably graceful, and she made an exquisite picture of Oriental femininity. She is a diminutive woman and she has a tiny voice—a voice that would be completely lost, probably, in another opera and character. But it is just such an infantile voice as the Butterfly of John Luther Long’s conception might be expected to possess and so there is no shock to the illusion. Her tones are rather attenuated and cold though sometimes in the upper register they gather warmth; but she sings true to the pitch.57

These leading paragraphs’ theme of smallness of voice and physique as the embodied grounds for reception as a truly Japanese Butterfly foreshadowed much of the U.S. response to Miura. Their foregone conclusion that she would probably be lost in other leading parts also turned out to be widely shared.

At its end, the article returned to Miura with excerpts from New York reviews. These bolstered the magazine’s own take on her significance:

Mme. Miura is a personality. She is a mite of a woman and she has the grace and charm necessary for a combination which would win any audience’s heart, irrespective of its brain. — The Times.

She fitted her national characteristics into the rôle with ability. In short her impersonation as a whole was novel, interesting and extremely effective. — The Sun

Rarely has a New York audience showed more spontaneous applause. It would be foolish to apply ordinary critical standards on the vocal side to this little soprano—hers is the voice of a child, with all a child’s charm and all its

limitations. Histronically [sic], she can stand comparison with any of her occidental operatic sisters.—The Tribune

The enthusiasm was entirely justified, for not only is her performance authoritative, as no Occidental conception can be, but she is a fine actress, reminding one of her great countrywoman, Sada Yacco.—The Evening Post

Truth to tell, the Japanese soprano’s performance, curious and interesting as it was in itself, brought out more clearly than ever the distinctly un-Japanese character of the lyric play.—The Press

Not since the Belasco-Long tragedy was new on the local stage has a performance been seen of more thrilling realism and poignant appeal. O Miura San was a Butterfly to the manner born.—The Evening Sun (4)

As in these passages, the general trend of her critical reception made at least partial recourse to ideas of difference grounded in her body’s national origin. The specific moves that supported these invocations of musical performance as evidence of racialized character are the focus of the following analysis.

A quotation from a review of Farrar’s first Chicago performance of Butterfly shows how performances of the role by white singers were heard as demonstrating musical ability and conscious practice, not a natural essence. The reviewer attributed the efficacy of Farrar’s performance entirely to her compelling talent, intelligence, training, and skill, not her racialized body:

“Miss Farrar clearly is an artist who thinks, and the number of such is so small that an addition to the ranks is subject for sincere rejoicing. Her Butterfly last evening proved a veritable dramatic portrayal. Thought and intelligent care had been expended on its every part, and a characterization beautifully rounded and consistent, logical and clean cut was the result.”58

Two other reviews attended in similar ways to her consciously performative shaping of the character. Seemingly by the same critic, they show how consistent accounts of her performances could be from season to season:

Miss Farrar has scarcely sung better than she did yesterday, nor has her voice sounded more beautiful and full, more entirely under her control. Her

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58. Quoted without attribution in E. Moore (1930, 45).
impersonation of the Japanese maiden last season is remembered as one of the most excellent of her achievements—most graceful and sympathetic, conceived in the ingenuous spirit of the character, and most carefully studied and consistently represented.\textsuperscript{59}

Miss Farrar’s representation of the luckless Japanese girl has infinite charm, not only of voice, but also of pose and action, which she has studied most skillfully and through which she gives a most ingratiating picture.\textsuperscript{60}

These reviews rendered Farrar’s enactment of Butterfly an accomplishment, not a natural state of being. An article on the same page as the first review emphasized the physical labor and stress entailed in performing orientality acknowledged to be mimetic; its title tells the story in brief: “Miss Farrar Ill, but Sings. Faints after Second Act of ‘Madame Butterfly,’ but Keeps On.”\textsuperscript{61}

In contrast to white singers’ performances of Butterfly, Miura’s act often elicited comments on native authenticity rather than skilled inhabitation of an imagined character. Some invoked mimesis in doubly layered ways:

[“]Tamaki Miura was the ‘real thing.’ So dainty, so Japanese, was she that we were reminded of a cute, quaint little doll, wound up to act and sing for several hours, then, after being carefully dusted to be put back on the shelf at Vantine’s. Her kimonos were simply marvelous in hue, shape and material. A symphony in greens, reds, blues, and gold. She pattered about on those funny little feet of hers and gave some pretty imitations of an Occidental prima donna; but she remained invincibly Nipponese.[“] —James Gibbons Huneker in the \textit{World}.\textsuperscript{62}

Such explicit reference to her asimitating white sopranos was not common, but related ideas underlay many accounts. Some articles contrasted Farrar and Miura as inhabiting the role in categorically different ways:

Before we had a Butterfly of sketchy outlines, or of most un-Japanesy emotionalism—Farrar’s gymnastical Butterfly, who rolls over the fair-haired baby, or most unconvincingly ponderous, fat-lady Butterflies—and we had the

\textsuperscript{60} “Madama Butterfly’ at the Metropolitan…,” \textit{New York Times}, 20 November 1908.
\textsuperscript{61} “Miss Farrar Ill, but Sings…,” \textit{New York Times}, 15 December 1907.
music to compensate for any lack of verisimilitude. But in Mme. Miura’s performance we have in every detail, tone and gesture—in all the “business” that is essentially of her own invention—a Butterfly as the Japanese mind, wholly sympathetic, understands her, and the musical beauty besides.  

A sub-heading over this part of the article put the argument more rudely as “FAT AND FATUOUS BUTTERFLIES.” This passage’s reference to the singer’s “invention” complicated its essentializing portrayal by locating an oriental Japanese essence not as something Miura unwittingly embodied, but as a natural repository of bodily practices upon which she could base her performance. In a sense, this invoked Japaneseness less as an unconscious force than a resource upon which Miura could draw consciously; but any non-essentialist sense of this was quashed by the phrase “the Japanese mind.” The complexities these ideas posed are clear in the photograph caption from an early article: “TAMAKI MIURA, The Japanese prima donna who has set the critics arguing whether a woman from the West can better portray the Butterfly of Puccini’s opera than a woman of her own nation.”

This relationship between the singer, her role, and an oriental essence was central to most of the meanings white Americans made from hearing Miura. Traces of her reception in other countries suggest that this might have been less prevalent outside the United States. Another Cuban review quoted in translation in the Musical Courier followed its comments on her abilities as a singer of Italian with praise less common in her country of residence:

We must confess our surprise. Tamaki Miura sang perfectly in Italian, with clean emission, perfect intonation and in such fine Italian that one could not believe it was not her mother language. She has adapted herself marvelously to the conditions of the European theatre. Her presentation of the character gave evidence of her clear intellect.—La Noche.

63. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.
This hearing of her performance as an intellectual accomplishment was unlike the tone of much of her U.S. reception. This suggests how such writing about Miura was founded in dominant ideology, not in some meaning latent in the soprano herself. The meanings U.S. observers commonly heard and saw in her were guided in hegemonic ways by beliefs that suffused the American air they breathed, and through which they heard the vibrations of Miura’s voice.

*Small Body, Small Voice, Authentic Orientality?*

Much U.S. commentary began by invoking Miura’s physical presence and playing to notions of a racially authentic body. Often critics tacitly linked her voice and her physical stature to their ideas about her orientality. Writing in *Opera Magazine* in December of 1915, John P. Kirkland stated:

“Madam Butterfly” was conspicuous chiefly because the title role was sung by a Japanese prima donna, Tamaki Miura. It is difficult to think of this tiny Oriental creature in any other character than that of Cio-Cio San, but it may be doubted whether the pathos of Puccini’s heroine has ever been more vividly portrayed on any stage. A criticism of Madame Miura’s voice is impossible, as she consistently adapted it to dramatic rather than musical effects. Its tones were pure and true in the upper register, and if not particularly powerful it was always adequate. A childish quality was much in evidence, and this was entirely in keeping with the singer’s interpretation of her role. Altogether, Tamaki Miura scored one of the great individual successes of the season.66

Kirkland’s praise for the “dramatic” effect of Miura’s voice was bound up with how she looked on stage. He saw her body as being of a place beyond the unmarked space of an American norm. Her voice was similarly outside his normality and “impossible” to criticize (although he did just that). Some critics heard Miura’s voice differently; a review of *Iris* exulted that “Intrinsic merit and high standards of artistry were reflected in the exquisite technique,

the certainty, and the clear purity of Tamaki Miura’s voice,” and that she gave “proof of the combined brilliancy, power and sweetness of her voice.” But Kirkland’s enthusiasm rested not on what he heard as musical aspects of performance, but on what he saw as an authentic embodiment of female orientality. This ascription of bodily and vocal authenticity was partnered with his assumption that the opera Madame Butterfly could and should accurately represent Japan—a belief he implied in a later comment on an Italian singer who “made a satisfactory if un-Japanese Suzuki.”

Kirkland’s belief in Miura’s credibility was part of a larger formation of response to performers’ supposed authenticity in mimetic roles. In related ways, some African Americans reinscribed, subverted, or otherwise bounced off of blackface conventions. Prominent among them was George W. Walker, who addressed this history of presentation and reception in the article “The Real Coon on the American Stage.” Walker told of his work in a context of audience expectations honed by decades of white men’s blackface acts.

Three excerpts offer useful connections to tales of Japanese Butterflies:

My experience [touring at a young age] with the quack doctors taught me two good lessons: that white people are always interested in what they call “darky” singing and dancing; and the fact that I could entertain in that way as no white boy could, made me valuable to the quack doctors as an advertising card. (224)

67. “Rare Performance Given Opera ‘Iris’ at Cort Last Night: Intrinsic Merit and High Artistry Reflected in Rare Performance,” San Francisco Call & Post, 28 February 1917.
70. For more on Williams and Walker, see Riis (1989, 43–46); for a later invocation of Williams as the epitome of “Negro” performance, see J. Chapman Hilder, “The Darktown Follies,” Theatre Magazine, March 1914, 135; cf. L. Anderson (1996); for a roughly contemporary article on the African American stock company at Chicago’s Pekin Theatre, see Lucie France Pierce, “The Only Colored Stock Theatre in America,” Theatre Magazine, January 1908, 27–28; for theoretical takes on Walker and Williams respectively, see Webb (2001), Forbes (2002); on later, related performative moments, see Gottschild (2000).
...we saw that the colored performer would have to get away from the ragtime limitations of the “darker,” and we decided to make the break, so as to save ourselves and others.

In 1893, natives from Dahomey, Africa, were imported to San Francisco to be exhibited at the Midwinter Fair. They were late in arriving for the opening of the Fair, and Afro-Americans were employed and exhibited for native Dahomians. Williams and Walker were among the sham native Dahomians. After the arrival of the native Africans, the Afro-Americans were dismissed. Having had free access to the Fair grounds, we were permitted to visit the natives from Africa. It was there, for the first time, that we were brought into close touch with native Africans, and the study of those natives interested us very much. We were not long in deciding that if we ever reached the point of having a show of our own, we would delineate and feature native African characters as far as we could, and still remain American, and make our acting interesting and entertaining to American audiences. (i)

Black-faced white comedians used to make themselves look as ridiculous as they could when portraying a “darker” character. In their “make-up” they always had tremendously big red lips, and their costumes were frightfully exaggerated. The one fatal result of this to the colored performers was that they imitated the white performers in their make-up as “darkies.” Nothing seemed more absurd than to see a colored man making himself ridiculous in order to portray himself.

My partner, Mr. Williams, is the first man that I know of our race to attempt to delineate a “darker” in a perfectly natural way, and I think much of his success is due to this fact. (ii)

Presumably edited by other hands, this still conveys some key issues. Esther Romeyn has noted the case of Williams and Walker as an emblematic instance of a history of reception in which whites in racialized roles were seen as “actors” invested with artistic force while performers regarded as non-white ethnics in the same sorts of roles were seen as “playing themselves,” and thus as “mere entertainers,” a pattern played out by white critics who repeatedly dragged Walker and Williams back to the category of the merely “real.”71

While working in socially different positions, Japanese sopranos faced related issues. Performers categorized in racial ways faced questions of how to perform “themselves” for audiences predisposed to hear them as singers

71. “‘One piece beer mit pretzels, by gollies’: Performing Ethnicity in the Urban Borderlands of Turn-of-the-Century New York,” paper given at the 2000 conference of the American Studies Association, Detroit, MI; unpublished work quoted here with Romeyn’s permission.
authentically embodying racial types known through histories of mimesis. Walker’s evocation of a context in which audiences enjoyed stereotypes of African, African American, and blackface performance foreshadowed white Americans’ confusion of orientalist tropes with Asian and Asian American performance. His urge to valorize his partner’s “perfectly natural” act marks his success at bringing less viciously demeaning African American characters to white audiences, but it also betrays the power of racial ideology to enforce an assumption that there was such a human category as the “darksy.”

Such contexts of performance and belief in racial essence suggested a variety of ways for making meaning from Miura. Unlike Kirkland, some critics heard and saw her supposed authenticity in Madame Butterfly not as bolstering the opera’s authenticity but as showing, by immediate contrast, its inauthenticity. A national magazine passed along one newspaper’s opinion to this effect. The writer was surprised to read of a “‘Madama Butterfly,’ with a real Japanese prima donna, Mme. Tamaki Miura, to sing Cio-Cio-San”:

It was highly edifying to read next morning’s comments on this last operatic coup. “Is Mme. Miura an artist, or merely a curiosity?” inquired one New York critic, who should have been able to answer the question himself. Another wrote as follows:

If any one had supposed that Mme. Miura’s impersonation of Cio-Cio-San would add to the realistic effect of Puccini’s music, that illusion was dispelled last night. Truth to tell, the Japanese soprano’s performance, curious and interesting as it was in itself, brought out more clearly than ever the distinctly un-Japanese character of the lyric play.

72. Another example of this is Sylvester Poli’s practice of listing other African American performers as “coon” acts, regardless of the actual nature of their performance (Oberdeck 1999, 204). Notions of authentic embodiment affected the dominant U.S. reception of a wide range of other performances as well. For example, a 1904 review of a “Greek Play Acted by Greeks in New York” treated the cast’s iconic national costumes and the skin of the racialized bodies they exposed to view as signs of authenticity: “Bare arms and legs gave a realistic touch” to the production” (Theatre Magazine, May 1904, 123).
A consensus of the comments would indicate that her histrionic abilities were far above her vocal attainments.73

Far from lending Japanese authenticity to this U.S. performance, both writers thought that Miura’s presence exposed the opera’s lack of Japaneseness. This did not diminish their ability to read Miura as a sign of Japanese essence. On the contrary, and conceived in just that way, her presence could confirm or undermine enable listeners’ belief in the opera’s representational accuracy.

Other critics perceived a similar authority in the visible aspects of Miura’s dramatic enactment, but linked these more directly to vocality. One review offered a spectatorial comparison of the singer and her audience:

It was a brilliant and enthusiastic throng that filled every seat at the Cort Theater last night and eagerly paid for standing room, but not even an audience as remarkable as this was in spirit and striking attire could swerve attention from the wonderful little Japanese woman.

Having invoked her physical presence in familiar terms, the critic dealt with her performance of Puccini’s composition:

Tamaki Miura’s vocal equipment could be far less adequate and satisfying without interfering with the supreme appeal of her performance. It is as an actress that her art makes its complete conquest.

There were times when even the poignant music written by Puccini appeared negligible and insipid beside the histrionic power displayed by the tiny artist.

Were the story of “Madama Butterfly” less familiar, librettos would still be superfluous, so clearly was the motive of every note expressed by the vivid acting of Madame Miura. The role is one of many moods, joy, hope, doubt and despair, intermingling and succeeding each other with a suddenness and rapidity that demands the most delicate shading in a successful interpretation.74

Similar to the “un-Japanese” quotation in its use of Miura as a rhetorical fulcrum by which to lever down the value of certain aspects of the opera

74. “Opera Continues to Be Mecca...,” San Francisco Call & Post, 2 March 1917.
(there its veracity as a cultural representation, here the quality of its music), this review drew a more explicit connection between the body and the voice. Its author saw in her gestures and expressions the motivation for each and every note she sang. Calling attention to her body and her vocal production, this positioned both as being more convincing than their dramatic vehicle.

In all these cases, U.S. operagoers heard and saw Miura as constituting a standard by which they could assess the opera’s authenticity or inauthenticity as a representation of Japan. This gave her performances added interest for listeners who perceived in it a profound disjuncture of national essences.

In related ways, Miura’s overlaying of social and dramatic identities could satisfy an attraction to the new while offering evidence about the authenticity of Butterfly’s various textual incarnations. In this way, a newspaper writer anticipated her West Coast premiere as novel spectacle and expert testimony:

> Even more notable in the novelty of her attractiveness is Tamaki Miura, the Japanese lady who came across the ocean to show us how the Orient thinks of Cio Cio San. The few Japanese women who have essayed Western music in my hearing have seemed unintentionally to burlesque it. But we have the testimony of New York and Boston that Miss Miura is an artist in the Occidental sense of the word and that she gives a wonderful impersonation of John Luther Long’s pathetic little heroine. By the way, it may not be uninteresting to recall the fact that Pierre Loti accuses Long of having stolen his Japanese from “Madame Chrysantheme.” “My geisha was almost a photograph of a reality,” says Loti. “Long’s absolutely false.” If the opinion of the East is to be believed, however, Miss Miura makes her a most credible person. Can it be Loti was jealous that some one else had the wit to seize a dramatic idea to which he himself was blind? It looks like it.75

This shows how writers also could, even without hearing her voice, use the rhetorical figure of such a singer to support their own literary countrymen.

Some coverage of Miura located her operatic competence in narratives of Asian musical westernization, presenting her as a sign of broader Japanese

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75. “Grand Opera Will Open at Cort Theatre…” *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 March 1916.
progress. To these writers, the fact that Miura had reached a level of mastery which enabled her to perform Italian opera in London and New York was an index of Japanese cultural advancement. This Eurocentric notion of progress was based in part upon a distaste for Japanese and Chinese music, one long expressed in much U.S. writing. One example of this interpretation began:

The Japanese people, whatever their attainments in the arts, never have been recognized as a musical people. It is interesting and significant of the broadening culture of the Japanese people now to observe a Japanese prima donna whose artistic grasp of grand opera has won her recognition first in Europe and more recently in America.76

Published in The Outlook, the article stressed Miura’s “native” identity and her training by European teachers: “Madame Miura is a native of Tokyo. Her musical education was secured at the Academy of Music in the Japanese capital. The teachers in this institution are Europeans” (828). These flatly declarative statements seem intended on the surface to validate her as an opera singer; but they also implied a musical model of European cultural tutelage for Asia in a broader and loosely (even if not literally) colonial sense. Miura herself expressed related views about Japanese music as a whole; “I think,” she said in a 1924 interview, “that Japanese music will be incorporated into European music, as Mr. Puccini has done in ‘Butterfly.’ Japanese music will not be changed from what it is now, but it will be worked into Occidental compositions to make something very beautiful.”77

77. Philip King, “Foresees Unity of East and West in Music: Tamaki Miura Says Japanese Songs Will Never Lose Their Individuality but Will Become Dominated by European Ideas—No Development Along Purely National Lines Has Taken Place in Many Years,” Musical America, 5 July 1924, 14. The full text of this article may be consulted in a supplementary source-text compilation (not part of this dissertation) available from this study’s author.
Selling Difference: Advertising Contexts & Audience Expectations

The categorical promotion of “Japanese sopranos’ gained credence from readers’ familiarity with related publicity for other events. For instance, one newspaper’s automotive section inserted female orientality into an account of Packard cars on display; its invitation to spectatorship of Chinese performers’ daintiness was of a piece with promotional accounts of these opera singers:

There will also be seen Rosie, the dainty little Chinese dancing girl who won the hearts of the San Francisco public with her graceful art at the Panama Pacific Exposition and later at Taft’s. More recently she has been playing a star part in Ziegfeld’s Midnight Follies at a popular New York roof garden, and the effete East acknowledged her artistry.

She is hostess of the Anthony booth during the show and will be assisted in receiving the many friends of herself and firm by Frances Jen, another petite Chinese beauty, who is also a dancer.

The setting for them has been created by a lavish use of Chinese rugs and an atmosphere of incense from two bronze burners on which sit dragons spouting clouds of perfumed smoke.

The Packard cars vie with each other for beauty until one is hard pressed to make a choice....78

While it may seem odd, the interpolation of this discourse into a sales pitch for cars is not so strange in context. Both styles of language located human or mechanical subjects as attractive objects of categorical looking: one focused on racial identities (“Chinese”) and the other on brand names (“Packard”).

Beyond their promotional use for consumerist spectacles, tacitly racial references to Japanese and Chinese newsmakers were endemic. This was a ubiquitous context for interpreting performers categorized in the same terms.

78. “Oriental Girl to Be Hostess at Auto Show: Rosie, the Chinese Maiden of Exposition Fame, to Hold Open House Tonight — Packard Models Attract...,” San Francisco Chronicle, 13 February 1919. As were some notices for singers, this article seems to have been based on a press release; another paper’s article used almost identical language to trade on these Chinese women’s “dainty” and “petite” charm. That text sought to belie any idea that such displays pandered to a male gaze: “Numerous novelties were arranged by many of the booths for society night and several cars were added to the exhibits which had a distinct appeal to the feminine taste, for the feminine taste is always the last when it comes to the selection of motor car equipage” (“Oriental Hostess Greets Society,” San Francisco Call & Post, 14 February 1919).
In a week in 1921 when the San Francisco Orpheum was billing the soprano Tsen Mei as “The Chinese Nightingale,” a front-page article in the Chronicle told readers the tale of a white woman who was forced to resign as a public health official because she had married a Japanese American physician.\textsuperscript{79} Other page-one headlines declared that “Japanese Strike Rioters Wage Battle with Police” and “Chinese Slain in Stockton by Unknown Foes”; two pages in were pieces on the Rockefellers’ trip to China, Japanese people’s attitudes towards disarmament, and a museum exhibition of Chinese screens.

Reading such articles in the morning and heading off to the Orpheum at night, audiences listening for Tsen Mei’s advertised Chineseness could use a thick aggregate of cultural associations when listening for her orientalized musicality. In fact, a review in the same day’s paper bemoaned her lack of audible orientality. The author of “Chinese Idea in Song” wrote that “Lady Tsen Mei’s interpretations of American vaudeville versatilities which were heralded as a Chinese girl’s conception, were somewhat disappointing. They tallied so amazingly with the conceptions of the usual American vaudeville star.”\textsuperscript{80} This disappointment in what seemed to be normality betrayed the usual assumption that vocalists who looked Asian would sound oriental—a belief reinforced by most of the performances discussed in this chapter.

Many advertisements for Miura invested authenticity into her voice and body, and thus appealed to aural and visual spectatorship. In marketing her


\textsuperscript{80} Norma Abrams, “Much Dancing in Offerings....,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, 1 August 1921.
recordings, however, the Columbia firm attributed a similar effect to the mediated trace of her voice alone (recs. 1.4, 1.5). A 1921 catalog exulted that:

As ‘Madama Butterfly’ is for all time one of the most popular operas in America, so Tamaki Miura, the native Japanese soprano, has become one of the most interesting and fascinating singers of the popular rôle of Butterfly. The Columbia recordings of the little prima donna reflect in the most fascinating way the native atmosphere of her country and people.

While Columbia’s copy-writers invoked Miura’s “little” body with the same paternalistic enthusiasm that so often imbued her reviews and other press, they did so in a way that asserted the ability of her recordings—of her literally disembodied voice—still “to reflect…the native atmosphere of her country and people,” even without her supposedly authenticating body.81

The Columbia advertising blurb exhibited an urge towards unusually bidirectional oriental timelessness. In the more usual direction, it summoned up a past-made-present by telling of a turn-of-the-century opera that played off an intercultural encounter between a modern United States and a once ostensibly timeless Old Japan.82 But in a less common move, it also projected that timelessness into the future. It did this by asserting the opera’s eternal value and vesting a similar permanence in Miura’s popularity in its leading role (an optimistic view for Columbia): “As ‘Madama Butterfly’ is for all time…, so Tamaki Miura….” This framed the purchase of Miura’s records as

81. Columbia Records 1921: Complete Catalog. New York: Columbia Graphophone Co., 1921, 439. This notion of summoning up authentic atmosphere was related to literary and theatrical practices. One article on the latter argued that “atmosphere” was best understood as “the ingenious arrangement of natural forces to produce conviction; an arrangement that persuades the auditor that what he sees, hears, and feels, is real.” In words that would prove resonant with the U.S. reception of Miura, the writer had concluded that the word “should be the highest term of commendation at the command of the critic because it is the reflection from the mirror that the theatre holds up to nature” (Eugene Presbrey, “The Use of the Word ‘Atmosphere’ Applied to the Stage,” Theatre Magazine, January 1907, 10, vi, this at vi).

an investment in a lasting document of her “fascinating” musical orientality. Asserting even more directly the singer’s status as “real” and “ideal” in the role, another advertisement attended to the physical size of this “diminutive Japanese singer” and to its practical effects on the recording session, where she had to stand “on a specially built platform.”

Marketing exigencies drove this language. As a firm selling disembodied musical sound, Columbia served its own interests by promising that acoustic traces of Miura’s voice conveyed the full experience of her performance. While distinct by virtue of its practical goal, this had much in common with certain other texts. One review positioned Miura as having an authentically oriental body but a voice that sounded something newer and less native:

Her voice is the most western that I have ever heard from the lips of an Oriental. There is none of the pinched tone that makes the singing of Japanese singers so painful to western ears. Yet I fancy that, if she were concealed behind a screen, one would before long detect that this was not the singing of an Occidental. But, within the limitations of her voice it was excellent singing and the organ is an expressive one, full of charming tonal color.

While Columbia elevated an oriental trace in Miura’s voice as a desirable sign of her authenticity, this reviewer equated it with an inability to achieve complete vocal assimilation. The image of Miura “concealed behind a screen” played with a common tactic in record-company advertisements and demonstrations. A performer and a phonograph would be hidden behind a screen and an audience would be said to be incapable of differentiating the live voice from its recorded trace. The review conjured up an analogous test of imitative accuracy, one in which the source of a second-order musical representation was human: an Asian-born simulacrum of a white benchmark.

This implicitly constituted the talking machine and the Japanese soprano as simulacra of real European (American) singers. It construed the audible products of both as seeking to represent an ideal European voice—the phonograph by means of clever engineering and mechanical reproduction, the Japanese soprano through expert mentoring and diligent practice. The key difference between the reviewer’s tableau and Columbia’s advertisements lay in his conclusion that Miura would fail the listening test. This would indicate her limitations, rather than constituting a positive sign of vocal authenticity.

Although Columbia promised that Miura’s records would create native atmosphere in the homes of those who bought them, their advertisements for recordings of Madame Butterfly (without mentioning this singer) offered imaginary movement away from the home into exotic spaces. This touristic passage was clear in an advertisement printed in various magazines in 1917 (fig. 1.6). Showing a procession of women in kimono emerging from a phonograph, and characterizing the aria “un bel di” as “in itself enough to transport the hearer to the fairyland of Spring in Japan,” it invoked records as bidirectional conduits for enjoying orientality. Transporting a parade of kimono-clad women into American homes while offering virtual escape to a land of cherry blossoms, these representations left no doubt where power lay. The purchaser of a phonograph and a record of “un bel di” would enjoy a remarkable experience. In this exoticized domestic world a consumer could, on a whim, transport a legion of tiny Butterflies into her drawing room and render it an audibly orientalized Japan, simply by dropping a steel needle onto a spinning shellac disk. While nary a reader would have given this advertisement such literal credence, its message was clear: those who bought
these products would have the power to drift off to a musically imagined orient whenever they wished.

The word “power” is central here. Unlike occasional live performances, these commodities promised control over when and where one could enjoy audible orientality. The image communicated this power relationship through the tiny bodies of the women emerging from a towering phonograph. This played to the attraction of the miniature and the gigantic, objects of desire in other cultural domains as well (Stewart 1984). Suggesting the solidity of the machine’s cabinet (as a durable furnishing) and the diminutive size of the women’s bodies (tractable to a taste for “cuteness”), this offered a visual equivalent to such reiterated adjectives as “little” in descriptions of Miura.

This image may be read as a sign of gendered desirability in regard to dominant ideas about gender and consumerism, Miura and Madame Butterfly, and a narrative structured around romantic tragedy and a white American man’s sexual use of a Japanese woman. The prevalent gendering of the home as a female sphere and an often male predilection for technological devices led both women and men to figure in decisions to buy phonographs. Some meanings available from the advertisement’s hyperbole seemed to address women and (heterosexual) men in different ways with the same words. Read in this context, one sentence could engage aesthetic desires or sublimated fantasy; on a page filled with images of women, it promised: “The opera can be a nightly delight, hearing its great voices a joy at your instant call.”

85. As Mark Katz has shown, contrary to some stereotypes, women often were phonograph purchasers, making advance and in-store decisions. In “Women, Men, and Phonographs, 1900–1930,” a paper (paraphrased with his permission) given at the 2000 conference of the American Studies Association in Detroit, Katz examined gendered aspects of technological engagement; work supporting that paper will be reflected in his book, Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).
Other record companies used similar advertising tactics, positioning the phonograph as an instrument of power and imaginary escape, illustrating this with *Madame Butterfly* arias. These could evoke a fictive Old Japan or summon up an imagined return to the opera house. An advertisement for Aeolian-Vocalion machines was cast in the solipsistic voice of a female customer who exulted with satisfaction that “THE WORLD OF MUSIC IS MINE”:

> I HAVE Loved And Needed Music All My Life. But always my enjoyment of music had been tempered by a great longing. As a dumb child longs for the power of speech, I had longed for a voice to sing—for some means of musical expression. Now, in the Aeolian-Vocalion I have found my instrument: through the medium of this pure-toned, responsive phonograph, I can play—and sing—and dream dreams aloud—for the whole world of music is mine! I play the great soprano aria from “Madame Butterfly” and swiftly on reminiscent wings I am wafted back to my first night at the Opera. I see again the hushed, expectant throng; I hear the sonorous eloquence of the orchestral prelude; I thrill again, as I thrilled that night at the exquisite pathos of Puccini’s ravishing melody. The Vocalion tones are clear, as colorful as reflections in a sunlit pool; their original beauty is undiminished.86

The popularity of “un bel di” gave record companies rich grounds for appealing to people’s desire for power over the terms of their listening.

Questions of power also affected audience expectations beyond those set up by advertisements. Racialized and gendered ideas about power, or its lack, were central to characteristics of Miura’s ascribed Japaneseness. Many writers perceived her as an authentic representative of female orientality in vocal performances they heard as “childish” and “not particularly powerful” (in Kirkland’s words above). A newspaper review corroborated that hearing:

> There is something childlike in the music in which Puccini pictures Cio Cio San and, whenever a Westerner, no matter how gifted, essays the part, one has a sense of incongruity as of a clash of irreconcilable temperaments. But when Tamaki Miura is the artist, the feeling of incongruity disappears. All San Francisco went to the Cort last night and all San Francisco gave this

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exquisite being from Nippon such an ovation as only the few in whom heart
and art conspire to the point of genius can command.

Perhaps you were present at the tea ceremony at the Japanese pavilion
during the fair. If you were, you must have felt something of the same thrill
as we felt last night. Tamaki Miura is as slight as a child and as graceful as a
flower. And, like a flower, she diffuses graciousness.

She took the story told by John Luther Long and let slip all save the
essential tragedy of character which she, of all those who have ever played it,
can best understand. Whether her ingenuousness is the product of a civilization
higher than our own or of a primitive attitude of mind which time has not been
able to sophisticate is a question on which one might long ponder.87

This disempowering and aestheticizing rhetoric of congruent on- and off-
stage selves reflected a discourse that constructed women and racial others
as lacking power, and did so especially strongly in regard to Asian women.

An ordinary and crucial result of these practices was the reinscription of
hegemonic beliefs. What is of interest here is the centrality of ideas about the
musical voice and body as tools for reinscribing dominant ways of knowing
difference—of “knowing” people believed to embody a racial essence and to
make it visible and audible in performance. By circular logic this validates by
musical means a pre-existing belief in a racial body, one understood to be the
physical origin and the typological referent of an oriental singing voice. In
the case of Japanese singers of Butterfly, this process was highly gendered.

An article published the day before Miura’s 1916 San Francisco debut
offers a hint of the gendered discursive context for her appearance there.
It relayed a Chicago real-estate man’s opinion that Japanese servants,
“apparently peaceful butlers and houseboys,” were leaving his city “quietly
and unobtrusively” several at a time for the West Coast, insinuating that this
augured espionage or worse for California. The article quoted an attorney
as saying: “‘Recently I learned that a certain United States army officer

discovered the Japanese servant who had blacked his boots for two years was in reality a major in the Japanese army.”88 In a milieu where many white people read of Japanese American servants as potential spies, a Japanese singer of oriental femininity could perform a reassuring kind of exotic distance by embodying a powerless figure and a nation still far away, a nation whose representative was contained by the stage—and a role in which she ritually killed herself at tale’s end, night after musical night.

Listeners’ expectations could strongly affect how they interpreted what they heard. This seemed to underlie a dismissive review of a 1916 vaudeville appearance by another singer. The San Francisco Orpheum billed her as “MME. SUMIKO, Japanese Prima Donna / Mezzo Soprano, Imperial Theatre, Tokio, assisted by Four Japanese Dancers.”89 The reviewer began in this way:

I am, I hope, too old to quarrel with programme writers in vaudeville, but I shall insist on drawing this gem to your attention, relative to Madame Sumiko’s appearance last night at the Orpheum, where she sang like an Irwin Japanese school girl:

“First Japanese prima donna.”

I shall hope, perhaps vainly, that we shall not hear the “second prima donna.” Madame Sumiko should find herself beyond the reach of my offensiveness, for she has a pretty personality, as all good women have with all good critics. She smiles engagingly, and makes gestures that would even please Bill Nye, who was a stickler for gestures, if you remember.

But when she sings!

Ah, me!

She should not.

She should make gestures.

Still, one feels that she is singing just as well as she can under the circumstances, since she hasn’t any voice.

88. “Japanese Head West by Pairs and Threes, Assertion in Chicago,” San Francisco Call & Post, 13 March 1916. The specious logic whereby such tales assert Asian American people’s peacefulness and then read it as a sign of lurking evil foreshadows the rationale for the U.S. government’s imprisonment of Japanese Americans three decades later, as distilled into Lieutenant General John DeWitt’s infamous statement: “The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken” (Tateishi 1984, xv; on a prominent journalist’s similar statement, see Chuman 1976, 149).
The net result, however, of her vocal efforts is as though a baby voice had somehow found a tune and had whispered it into an old Edison phonograph of twenty years ago, and that then the tone waves had been turned over to the hearer through a telephone with bad connections. However, it was, perhaps, wonderful, that the quaint little lady before her Fujiyama backdrop could sing at all.

YUM YUMS HELP OUT

There was a quartet of Yum Yums to help out with their singular dances and lend piquancy and charm to the sense of sight when the sense of hearing was strained. A very earnest Japanese gentleman, with white gloves, beat the time and seemed to feel the importance of his position, where Rosner used to be. He was—again to quote the programme—"the musical director of the Imperial Theater of Tokio."

The Japanese are certainly a wonderful people. Already their musicians, if B. S. Takaori is a sample, have reduced the Occidental art of tone to a mathematical equation. He beat time with grave precision.

Nevertheless, I found the act interesting, though it gives me no pleasure to think that I shall have to hear it again.90

Gendered spectatorship and notions of Japan’s westernization led this writer to locate the singer as a bodily sign of female orientality in herself and as a metonym for the Japanese nation. Prefaced with an allusion to the voices of San Franciscan children of Japanese heritage, his unfavorable response to her singing (and hollow mock respect for the conductor) implicitly asserted the limits of assimilative Americanization. The convergence of phonographs and Fujiyama backdrops, Mikado-esque “Yum Yums” and equations is as striking as the writer’s casual wonderment that Mme. Sumiko “could sing at all.” Engaged by the novelty of the performance but put off by its actual sound, his interest and distaste make this another subtype of response to Asian singers.

Here not all that was interesting was pleasurable—at least not after one’s first encounter with the newness of it all, which could be sufficient cause for a reviewer not to regret having heard the wonder of a bad voice produced by

90. Walter Anthony, “Soprano’s Art Is Exotic in Type...,” San Francisco Chronicle, 21 August 1916. Although the writer had reviewed Miura’s San Francisco debut five months earlier, he repeated the program’s reference to Mme. Sumiko as the “First Japanese prima donna.”
a “quaint little lady before her Fujiyama backdrop” on a San Francisco stage. For some listeners—even this critic, who already had heard another Japanese vocalist sing Butterfly that year—the sheer visual novelty of a Japanese soprano could suffice as a hook for spectatorial interest as well as disdain.

**Reading Two White Women Writing Tamaki Miura**

As did many yellow-perilist fantasies, the Chicagoan’s tale of dangerously westbound Japanese laborers summoned up a male counterpart to female Butterflies. Both tropes played to raciological notions of a peaceful Japanese surface; but many white Americans believed that its male incarnation masked a hidden threat, while its female variant offered a truthful window into a unitary character of Japanese women—one many thought they saw and heard in the operatic figure of Butterfly and the Japanese sopranos who sang it.

Most of the writers quoted above were men. Of the articles mentioned so far, all of those with bylines credited male authors, with the sole exception of Helen Dare’s contrastive account of Miura and Farrar. Another article was written by Alice Woodbrough Chapman for *The Musician*. It consisted largely of her interview with “Japan’s one and only prima donna,” framed by narratives of arrival to and departure from Miura’s New York apartment.91 Those passages referred to her body and clothing in ways that echoed orientalist conventions. Chapman may have been poking fun at those tropes, or have been truly over the top with enchantment, or both:

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91. “A Japanese Butterfly,” *Musician*, January 1916, 45. Chapman presented her versions of Miura’s statements in language meant to convey a sense of the singer’s non-native English speech, but there is no way of knowing how much this was based on assiduous listening and note-taking versus later reconstruction to match conventions for representing “dialect”; thus it would be a mistake to rely too closely on idiosyncrasies of what Chapman presents as Miura’s speech. Nonetheless, this mediated “first person” presentation is illuminating.
In wonderful blue silk kimono, heavily embroidered with cherry blossoms shading from the deepest rose to softest pink, finished with a blue obi scarf around the tiny waist and with fluttering fan constantly in motion, this almond eyed bit of Orientalism was Cho-Cho-San reincarnated as she bowed me into her presence and inquired for the health of my honorable parents. After a mutual exchange of courtesies as to the state of health enjoyed by our various relations, I turned to the more interesting subject of Tamaki Miura herself.

... [Chapman then presented the body of the interview] ...

Here with repeated wishes for our honorable family, many bows, and flirting of fans, I took my leave in order that the little prima donna might rest before the afternoon performance, and with a rude awakening dropped from the oriental atmosphere of her apartment to the cold occidentalism of a New York hotel rotunda.

In this framing text, Chapman invoked Miura’s physicality as a means of creating in her readers’ imaginations an almost tangible sense of the singer’s apartment as a warmly oriental space in the midst of a chilly Manhattan.

Playing to a sense of New York’s cosmopolitanism, this construction of an expatriate performer’s apartment as locally foreign also invoked the trope of oriental performers bringing their nations with them to the U.S. stage, and to domestic spaces as repositories of translocated national essence. An article on Alla Nazimova characterized her New York apartment as “a typically Russian room,” indexing a liminally European/Asian nation often subsumed to the orient. A photograph of Nazimova reclining languorously in her transnativized home was captioned with her self-exoticizing statement: “I am an Oriental, a Jew—the wandering tribes of Israel slept often under the stars.”92 Another, perhaps fictive tale of a visit to an actress’s New York apartment enlisted the same rhetorical move in a sales pitch for orientalist furnishings:

OF the East, eastern is the quaint little reception hall wherein one is ushered on visiting a clever Lady of Stageland in her New York apartment. Not the stuffy, incense-laden, heavy Orientalism one is apt to find in American

transplantations of Asiatic settings, but by the clever arrangement of a splendid Chinese lamp, a tiny teakwood table, some bits of sixteenth century, hand-woven velvets and a funny black lacquered bench, little Miss “Footlight” has managed to convey an atmosphere as truly Oriental as a Temple of Buddha.93

Chapman’s scene-setting text was not unusual in this light, and her references to Miura’s physical size differed little from those made by many men. The interview portion of her article, however, may offer a trace of one differently gendered view (but not a single essentialized “female view”) of the meanings of this singer’s ability to perform European opera in the United States.

While *The Outlook* stressed the role of European teachers in transforming Miura into a soprano, Chapman vested the agency for her musical progress in the singer herself. She did so in a long paragraph about her determination and achievement, one that also brought home Miura’s agency by telling her story in the first person, with recurrent assertions of motivation and agency—“I want,” “I study,” “I work”:

“When I was little baby, I love music always. Japanese music not like Western music. Japanese music much more sad. When I was four I begin dance; I like dance much. Then people say I can act. I want to study music.” Here she clasped her tiny hands and gazed straight before her rapturously. “My honorable parents say no—Oriental, especially girls—could not understand Western music, and my honorable grandparents, my aunts, and uncles are grieved that I desire to sing before the public. They say no nice Japanese girl show love for man, no matter how much she love. But I very much in earnest, and at last I go to conservatory in Tokio. Here I study all music—Italian, German, French, and English. I work years till I grow up; it so much easier to understand your emotions than to ex-ex-press them. To phrase in your languages is most difficult. I am not stupid, and Western languages very much alike, but Japanese and Chinese not at all. I teach when I leave Tokio Conservatory, and 1903 make my début in opera at Imperial Opera House, Tokio, singing title rôle in Gluck’s opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* at first grand opera ever given in Japan. My people now very pleased. I also sing Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, but not like so well as *Butterfly*.”

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Read in its historical contexts, this conveyed a complex set of meanings. Chapman presented linguistic quirks and hesitant speech (“ex-ex-press”) to ground Miura’s tale of her resolute struggle to learn a foreign vocal music. These devices suggested that her struggle was ongoing. Viewed in the frame of *The Musician*, Chapman’s version of Miura’s self-presentation held up the singer as a role model—kind of an intercultural female version of Horatio Alger, Jr.’s characters, who triumphed over adversity to make something of themselves in popular books for young readers (e.g., Alger 1904).

*The Musician* and other such magazines strove to encourage young Americans to apply themselves rigorously to European traditions positioned as “good” music. Presented in that setting, Miura’s tale offered a clear implicit message. Put into words, it would be something like this: “if this Japanese woman could attain such mastery in a European musical tradition, then certainly you (white) American children can apply yourselves and enjoy similar aesthetic and personal improvement.” Since the parents of these students would have had to employ teachers and buy educational sheet music in order to follow this path of cultural betterment, class ideology and economic self-interest converged in the magazine’s implied exhortation.

This complicates any surmised relationship between Chapman’s gender and her stress on this female singer’s agency, but some connection between the two is plausible. Certain other sources also cast Miura’s story as one of personal accomplishment, if more briefly and in the third person.94 Some newspaper accounts, especially those with bylines bearing women’s names, evoked a similar sense of agency. The San Francisco article that referred to

94. E.g., as seen above, “A Japanese ‘Butterfly’,” a *New York Evening Sun* article made available to a national readership as quoted in *Literary Digest*, 13 November 1915, 1085.
Miura’s Butterfly as “essentially of her own invention” was one. By Helen Dare, it described the singer as “frankly, enthusiastically ambitious” and quoted her as saying: “When I am here in San Francisco, so near Japan, people ask me if I am homesick; if I would like to go on to Japan. No; I do not want to. I must work and study yet very hard. I want to do better; the best I can and for that it takes much work and study. When we go back to London...I will study again; and improve myself.” Her quotation of “I do,” “I work,” “I study” was much like Chapman’s of “I want,” “I study,” “I work.”

Unlike most male authors,95 these interviewers quoted the singer in ways that stressed her own agency. However, like most white Americans who wrote about Miura, they still used her as a rhetorical figure to reinforce the idea of a powerless female Japanese essence, even if one portrayed by an efficacious individual soprano. Dare’s article made this duality clear. She immediately followed its quotation of Miura’s “I do it” with a reassertion of timelessly disempowered Japaneseness: “And this it is that gives us the finished picture of poor little Cho Cho San, who believed and waited in her unwavering Japanese way.” Dare also quoted Miura as modeling her enactment after a unitary “Japanese woman”: “I know what is in the heart of the Japanese woman,’ she explains with simple directness. ‘Butterfly is of Japan, so I know how she would feel and what she would do, and I do it.”96

Read in its social contexts, Chapman’s narrative of a Japanese woman’s improvement through study of “all music—Italian, German, French, and English” had wide implications. Clearly it bore on musical westernization in the late Meiji Japan of Miura’s formative years; but more to the point here, it

95. But remember the long text presented by Frederick Martens, quoted early in this chapter. 96. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing...,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.

This had immense resonance in a time of raging debates about Asian immigration. By the mid-teens, people on one side of those debates treated Japanese immigrants as unassimilable and undesirable.97 One among many examples is “The Japanese Menace,” published two months after Chapman’s article. Its author argued against making Japanese immigrants eligible for U.S. citizenship because, as “Orientals,” “they have different racial and social characteristics, and therefore cannot be assimilated into our social body.”98

Beyond such racist tracts, newspapers of the later teens told of many deportation cases. A month after the “Menace” article, a San Francisco paper recounted the story of a young Japanese woman who had come to the United States to work at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and had been adopted “by a wealthy Japanese [American?] couple” so that she could stay in the country after the exposition. Two days after the same paper praised Miura’s performance of “Butterfly,” it reported on a hearing in which an Assistant U.S. Attorney argued against the Superior Court’s “right to make a citizen of Gin Sakiguchi [sic], former cherry blossom maid in the Japanese tea garden at the exposition,” and sought to have “her sent back to Japan.” In language that evoked journalistic descriptions of Miura and a recast version of the Butterfly narrative, the writer stated that Sekiguchi, “who has dusky eyes and the dainty manner of a typical tea garden girl,” “would have been

forced to leave behind her young sweetheart and adorer, Dr. T. Nakamura” had she been deported in an earlier stage of the dispute.  

Another paper explained that “Little Gin, who is 17 years old,” was born in Osaka and studied dancing and singing there before coming to California to “see the exposition and dance for Americans.” After performing at an attraction called “Japan Beautiful,” Sekiguchi found greater fame as the star of her own deportation hearing. Coincidentally emphasizing the two women’s disparate positions, the Chronicle printed the article on her court proceeding next to Helen Dare’s feature on Miura. That piece’s title evoked the distance of both women’s birth nation from California, but it exulted: “Prima Donna the Last Thing That We Looked for from Far Off Japan.”

These adjacent pieces played to the idea of Japanese women’s bodies as a charming basis for aesthetic spectacle in a California far from their original land. Both sought sympathetic stances towards their protagonists. Read together, they suggest that embodying Butterfly on the operatic stage gave an artist more clout with immigration authorities than did enacting less elite representations of Japanese-ness. Believing that female readers would constitute both stories’ most avid audience, the editors put them with wedding announcements and women’s health advertisements under a heading that marked all these items as being “of interest to women.”

For years before and after articles such as Chapman’s, U.S. print media included many anti-Asian screeds and tales of Asian people’s immigration

99. “Battle to Save Cherry Blossom Maid from Exile…,” San Francisco Examiner, 17 April 1916. “Sekiguchi” appears in more accounts than does “Sakiguchi,” and is a more likely spelling.  
101. See “Japan Beautiful…” [advertisement], San Francisco Chronicle, 1 May 1915.  
102. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.
woes. In this highly charged atmosphere, Chapman presented Miura as a Japanese woman whose competence in elite European music enabled her to contemplate a long U.S. residence. Implicitly, this made the singer a living example of the possibility of assimilation by means of musical study and mastery of a high-status genre, and suggested that intercultural artistic competence could enable long-term U.S. residency even in a time of ever-tightening restrictions on Asian immigration. Explicitly, it gave Miura a forum in which to speak in public of her desire to reside in the United States, and to be heard by white readers as if desiring assimilation to a Eurocentric ideal—seeming to assert by proxy a similar desire in the hearts of other Asians and Asian Americans who had less access to such a public forum.

The idea that musical training and practice could foster immigrants’ enculturation was not uncommon. One example presented the idea in general terms without mentioning Asian singers. Published while Miura was still touring the United States in the mid-1920s, the article’s title was telling: “In the Melting Pot: Music as a Force for Americanization.” But texts locating Japanese sopranos in narratives of Americanization set severe limits for the assimilation of Miura and, by proxy, other Asians. These were staked out by the roles in which she found her U.S. audiences. On stage and in print, she was almost unrelentingly draped with the trappings of Madame Butterfly.

This also was true in visual terms. Chapman’s article was published in a section of The Musician called “The Singer and His Art.” The juxtaposition of its drawn illustration with Miura’s photograph (fig. 1.7) conveyed the terms of this assimilation, and may reward a close reading of its imagery in some of

103. Henrietta Malkiel, “In the Melting Pot…,” Musical America, 6 September 1924, 5, 27.
its contexts. It portrayed a white female singer facing the viewer at a slight angle, head erect and neck extended slightly forward. Her clothing was unexceptional. A mustachioed accompanist sat at a piano to her side. All told, this was a scene of unmarked normality, of cultivated music-making in a serene setting somewhere—ideologically, anywhere—in the United States.104

Below this was a photograph of Miura in kimono as Butterfly.105 A newspaper item suggests how that garment reflected not just her chosen clothing, but an identification of the singer and her role. Anticipating that “the women of San Francisco” would be interested in “the coming visit of Tamaki Miura, the famous Japanese prima donna,” it enthused that: “The kimonas worn by Madame Miura in ‘The Geisha’ will include the famous $6,000 dragon kimona sent to the singer by the musical society of Japan as a token of their appreciation of her art.”106 Many concert notices offered group photographs of performers. In Miura’s case, most showed her as Butterfly in the company of singers costumed for diverse roles or in fine off-stage garb.107

104. On wider iconographic contexts of mediated images of women in this and the preceding decades, see studies including Banta (1987, 2003), S. M. Smith (1999), and Kitch (2001).
105. Some photographs did show Miura in other dress; but most published images from throughout her U.S. career showed her in kimono. A later example is “Tamaki Miura” [photograph], Musical America, 5 July 1924, 1.
107. One image portrayed Felice Lyne standing in elegant street dress, Giovanni Zenatello standing in a Pagliacci clown suit, and Miura kneeling in kimono; a magazine’s array of 23 photographs of singers with the San Carlo company showed her in kimono among mostly less typecast portraits (San Francisco Examiner, “Grand Opera Will Open at Cort Theatre....,” San Francisco Examiner, 12 March 1916; “Gallo Forces Prepare to Launch New York Season,” Musical America, 13 September 1924, 4). Kimono signified Japanese femininity in a wide range of U.S. discourse and media (e.g., Wyman S. Smith, “The Rainbow-Lined Kimono: Expressing by Its Inner Brightness the Quality of the Japanese Woman’s Soul,” Asia, November 1927, 927–31, 969). They were widely available for domestic wear, as seen in advertisements; in a possibly less than coincidental way, some appeared close to publicity photos of Miura. The one cited here appeared on page seven of a newspaper which offered on page eight a photo of the singer in kimono (“The Original Kimono House’s Closing Out Sale” [advertisement] and “‘La Boheme’ Delights Oakland Opera-Goers....,” San Francisco Chronicle, 22 March 1916).
The Musical Courier image paired her kimono with another icon: the fan Miura held between the viewer and her body, as in many images of her. That sign of orientality echoed Chapman’s reference to the “flirting of fans.” Its gendered valence is clear in a Vantine’s advertisement with text that began:

“Japan has long been known as the Land of the Fan. It is the chief weapon in the art of coquetry of the little Japanese maiden. Just as this black-eyed coquette is the most accomplished adept with the fan, so Japan has no rival in the production of artistic and beautiful fans.

The many blossoms of the Flowery Isle are gracefully reproduced in an endless number of designs, either brushed in with the delicate hand of the artist or daintily embroidered. Scenes familiar to the almond-eyed race, but strangely foreign to Americans, are portrayed with the fidelity to detail which marks all Japanese art.”

Fans were widely seen in orientalist advertisements, music covers, and stage acts. Their feminine associations offered a ground for yellowface plays that used them to feminize male roles, and for male dancers challenging ideas about gender. They also figured in accounts of performance; one told of the play The Willow Tree as transporting theatergoers into a kind of fanscape: “To sit out front and watch the pretty tale unfold is to put one’s self under a spell as of Japanese incense. One fancies one’s self one of the figures on a beautiful old fan, or the central motif of the decoration on a lacquered box.”

Images of Miura’s peacefully fan-holding hand contrasted with more sinister pictures. For example, a 1915 novel displayed on its cover a claw-like figure.

hand (fig. 1.8). *The Yellow Claw* told a tale of Chinese danger in Paris and London; its cover used the hand to telegraph an embodied peril described as a “yellow hand and arm—a hand and arm of great nervous strength and of the hue of old ivory” (Rohmer 1915, 391). The hand belonged to a female Eurasian character, and its threat implied the remapping of a masculinized danger onto a biracial female body. This “yellow claw” may be read against the singer’s fan-bearing hand as a sign of the dangers of transgressing racial categories—something quite unlike the idea of Miura as a pure bearer of an oriental female essence. Without proposing any concrete linkage between these images, attending to contrasts between them suggests how raciological ideas could be read from images even just of Asian people’s hands.112

Print media offered abundant iconographic and linguistic grounds for reading race from physiognomy in fictive and factual texts. A 1905 account of a Japanese soldier recovering from a grievous wound included this:

> As he talked he occasionally passed his hand over his eyes and temple, and I could not but notice anew what I had long known, the delicacy and shapeliness of the Japanese hand. How can such a woman’s hand with such slender fingers wield the sword with such fatal effects? When talking with some officers later on, I spread my broad, thick, stub-fingered hand on the table and challenged them to show theirs, which they did with a jolly laugh at the contrast. It is this lady hand that makes Japan famous for its art and its surgeons, and its swordsmen too.113

In interpretive contexts long populated by representations of these and other sorts, Miura’s fan-holding meant more about this soprano as a sign of race

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112. As a lower-pitched counterpart to the almost fetishistic attention paid to images of Chinese women’s bound feet, this had such textual counterparts as the title of *Yellow Fingers;* staged in San Francisco in 1926, that play presented a “girl, who, when she learns that she is a half-caste, turns all native, to become the wild dancing beauty of the tropical isle” (“California” [theatrical listing], *San Francisco News Letter*, 10 July 1926). For excerpts from *The Yellow Claw,* see a supplementary source-text compilation available from this study’s author.

and gender than it might at first suggest. As an overdetermined element of the image, the fan lent its meaning to that of the singer herself.

Her tilted head evoked Chapman’s mention of a “half-shy side glance”; her face was susceptible to viewing as an example of the trope of “almond eyes,” familiar from the lyrics of popular songs. Right below the caption of “Mme. Tamaki Miura” was the article title: “A Japanese Butterfly.” This removed any distinction between her identities on stage and in the world, and between those specific identities and a stereotype of oriental femininity.

Chapman’s article conveyed a sense of Miura’s agency and laid out the imposed and accepted terms of her musical enculturation. By showing that Miura’s will and determination were essential to her progress as an opera singer, the writer made her an implicit spokesperson for musical assimilation; but by so completely locating the singer as a person in her orientalist role, Chapman showed that this was possible only within boundaries policed by opera company directors and the audiences from whom they derived their livelihood. By means of training and practice, Miura could earn acclaim in the United States, but within limits based on public perceptions of her body. This effect of the racialized body was seen in some reviewers’ praise; a few even distinguished her supposed orientality from her voice: “Tamaki Miura, the Japanese prima donna, made her American début—in ‘Madame Butterfly,’ of course. …Critics not only praised the Orientalism of her performance, but

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many were enthusiastic about her voice also.” Public belief in performers’ racialized bodies can lead to constraints which seldom exert their full force in both directions, as critiques of casting for Miss Saigon have shown; and as noted, many non-Asian sopranos sang Butterfly. While being a “Japanese soprano” offered an exotic niche carved out of the U.S. musical landscape, that space limited musicians who struggled to build careers while negotiating its promotional utility and its power of containment to orientalist roles.

Due to their focus on the body and voice as signs of race and gender, even texts that did not link Miura’s staged performance to broader gender categories were open to reading in such terms. Chapman’s quotation of Miura’s “I want,” “I study,” “I work” provides an example. It presented the singer as a willful woman of a sort decried several years before in the Atlantic Monthly: “Our girls know how to say, ‘I want,’ and ‘I will,’ or sometimes ‘I must;’ but they are not learning to say, ‘I ought.” Martha Banta cites this to exemplify a politically conservative and racially biased position in debates about female duty and responsibility (1987, 61). Those traditionally feminine ideals of self-sacrifice were much discussed in a public discourse which provided a backdrop to Miura’s assertions of personal agency.

Belief in Miura as an authentic embodiment of natural Japaneseness was widespread, but it did not underlie all of her “mainstream” U.S. press. Some

116. E.g., in Yoshikawa (1994); for more on Miss Saigon, see Conclusion/Epilogue.
117. In a sense, this was a racialized case of an issue played out in other representations of gender and women’s agency. Martha Banta has written of the “classification of the American Girl” and the idea of will: “The different purposes to which the female will is put, and the ways this inner quality reflects itself upon the face and body, are what differentiate one form of the central type of the Girl from the others that cluster around it” (1987, 58).
118. Banta cites the original source (not seen for this study) as Margaret Deland, “The Change in the Feminine Ideal,” Atlantic Monthly, March 1910, 289–302.
writers construed her authenticity differently, seeing culturally normative Japanese ways of moving and the operatic embodiment of orientality as both relying on learned uses of the body. They realized that a Japanese performer of Butterfly would have to learn non-Japanese techniques of movement and gesture in order to represent stereotyped Japaneseness to U.S. audiences. In “A Japanese ‘Butterfly’” (with quotation marks around “Butterfly” preserving a bit of distance between Miura and her role), a November 1915 article noted above, the Literary Digest quoted a New York newspaper to this effect:

An editorial writer in the New York Evening Sun...admits that “in certain details there may have appeared an ethnological, a geographical truth which a Western actress could not attain.” But—

“Art suggests rather than reproduces. It should be remembered that Mme. Miura had to divest herself of most of the artistic traditions of her own land before she could impersonate the character imagined by an American novelist and set to music in Italy. If she had trusted to native impulses and conceptions she would have cut as poor a figure as does the drunken actor who tries to take a drunken part.

“No doubt the element of novelty constituted an appeal. But opera audiences are not to be caught by sideshow effects. When the little lady of Japan was called before the curtain tribute was paid to the universal art in her tragic picture—the same power that makes the drawings of Hokusai intelligible to Western eyes.”119

Acknowledging the need to set aside traditional Japanese uses of the body in order to learn mimetic ways of embodying orientality, this still retreated from cultural practice to ground the singer’s appeal in the power of “universal art.”

The metaphor of American taste for ukiyo-e woodcuts by Hokusai (1760–1849) was not unique to this text. Others alluded to Japanese and European conventions of visual representation as metaphors for musical westernization; a review of Onuki as Butterfly contended that “There was line and color, but there was also perspective to her art, the vitality of which rang in her melody

and quivered in her pretty form, shaken with emotion.”\textsuperscript{120} Another critic referred to “a classic lightness and charm about Miss Miura which modulates as if by native propriety into classic tragedy,” an assertion he elaborated upon with a visual metaphor: “If the Cio Cio San of the marriage ceremony dimpled as some adorable little Tanagra figurine might dimple in the death-like chill of the last act, she put on a severity and a merciless realism that one may find paralleled in the grim masterpieces of Hokusai.”\textsuperscript{121} Although the \textit{Literary Digest} invoked “Western” appreciation of Hokusai’s prints to assert the transcultural power of art, this also summoned up histories of \textit{japonisme} and European and U.S. consumption, often in an exoticist vein, of \textit{ukiyo-e}.\textsuperscript{122}

A conjuncture of delight in Miura’s novelty and invocation of Japanese visual art was more explicit in Helen Dare’s interview. Characterizing Miura as “the differentest prima donna among all the assiduously different primas known to the stage,” Dare described her experience of the singer in striking language: “To find yourself sitting beside her at a perfectly modern luncheon table is almost enough of a sensation to stimulate those brain cell explosions that—the scientists tell us—give us new ideas and keep us from stagnating.”\textsuperscript{123} Elaborating on her belief in a disjuncture between modernity and Japan, she wrote that “the unique experience doesn’t stop there”:

\begin{quote}
You get another sensation out of it with the discovery that she eats regular food (with Japanese daintiness and gracefulness) just like any regular home-grown prima donna; which strikes you as singularly anachronistic. For, to be altogether in character, such a dainty, bijou little person, who might have walked right off a Japanese screen or out of a Japanese print—wonderful embroidered kimono, glossy raven coiffure, magnolia blossom skin, sloe-eyed, sidelong glances, wand-like gestures and all—right into the fashion-plated
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{120} Walter Anthony, “Onuki in Role....,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, 14 February 1919.  
\textsuperscript{121} R. Mason, “Tamaki Miura Is Incomparable....,” \textit{San Francisco Examiner}, 15 April 1916.  
\textsuperscript{122} On Hokusai, see Lane (1989), Meech and Weisberg (1990).  
\textsuperscript{123} Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing....,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, 16 March 1916.
modernity of the Tapestry Room, should be serving tea ceremonially or trifling abstractedly with the fanciful and unsubstantial viands of Old Japan.

Dare’s cognitive dissonance arose from notions of an Old Japan based on *ukiyo-e* scenes and the essence she ascribed to Miura. Her probably accurate sense that readers would share her amazement was clear in an asked-and-answered appeal after her reference to Old Japan: “You get me; don’t you?”

**Universal Femininity & Singing Signs of Mentored Emancipation**

While most U.S. accounts of Miura shared a belief in her racial authenticity as Butterfly, that was a leaving-off point for varied hearings of her significance. This and subsequent sections examine texts that illustrate this interpretive heterogeneity (which still could be based upon a fairly homogeneous idea of orientality). These concern ideas of mentored emancipation, nationalism, and self-transforming struggle, and the contextual effects of performance venue.

Ideas about mentored emancipation and universal femininity figured centrally in a book to be discussed shortly, one for which another text may lay some groundwork. Its author asserted the transcultural appeal of Miura’s singing to support a notion of universal femininity, something central to some white Americans’ retellings of what they heard in Miura. A review of her San Francisco premiere, the text began with raciological presuppositions about (what potentially was for the author) the troubled scenario of an interracial relationship sung by white and Asian singers, but then resolved his anxiety through a double movement towards a dawning belief in Miura’s naturally
gifted, technically well-trained voice and in her embodiment not just of authentic (orientalized) Japaneseness, but also of “the eternal feminine.”

The first part of the review illustrates the narrative trajectory through which this writer elucidated these issues after hearing the “Japanese prima donna” as Butterfly. It opened with tumbling language homologous with the state of mind of a writer overwhelmed by what he had heard and seen, one struggling to express a confused enthusiasm which almost palpably suffused his article: “It is just as difficult after the second performance of the Boston Grand Opera Company and the Pavlowa Imperial Ballet Russe as it was after the first to write coherently. There is too much to say about too many things in too brief a space and too limited time. Many things clamor at once for expression.” He then explained the source of this vertiginous condition:

While the recorder of transient impressions seeks words to denote the singular appeal of Tamaki Miura in the role of Madame Butterfly, he feels he ought really to be saying something about the excellence of Roberto Moranzoni, or about the baritone voice of a young American named Graham Marr, or more especially about Pavlowa, the incomparable, who did not deign to appear at all until the hour had slipped by when all good young newspaper men should be back in their places putting the paper to bed, as we say.

Following this half-hearted disclaimer, he dwelt upon the performer who had delighted and befuddled him:

I assume, in the presence of a wealth of material to discuss, that the greatest interest last night centered in the debut of Tamaki Miura, a Japanese prima donna who assumed the role of Cho-Cho-San, the forlorn little creature of Luther Long’s dreams, who was visualized by Belasco and harmonized by Puccini. So I shall talk about her for a while, but warn you that I shall leave out much more interesting material than I shall be able to incorporate—such being the nature of the impression which this little lady of Nippon made on me. Where one feels deeply one does not always write well.

It was with some misgivings that I went to the Cort Theater last night. There is a pride of race which renders in Chinese eyes, all others, devils.

Everybody, sometime since, who was Greek was a barbarian, and newspapers in certain quarters have urged us to the suspicion of the men of Samurai descent. I thought the spectacle of a ‘white man’ in the amorous arms of a young miss from the Mikado’s realm might—to put it mildly—lack something of the romantic beauty which Puccini saw in the situation and which has been visualized frequently when Caucasian ladies have pretended to be Oriental. In brief, I feared that a repugnance might be set up which would rob Puccini’s opera of its principal charm—a charm which rises from the contemplation of the merely quaint.

With these worries laid bare for all to read (and perhaps to echo), the writer prepared the way for his revelatory experience of a musical event he heard and saw as a performance of transcultural and transracial womanhood.

His prospective revulsion was founded in the reactive terror of blurred boundaries between subcategories of humankind, a fount of unease in many societies and one which often takes racialized forms in the United States.125 This critic’s aversion to casting that threatened a sort of staged miscegenation was linked to musical concerns. Under the heading “FEARS FOR RESULT,” he articulated raciological ideas of singers’ suitability for specific vocal styles: “As to the musical possibilities of the leading role of Madame Butterfly when sung by a daughter of a race whose singing ideals have been through many centuries somewhat at variance with full-throated Western ideals, I did not dare to think. The speculation was too remote, like the nebular hypothesis.”

Prefaced by so much fuss about what this critic thought he might have to suffer, his approval of her performance seemed all the more enthusiastic:

Very well, then. This little Japanese lady completely vanquished all contrary suspicions concerning her vocalism even before her pretty little person emerged from the background of Urban’s beautiful scenery. She sang with an Italian method, slightly affected by travel, perhaps, and guilty of a touch of vibrato, but with a tonal beauty which was not to have been expected—a released and charming voice which was not merely decorative. It was lyrically full of intrinsic beauty and expressiveness. It standardized song, by reason of

125. For a major anthropological work on this tendency, see M. Douglas (1994 [1966]).
its agreement with Occidental ideals, and it matched the melody of Puccini with a sense for the keyed music of the West.

A contrastive assessment under the surprised capital letters of “VOICE IS TRUE TO PITCH” put Miura’s competence in terms evoking her operatic training by Europeans and her own elite status: “Indeed, though I say it with shame, it was much truer to pitch than 90 per cent of Italian singers achieve. Evidently songbirds of Japan are not different from songbirds elsewhere.”

Having shown that Miura’s prima donna credentials were in order, the critic brought his review back around to his initial fears, now put to rest by his perception of the singer and her role in gender-based universal terms:

As for the impression of repugnance which I feared, it was lost in a feminine prettiness of manner and sincere charm so perfect in its modest revealments that Cho-Cho-San was less Japanese than she was the eternal feminine. At least so she appealed to me. I wonder how the somber Japanese gentlemen in the stage box felt about it.

Expanding upon why she was so perfectly “the eternal feminine,” he cast her as singing a gendered identity that framed—rather than displaced—race:

But one element seemed lacking in her Cho-Cho-San that I have noticed in other interpretations. It was a capacity for grief. That maid was touching in her simple coquetry, delightful in her quaint, pretty ways, and alluring in her moments of little motherly love for her blonde baby. She was tragic in her climax and competent to suggest the rage of offended womanhood. But grief such as Western folk know, there was little, if any. In this connection there was the only deviation from the conventional Madame Butterfly save those deviations by which Tamaki Miura made the role more coquettish, more decorative and more true to intonation than is usually the case.

By ascribing to Miura the dramatic limitations of an inability to feel true grief, and linking this to a group essence, this foreshadowed a century haunted by a dominant U.S. belief that life is cheap and grief not deeply felt in Asia.126

126. The human wastage of policies enabled by this premise, the idea that the experiential depth of loss knows local limits, began well before this operatic moment. Later it would figure in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam in the time of Napalm®, the
Such traces of response to Miura’s enactment of Butterfly show how the reception of musicians as racially authentic can help to naturalize ideological formations. These accounts of raciological hearing offered tales of an Asian person’s voice and body as evidence which reinforced efficacious ideas about racial difference. Implicitly or explicitly, they told of musical voices and bodies as grounds for believing that racial character types did exist, and that they could determine both the staged travails of fictive Butterflies and the lived experiences of real people. This belief gained credibility from its casual appearance in press coverage of performers from many countries. The same cognitive frame—one positing unitary patterns of response to the world by all people assigned to a racial/national category—has had deeply serious consequences in less aestheticized domains of political and military action.

While musical experience and words about it have been enlisted to support such actions (e.g., military marches, patriotic anthems, and popular songs figuring wartime opponents as subhuman), music’s utility as a means of constructing dehumanizing kinds of difference exceeds those overt uses. It may occur even in moments and tales of reception that seem unburdened by such loads. Lightness of appearance and intent can render them less likely to be noticed, interrogated, and possibly dismissed even by a review’s more critical readers. These unintended conjunctures of a frothy surface and unseen trouble below give hearings of authentic musical embodiment, and tales of its

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sufferings of Agent Orange, and General William Westmoreland’s chilling certitude that “the Oriental doesn’t put the same high price on life as does the Westerner—life is plentiful, life is cheap in the Orient; and as the philosophy of the Orient expresses it, life is not important.”

See Dower (1986), Lifton and Mitchell (1995), Takaki (1995), FitzGerald (1972), Halberstam (1972); the Westmoreland quotation is transcribed from a television interview excerpted in the 1975 film *Hearts and Minds* (Peter Davis, director), reissued (n.d.) on VHS videocassette by Embassy Home Entertainment. Some kinds of musical experience have helped to make these raciological views seem credible, thus making their social implementation more possible.
often favorable reception, no small part of their social power. The review quoted above shows how an account of musical reception which dealt on its surface with fundamental rethinkings of previous assumptions still could carry a heavy ideological load. Such tales of a listener’s transformation are made convincing by their writers’ evident willingness to reconsider their views. This gives even greater force to residual or newly made assumptions about music and race, which may remain unspoken and unquestioned.

This reviewer’s invocation of Miura as an avatar of “the eternal feminine”—a vision perhaps bound to underlying notions of a feminized orient—leads to other white Americans who heard Miura as a musical sign singing her own and all women’s femininity. Almost a decade later, another male writer offered similar but distinct views. His sustained engagement with this assertion affords a wider window into its linkage to the singer.

In his 1926 book *The New Japanese Womanhood*, Allen K. Faust (for 25 years the President of Miyagi College, a women’s college in Sendai province) wrote of Miura as an evolutionary, even revolutionary, sign of Japanese women’s ascent towards westernized emancipation from Asian tradition.127 Faust heard Miura’s voice as if it were singing for all Japanese women in an operatic unveiling of long-suppressed emotion and potential. His explanation of this relied upon a notion of transcultural femininity, one constructed in missionizing terms, and a reified picture of an intrinsically (Asian/oriental) oppressed status for Japanese women in contrast to that of less oppressed American women. Some of his thoughts had commonalities with writings on

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Miura’s early U.S. performances; these are read together below to show how these interpretive moves could frame the singer over ten years and more.

Faust posited a hypothetical “Japanese womanhood” as the epitome of a universal femininity—one heretofore under wraps, but which now could be communicated to the world through the inculcation of Japanese women’s voices into a non-Japanese musical form (see also this chapter’s epigraph):

Madame Miura has surprised the world by showing the unlimited store of emotion that may be penned up in the bosom of a Japanese woman. She has thrown the native reserve to the winds and opened the springs of her soul. These feelings are there all the time, but are held in strictest leash under Japanese customs. The Japanese woman is probably the most feminine woman in the world, and the opera is one means of expressing this wealth of tenderest affection in her heart. (Faust 1926, 92)

For Faust, Miura’s voice sang of freeing this Japanese womanhood. He believed that its liberation was possible only by means of European practices.

While he dwelt upon it at unusual length and steered it in his own directions, Faust’s attention to Miura’s significance in this way was consistent in broad terms with reports of hearing transcultural womanhood in her voice. As seen above, certain accounts of her first U.S. performances had invoked a similar belief. A 1916 reviewer heard her as transcending “East and West”:

I could not but think as we watched this notable woman and heard her sing our music that Kipling was wrong after all when he wrote:

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet
Till Earth and Heaven stand presently at God’s great judgment seat.

In spite of Eastern tricks of gesture, of face play, and of “business,” the essential womanly in Cio Cio San remained eloquent in its direct appeal. Miss Miura made us feel that, in spite of the familiarity of the East with the institution of temporary marriage, that institution might, in a nature “finely touched” yield to the mightier supremacy of love. However, we may qualify her work, Tamaki Miura’s Cio Cio San is an impersonation the memory of which will remain indelibly charactered on the minds of thousands.128

While reinforcing notions of “Eastern” expression and movement, that writer heard and saw in her performance of Butterfly something of the “essential womanly.” This belief in the universal significance of Japanese singers of European music was not unique to accounts of Miura. But beyond its general enthusiasm for Japanese renditions as proof of the universality of European song, Faust’s response to Miura had a more specific focus.

Faust shared in common modes of hearing-but-not-hearing Asian musical sounds unfamiliar to him. He had not learned to appreciate Japanese music, which was for him the lower opposing term of a hierarchical pair:

The native Japanese music differs much more widely from that of the West than does the painting or the literature of these different parts of the world. It is not only that the Occident seems to like the major key and the Orient the minor key. The Japanese music includes sounds that to an Occidental are impossible and discordant, for the scale is by no means the same as our own. The Japanese can strike notes that do not correspond to either full intervals or half intervals, but to some very odd fractions between these steps. Harmony hardly exists in Japanese music. (87–88)

Later he wrote of the singing of geisha (in the categorical singular): “Her singing, to which she always plays the samisen, is exceedingly shrill and thoroughly unmusical to the European [read white American], but her dancing is a very graceful form of attitudinizing” (97–98).

Faust’s emphasis on un-Japanese vocal production as a good thing also had precursors in Miura’s 1916 reviews. In one, her voice sang “the heart of a

129. E.g., in the same year Faust’s book was published, a U.S. magazine offered its wide readership similar views in its translation of an article by a German traveler in Japan:

I heard a young Japanese woman at the Imperial Conservatory sing with brilliant technique and deep expression a selection by Hugo Wolf, and, when I requested it, one by Bach. The distinction between the East and the West momentarily vanished. The barrier between these two worlds, which we encounter, or imagine we encounter, hourly in the Orient, simply ceased to exist. This proved that the barrier is not insurmountable; but when it falls one hardly knows whether to be pleased or shocked. (Paul Scheffer, “Theatres That Are Different: I. Stage and Music in Japan,” Living Age, 4 September 1926, 504–507, this at 505.)
race,” and it was able to do so by virtue of having mastered vocal techniques which expunged Japanese timbral attributes in favor of a bel canto ideal. The reviewer heard this musical remaking as the means by which Miura had become a sign of more than herself. Along with the stock language of “little,” nativizing kimono references, and tropes of an orient both quaint and stoic, the article framed Miura as a Japanese woman who “broke through the veneer” of her first culture in order to reveal “the heart of a woman,” the categorical base of an underlying structure of universal female feeling.

This was homologous with Faust’s opinions and turns of phrase. Both writers also used tales of the soprano to assert their own authority as experts. Explaining without reservation the objective meanings they believed to be audible in the singer, they positioned themselves as (in the earlier writer’s words) “among those who know the Orient,” and thus as enjoying a self-assigned representational authority common to orientalist discourse. The review buttressed this with such rhetorical flourishes as the almost avuncular familiarity of a reiterated “Old Fuji,” which seemed to summon up an old Japan hand’s nostalgia for foreign climes. In these textual fillips and in more substantial assertions, that writer’s and Faust’s elucidations of what they heard as Miura’s significance to Japan and to the United States supported their narrative constructions of both the singer’s image and their own.

Another mode of self-authorization is seen in the weight Faust gave to European preceptors in Miura’s musical progress. His enthusiasm for her training by European/Americans evinced an urge towards self-validation by analogy to his decades as a foreign educator at a Japanese women’s college.

A 1915 article on Miura suggests the pride such mentors could feel. After telling of her early training and her experiences with American women married to European embassy staff (“All helped her, played for her, sang for her, and she needed to hear quantities of music, for the Japanese kind is so totally different”), it told of her work with Rudolph Reuter, her American musical coach and piano accompanist in Japan. It ended with the musicians’ later encounter on U.S. soil: “After five years, they were to meet again in Chicago, and talk over their interesting experiences in the lovely land of flowers, and when little Miss Miura’s debut in the smoky stockyards town turned out to be a veritable triumph, Rudolph Reuter was very happy and proud, for he had had a share in what proved to be a highly successful experiment.”

While it positioned the two as in some ways equal parties sharing happy reminiscences, the passage’s scientific language cast Reuter and his colleagues as experimenters while begging the question of whether Miura was a fellow investigator with agency or was the experiment itself.

A photograph gave the latter, implicit power relations visible form. In it, Miura appeared with her usual attributes of kimono and fan, and almost towering over her was the suit-clad Reuter. As if to affirm that this disparity in stature represented a hierarchy of status, the backdrop interposed an image of a columned structure between their heads. This classical icon of social and technical accomplishment (racialized as European) in the arts in tangibly structural form (gendered as male) silently asserted itself as a sign of the musical pedagogy that had conducted power from Reuter to Miura. This is

not to say that their professional relationship was necessarily so inequitable, but to argue that this image reified them into signs of a musically enacted relationship between more and less powerful positions of race and gender.

The “womanhood” Faust praised in Miura’s singing was a profoundly gendered orientality, one heard as a specifically Japanese essence (“probably the most feminine woman”) construed as undifferentiated (the singular “the”); but he also gave that identity a privileged location within a universal gender category of womanhood (the superlative “most” feminine). Miura’s voice enabled him to make this interpretive move because it gave him an example of a Japanese woman’s internalization of operatic singing. Many Americans believed that tradition to be a credible forum for expressing female characteristics.\(^\text{132}\) Miura’s use of those skills to sing oriental roles from a European repertoire allowed Faust to locate her as universally female and essentially Japanese in non-Japanese performance, and so to position her as the musical vanguard of all Japanese women’s potential social uplift.

Many accounts of women’s activities framed their protagonists as role models for a liberating westernization. One article told of Mary Hung Woo, the “Middle West champion tennis player of the Chinese Students’ Alliance.” Reporting on Chinese Students’ Day at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, it stated that “The young Oriental star has adopted the open air, athletic life of the American girl and urges all her sisters of the Orient to follow her example.”\(^\text{133}\) Yet while such accounts had some commonality with those of Miura, the singer’s sustained visibility, European musical practice,

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133. “Chinese Girl, Star at Tennis, Attends Fair Students’ Day: Young Orientals Are Honored at Exposition During Alliance Convention,” San Francisco Call & Post, 7 August 1915.
and orientalist roles rendered her—or her rhetorical figure—an especially potent exemplar of enculturation into universal (Americanized) womanhood.

A closer look at Faust’s text will show precisely how. Miura’s uplift of Japanese womanhood was to occur by means of westernization, musical and otherwise. Faust led into his discussion of the singer by stating this belief:

The world of Western music is now fully open to the Japanese woman, and she has a good chance to rank, in due time, as high in music as do the women of other countries. Moreover, it is certain that by means of music the women of Nippon will be able to advance themselves very materially in their upward struggle towards a larger and freer life. (Faust 1926, 91)

These spatial metaphors made clear the cultural hierarchies at issue; and for Faust, only certain genres of U.S. and European music were up to the task. Elsewhere, Faust stated (with, from his perspective, false optimism) that “the Japanese people have taken to Occidental music with the greatest avidity. They do not like Jazz, but desire the very best classical music. Western music is now the music of Japan.” While he did not delve into the issue, his distaste may have been rooted in issues of class, race, and moral panic which produced much U.S. opposition to “jazz” in the 1920s. Whatever the roots of this disdain, his assertion of a unified Japanese preference for “the very best classical music” inserted his text directly into U.S. cultural debates. This positioned Miura as not only a model for assimilating Asian musicians into European traditions, but a voice from afar corroborating the superiority of elite European genres over home-grown U.S. traditions—especially those which some white Americans heard as tainted by African American culture.

134. Faust (1926, 89); for a more reasonable assessment of many Japanese people’s musical tastes in that regard during those years, see E. T. Atkins (2001).
This mode of appeal to Japanese taste as an external arbiter of 1920s cultural hierarchies in the United States was not unique to music. A 1921 article in the magazine *Arts and Decoration* on Japanese theater began:

If you are Japanese, you are already at the heart of all Asiatic mysteries and joys, and added to that you have spread out before you the wares of the European civilization, to take or reject at will. There is immense interest to us, “the white people,” to observe what, among our wares, this privileged Asiatic considers desirable to adopt, to graft onto his aged civilization, or to take as substitute for some of his time-honored methods and conventions.135

Faust and other U.S. writers had transparent reasons for telling of Japanese people who adopted European forms and practices. These tales helped to validate at home the particular traditions they said were being most widely accepted in Japan. The example above implied complex hierarchies. It played to a belief in Japan’s inevitable (and selective) westernization due to the attractions of cultural “wares” “spread out before” Japanese society; but it also asserted a not entirely sarcastic notion of the “privileged Asiatic.”

Some white American writers constructed such figures (in these or similar terms) as people hungry for the products of a Western modernity, but still privy to “Asiatic mysteries” rooted in an ancient time—one that lived on as a kind of timeless repose in the souls of people assigned to this category. In this conflicted frame, American writers could present Japanese performers who chose to work in European traditions as evidence of those traditions’ superiority. They used these performers rhetorically to validate their chosen traditions in one sense from above, as heirs to “time-honored methods and conventions” who nonetheless set them aside to adopt new practices; but they also did so from below due to their subordinated role in these exchanges.

There was little talk of cultural give-and-take, of white people taking Japanese cultural wares “as substitute” for European (American) traditions. Such a notion would have been distinct from orientalist practices and products. Those rarely were concerned with the depth of personal transformation said to underlie Japanese performers’ work in European traditions, but dealt with an exoticism usually not construed as involving permanent transformation. As a hypothetical counterexample, while many songs invoked their orients with markers of Japan or China (lanterns, tea), there was no major public discourse about white Americans choosing to study Japanese or Chinese singing, thereby to improve themselves and their society, or about which Asian vocal traditions they might choose over others. The patently surreal sense of this imagined turnabout brings home the asymmetry of U.S. discourse on the musicality of certain Japanese singers.

For Faust, Miura’s singing was a stellar example of a Japanese woman’s musicality reconstructed as more universally female and less (but still) Japanese. This made her voice and body into a complex musical sign. In The New Japanese Womanhood, she signified an assumed foundation of natural Japanese difference; the salutary effects of European teachers in Japan; evidence for the privileging of opera over music associated with African America; women’s potential betterment through musical westernization; universal femininity and its Japanese epitome; the transcultural status of U.S. models for women’s improvement; and the ability of Japanese women to find international acceptance—even adulation—should they learn to embody and envoice certain oriental roles offered by European and American preceptors.
All of this should be read against U.S. public discourse on a black/white
dichotomy, immigration policy, and cultural assimilation to European
American norms. Alongside these issues were “Jazz Age” debates about
performance based on European- or African-derived models. Many white
writers perceived a threat in singing styles and other forms based on African
American, and ultimately on African, traditions. Stated or not, raciological
worries of these sorts entangled almost any U.S. text that set off European
musical practice against others. Read in this light, a later passage clarifies
more precisely why Faust heard such promise in Miura.

In that passage’s militaristic language, musical westernization in Japan
became a proxy not only for missionary views of women’s roles, but for the
winning power of Beethoven and Chopin in any contest with a non-European
foe—whether geisha or, implicitly, domestic American, jazz-playing enemies:

The geisha will most likely be fought with one of her own weapons, namely
music. In the extraordinary love for the world’s best music, which is almost
universally evidenced by young Japan, is contained a dormant force which
may become the death-blow to the geisha. In this musical war, the leaders pin
their faith mostly on the piano and the human voice. It is the hope of these
optimists to seize on the present unusual demand for the classical music of the
Occident and make it count for a new social order in Japan. It is the best young
men and the best young women, who are learning to play the piano and to
sing. Economically speaking, these young people come from the upper half
of society, as it would be beyond the financial ability of representatives of the
lower half of society to buy pianos. As the young men are also very fond of
Western music, there is no doubt that they will prefer to the discordant
thrumming of a geisha on a samisen, the beautiful strains of Beethoven or
Chopin, played on a piano by a pure young girl. Moreover, the piano will
always remain in the home of the young woman, because it is too heavy to be
moved at will. The friends of the young musician—girls or boys—if they wish
to enjoy the music, will have to come to her home. In due time there will be
young men who come to hear the music and also to associate with the girl
making the music. In this will be, it is hoped, the beginning of a new social
world for the young Japanese people.136 (136–38)

Enmeshed in this metaphorical meeting of the battlefield ("weapons," "war," "death-blow," the rhetoric of physical conquest), the mission church ("faith," "new social order," pilgrimage narratives), and the cult of female domesticity (enforced by an immobile piano which "will always remain in the home" as a weighty metaphor for permanent westernization) was not just a fervent hope that European music should prevail abroad in Japan, but the gnawing anxiety that it might not do so at home in a nation felt to be under cultural siege.

Evaluated in terms of Faust’s aims, this vision of Japan’s musical future was remarkably optimistic—especially if counterpoised to accounts of the actual popularity of jazz-influenced music in Japan, and to nationalistic modes of reception. The German writer quoted above also stated that:

Since the war...Japanese morals have been sadly undermined, principally by American films and easy money. So the honorable deputies have introduced a bill in Parliament to regulate morals. Even in liberal Osaka an ordinance has been passed forbidding the serving of intoxicating liquors at dances, and requiring the doors of all dance-halls to be kept wide open. This puritanism expresses itself in many ways. For example, in Osaka, which is paradoxically both ultranationalist and ultramodern, many a man will disconnect his radio the moment a piece of European music is played.¹³⁷

Faust’s dream of a westernized Japan happily weighed down with pianos and uplifted by opera stands in contrast to these unplugged radios. His selective vision of musical Europeanization not only painted a scene that realized his goals in a nation distant from most of his readers; it also implied a model for social processes in his and their own country. His story of Miura was not just a tale of Japanese cultural change, but also a talisman against other changes at home. That home was a United States where certain white Americans saw European music as a beleaguered tradition, one neglected by young people

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seduced by music and dance which conjured up, in some minds, the frightening specter of African American practices and African forebears.

As seen in Chapman’s article in a “New Woman” context (cf. Ammons 1991), some writers enlisted the idea of Japanese sopranos in support of different agendas in debates over women’s social roles. Gendered meanings informed other texts as well. One detailed Miura’s marital tensions as arising in part from her touring with a male accompanist. Telling of her travels with a dissatisfied chaperone, it ended with a quotation attributed to her (and cast in pseudo-dialect): “‘Honorable chaperon[e] probably married by now,’ said Madame Miura, who is in New York busily and uninterruptedly engaged with her Italian pianist and the new opera. And she added shyly, ‘Like America very much—easier get divorce here than Japan.’”

Accounts of other Japanese sopranos also offered social commentary. A 1931 St. Louis article offered a first-person account of Hizi Koyke’s call for gender equality in politics, employment, domestic work, dress, and other domains; its subtitle neatly summed up her argument: “‘Love and Marriage First, But Then—On to Work!’: Japanese Prima Donna Believes Women Are Capable of More Than Romances or Housework, and the Role of the Sexes Should Often Be Reversed in Dress and in Business.” The text began:

I LIKE to think of myself as an American. I have been educated in the United States, at Columbia University, and then by American music teachers. And my real happiness has come to me in the United States—success in the world I love—the great world of music. I speak humbly about this success, but such as it is, it could hardly have come to me—a woman—in my own Japan. And so it happens that I look everywhere at American life, and that I study American men—and women—and customs. And that as a result today, I am

138. “Her Own Life Comedy More Absurd Than a Comic Opera: Madame Miura, the Distinguished Japanese Prima Donna, Explains Why Her Husband Tried to Hold Her in Japan—and How She Embarked on Her World Tour with Her Italian Accompanist and a Chaperon [sic],” San Francisco Examiner, 6 August 1922.
going to say a little of what I think about the absurdities of women in America, you and your Aunt Dora, even myself.

The article critiqued ubiquitous notions of romantic love in terms striking for their contrast to the role that accompanied every “Japanese Prima Donna,” including Koyke, in U.S. public discourse. Although this paradigmatic role went unmentioned in the piece, its ideological shadow stood nearby as Koyke said: “Too much bother and embroidery and sheer drivelling words are wasted on those love affairs which should be as spontaneous as a spring breeze, blown and done.” In language one could read as a crisis intervention into the Butterfly narrative, she called for a kind of lived balance, one that resituated Cho-Cho-San’s endlessly re-enacted suicide as the needless effect of a massive loss of perspective: “Why not adopt the slogan, ‘Certainly, love and marriage first. And then on to work. Love is not all of life!’”

Koyke (and her interlocutor) linked this lack of balance to “the question of equality,” beginning with female suffrage, election to political office, and—in an ironic mood—politicians’ bribe-taking: “…women in politics curse the day when they accept graft. It seems that the few women who have been interested in—well—the more monetary side of politics—have got into trouble for rather small sums. So there equality is lagging. No doubt, men feel that such women should be protected, no matter how it hurts.”

139. Because the suffrage passage used the first-person plural in regard to women’s voting rights at a time when Japanese immigrants were ineligible for naturalization, it must reflect rewriting by her anonymous American interviewer—in a way analogous to the English and U.S. tradition of publishing social critique under the pen names of fabricated, supposedly Chinese traveling observers. The text gains added interest as a gender-centric, almost certainly woman-authored version of a similar literary sort, and remains useful for its enlistment of Koyke as both an actual speaker and an attributed mouthpiece for these views from the categorical location of the “Japanese prima donna.” Precise demarcation of Koyke’s own verbal contributions from traces of her proxy role is impossible, and it is of secondary importance in seeing how dominant U.S. media offered up images of Japanese female singers as social commentators—whether actual and intentional or ventriloquized to some degree.
arguing against the oppressive restrictions of traditional gender roles and for equity between women and men across the board in public and domestic spheres, the article’s conclusion—clearly addressing women readers, and printed beneath an image of Koyke kneeling in kimono, “as she appears in one of her operatic roles”—called for a bold social experiment. This was:

The experiment of dividing up the work of the world again, and assorting the clothes of the sexes again. And achieving some real equality. Let us send the men with domesticity in their hearts back to the kitchen to express their souls. And let us free many women from the slavery of dress. And put them into a uniform, for a time at least. And give them a chance at the hard work of the world, on an equal basis with men. This, then, is my idea of making our country at least a more logical world to live in.140

This offered social commentary from the rhetorical figure and paraphrased voice of a Japanese soprano speaking as a cultural (read racial) outsider.

Some texts argued against dominant ideologies of gender-appropriate behavior (although they seldom offered serious critique of equally oppressive beliefs about race, but reinscribed notions of unitary essences or—as in the St. Louis piece—elided the issue). Addressing geographically dispersed regional readerships, such articles enlisted spokesperson singers to comment on gender issues treated more implicitly in accounts such as Chapman’s article. They often did so in ways akin to Faust’s universalizing of Miura as a prototypical New Japanese Woman whose tale might hearten her (white) American sisters—in Faust’s case, with less radically restructurialist aims.

Journalists used these figures to support disjunct arguments. Upon Miura’s arrival in 1915, one situated her as a westernized singer who had grown through her own initiative and was poised to share the liberatory

fruits of her labors by helping Japan appreciate European music. The article closed by quoting Miura’s views on, in the journalist’s phrase, “such lost causes as votes for women”: “Such a thing as that in Japan would be unheard of. ...In Japan the men are cleverer than the women. We all acknowledge that. But in America the women appear to think that they are cleverer than the men. I really don’t think that is true myself.”141 In contrast, Koyke’s strong (paraphrased, recast, partially fabricated) voice offered her Missouri readers more trenchant support of women’s rights. This diversity of these views and interpretations is important. In performance and in print, characters played by “Japanese sopranos” and women who inhabited that category spoke out literally and metaphorically, in scripted and impromptu ways, on ideas about gender. These performers’ malleable meanings not just as embodied signs of stock roles but also as commentators on women in society offered subjective counterparts to the identity so many listeners and readers ascribed to them.

Singing Orientality for the Nation at U.S. Political Events

Writers and publishers also enlisted these singers’ rhetorical figures in more globally focused political discourses, bringing them to bear on international issues as well as domestic social questions. An example is press coverage of Miura’s public support of U.S. government programs in connection with the war in Europe. In a convergence of national and cultural signs, The World Outlook ran a photograph of Miura in kimono, singing the “Star Spangled Banner” on Fifth Avenue on behalf of the Fourth Liberty Loan. While that appearance may reflect her career savvy and her instinct for good publicity opportunities, it also shows that there was space in such a quintessentially

American patriotic event for this Asian performer. This may seem surprising, but it is less so when viewed in regard to political alliances abroad and Americanism at home. She sang for these causes in a context of performances by citizens and non-citizens in support of the war against Germany, and of participatory singing at pageants that dramatized war-related themes to foster U.S. nationalism in immigrants (Glassberg 1990, 219–24).

At some benefits Miura sang nationalistic U.S. songs, but at others she performed the aria with which many white Americans identified her. This encouraged audiences to construct meanings different from the assimilation they could perceive in her singing of patriotic songs and in such sights as flag-waving residents of New York’s Chinatown (as seen in an image titled “Democracy—Oriental and Occidental”). A 1918 benefit at New York’s Metropolitan Opera House drew a standing-room-only crowd who heard the soprano in a context of various singers’ operatic excerpts, Louise Homer’s “Star-Spangled Banner,” and Lucien Muratore’s “Marseillaise”: “Another ally was represented by Tamaki Miura, the Japanese soprano, heard here in past years with the Boston Opera Company, who sang ‘Un Bel Di Vedremo’ from ‘Madama Butterfly,’ and Mabel Garrison…sang ‘Dixie’ for an encore with the response which a New York crowd always gives.” Miura’s performance of the aria—reported in an article subtitled in part “Japan Sends Her Soprano”—not only was an operatic piece. It positioned the singer and her Italian song as unofficial bel canto representatives of her homeland’s people and government.

In the view of this article, Miura’s song as Puccini’s heroine located the singer, the character, and the aria as a form of national essence. Framed by the Met’s proscenium at a time when it was overtly politicized, her singing as Butterfly was charged beyond its ordinary and substantial representational force. Because this Japanese-born singer performed it, Puccini’s aria became that night a symbol of Japan with a political valence nearly equivalent to that of the “Star-Spangled Banner” and the “Marseillaise.” (Nearly, but not quite, because the audience stood during those official anthems but not for the aria.) This redefinition took place in the minds of the journalist and of any other listeners susceptible to slippage from Italian operatic orientality to the essence of an Asian nation-state—a symbolic remapping made easy and convincing by the staged embodiment of both in an ostensibly native Butterfly. The event’s location at the Met and the frequent convergence of Miura’s image with this role must have combined to make performing an aria amid anthems seem sensible, despite the common inclusion of Japan’s anthem (rather than “un bel di’!) in other successions of national songs in different contexts.145

Miura’s performances at patriotic events suggested meanings that were conveyed elsewhere in more metaphorical ways; for example, an article on activist Michi Kawai’s trip to Russia was titled “Madame Butterfly—War Worker.”146 Other Japanese sopranos also sang for war-related causes. Onuki appeared in San Francisco performances under the rubric of Stage Women’s War Relief; announcements referred to her as “the Japanese prima donna,”

145. E.g., a wartime song collection included the anthem “Kimi ga Yo” as the “Japanese National Hymn” and marked its presence with a Japanese flag in its cover art (“Songs of the United States and Her Allies,” Pittston, PA: Miners Savings Bank). The volume is undated, but it has back-cover photographs of nine heads of state whose years in power suggest a publication year of about 1917, the year in which the United States entered the war.
mirroring her Orpheum listing that same week.147 Other benefits featured performers including Blanche Bates, who played the dramatic Butterfly, and musicians such as Paderewski; and Geraldine Farrar organized a Stage Women’s War Relief benefit in which she sang Act 2 of Madame Butterfly.148

Miura’s and Onuki’s appearances at such events had further implications. As noted, amateur singing of nationalist songs was widespread at wartime rallies and pageants (Glassberg 1990, 220). Photographs of people in the streets of New York convey a sense of these happenings’ popularity; the caption to one suggests how much energy audiences built up and released in them: “It was ‘The Star Spangled Banner,’ …with Douglas Fairbanks leading the singing, that got the crowd of 20,000 going strong for the Third Loan. They had just finished a thundering ‘Over There,’ but when he started the old anthem you couldn’t have heard Standard Oil ‘blow up.’”149

In these contexts, these sopranos’ visibility at benefits offered white Americans an audible idea of their own potential, if limited, commonality with orientalized singers. This was founded in both parties’ external display of pro-United States sentiment, and internally in the musical acts through

147. “Stage Women’s War Relief” [program], San Francisco: Columbia Theatre, 9 April 1918; “Famed Stars to Play for Benefit of Stage Women…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 8 April 1918; “Columbia Is Magnet Today: Noted Stars to Aid Benefit…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 9 April 1918; “Stage Folk War Benefit to Be Big Affair,” San Francisco Call & Post, 6 April 1918; “Orpheum” [advertisements], San Francisco Call & Post, 6 and 8 April 1918.
149. “How ‘Doug’ and ‘Charlie’ Helped to Boost the Loan Yesterday” [photographs], New York World, 9 April 1918. Other events enlisted Asian American heritage communities as signs of international allied unity; one feature showed images of such moments in various cities (“An International Fourth of July” [photographs], Asia, August 1918, 677–80).
which they gave public voice to these feelings; and some people may have
seen these sopranos as testifying from afar about the righteousness of U.S.
military actions. Such events offered more than just a forum for building
audiences through sheer exposure. These performances in city streets and
parks brought singers before mass audiences not only larger but probably
more diverse in social status than the typical opera crowd. They also may
have fostered unusual modes of imagined identification (constrained by
raciological sensibilities) with Japanese sopranos singing a patriotism also
widely envoiced by some of their listeners, who would have sung as part of
amateur crowds at other wartime events. And in a textually distanced way,
patriotic members of the public who did not attend still could imagine such
identification by seeing images and remembering in their own bodies what
it felt like when they had sung aloud as participants at other such events.

Miura also sang for benefits for Japanese and Japanese American causes;
one example was a New York recital organized by the Japanese M.E. Church
and Institute to benefit that institution and the families of victims of a
maritime disaster.\(^{150}\) This involvement with Japanese American society
seldom figured in her dominant media coverage. Another type of forum
comprised private society functions, some overtly political and others framed
as entertaining diversions. Both often were restricted to invited attendees of a
certain station. One private political/social event was her 1917 performance
in Washington, D.C. for a newly arrived Japanese Commission.\(^{151}\)

\(^{150}\) Advertised in “Aeolian Hall Season of 1924–1925” [program], New York: Aeolian Hall,
11 May 1925, 17.
Examples of less politicized performances at private venues abound. Her 1924 engagements included a reception at New York’s Nippon Club, whose members she “entertained” by “serving tea in the Japanese fashion and singing a number of songs,” and a musical program at Beechwood, an estate in Scarborough-on-Hudson. At a “Japanese garden party” there “in aid of the Tsuda College Fund,” Miura sang “the favorite aria from ‘Butterfly,’” three songs she had composed, and other pieces including Cadman’s “At Dawning.”152 Society doings such as these were a more private and class-bound, yet in some ways still public, counterpart to war-related events. Both enabled her to play Butterfly in settings closer to the “real world” than were self-evidently constructed operatic domains of extravagant fantasy.153

Many of Miura’s touring concert performances also took place outside opera houses because many cities lacked large enough halls. Speaking about her 1926 tour of 108 concerts in eleven states, she was quoted as saying:

“I never had such a great treat,” said Mme. Miura. “It was all so new. In some cities they did not have a large hall, so the concerts were given in a big tent, one of them seating 2,000, and I believe that on more than one occasion a whole town, almost, heard our concert.” [”]Every evening I shook about 200 people’s hands after the concert or at some reception in our honor. “The little boys and girls especially seemed to enjoy us so much. Many are anxious, they said, to be opera singers. And among our most appreciative listeners are the aged and crippled who could be wheeled into the tent to hear us, whereas they had been unable to attend performances at the theaters. “I loved those Chautauqua audiences because I could get close to them. I talked with them and before I sang the Madame Butterfly selections I told them

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153. Cf. an advertisement making a point of her availability for “Costume Recitals,” showing that she sang her usual role attired in that way outside the context of fully staged productions (“Tamaki Miura: Celebrated Japanese Soprano,” *Musical Courier*, 29 March 1928, 15).
the story of the opera and they liked it all so much. Mind, opera is my first love, but the Chautauqua work was a delightful change and experience.”

To add to the comfort and pleasure of the tour, Miura, her new toy dog, and her company motored from place to place, never once being obliged to resort to the train.154

In at least the Chautauqua venue that summer, her practice of telling the tale of “Madame Butterfly” before singing excerpts from the opera suggests that her role as the character’s interpreter was at times more active, and perhaps more flexible in its moment-to-moment calibration to audience tastes and expectations, than just a matter of reinscribing a fixed and static part.

While it is interesting to wonder whether in those framing presentations the singer may have critiqued her role’s reductive force and asserted her own identity’s difference from that fictive one, no evidence has been found to support or belie such a notion. Perhaps debunking of that sort would have seemed a suicidal professional move for this singer, who was so aware of the power of dominant beliefs and the limits they placed on the U.S. careers of musicians of Asian heritage—especially Japanese women singing Butterfly.

True Grit in Kimono: Sopranos as Agents of Self-Transforming Struggle

First-hand or mediated experience of other Asian singers active in the United States constituted another context within which some listeners heard Miura. Some accounts of these vocalists focused on their own agency in undertaking musical transformation, locating this as a sign of women’s more general powers of self-reinvention and redefinition.

As noted, shortly before Miura’s arrival in the United States another Japanese soprano sang at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Nobu

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Hara, then 23, was a “prima-donna at the Imperial Theatre” and “director of the Imperial Operatic Training School.” An August 1915 feature on her in Sunset magazine was similar in some ways to Chapman’s article on Miura.155 In Sunset, Mabel Harding also presented Hara as a musically westernized icon of female advancement through personal grit and determination.

Harding’s text used such language of the body as “little prima-donna”—much like references to Miura as “the rising little Japanese star,” “marvelous little Japanese prima donna, or “clever little Japanese prima donna.”156 However, Harding did so in a narrative that asserted Hara’s efficacy as both an agent and a sign of social change. While the nature of this change assumed the superiority of non-Japanese practices, Harding’s told the tale of “plucky” Hara as one of “achievement against the odds” in the face of gender-based opposition (354–55), attributing social power to its protagonist. This contrasted with Kirkland’s reference to Miura’s “not particularly powerful” voice as a metaphor for a more pervasive lack, and was akin to Chapman’s presentation of Miura as an active agent of her own musical construction.157

Sunset’s presentation of Harding’s text displayed significant disjunctures of language between the article as such and its title and photograph captions.

157. Dispelling any misimpression that only women writers vested power (of any sort) in these singers, a male critic’s review of Onuki as Butterfly included: “The youthful Japanese singer’s voice has amazing sympathy, almost Celtic in its winsome quality. She has power and she reaches the upper tones freely, sacrificing nothing to the pitch. She was a picture in her quaint posturings and elaborate headdress, and demure and appealing in her vocal reactions to the woes of deserted Cho Cho San” (Walter Anthony, “Onuki in Role of Cho Cho San…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 14 February 1919). Despite reducing her to the “quaint” and “demure,” he still stated that (in her voice, at least) “She has power.”
These seem to be traces of more editorial than authorial eagerness to conflate Hara and the part she played, and thus of tensions between representational styles within this single document. The article itself presented the singer more as a tough-minded fighter than as any sort of victim. Without soft-pedaling the narrative’s essentializing aspects (e.g., appeals to such general character traits as “the Japanese acquisitiveness”), this comparatively perceptive treatment of a Japanese soprano—an article which resisted wrapping her real identity in the costume of Puccini’s heroine—still was wrapped (along with its subject) in just that way before being disseminated to its readers. In a way almost religious in tone, Harding’s article portrayed Hara as the efficacious agent of her own transformation;158 but it was titled “Madame Butterfly at Home,” and the caption given to a leading photograph was “Miss Nobu Hara, prima donna at the Imperial Theatre, Tokyo—a native ‘Butterfly’.”

There may have been some less than conscious relationship between this representational containment, its California historical context of Japanese immigration and rampant yellow perilism, and the white-oriented, tourism-boosting mission of a magazine founded in 1898 by the male owners of “the Southern Pacific Railroad to promote Western travel” (Tebbel and Zuckerman 1991, 259). The idea of a safely aestheticized—and by musical metaphor, proselytized and happily converted—Japanese woman opera singer, even one who had refused to follow inhibiting advice offered by institutional and family forces during her self-transformative quest to master a European vocal

158. Harding established this missionizing atmosphere with comments on many Japanese people’s first training in European vocal music having been the singing of Christian hymns, something “anybody might guess” (352); but she portrayed Hara as having real agency.
art, may have seemed a heartening story to many white readers of *Sunset*, whether they were residents or potential visitors to the West Coast.

The ways in which many critics heard and saw authenticity in Japanese sopranos’ Butterfly acts were notably consistent over the years after Miura’s and Hara’s U.S. debuts. Miura’s performances in the 1920s elicited responses similar to, if often briefer than, her reviews a decade earlier. Two *Musical America* notes from 1924 still evoked inborn authenticity as a foundation for Miura’s dramatic abilities, and at times as a directly perceptible quality:

Tamaki Miura, who had not been heard here since her appearances with the Chicago Company during the season of 1918–1919, reasserted her hold on the affections of the public by a fine performance of the rôle of *Cio-Cio-San*. Her lovely voice carried the vocal requirements well, and she created the illusion of the part as no other exponent of the rôle can.¹⁵⁹

With her usual charm, Tamaki Miura brought the authentic atmosphere of the Orient to the season’s first presentation of “Madama Butterfly”…. It was a colorful performance, the presence of Mme. Miura and her wardrobe of rich Japanese costumes would insure that…. Mme. Miura sang the rôle of *Cio Cio San* with artistry and buoyancy. Except for the fact that she continued to wear her diamond ring in the second act, when supposedly on the verge of starvation, it was a convincing portrayal. The other singers had apparently been chosen with a view to making an accurate picture as well as for their voices.¹⁶⁰

As seen in earlier texts, these rhetorics of authenticity, accuracy, and credible illusion drew on the presence of a Butterfly known to be Japanese in real life, one thus believed to be not only naturally representative of herself and her “race,” but also better equipped to create an illusion of oriental Japaneseness.

This set up an unstable oscillation between notions of a singer’s Asian origins as the grounds for her native authenticity and her consciously adept enactment of a fictional character. This tension between contradictory views

of the significance of Miura’s origins vis-à-vis her role was implicit in much of her press, and it was not limited her enactment of Butterfly. For example, a review of her appearance in the leading role of Iris played to a desire for authenticity—one not to be sated by Gilbert & Sullivan confections: “‘Iris’ was Nipponese as opposed to mikadoesque in atmosphere, setting and rendition. Fidelity to the real life of Japan strikes one from the very first act…”\textsuperscript{161}

One photograph caption summed up and undermined the notion of Miura’s authentic orientality in the role, implicitly raising questions of her agency but leaving them open. The image presented the singer in kimono; its caption read: “TAMAKI MUIRA [sic] / Who as Cio-Cio-San is doubly real, being an artist and a daughter of Old Japan.”\textsuperscript{162} That Miura was “doubly real” indicated the writer’s awareness that what she presented on stage was professional artifice, but still it adduced her origins as giving her artifice greater reality. Meant to praise her in two ways, the caption weakened itself by contradiction. Its acknowledgment of her conscious practice inadvertently pointed out how untenable was the view that Miura was in fact a “real” Cio-Cio-San as “a daughter of Old Japan.” Once the singer’s non-Japanese training was invoked as being crucial to her portrayal of Butterfly, that doubleness did not so strongly support her merged reality “as Cio-Cio-San,” but rather as two collocated entities on the same bit of stage: Butterfly, heard in the form of an authentically European-trained voice, and Miura, seen in the form of an authentically Japanese-born body. Yet this analytical split circled

\textsuperscript{161} “Rare Performance Given Opera ‘Iris’…,” \textit{San Francisco Call & Post}, 28 February 1917.
\textsuperscript{162} “The Music Season Begins to Vibrate: Six Early and Important Arrivals Among the Singers and Pianists,” \textit{Theatre Magazine}, November 1923, 35. While it is tempting to interpret the misspelling as a sign of her continued foreignness to U.S. caption writers and editors, to do so could invest spurious meaning into what may have been a routine typesetting error.
back on itself. In the singing and hearing and seeing of this illusory double authenticity, the origins of her voice in her body wedded the two together.

This enabled, even encouraged, people in this singer’s audiences still to conflate their notions of Miura and Butterfly, body and voice, Japan and Asia and orient into a bundle of musical signification, a tightly-wrapped packet of meaning rendered no less powerful—and perhaps more intriguing—by its own self-contradictions. And while some other Japanese performers in the United States earlier in the century had been billed literally as performing themselves,163 the U.S. press presented Miura often and over many years not just as performing herself, but as doing so within the bounds of a role scripted by Europeans. This rendered the notion of her authenticity more complex.

By positioning Miura as “a daughter of Old Japan,” the magazine left room for a double interpretation. The phrase “Old Japan” drew on a common trope of timeless orientality, one which added temporal distance to a spatial cultural remove.164 It situated “Old Japan” as a place Miura had in part left behind by means of education and travel, but also an unchanging, imaginary space to which she always would belong (and one she summoned up in many listeners’ imaginations). Conjuring up the idea of a pure, pre-Perry Japan of the past, yet one many still believed to exist, this “Old Japan” purged of any westernization (save for musical forays by white sailors) was a geographical counterpart to notions of Miura’s embodiment of Butterfly. Both sought to locate authentic orientality in a physical locus, whether a timeless nation across the sea or an opera singer’s body on stage in one’s own American city.

163. E.g., “Fuji Ko as Herself…” [photographs], Theatre Magazine, October 1906, 266.
An illustrative popular song suggests such pieces’ common ground with Miura’s dominant U.S. reception. “In Old Japan” presented a Butterfly-like scenario. Its chorus’s first line situated the narrative; in its sung duration, the repeated phrase gave the imagination time to settle in that fictive space before subsequent lyrics filled it with wistful images of cherry-blossom orientality:

In old Japan,
In old Japan,
In a garden where the water lilies grow,
The cherry trees perfume the breeze,
Where someone waits in a bamboo bungalow.
And in her hand a little fan
She swings as she sings her love song soft and low.
Lonesome little sweetheart soon I’ll be
With you in your land across the sea,
I know your little heart beats
Just for me in old Japan.165

Given weight by a shift from third-person reportage to second-person address, the last lines asserted Butterfly-like dependence on a foreign sailor’s love;166 and if the character’s single-purpose heartbeat were taken literally, the song could seem to foretell her Butterfly-like death were he to reject her.

Locating “Japanese Sopranos” in & out of the Opera House

Many later U.S. reviews of Japanese singers of Butterfly blurred their staged and lived identities in ways seen in accounts of Miura’s performances of the teens and twenties. One told of a soprano’s 1932 performance in Austria:

Her success was immediate, and one felt that for the first time one was seeing Butterfly herself. Mitchiko Meini-Tanaka was really the little 15-year-old Japanese girl (her real age cannot be over 22). Her acting was dramatic, her every movement fascinatingly natural and, like her costumes, “real Japanese” to an extent that a European cannot hope to achieve.167

Were Meini-Tanaka’s name replaced with Miura’s, this could have been a review of the older singer’s first U.S. performances. Once again this conflation was received as being pleasing, even revelatory. The reviewer continued:

She sang in German. Her voice trained for three years in Vienna, away from the strange music of Japan, to that of Europe, was silver-clear, true, and despite her childish figure, which made one wonder at first if she could fill the theatre, entirely adequate in volume.

As in articles on Miura, the singer’s small physical size was presented as a limitation and as a potential sign of immaturity—but was shown not to be an insurmountable obstacle to the development of a “true” voice, so long as her Asian body and mind had been submitted to proper European training.

Although many accounts above were distributed in mass publications, most of the acts of orientality they discussed took place in the elite context of grand opera. Similar roles also were sung in less elevated venues, at times by the same singers. One of these was Haru Onuki. Her operatic reception was much like that of Miura, to whom some listeners linked her.

Haru Onuki, the second Japanese prima donna to sing Cio Cio San in this city, Tamaki Miura being the first, brought many native touches to the rôle at the “Madama Butterfly” performance, though her voice was not quite strong enough at times for the glowing Puccini strains.168

Onuki also sang in vaudeville, where she was described by such consistent terms as “The Japanese Prima Donna,” “gifted Japanese prima donna,” “dainty Japanese prima donna,” “The Celebrated Japanese Prima Donna,” and “The Popular Japanese Prima-Donna.”169

168. “Orchestras and Opera Company…,” Musical America, 3 November 1923, 1, 32.
169. “Orpheum” [advertisement], San Francisco Examiner, 16 September 1917; “Road Show at Orpheum is Wonder,” San Francisco Call & Post, 19 February 1917; “Orpheum” [theatrical listing], San Francisco Chronicle, 7 April 1918; “Orpheum” [advertisement], San Francisco Call & Post, 16 April 1918; “Orpheum: An All-Feature Program” [advertisement], San Francisco Chronicle, 27 August 1922; “B.F. Keith’s Theatre” [program], Boston, week beginning 27 August 1917; “Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco, week beginning 8 April 1923.
In this way, Onuki blurred what might be misunderstood as a firm boundary between “high” and “low” performances of orientality. Sometimes the same photographs were used to publicize her appearances in vaudeville and grand opera. For a 1918 engagement at the San Francisco Orpheum, one newspaper printed an image it would run again in more upscale company the following year for a full-blown version of Madame Butterfly.¹⁷⁰ In both of these working-class and elite domains (and as noted previously in specific regard to its operatic context), this representation of Onuki as a Japanese soprano gave its foreground over to generic signs of female Japaneseness (kimono, obi, and hairstyle), leaving her individual face half-elided near the margin.

As Lawrence Levine has argued about nineteenth-century American culture and as John Dizikes has elaborated upon in specific regard to opera, this cultural hierarchy was being constructed up to and beyond the turn of the century. Only in hindsight might it seem that “high” and “low” domains of performance were always as distinct as we now may believe them to have been.¹⁷¹ These sopranos crossed between venues as diverse as the opera house and the vaudeville theater at least into the 1930s, appearing in both locations under the same rubrics. This was one way in which the boundary between “high class” and less elevated venues continued to be permeable well into the twentieth century. Touring opera companies that often played to less than upper-crust audiences provide another example; these less elite

¹⁷⁰. “Orpheum” [theatrical listing], San Francisco Chronicle, 14 April 1918; “Musical Farce for Orpheum,” San Francisco Call & Post, 4 April 1918. The later image was reversed left-to-right (relative to the earlier one, at least) either accidentally or for layout reasons.
¹⁷¹. Levine (1988, 240–41); see also Dizikes (1993); for a critique that challenges aspects of Levine’s evidentiary and rhetorical practice, while leaving this broad point basically intact but usefully complicated in certain ways, see Locke (1999, 522–23).
companies had spurred debates over quality, class, and urban/rural tensions since well back into the nineteenth century (Dizikes 1993, 257–80).

Along with helping to keep boundaries between genres at least a bit blurred, these singers’ work in diverse venues presented them to audiences who might not have ventured into theaters of other than their favorite type. Some newspapers coincidentally presented these choices in simultaneous advertisements for operatic and vaudevillian appearances. A 1917 issue of the *San Francisco Call & Post* ran side-by-side advertisements for an upcoming presentation of the Boston company and the Orpheum’s bill for the following week. Adequately funded opera fans could plan to hear Miura sing *Madame Butterfly* or *Iris* for an admission charge ranging from one dollar for the farthest reaches of the gallery to $80 for loge seating for five.172 Those with thinner wallets or lighter purses—or who preferred more varied and unassuming theatrical fare—could choose to hear Onuki, billed (even here, next to an advertisement listing Miura) with the definite article as “The Japanese Prima Donna,” at the Orpheum. There even the priciest seats could be had for under a dollar, and the cheapest went for a dime.173

A review of a San Francisco appearance by Onuki as Butterfly shows how opera offered a forum for negotiating class-bound notions of propriety. As did many responses to Miura, the article attributed Onuki’s success more to her “charm” and dramatic ability—that is, to visually perceived qualities of her enactment’s expression and gesture—than to her singing. But this critic attended above all to audience response, situating it in its class-laden venue:

172. “Cort Theatre” [advertisement], *San Francisco Call & Post*, 17 February 1917.
173. “Orpheum” [advertisement], *San Francisco Call & Post*, 17 February 1917.
Not even the anguished “shushing” of the more conventional opera lovers in the audience at the Curran Theater last night could restrain the frank enthusiasm which repeatedly sent a rending storm of applause into the skein of Puccini’s “Madame Butterfly” music. Haru Onuki, the dainty Japanese prima donna of the San Carlo Grand Opera Company, singing the poignant role of Cho Cho San, was given a reception that justifies bringing out the much abused word, “ovation.”

In many respects there have been infinitely more artistic performances of Cho Cho San, but none which presented a greater emotional appeal. Those who drowned out the music, regardless of the proper time for tribute, cared for nothing but the fact that this little Japanese had given them a thrill that could not be resisted.

Analysis probably would result in the conclusion that the appeal of Horu [sic] Onuki’s Cho Cho San lies in the personal charm of the singer and the clear intelligence with which her acting meets even the most subtle demands of the role. In voice, Haru Onuki proved pleasing, but there were moments last night when the orchestra became almost too much of a competitor, and her voice shed its color under the strain.

This lack, however, was a minor one in the light of an otherwise remarkable performance. This tale of “shushing” and its catalysts provides a trace of the broad appeal of Onuki’s embodiment of Butterfly and shows how such performances offered a site for negotiating expressions of public response, especially insofar as a Japanese soprano’s novelty drew less habitual operagoers to the theater. This documents the heterogeneity of this audience for a Japanese soprano’s operatic embodiment of Butterfly. And despite the care with which the article invoked “the proper time for tribute” (perhaps to mark its author’s own inculcation in such matters), this critic seemed tacitly to approve of, or at least condone, the audible enthusiasm of those less-restrained listeners who felt most free to voice and clap their appreciation in the moments of its arising.

Vaudeville audiences often were less concerned about distinguishing between high and low genres than were opera critics. The story of an appearance by Onuki at New York’s Palace Theater shows how these events and their retelling could focus on her Japaneseness even when they had to do

with more general aspects of performance. By also telling of other, mimetic acts, the article located Onuki by contrast as all the more Japanese. Its most apposite part began with high praise and the usual categorical descriptions:

The little Japanese prima donna was a beauty, too, in her quaint way. She looked so petite in her gay brocade kimono, with a gorgeous curtain of gold embroidered silk stretching far to each side and high above her, that the audience fairly loved her before she opened her little Jap mouth. It was the clearest English that issued therefrom, sung in a full, sweet soprano voice—a trained, authoritative voice. She was indeed prima donna; and one knew why she had been so successful in the big Hippodrome where she appeared earlier in the season. Haruko Onuki is her name and it will probably be seen topping vaudeville bills for many months to come. For the Jap mademoiselle possesses not only a rich voice (many a prima donna has brought that to vaudeville and found her engagement limited to one consecutive week), but the mysterious quality of vaudeville appeal. She holds audiences in rapt attention; they listen, they watch, and they will be glad to see her again. Indeed they will almost rise up in arms in her defence as witness an incident during her engagement at the Palace.

A standard repertoire of descriptive tropes appeared here; but this critic’s emphasis on Onuki’s voice as “authoritative,” not just “trained,” resonated with some women writers’ stress on Miura’s agency as the foundation of her career (even as they also reified her as a representative of an essential type).

The writer followed that assessment of Onuki, however, with a specific anecdote that left behind any further assertions of Onuki’s ascribed identity:

It was during the close of Mlle. Onuki’s final song, the Tosti “Good Bye,” that a party of four noisily made their way to seats in the third row. The whispered protests of ushers availed nothing; the four chatted in the aisle as the other occupants of the third row rose to let them pass, and when they achieved their seats they did not sink into them quietly, but stood removing wraps and rearranging their grouping, thus blocking the view of half the audience. The commotion was such as was impossible not to observe, and Haruko Onuki’s

175. Nellie Revell, “Why Vaudeville Need Never Fear...,” Theatre Magazine, February 1917, 100, 120. Cf. the spectatorship of successive novelties in vaudeville (see Chapter 3). A review of Onuki’s performance on a San Francisco bill also featuring a blackface act attended to her appearance as much as to her voice: “Haruko Onuki, the Japanese singer—prima donna, I should say—is back with a new lot of songs and some old ones. She is a charming little Madame Butterfly, and we forgive her even when she sings a little sharp, because of the grace of her dainty manner, her eagerness to please and her big voice” (Walter Anthony, “No Stars, but Good Bill at Orpheum...,” San Francisco Chronicle, 8 April 1918).
farewell note died out and she was almost off the stage before the audience was aware of it. There was a burst of applause, but it was sympathetic rather than the tumult due to the triumphant artiste. Mlle. Onuki’s finish had been killed, to use the vaudeville vernacular. But a knight soon made his appearance in the guise of Julius Tannen. He wove into his chatter as neat and expert a denunciation of the impolite party as Cicero ever used on Cataline, and the audience demonstrated its concurrence in a ring of applause. Their little prima donna had been avenged, and contented they lent ear to Mr. Tannen.176

Even a story of such favorable reception ended up casting Onuki as a “little prima donna” in need of rescue by a white man. We may wonder whether the final applause was for Onuki or for a real-life scene of impromptu chivalry that vested agency not in the insulted singer, but in her gentlemanly savior.

More generally, the anecdote exemplifies what may have been an aspect of many moments when Japanese sopranos performed. On the one hand, it demonstrates routine constraints of character types in performance, reception, and their published retelling. On the other, it shows how they and other performers could be part of the same professional world, sharing experiences of audience rudeness or appreciation (experiences often felt and described in differently inflected terms) in response to the acts they presented in quick succession on the vaudeville stage, or to parts they sang in the opera house.

Along with singing at political and social events noted above, Miura performed in other settings outside the opera house. She sang with John Philip Sousa’s band in late 1915 and early 1916, a time when she also was singing Butterfly with the Boston Grand Opera Company. This reflected a blurred boundary between highbrow and middlebrow musical culture. For many Americans, Sousa epitomized mainstream popular musicianship, and for many years his band’s repertoire had included orientalist pieces. These

included Gardner’s 1916 “Chinese Blues” (rec. 1.6), and a decade and a half earlier Sousa’s own “Sen-Sen March” (fig. 1.9). The band’s publicity described Miura as “The Japanese Prima Donna,” often with prominent billing. For a 1915 appearance with Sousa at New York’s Hippodrome (mentioned briefly above), she sang excerpts from *Butterfly* and *Iris*, as well as songs in English. The Hippodrome used these high-culture connections as a selling point. A typical advertisement invoked operatic stardom: “PAVLOWA With SOUSA and HIS BAND / TAMAKI MIURA & BOSTON OPERA CO. STARS.”

Press releases in entertainment columns also cast Miura in class-inflected terms. As did many such notices, the Hippodrome’s announcements invoked the singers’ highbrow qualifications. One printed in the *Herald* included:

> Additional features…will be Mme. Tamaki Miura, Japanese prima donna, who sang earlier this season at the Manhattan Opera House in the title rôle of ‘Madama Butterfly,’ while other artists will be George Baklanoff, Russian barytone; Riccardo Martin, American tenor, and José Mardones, Spanish basso. All told, it promises to be a concert of unusual novelty.

This promised a menagerie of singing bodies representing human types. It described them all by nationality, but only for Miura did it link personal origins to operatic role. Insofar as such texts evoked a sense of variety for variety’s sake, they appealed to a thirst for novelty; but when many over time linked her staged and lived identities, their ideological load was clear.

182. An effect seen also in images of Miura in such costumes as a Plains headdress (“The Gigli Family and Tamaki Miura Done up in Feathers in Honor of Honorable Big Chief White Horse Eagle” [photograph], *Musical America*, 5 May 1928, 27).
Similar linkages were made in connection to another durable musical version of Japan, *The Mikado*, which often occupied middlebrow locations below grand opera but above vaudeville in cultural status. A notice for a 1920 production in Oakland promoted a Japanese Californian singer as follows:

> The list of principals is an admirable one. The chief interest, of course, centers in the sensational Japanese prima donna, Hana Shimozumi, who is, to use a colloquialism, the ‘knock-out’ of the year. Miss Shimozumi not only has a gloriously beautiful soprano voice, but is a comedienne of rare charm, and it is said that no Yum-Yum who has ever played the part is so thoroughly imbued with the true Nipponese spirit.183

And a 1928 vaudeville notice described her in familiar terms in that context:

> “Hana Shimozumi Iki, San Francisco born Japanese soprano, is the featured member of the Fanchon and Marco ‘Japa-Knees Idea’ ….”184

Although most sources on U.S. performances by Japanese sopranos in the teens and twenties provide traces of their reception only by the critic who wrote the particular article at hand, occasionally these reviewers passed along their versions of comments overheard from other audience members. These traces must be taken with a grain of salt. Beyond inaccuracies arising from their later reconstruction, they may have been doctored to serve as foils for a writer’s “own” more perceptive comments, or for humorous effect; but they still may provide a glimpse of meanings white Americans made from these singers. The variety of these interpretations is crucial because any act can support at least as many modes of reception as it has witnesses. Since many people “heard” these performances through published accounts rather than actual auditory experience, quotations in reviews were a key part of discourse about them—even if many such quotations were mangled or fabricated.

Although their uncertain provenance requires caution regarding whose ideas they represented, once published they were available to a great many readers.

Several articles tell of audience response to Miura’s 1916 performances in San Francisco. A tale of a prospective listener who may never have made it into the theater shows how some observers saw the singer’s drawing power as reaching beyond steady operagoers. After mentioning how busy the city’s theaters were despite the Lenten season, the writer led into a tale of audience genre-crossing by observing that “Life as caught by the camera unrolls from the reel to the screen at the picture play houses, and grand opera and drama gives its thrills to the audiences at the legitimate theaters”:

Speaking of the movies, the ticket office man at the Cort Theater, now dealing exclusively in grand opera paste-boards, is reported to have had this experience:

A movie fan went to the box office window and stuck two dimes under the grill.
“One, please,” he said.
The ticket office man, who has been used to seeing nothing less than $5 bills, gasped.
“One what?”
“Ticket to see this ‘Madame Butterfly’ thing,” said the prospective purchaser. “I want to see if this Japanese girl makes a better picture than Mary Pickford.”

Apocryphal or not, this evokes a moment in which some San Franciscans saw Miura’s novelty as an attraction that might lead people to alter their patterns of consuming entertainment, challenging or transcending customary class distinctions. This would-be listener’s comparison of the singer to Pickford, who had starred as Butterfly in a 1915 film, grounded his naïveté about the cost of opera tickets in his habituation of the less-elite cinema.

Another article offered direct quotation of purported audience comments at the performance. It played to the same sense of Miura’s ability to attract fans from beyond—or below—the ranks of opera aficionados:

The enthusiastically crowded house which showed itself on Monday was duplicated last night at the Cort, which harbors for the week the Boston Grand Opera Company. The audience gathered with as much anticipation for the long honored “Madame Butterfly” as it had for Montemezzi’s new masterpiece, and, profiting by a lesson to late comers on Monday night, every seat was occupied when the curtain went up.

But the older opera opened with a new note, nevertheless. Dainty Miss Miura of Japan created more fluster and concern among the experienced operagoers than a whole new work. Regarding her, speculation and comment ran high, nor ceased with the going down of each curtain. When reporters are sent to get “color” stories there are usually half a dozen topics which make good reading, for the lobby supplies remarks and conversations more entertaining for their originality than for any other reason.

Miss Miura certainly aroused original comment, but as for a diversity of topic, there is none to record. She was the sole theme of the night, and the interest in her arose mainly because the Anglo-Saxon mind could not understand how she was able to do the things she did, because she was born in Japan. Samples of talk went something like this: “Isn’t she wonderful?” “Yes, but isn’t it more wonderful that she can sing and act? I don’t see how she knows how to do those things.”

A friend who had the access of the outside lobby passed this in to me: Two girls had come from the upper tiers of seats. Said one: “I guess she’s singing in Japanese.” “Oh, no, she isn’t; she was learned in Europe and sings in Italian. She can’t talk English at all.”

Still another: “Well, I saw Mary Pickford as Butterfly, and she was so good I cried. But, my goodness, this Jap lady beats Mary a mile, and I know I’ll cry all night over the awful time she’s had with that Pinkerton.”

Even if these bits of “original comment” were embellished, they suggest that popular responses to Miura’s performance of Butterfly centered on issues that also figured in formal accounts composed for publication. These statements may have been cast in exaggeratedly vernacular language to contrast with the writer’s own voice and cultural capital; the tale of hearing Italian as Japanese seemed meant to assure readers that the writer would never make such a

186. “Dainty Miss Miura Wins Heart of Big Audience — Little Japanese Star Thrills, Delights and Surprises in Her Rendition of Madame Butterfly,” 15 March 1916. The newspaper is unidentified on a clipping in the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum’s chronological clippings files; based on its type and layout, it may well be the Chronicle.
déclassé mistake. Referring to people “from the upper tiers of seats” reinforced the status marked by transcribing speech as uneducated: “she was learned,” “can’t talk English.” The writer presented these listeners’ comments as the naïve amazement of innocents agog.\footnote{Another review from this early engagement stated: “Last night witnessed the largest audience of the season, save that which ushered in the engagement last Monday night. The performance was devoted to the second presentation of Puccini’s “Madame Butterfly,” with the dainty little Japanese prima donna, Tamaki Miura, in the leading role. Her fame has spread since her performance of the part last Tuesday night, and last night there was not a vacant seat in the entire house, and many were glad of the opportunity to stand. The success of last Tuesday night was emphatically repeated” (“Tamaki Miura Is Ideal Butterfly...,” \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, 17 March 1916). Because of this favorable response, the ensemble arranged to present three concerts across the bay in Oakland. Performing Butterfly there for the engagement’s “gala” closing night, Miura would be rewarded with “the sympathy and applause of the largest audience attending the performances of the Boston Grand Opera Company” ("Oakland to Hear Boston Opera Co.,” \textit{San Francisco Call & Post}, 16 March 1916; “Big Crowd Hears Japanese Singer,” \textit{San Francisco Call & Post}, 23 March 1916).}

In this context, the San Francisco audience member’s preference for Miura’s Butterfly over Mary Pickford’s can complicate our understanding of gendered aspects of these singers’ reception. The relevant passage again:

Still another: “Well, I saw Mary Pickford as Butterfly, and she was so good I cried. But, my goodness, this Jap lady beats Mary a mile, and I know I’ll cry all night over the awful time she’s had with that Pinkerton.”

The writer’s preface to the quotation (“Still another:”) could refer to another “girl” or another “sample of talk”; but anyone who would speak so openly in 1916 about the pleasures of weeping probably was female. To whatever extent the quotation was faithful to an actual utterance, it offers a casual supplement to American women’s articles on Miura. This locates another point in the universe of her reception, helping to undermine any notion that there was one essentially female (white) American way of hearing the singer.

Recalling Chapman’s and Faust’s ways of hearing Miura, both linked her to social projects framed as emancipatory for women. While her reception
by white Americans could be affected by their gender, that was not the sole determining factor in these moments of reception. The Pickford anecdote makes this picture incrementally more heterogeneous and accurate. In that concertgoer’s private contest, Miura’s sung embodiment won out over Pickford’s filmed enactment. The spectator/judge’s criterion was how deeply each representation induced her to feel and express its emotional effects—that is, its power to induce an all-night crying jag. Miura’s power in that regard seems to have been due in part to the presence of the seemingly authentic touchstone of her Japanese body. The speaker’s casual use of racist language situated her as an uncritical adherent to dominant U.S. views of Japanese people; but for all of the charged valences of the word “J*p,” these racist overtones were peripheral to her reaction to Miura. She seemed to construct her response to the singer’s embodied Butterfly primarily in terms of gender, based on her sympathetic identification with a woman mistreated by a man.

That theme is played out in the Butterfly story in deeply racialized ways; but in this trace of an unnamed woman’s unguarded response, everything but the idea of “man trouble” seemed to be beside the point—while her reference to Miura as “this Jap lady” rather than by name demonstrates the importance of race. Despite this listener’s conscious interpretation, Miura’s nationality was a defining characteristic in this person’s mind, and some notion of racial authenticity probably was bound up with her impact on this operagoer. This returns us to raciological belief in Miura’s bodily authenticity as many white Americans’ basis for constructing social meaning from her performances.

Leading to the question of undocumented modes of reception of Miura, this comment in a theater lobby suggests that alongside her well-documented
reception as an icon of social processes (some intercultural or international, others more domestic and centered on gender), general qualities of character, and essential identities, more personal interpretations of her enactments of Butterfly were available to those predisposed to hear them. While channeled in various ways by hegemonic frameworks within which listeners felt and thought about their worlds, some of their experiences of Miura may have been relatively immune to the public-sphere, more overt ideological content—raciological narratives of national character or orientality—that many differently focused operagoers heard and saw in her performances.

These more idiosyncratic experiences were centered in a relatively private domain (but one lived in socially constructed subjective terms) of felt connections based on personal histories and imaginings. Some were based on a perceived affinity or identity based on ideas of transcultural gender, and probably were most common among women, as in the anecdote above; many more such responses may have been expressed in moments not eavesdropped upon and documented, or may never have been articulated in audible form.

Miura’s reception by many white Americans involved gendered male spectatorship of sorts which have been widely theorized, but these may be less relevant to certain more identificatory experiences, ones documented here in some women’s responses.188 These interpretations still were founded in spectatorship of an operatic event, and could be guided by racial ideology; but sometimes such matters were of less interest to, or simply ignored by, listeners who brought powerfully felt personal associations to these musical experiences. This notion of some listeners’ lesser susceptibility to certain

hegemonic processes is in one sense parallel to the idea of others’ generic
taste for novelty. Some concertgoers attending solely to the surface variety
of things (costume, scenery, sounds) might have been less attuned to deeper
social meanings embedded in a performance. This is neither to let listeners off
the hook for enjoying events laden with racist representations, nor to leave
more ideologically susceptible people more deeply implicated; rather, it is to
try to set aside such judgments as unproductive in these analytical contexts.

Raciological enactments of gendered orientality were so ubiquitous in
the twentieth-century United States that to point out their often unintended
racism may begin as a useful exercise, but soon loses its point. Given this
history of orientalist performance in social contexts of anti-Asian racism, and
the fact that most reception involves processes that are felt by individuals,
guided by hegemony, and almost always undocumented, a more useful
project is to ask: “How might these embodied and envoiced ideologies have
been seen and heard by diverse members of the U.S. audiences of these
Japanese sopranos, enabling them to construct race in musical terms?”

This open question may help to resist narrow conceptions of how white
Americans made meaning from hearing Japanese singers. The tendency for
few sources to refer to private ways of interpreting these performances may
say more about which modes of reception authors and editors thought to be
suitable for publication than it does about all of the interpretations which
were available. Many interiorized responses left scant documentary trails,
and to attend only to published accounts without opening up an interpretive
space for such unrecorded moments would be unfortunate. Even if that space
must remain empty in evidentiary terms, it may foster awareness of the limits
of provable interpretations of these histories, of the need to try to think beyond those bounds, and of the necessity of framing such speculation as being useful in suggestive ways, but built on loosely consolidated ground.

Here as in many reception studies, the disparity between a history of heterogeneous experience and its incomplete sources would undermine any totalizing claims about what a performance meant. This need not downplay the role of ideology in the meanings people made. Hegemonic processes affirming dominant beliefs about race, gender, and power were central to many of the accounts treated above. Rather, it may situate this analysis as a necessarily partial interpretation of some salient aspects of histories of intercultural hearing. This kind of framing does not impose limits on such a study’s findings; it brings into the open those that are always already there. This may lessen a study’s susceptibility to offering totalizing readings—readings that, as the price of too-neat disambiguation, may too easily reinscribe the hegemonic notions of the later time of their own production.
Chapter 2

Hearing Assimilation, Representing Struggle

Tomijiro Asai, Japanese Tenor in New York

Ideas of orientality and musical art intersected in many ways with elite European traditions in the United States. This chapter centers on another Japanese-born singer long active in America; but first we may note that, alongside these performance-centered moments, some U.S. listeners and writers interpreted certain composers’ works in similar ways. Some texts about Asian-born composers active in European-based traditions ascribed authenticity to music itself in ways related to those seen in the U.S. reception of expatriate, transnational, or Asian American “Japanese sopranos.”

Documents of the U.S. activities of composer Kosçak Yamada (Yamada Kösaku) in the late teens offer an example of this. Some of Yamada’s works on Japanese themes were published in the United States in 1919 and in other countries; violinist Efrem Zimbalist recorded one of his pieces (rec. 2.1).1

Michio Ito, a dancer whose career spanned collaborations with W. B. Yeats, choreography for Hollywood Bowl productions, and a great deal of performance in the United States, used some of his works; sometimes Yamada sang with Ito, who continued to use his music at least into the 1930s.² He was very active in Japanese musical scenes, and in such capacities as the composer for Sada Yacco’s 1914 version of Salomé (Kano 2001, 280n1).

A 1918 article on Yamada presented intersecting ideas about racialized national essences, class hierarchies of intrinsic artistic worth, and personal accomplishment in composition, crosscut by dominant beliefs and assertions about authentic orientality and musical representation:

The only way to have this music interpreted to the western world is, obviously, for a Japanese to absorb into his consciousness a western musical vocabulary so complete that through it he might express his nation’s musical soul. That…is precisely what has happened in the case of Kosçak Yamada, the first Japanese graduate of the Tokio Academy of Music to become a composer, now on a visit to America. Having proved himself capable of sustained creative activity in the western forms, he is now, in the light of his European understanding, successfully interpreting to us the folk-songs and art music of his race. The result of his labors is nothing short of the establishment of an entente cordial between eastern and western musical art, the consequences of which, in broadening our artistic horizon, may prove as far-reaching as our awakening to the beauties of Japanese prints.³

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³ “The Musical Awakening of Japan: The First Japanese Composer to Write in the Occidental Forms Interprets Nippon’s Music to the West,” Current Opinion, October 1918, 231–32. Ideas of musical westernization as universal progress recur in numerous texts. A 1936 Japanese tourist-industry book predicted that “the Japanese music of the future is likely to be…for the most part, in musical forms of a general Western character. At the same time it will still preserve those traditional delicate qualities which so appeal to the sensibilities of the Japanese people. This new music, in its form, will have an international character. This will make it easy to be understood by Westerners. But the addition to this of an essential Oriental quality will not only mean the development of Japanese music, it will add a page of real progress in the history of the music of the world” (Sunaga 1936, 64–65). For essays and citations on more recent Asian composition related to European forms, see Ryker (1991).
Language such as this played to belief in Yamada’s authentic orientality as a racial essence he could make audible in his works for European instruments. With this sense of how composition supported such interpretations, we may return to performance and consider some other hearings of race in the voice.

Prologue: From “Japanese Sopranos” to “Japanese Tenors”

While the most prominent documentary traces of white Americans’ reception of Asian singers of European music in the teens and twenties pertain to Tamaki Miura, smaller numbers of sources provide a sense of how certain other vocalists were presented and received by white Americans, and of how the meanings many people heard in those singers’ performances were related to certain historical contexts. In addition to such other sopranos as Nobu Hara and Hizi Koyke, some male professional singers of Chinese or Japanese descent performed European or popular American music in the United States. The ways in which dominant print media described these men also used language that gave a central place to race, but which often was inflected in ways different from accounts that relied on the perceived equivalence of the Butterfly role and a female Japanese singer. In all of these cases, language was critical to these performances’ preferred hearings (transposing the critical term “preferred readings” into this musical domain, where it may denote the social interpretations made most accessible by a given performance—without suggesting that listeners did not construct the musical meanings they heard).4

As discussed in the next chapter, many of these men were mostly active in vaudeville. One was billed by a San Francisco theater as “Jue Fong, noted

young Chinese tenor.” 5 Another was Lee Tung Foo, promoted as “the first Chinese baritone.” 6 The press often referred to these singers in language that categorized them by (implicitly racialized) national origins—or actually, as often was elided by rhetorical slippage from ethnic Americanness to alien Asianness, the origins of their parents or grandparents. Aside from coverage of vaudevillians, however, the infrequency of press references to male Asian or Asian American singers suggests that none was known in elite musical domains to a degree close that of the most visible “Japanese sopranos.”

These male singers seem seldom to have been cast in full-blown opera presentations—if ever they were cast in that way at all in these years in U.S. productions. This absence may have arisen from the dearth of leading male Asian roles in operas set in Japan or China and the raciological practice of casting singers of Asian heritage in ready-made orientalized roles, which many white Americans (including opera producers) apparently thought were the only ones that fit such vocalists. This may also have been an instance of the more general invisibility of Asian and Asian American men in U.S. media other than in a few circumscribed character types, a phenomenon widely observed in film and television casting practices of more recent decades. 7

Nonetheless, some Asian and Asian American men who sang European music were professionally active in the early twentieth-century United States, albeit with less national visibility than that of sopranos singing Butterfly. One such singer was Yoshie Fujiwara, a tenor who was prominent in Japan and performed widely in the United States, where the media cast him in familiar

5. “Warfield” [theatrical column listing], San Francisco Call & Post, 1 August 1923.
ways. A 1930 Victor catalog included a small entry for him in its section of Red Seal records, which featured music in elite genres. Headed by his name and “Japanese tenor,” it listed a single record of two songs with the translated titles “Fisherman’s Song” and “Moon over Ruined Castle” (recs. 2.2, 2.3).8

Categorization by national origin or ethnicity was not endemic to entries of this sort. Above Fujiwara’s was one marking Benvenuto Franci as simply a “Baritone,” and below it was one for Ossip Gabrilowitsch as just a “Pianist.” In contrast to other ethnicities, Japaneseness again was a condition worth calling to the attention of the catalog’s (mostly white) American readers. In certain other instances, however, this singer was promoted in ethnically unmarked ways. A 1928 New York recital advertisement described “Yosie Fujiwara” (with a common, alternate transliteration of his name) as simply a “tenor.” Perhaps in this case the singer had more control over his billing and chose not to be pigeonholed as “Japanese,” despite the fact that there was plenty of space to add that unusually absent word to the item’s layout.9

AMERICAN BUT NOT? SEIJIRO TATSUMI, “AMERICAN BORN JAPANESE TENOR”

A singer billed in related ways was a Japanese American man named Seijiro Tatsumi, who gave vocal recitals in San Francisco in 1924. Advertisements for these engagements billed him as “SEIJIRO TATSUMI / AMERICAN BORN JAPANESE TENOR / in SONG RECITAL OF WESTERN MUSIC.”10 This made his birthplace clear, yet situated him as being in essence a Japanese tenor—just one who happened to have been born in the United States. This

rendered that nation one of white “Americans,” among whom U.S.-born Japanese American singers (and other citizens) were alienated as “Japanese.” The emphasis on “Western music” allayed any misunderstanding that his (American-born) Japaneseness might lead him to sing Japanese music. As an announcement listing the program shows, he was to sing Yamada’s cycle of “Japanese love songs”; but those pieces were written in a European style, and he almost certainly sang them in a vocal style suited to European art song.11

These advertisements’ references to songs sung in the Japanese language or written by Japanese composers struck a delicate balance between playing to Tatsumi’s ethnic—read racial—novelty, but doing so in a way which did not threaten to displace a canonical European repertoire. A newspaper item stated that he would “be heard in Italian and French operatic arias, a group of songs in Japanese and a number of American songs including Frederick Knight Logan’s ‘Pale Moon,’” and it characterized Tatsumi as “a young Japanese tenor.”12 In contrast to the definite “the” which so often preceded such phrases, the indefinite “a” suggested that other Japanese American tenors were known to San Francisco audiences. The use of “Japanese” rather than “Japanese American” to describe him reinforced the assumption that Americans of Asian descent, even those born in that same city, were alien. This practice had its exceptions, such as an article that told of a 1923 “Puccini memorial performance of ‘Madama Butterfly,’ with an all-American cast, the Butterfly being a young girl of Japanese parentage, who came here as an infant.”13 This permitted a soprano born in Japan and long resident in the

United States to pass into the domain of the “all-American”; but the equation of singers’ Asian heritage with eternal outsider status was more common.

On its surface, another article on Tatsumi undermined this assumption just a bit by terming him an “S. F. Japanese” and conferring upon him an implicitly limited, native Californian status by describing him as “a young Japanese tenor, who is a native San Franciscan.” It also provided some background on his activities, apparently based on a press release also received by another paper that ran a recast variant of some of the text:

Tatsumi recently returned from a successful tour of Japan, China, Korea and Formosa, where he gave more than seventy-five recitals. Of his recent recital in Portland, Or., Susan Aubrey Smith wrote in the Telegram: “The young tenor is surprisingly versatile in his knowledge of Occidental music. He has a voice of pleasing quality, with an especially beautiful lower and middle register. His phrasing is excellent and his diction in all the languages he sang extremely good.”

With its stops in Japanese venues, this Japanese San Franciscan’s singing tour may be an instance of 1920s Japanese/American musical transnationality. The Oregon reviewer’s surprise demonstrates how even favorable U.S. reviews of singers framed as Japanese usually started from the assumption that one’s ascribed race determines one’s musicality. This Californian tenor could not set aside the presumption that his inner being and the music with which he sang it would naturally be somehow different, always audibly oriental.

This is even clearer in an article that announced Tatsumi’s San Francisco recital and relayed some excerpts from Chinese and Japanese reviews of his Asian tour. After noting the singer’s professional management and the fact of his birth in San Francisco 25 years before, the writer gave over most the piece to quotations that offered up the opinions of Asian critics (or of critics in Asia,

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14. “S. F. Japanese Sings Monday,” San Francisco Chronicle, 24 February 1924; the other was “Tatsumi to Sing Here Monday,” San Francisco Call & Post, 23 February 1924.
since they may have been expatriate Americans or Europeans). This gathered reviews from the Chinese and Japanese press into a sort of expert testimony. Vouching for the accomplishments of an Asian American vocalist heard in Asian concert halls, it was an international counterpart to U.S. newspapers’ seemingly authenticating reports of Asian and Asian American audiences’ appreciation of orientalist productions.

The first excerpt recounted the praise of the China Mail: “‘Japanese tenor at the Theater Royal a wonderful singer. In any of his songs not a flaw could be detected in his delivery. Tatsumi was, in short—a great success.’” The Tientsin Times offered more detail: “‘Tatsumi sang in four languages, and his enunciation was remarkable. His repertoire is extremely varied and his selections went far afield. His voice has been wonderfully trained, and as a technical achievement alone would only be surpassed by the greatest singers in the West.’”¹⁵ This emphasis on enunciation as a sign of mentored musical assimilation is like that in many accounts of Miura. A key aspect of this was the phrase “wonderfully trained.” By locating the source of his competence not in Tatsumi but in the agency and Europeanized expertise of white Americans who trained him, the passive grammatical voice invested artistic and cultural (read racial) passivity into the singer’s vocal practice.

Immediately after this rhetoric of assimilation was a more distancing excerpt: “In Japan Tatsumi was hailed as ‘Our country’s premier of song.’” This quotation left its Japanese reviewer unnamed as the voice of a nation. Reprinted in this U.S. context, the phrase seemed to lay claim to the singer with the word “Our.” This located Tatsumi as belonging to Japan despite

having been born and raised in California. Yet right after this alienating move, the American journalist noted that “Some who heard him in this city a few months ago compared his voice to that of McCormack, and he has been giving recitals in Southern California with great success.” This oscillation between ideas of essential Japanese difference and Americanization flipped back and forth so quickly as to render Tatsumi both a “forever foreigner” and an “honorary white”—a musical inhabitant of both ideological locations central to Mia Tuan’s study of Asian American ethnic experience (Tuan 1999).

Those positions converged in dominant representations of this Japanese Californian tenor, as well as in those of other Asian American musicians. The San Francisco Call published another example of this after its advance piece on Tatsumi, but still before his recital. That week, an article on a competition for violinists under the age of fifteen stated: “Practically all nationalities are represented in the competition—French, Russian, German, American, English, Chinese.”16 By listing three contestants’ names as “Mabel Chan, Elizabeth Won [sic] and Anna Lee,” a photograph caption left scant doubt that the “Americans” referred to in the text were white—and the “Chinese” were, in fact, Americans. While the caption began with “DOLIN KNOWS NO RACE LINES,” the newspaper and its readers were attuned to the racialized status of Chinese Americans. Language of these sorts represented musical assimilation and racial difference in ways applied often to professional singers of Asian heritage, but also to such other public events as this.

The ease with which some tales of Asian American musicians could slip in and out of racial categorization is evident as well in a review of Tatsumi. It

appeared under the title “Japanese Tenor Delights Audience,” right below a review titled (with attention to individual rather than ethnic identity) “Frank Moss Wins Plaudits for Recital.” Yet beneath its blunt heading, Tatsumi’s review told of his performance in much less raciological language:

Seijiro Tatsumi, the San Francisco born Japanese tenor, who sang at Scottish Rite Auditorium under Madame Vought’s management, aroused considerable enthusiasm with a program in French, German, Italian, Japanese and English.

His enunciation was good all the time and, strangely enough, especially so with Burleigh’s “Oh, Didn’t It Rain” and “Mother Machree,” and the “Invictus,” which were some of his encore numbers.

Tatsumi has a clear, round toned, powerful, well trained voice and is at his best with declamatory songs, though many expressed the opinion that he made the most of the “Tosca” aria, “The Stars Were Brightly Shining,” which Mario sings in prison, never expecting to see his loved one again and into which Tatsumi put just the right note of passionate regret.17

The comment about his enunciation was made, it seems, against the backdrop of a physical appearance presumed to suggest that he would have an accent; but by locating the “well-trained” quality of Tatsumi’s voice as one of its positive traits rather than as the sufficient grounds for his musicality, this review attributed agency and gave credit to the singer himself for his success. In these ways, audiences and newspaper readers could meld more and less racialized modes of hearing this Japanese San Franciscan’s tenor voice.

The American Self-Presentation of and by Tomijiro Asai

A small publicity packet (fig. 2.1) for an Issei (first-generation Japanese American) tenor named Tomijiro Asai has preserved a more complex and revealing trace of the efforts of another singer of Japanese heritage (and in this case, birth) to build a U.S. career singing European music, with a self-selected emphasis on Christian religious song. This small and ephemeral

document suggests a remarkably rich collection of perspectives on the U.S. reception of one not especially famous singer in the second decade of the twentieth century. For what it may tell us about relationships between dominant American ways of hearing orientality and the self-representational agency of lesser-known musicians, it deserves and rewards a close reading.

Asai came to the United States for non-musical reasons just before the turn of the century, but toured the eastern and southern states as a singer from 1907 to 1914. Among his other activities during those years, he translated the lyrics of two Japanese songs (fig. 2.2) for arrangements by Charles Wakefield Cadman. Spurred by a personal crisis, in 1914 he stopped performing for several years to devote himself to musical study and practice. In 1917 he returned to public performance and prepared a brochure with which to present himself to potential employers. Later he inserted into it a reprint of a 1918 article from the Sunday magazine of the *New York World* and a list of oratorio selections featured in his recitals. Together these items make up a microhistorical time capsule, one which has preserved some interwoven threads of his self-presentation and dominant U.S. hearings of him. This provides a nuanced sense of how Asai, then of 16 Arden Street (off Broadway, near the Cloisters) in upper Manhattan, contended with his U.S.

18. With music “harmonized and idealized” by Cadman and text translated by Asai, these were “Two Little Songs from Japan: Harvest Song (Nōnenja! Mansakuja!) and Love Song (Také ni Susumé),” Boston: White-Smith, 1912. “Founded upon Genuine Themes” said to be “harmonized and idealized” by Cadman, these were framed by a rhetoric of authenticity akin to that which surrounded the composer’s arrangements of Native American melodies; e.g., Cadman and Nelle Richmond Eberhart, “From the Land of Sky-Blue Water,” Boston: White-Smith, 1909; Cadman, “Idealized Indian Themes for Pianoforte, Op. 54,” Boston: White-Smith, 1912; see also Cadman, “The ‘Idealization’ of Indian Music,” *Musical Quarterly*, July 1915, 387–95: for more on that cultural and musical moment, see Pisani (1996, 1998, 2001).

19. For the article in its original publication, see N. Corcoran and Tomijiro Asai, “Up the Scale with a Japanese Tenor,” *New York World Magazine*, 3 March 1918.
musical world over the troubled issue of how he would be represented in written form, and thus over certain meanings many people in his primarily white American audiences most easily could hear in his performances.20

The interior two pages of the brochure presented Asai’s unmediated first-person narrative. The text in full was as follows:

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MYSELF

I, a native of Japan, came to America in 1899 with the object of preparing myself for a business career which my father had chosen for me, and began my course of training in New York. In 1903 I was graduated from a business college, and was well along the road to what I then thought was my destined end in the New Land. The fact, however, did not bear out my belief. About two years later I happened to participate in a Christmas entertainment, and for the first time in my life I sang before an audience my very first American song, “Old Folks at Home,” taught for the occasion, and thoroughly enjoyed the singing. It was a truly memorable event for me indeed, for I then felt as I never felt before, a sudden awakening in me of a new passion, and at once I became an ardent lover of singing, and began my study. Since then I sang in glee clubs, in church choirs, and various other musical organizations in New York, and attended the operas, recitals and concerts, and heard the many great singers. In this way I’ve acquired a valuable experience, and learned to love the true beauty in the works of the great masters.

Then came my real trouble, and followed the period of bitter struggle in me—a struggle between my own sense of duty to my parents, and my inner self, my intense passion for a serious study of art. But finally the latter had won, and in 1907, in my twentieth year, I took up the study with a definite object, and began my real preparation for the future.

Until 1914 I sang in public for three seasons of two months each in winter and summer, touring through many Southern cities, and New England resorts, in order to gain a practical experience. Then I gave up the public appearances all together, and have been devoting my entire time for the further development of my art ever since.

I now offer my humble service for engagement, relying upon the kindness of the American people which I enjoyed in my former appearances.

TOMIJIRO ASAI.

16 Arden Street,
New York, 1917.

Because the brochure gave Asai’s own address rather than an agent’s, it seems to have been self-published. Thus it differs significantly from U.S. newspaper articles recounting the life stories of Asian and Asian American singers, which were often paraphrased and almost always heavily edited.

While the effects of those processes of mediated representation are central to this study’s concern with reception, this brochure’s status as a rare, unmediated statement—albeit one intended to be an effective marketing instrument for gaining bookings—makes it interesting in different ways. Fascinating as a document of one Japanese immigrant’s experience as a singer based in New York and performing more widely, Asai’s publicity packet is examined here chiefly for what it indicates about his reception by white Americans and the ways in which he reframed or contested the printed texts that some of them wrote—reusing their language to his own musical ends.

As did some published accounts of Miura and Hara (for instance, Chapman’s account of the former singer), Asai’s brochure portrayed the United States as a place of opportunity for an aspiring Japanese singer of European music. Both his first-person saga and some journalists’ versions of Japanese sopranos’ tales cast their protagonists in Horatio Alger-like tales of triumph over adversity (cf. Alger 1904). This element of struggle in new surroundings was a common narrative device in texts of many other sorts, as well as a real part of many musicians’ and other people’s lives. But unlike accounts that implicitly cast Japanese music as a less-developed historical backdrop to Miura’s education into an operatic present, Asai’s text never couched his dedicated study of European singing in such evolutionary—or even in neutrally comparative—language. He presented his intercultural
musical path as the result of his having found a practice to which he wanted to apply himself with all his heart, not as also a matter of having found a music he believed to be somehow more advanced than that of his homeland.

This absence of any such contrastive reference to musical westernization as a means and sign of objective cultural progress was unusual. It may be due to the fact that Asai’s self-published text was never subjected to editorial intervention by white Americans. It also may reflect the facts that his entire experience of European music seems to have taken place in the United States, and that it did so along a path that he himself selected. His statement mirrors his seemingly single-minded focus on learning, hearing, and singing his way into a non-orientalized location in a European American music culture—into a place distinct from a more Butterfly-infested operatic domain. Yet in their lack of connection to tropes of female orientality, Asai’s gender, his repertoire, and his role as self-promoter may have cut both ways regarding his reception. These aspects of his career made it more feasible for him to enter into his chosen tradition than into the typologically constrained settings within which Japanese sopranos often sang; but they also may have limited his ability to build audiences among people who were predisposed to enjoy the work of Asian (American) performers who could fit neatly into familiar categories.

The reviews that Asai quoted on the back of his brochure strategically reinforced his self-presentation as a singer of a deeply assimilated European musicality, a singer framed for the most part in non-orientalized terms:

Japanese tenor a success.—*The Washington Post, Washington, D.C.*

Mr. Asai has a sweet tenor voice and sings with expression.—*Richfield Daily, Richfield Springs, N.Y.*
The singing of Mr. Asai was a revelation to his audience. He has a remarkably fine voice and his enunciation was faultless.—*Asbury Park Evening Express, Asbury Park, N.J.*

Mr. Asai possesses a high tenor voice of especially clear and pleasant character.—*The Brattleboro Reformer, Brattleboro, Vt.*

Mr. Asai has a voice, full of pathos and sweetness.—*The State, Columbia, S.C.*

He has a clear, sweet tenor voice and sings with much expression.—*The Augusta Chronicle, Augusta, Ga.*

Mr. Asai told many amusing anecdotes in perfect English and in a pleasing tenor, showing much training, sang several songs.—*Miami Metropolis, Miami, Fla.*

Mr. Asai has a very pleasing voice and a marvelously correct pronunciation of the English language, while his manner is charming.—*Portland Evening Express, Portland, Me.*

These quotations’ extreme brevity, and their lack of framing references to the events at which Asai sang, make it clear that he carefully excised them from longer reviews. Together they show how Asai chose to market himself by using selective quotations from newspaper critics. These quotations can be read against Miura’s reviews as a trace of differences in both their critical reception and their publication contexts—of Asai’s independent control versus Miura’s profound mediation by newspaper writers and editors.

While it would be insupportable to compare in any overall way these self-selected snippets about Asai to complete articles on Miura, to juxtapose them in certain ways is revealing. In contrast to Miura’s press coverage, the absence (in all but the first of these quotations) of any explicit reference to Asai’s national origins, whether cast in racial terms or not, is striking. The singer clearly was not interested in advertising himself as a “Japanese tenor” in the sustained categorical sense in which “Japanese sopranos” were presented. The phrase appeared only once, at the very beginning of the first quotation, where it seems to be a way of accounting for his appearance in the
cover photograph and on stage. He then moved immediately to seven slightly longer quotations, none of which directly invoked his national origins.

In fact, they did just the opposite. Six of the seven excerpts included the text “Mr. Asai.” All attested to his abilities and talent as a singer, referring to his voice in such non-racialized—if implicitly Europeanizing—terms as “sweet” and “pleasing”; more dismissive adjectives were common in much U.S. discourse about Asian vocality. But in an implicit nod to the career risks of perceived difference, three of the quotations he selected testified to his English-language competence: “his enunciation was faultless” in New Jersey, he “told many amusing anecdotes in perfect English” in Florida, and he had “a marvelously correct pronunciation of the English language” in Maine.

Some dominant U.S. accounts of Japanese or Japanese American singers did refer to their pronunciation as unaccented—or if accented, “charmingly” or otherwise, still as effortlessly intelligible to these reviewers’ ears. A few such examples referred to Miura’s “clearly enunciated, precise English,” Onuki’s “clearest English,” and Tatsumi’s “good enunciation in each” of the five languages in which he sang, English among them.21 More often, however, white American journalists invoked marked attributes of speech as signs of difference. They did this with conventionally or idiosyncratically transcribed quasi-dialect spellings such as those seen in some interviews with Miura. In this light, Asai’s quotation of testimonials to his linguistic competence seems to reflect a preemptive strategic move—one that anticipated raciological modes of perception still prevalent today among

some white Americans who marvel out loud at the unaccented speech of fifth- or sixth-generation Asian Americans. No doubt his strategy served to reassure presenters who might have worried that European American audiences would not understand his speech; but it also seems to have been a means of trying to efface the racial difference that audiences would have been all too ready to ascribe to him.

This attempted effacement took place by acknowledging his perceived difference with the first quoted words (“Japanese tenor”), but summoning up mutually corroborating statements from newspapers in three states to testify that his Japaneseness was not what he performed, and not what his audiences would hear. While his body would look Japanese or oriental to many people for whom he sang, his voice was certified by expert European American witnesses to be free of any musical trace of orientality—which, if it ever had been there, had been excised by assimilative training and diligent practice.

Many aspects of Asai’s self-presentation refigured wider social issues in his musical contexts. His reliance on the credibility of white witnesses was a music-centered metonym for judicial practices that gave greater credence to the testimony of white than Asian witnesses in U.S. criminal and civil proceedings. Some well-known examples of this pertain to Chinese residents in nineteenth-century California, where state legislation laid out race-based rules of admissibility early on.22 The case of Quimbo Appo, a New York teasheller accused of murdering his landlady, provides an early example of an East Coast trial fraught by stereotypes of Chinese and Irish credibility or its lack (Tchen 1999, 159–63).

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The reviews’ recurrent emphasis on this Japanese-born tenor’s English skills is similarly metonymic for contemporary discussions about whether to restrict immigration based on English-language tests. Read in that historical context, Asai’s reportedly unmarked speech stood for more than just his ability to be understood in a recital. In this way, his vocal abilities acquired weight beyond that of white singers’ similar enunciative skill—for example, the “good diction” attributed without further comment to a vocalist named Kathleen Gibb by the New York World several days before it ran a feature on Asai.23 By the late teens, many Americans had heard about, or participated in, debates on the need for a shared (English) language as a requisite foundation for social assimilability. After much public discussion, this led Congress to write literacy criteria into the Immigration Act of 1917.24

Beyond that legislative issue, concern with linguistic assimilation was widespread in the teens. A 1916 study for non-specialist readers who were concerned about immigrants in public schools provides an example. In it, Oberlin College professor of sociology Herbert Miller stated that “The successful assimilation of the immigrant, his adaptation to American customs and ways of thought, and to a marked degree his economic and social status, depend on his ability to read and speak English” (1916, 15–16). Other sociology books for general readers ascribed to “the Japanese” a broad array of adaptive abilities, some of which relied (if read in context as pertaining to interactions with white Americans) on English-language skills. In 1921, Miller and University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park wrote that “The thrift,

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24. Helweg (1996, 156–65). On related historical contexts, see R. Daniels (1977), Hing (1993); see also such broader studies of European American nativism as Higham (1988 [1955]).
cleanliness, quickness, sobriety, industry, adaptability, eagerness to learn, of the Japanese are everywhere recognized” (R. Park and Miller 1921, 173).

Stated in theory in such works, these wholesale assimilative traits were ascribed more concretely to immigrants’ bodies in moments of performance. Many white people made analogous meanings from hearing singers such as Asai. While some self-selecting individuals read sociological studies of these issues, many Americans from a wide range of social locations heard vocalists who offered, intentionally or not, performances readily interpreted as bearing on the same questions. Much of Asai’s U.S. reception built on, and helped to substantiate, ideas of contingently Americanizable orientality. This made his cultural meanings into a kind of proxy for more massive social processes, ones not so often thought of as gaining credibility from musical performance.

Asai’s audience members (newspaper reviewers or otherwise) could hear his singing as a display of Eurocentric Americanization, a process demonstrated beyond his audiences’ initials doubts by the audible and visible evidence of the Christian oratorio excerpts he sang with his Japanese body. In this way, musical performance offered white Americans firsthand experience of what they could hear as a deep spiritual, mental, and bodily assimilation—one still framed by Asai’s billing as a “Japanese tenor.” This played as well to pervasive rhetorics of missionary conversion in Asia, which often used tales of hymn-singing as signs of more than just musical kinds of transformation.

As an assertion of internalized musical assimilation, Asai’s stress on his thoroughly Americanized—or in fact, Europeanized—voice had an external analog in the photograph on his brochure. In elegant black-tie garb, he seems in one sense the polar opposite of America’s elegantly orientalized Japanese
singers of Butterfly. Although in reality the social valences of both kinds of
costume in American musical settings were based on European traditions
(orientalist or not), in U.S. publication contexts the meanings of these modes
of dress were imaginary worlds apart. Asai’s clothing marked a singer who
had trained his Asian body to be musically (European) American, not one
seen and heard as singing his original nativized self by European means.

Representing Tomijiro Asai & Tamaki Miura—Initial Impressions
While not denying his national origins (for as Asai clearly realized, to do so
would have been futile in his U.S. musical world), he seemed to show with
pride that he had detached his Japaneseness from his musicality. On the
contrary, most photographs of Tamaki Miura published in American media
portrayed her in kimono. In part this responded to a widespread taste for
opulent costuming of orientalized Asian performers, especially women—a
desire seen, for example, in a review of a singer of Chinese opera in New
York several years later: “To enhance her Oriental beauty, Chan Wei Wong
has costumes stiff with brocade and gold embroidery valued at more than
$16,000.”25 But beyond their broad appeal to stereotypes of authentic and
extravagantly dressed orientality, many photographs of Miura used props or
were captioned in ways that marked the kimono not just as a type of Japanese
clothing, but precisely as her Butterfly costume. This made her body’s image
represent both Miura herself in real life and Butterfly in ideological space.

Viewed in juxtaposition with Asai’s brochure, it is even more clear that
Miura’s representation in this manner, her costumed blurring of stage role

25. “Manchu Princess Sings Five Hours in Ancient Chinese Opera,” Musical America,
2 August 1924, 31.
and self-identity, was not the only way in which a Japanese-born singer of European music could be presented to American audiences. But due to the popularity of Butterfly (the opera and the character more generally), Miura’s prior training for that kind of role, and her apparent marketing savvy, to do so offered the most promising way for a soprano from Japan to build a career in the United States. The degree to which she encouraged this conflation of her own identity and her operatic role is not clear from these sources; but the fact that she played so consistently to it for so many years in interviews and advertisements indicates at least a willingness to go along with the marketing strategies of her opera company managers, local presenters, and publicists.26

This mode of pragmatic (career-savvy but inevitably painful) embodied accommodation of dominant raciological perceptions is like some aspects of the film career of Anna May Wong.27 It would be foolish to ascribe any real homology of experience to these two very different performers, who (even aside from their individual differences) inhabited the distinct social categories of Japanese-born U.S. resident and Los Angeles-born Chinese American, and who led professional lives in the domains of the operatic prima donna and Hollywood film star. Still, some aspects of how their careers intersected with dominant expectations for the performance of female orientality were similar. Those similarities afford comparative grounds for thinking about how white Americans have understood performances of orientality. They also make

26. For more on those of Miura’s own views that were not so accessible to most of her U.S. public, see Mari Yoshihara’s forthcoming article (2004?).
even clearer the fact that trying to read racialized performers’ own desires and intentions from their public images can severely misrepresent them.

With these representational caveats, a closer look at Miura’s and Asai’s U.S. careers and social locations will be useful, even if necessarily speculative. Miura’s higher national profile clearly was due in part to the convergence of her Japanese body and European-trained voice with a popular role in which she could be perceived as authentically oriental. Conversely, Asai’s singing of non-orientalist religious music may have made him seem less categorically appealing to white listeners. Even had Asai desired an operatic career, he would have been locked out of leading parts due to the lack of roles deemed inhabitable by Asian men—and even had such roles existed in operas popular at the time, a male body seen as oriental not just on stage, but also in real life, could have been a difficult sell, as it were. Marketed and perceived within dominant frames of belief about gender and race, this would have been less attractive to many white operagoers than were “Japanese sopranos” singing Butterfly, which could play to long U.S. histories of massively disseminated images of Asian women rendered powerlessly and tragically cute.

Unlike Miura’s Butterfly, the sight of a Japanese man in a leading operatic role would have provided neither a typical object for a heterosexual male gaze nor, for women who enjoyed sentimental feelings of imagined identification with such images, an aestheticized version of transculturally gendered suffering; and the converse readings of this hypothetical scenario could have flown in the face of dominant U.S. ideas about racialized gender and gendered race. It is hard to imagine many white American men in the teens and twenties being drawn musically into a state of identification with
an orientalized male protagonist at a time when the tropes available to such characters overwhelmingly positioned them as embodying some shade of evil or as effete and asexual. At first it also may seem difficult to imagine many white American women making a male Asian operatic lead the object of a desiring gaze, but this is trickier in the light of the popularity of such film stars as Sessue Hayakawa, and later Rudolph Valentino. At any rate, there were no equally visible male Asian or Asian American counterparts to the Japanese sopranos who frequented the U.S. opera stage. As causes of a non-occurrence, the reasons for this are not strictly knowable; but the ideas above may be plausible readings of how ideology could have met here with music.

Contesting Frames: Tomijiro Asai & The World of New York

Although Asai trimmed and assembled his press excerpts in a way which invoked his Japaneseness only in order to leave it behind, his publicity packet contained a later article in its entirety. Inserted into the brochure was a reprint from the Sunday magazine of The World, a New York newspaper. The article’s inclusion in full makes it an instructive counterpart to the quotations in Asai’s brochure. Although the singer reprinted the article, credited as in its original publication (cited below) to an “N. Corcoran,” he edited the piece not in the slightest. Rather, he appended his own comments at the end, stating that some quotations attributed to (and reprinted by) him were “not wholly true.”

28. W. Wu (1982, 164–206), R. G. Lee (1999, 113–36). A partial exception to this general lack of potential male identification involved interest in Asian martial arts, discussed in Chapter 7. 29. Studlar (1996, 150–98), Basinger (1999, 264–309), M. Liu (2003, 323–28). Because this speculation is grounded in and focused on widespread public discourse, interpretive stances that may have been associated with gay, lesbian, or other marginalized sexualities open out to questions that, while interesting and worthy of exploration, lie beyond this study’s scope. 30. Aside from the possible addition of a comma in a place where it had no effect on meaning; and even that potential discrepancy may be just a mechanical artifact of dropped type on the microfilmed copy of the paper that was used for this comparison with Asai’s reprint.
This provides an unusual trace of an account of an Asian singer of European music in the United States which was published in the dominant press and then preserved along with its subject’s commentary. Since the article began by quoting Asai’s autobiographical essay from his brochure, together these sources present a musician’s reception of a journalist’s reception of the musician’s textual presentation of himself. This dialogue looped into raciological discourse in its middle portion, but began and ended with Asai’s own carefully non-racialized text. As reprinted by the singer, the journalist’s language—which assimilated parts of Asai’s brochure text, along with quotations from an interview—was itself re-assimilated into the singer’s painstaking self-representation. This vividly conveys key tensions between alternative—and here, nested—modes of framing the American meanings of this Japanese tenor’s musical practice, and it shows how Asai negotiated them within the (only physically small) space of his pocket-sized publicity packet.

Titled “Up the Scale with a Japanese Tenor: Tomijiro Asai Has Fought the Wolf and Gathered Up Musical Training During a Dozen Years,” the article marked from its outset the narrative’s heroic nature: “THIS is the story of the struggle of Tomijiro Asai against the fates for his fortune and fame.” The writer then moved straight to the first quotation from the singer: “‘I, a native of Japan, came to America in 1899 with the object of preparing myself for a business career.’ So he begins his story.” Having set the scene, the journalist and the singer continued in language redolent of missionary prose:

Six years later that career was cut short. Tomijiro Asai discovered he had a voice. It was when he participated in a Christmas festival at the Y. M. C. A., New York.

“I then felt,” he says, “as I never felt before, a sudden awakening in me of a new passion. At once I became an ardent lover of singing.”
Along with invocations of Christmas and the Y.M.C.A., the rhetorical turn of Asai’s “sudden awakening” infused the tale with a religious sensibility. It also is reminiscent of Faust’s missionary-like view of Miura as having “opened the springs of her soul” by finding in opera a liberating avenue for expressing “feelings…held in strictest leash under Japanese customs” (Faust 1926, 92).

After offering this anecdote of musical discovery as an implicit analog to Christian conversion, Corcoran described Asai in terms like those used in much of Miura’s press—for example, a 1916 newspaper reference to her as “the first of her artistically sensitive race to adventure into this exclusively Occidental field of art which, as we had always supposed, was peculiarly alien to the Japanese.” Similar language—as a specific racialization of Japanese nationality, a more sweeping racial reference to Asianness, or both—located Asai as the analogous bearer of a voice in a lower register, one well trained in the years since his awakening: “That was in 1905. Now in 1918 he is ready to face the American public as the first tenor of his race.” This phrase was broadly akin to similarly hyperbolic claims for Japanese sopranos, but it also reflected the time’s lesser visibility of men billed as “Japanese tenors” in most parts of the United States. The contrast between Corcoran’s claim for Asai’s unique status and the San Francisco Chronicle’s later characterization of Seijiro Tatsumi as not “the,” but only “a Japanese tenor,” may reflect both geographic and temporal differences in the relative visibility of Japanese Americans in Asai’s New York of 1918 and Tatsumi’s San Francisco of 1924.

The years from 1905 to 1918 framed the rest of Corcoran’s article: “But what a story lies in between—a story of discouragement, despair, high

31. Helen Dare, “Prima Donna the Last Thing…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 16 March 1916.
aspiration, new resolution!” It hinged on a foreboding moment: “‘It was about 1912,’ he said, ‘that I pitted myself against fate. Atlantic City was the scene of the struggle. If I failed, there was the ocean—quite a commodious grave,’ he smiled. ‘But I won.’” The article then stepped back in time to explain how Asai had come to such a pass. Soon after his 1905 experience at the Y.M.C.A., he had joined a Baptist church choir, and “Close on the heels of that came the intervention of Mme. Marie Cross Newhouse, who took the Japanese under her tutelage for a year, giving him instruction free of cost”:

“She introduced me to a dress suit,” said Mr. Asai. “She presented me to many great artists, and I saw what a high position a singer obtains in this country. She whetted my desire to become one. Then, after a year, she lost interest.”

But that dress suit alone marked a turning point in the singer’s career.

Newhouse’s intervention in Asai’s career transformed his body by means of external wrapping in his first dress suit and internal training of his lungs, larynx, and mouth in European vocal techniques. In its cover photograph and its testimonials to his “sweet” unmarked voice, Asai’s brochure displayed the results of these mentored processes of outer and inner bodily transformation.

The fact that this mentor lost interest in Asai foreshadowed the singer’s later experiences. Here the prose shifted abruptly into second-person direct address. This unambiguously positioned the reader as a white American, and encouraged a contrastive reading of Asai’s experiences with one’s own in a hypothetical situation which only at first might have seemed akin to his:

SUPPOSE that you, reader, found yourself possessed of a voice. What considerations would hold you back from developing it? Financial, perhaps. Voice culture is costly. But any others? Of course not.

Mr. Asai’s case was different. He had been born and bred in a country where the singer has no more social standing than the English actor had in the days of Shakespeare. Moreover, he was trained to be obedient, implicitly obedient, to parental commands. Inform his father that he was deserting an honorable business, the business of selling prints in a large city?
“It seemed impossible to me at first,” said Mr. Asai. “Still I had learned that the career of an artist is honorable, and I had come to know that there may be a duty higher than that of son to father—the duty of a man to himself.”

In addition to this passage’s class positioning of Asai’s chosen music, its reference to his original business is noteworthy. The fact that he had come to New York to feed the turn-of-the-century American taste for Japanese art situated his story of assimilative musical endeavor in an ironic way. It located his presence on the East Coast as part of a historical moment involving such cultural interpreters as Okakura Kakuzo. Warren Cohen has characterized Okakura’s appeal in Boston in terms which resonate with both Miura’s orientalized persona and public attention to Asai’s linguistic skill: “A Japanese who could appear in exotic costume and discuss Oriental aesthetics in nearly flawless English was a great asset” to elite Bostonian Japanophiles (1992, 45). In contrast to this, in his self-presentation as a singer Asai seems to have set aside any appeal to an orientalist taste in music—one that might have echoed some Americans’ reasons for buying Japanese visual art.

Beyond and in relationship to this matter of self-representation, Asai’s quoted comment about “the duty of a man to himself” is the most deeply resonant part of this passage. It clearly articulated his experience of devotion to European music as a means of enacting publicly his felt assimilation to a dominant American ideal of manly independence over his sense of duty to his Japanese father. Without suggesting a falsely reified opposition between stereotypical ideas of Japanese duty and American self-actualization, it seems clear that (in this U.S.-published text) this immigrant’s musical experience stood for an encompassing transformation of his sense of himself, a change that was at once personal, familial, and more broadly social. The narrative’s
presentation of this as a musical remaking of self-identity left readers little
doubt about the depth and likely permanence of Asai’s self-reinvention.

Corcoran continued with a possibly surprising twist, one which offers
a window into connections between musical reception framed as interracial
and a historical context of dominant attitudes towards race, the body, and
orientalized Asian immigrants: “FIRST he went to Dr. Frank Miller, the noted
authority on the throat. The decision was favorable. Tomijiro Asai had at least
the instrument for producing a voice.” This quasi-scientific turn reflected and
addressed discourses which medicalized the body in many social domains
(e.g., the era’s intense concern with hygienic instruction in public schools).32

More specifically, the bodily foundation of operatic vocal production
itself was a topic of scientific and quasi-scientific journalism in the teens. The
tone of some such accounts is clear in the titles of two 1916 articles: “Science
Explains the Secret of What Makes the Grand Opera Singer: Nine Different
Links in the Chain of Perfect Voice Production — If Any One of These Fail
You Cannot Be a Caruso or Farrar” and “Planing a Grand Opera Prima
Donna’s Sensitive Vocal Cords: How the Voice-Destroying Little ‘Corns’
Came to Grow on Signorina Lucrezia Bori’s Wonderful Vocal Cords and How
the Surgeons Restored Her Voice by Slicing Them Off.”33 The first of these
declared that “Science has at last standardized the human voice,” and the
second dwelt in sometimes bloody detail on the procedures undergone by
a famous soprano in the hope of restoring her damaged voice. Asai and his

32. For a few sources illustrating wider contexts of discourse on race and hygiene, see
William W. Whitelock, “Importing Orientals,” Theatre Magazine, July 1903, 173, 177; Joe
Hayman, “Cohen Telephones the Health Department” (Montague Glass), Columbia A2192
(78 rpm record), 1917; and many trade cards. See also Palumbo-Liu (1999), Shah (2001).
33. “Science Explains the Secret…,” San Francisco Examiner, 5 March 1916; “Planing a Grand
Opera Prima Donna’s Sensitive Vocal Cords…,” San Francisco Examiner, 12 March 1916.
contemporaries who followed European vocal music knew well that it was no simple matter to act upon the discovery that one was “possessed of a voice.”

Read in a context of broad emphasis on the body as the physical basis for proper participation in U.S. society, the story of Asai’s visit to Dr. Miller instantiated a common turn in tales of the assimilation of immigrants from all nations, and thus may not have been specifically racialized; but its focus on the voice had a more precise significance. Giving Asai’s voice a medical doctor’s seal of approval added a scientific rhetoric of the body (as the origin of the voice) to the culturally and racially grounded aesthetic framing more generally used to support this musical linkage. In its broader discursive contexts, this had two somewhat contradictory implications.

Considered strictly in regard to Asai’s story, it lent a scientific basis to his credibility as an assimilated singer. But if read outwards against texts which told of oriental voices grounded in eternally oriental bodies, and thus as being forever incommensurable with a universalized aesthetics of vocal production, Corcoran’s resort to medical authority marked a certain kind of heterogeneity in beliefs about music as a sign of oriental bodily difference. These ideas could invoke Asian singers’ musicality as proof of variously inflected difference, limited assimilability, or both, at least for a talented few.

This may be just a trace of internal contradiction within a fairly coherent discourse on musical orientality, which often remained an inalienable sign of an Asian difference cast out from U.S. society. But it may also have partially inverted a common link between the vocal body and racial difference, doing so in a way that may have opened some space for a notion that exceptional immigrants were able truly to reinvent themselves as unmarked Americans,
at least in certain contexts, by singing European religious music. This mode of musical self-reconstruction within an immigrant body may have been heard as producing a restricted, audibly Christianized, Asian (or formerly Asian) Americanness. Despite the limits of this condition, it usefully complicates any too-simple notion of the meanings white Americans heard in Asian singers. Ideas of embodied musical orientality could support semi-contradictory U.S. discourses—ones historically interwoven and mutually reinforcing in covert ways—about Asians and Asian Americans. These ideas could range from the exclusionary to the missionary, which were by no means mutually exclusive.

At the time of the article’s first publication, readers could interpret its medicalizing turn within more locally remembered frames. A photographic spread in the previous Sunday’s World had offered an illustrated explanation of “How Coolies from China Are Shipped to France.” Its main caption invoked wartime labor issues: “What makes these pictures from Shang-Tung especially interesting just now to America is that some manufacturers are beginning to say that America soon will have to resort to Chinese labor. Part of the pay of the coolies is withheld for their families in China. They make a contract for several years.” A comparative look at this feature will illustrate some key discursive contexts that figured widely at the time, ones white Americans could use to make deeper social meaning from Asai’s story.34

34. K. Adachi, “How Coolies from China Are Shipped to France” [photographs], New York World, 24 February 1918. The national specificity of the feature’s Chinese topic in relation to Asai’s Japanese origins needs noting here as a factor further complicated by its credit to K. Adachi, possibly Kinnosuke Adachi. Its author’s social locations raise interesting issues about his possible stance against blurring Japanese and Chinese into orientality, but this is not crucial to analyzing these pieces’ likely meanings once they had passed through the newspaper’s editorial process and been interpreted by a mostly white readership.
Situated as part of a scenario that might affect the United States, the pictures’ individual captions reasserted long-dominant views about the social hazards of (often undifferentiated) Asian workers in America. The first image portrayed a shirtless Chinese man who gazed with questioning eyes at the camera as a white doctor examined his chest with a stethoscope, listening to the audible workings of the heart and lungs of his examinee—not a patient in any caregiving sense, since this mass screening had no therapeutic intent. Rather, it was an economically pragmatic process of quality control described as a “Medical inspection.” Disseminated in the paper which a week later told of Asai’s certification, this image may have charged his tale of a physician’s approval with a wider valence which also adhered to professional inspections of the bodies of Asian men bound for less aestheticized labor overseas.

Discourse about Asian people bound for employment in agricultural, industrial, or musical contexts in Europe and the United States transcended and contextualized these medical representations. The feature’s subsequent captions bear this out: “A metal bracelet with his identification number is riveted to his arm” (enabling physical control over human inventory made traceable and identifiable in the absence of shared language, reminiscent of methods used to manage human chattels); “For the first time in his life he learns what a bath means” (playing to beliefs about unhygienic others); and “Cutting off his cue is next.” This queue-cutting caption continued by stating that “Chinamen are used to that now,” casually invoking a history of racist assaults treated as comic by some white performers and cartoonists.

The remaining images showed bodily practices that were consistent in metaphorical ways with singers’ stories of training by European mentors
(“There follows a brief drill under European officers”) and intercontinental travel recounted in the passive voice. In contrast to some musicians’ tales of transnational agency, the latter texts objectified Chinese laborers as subhuman commodities (“Then the coolies are shipped aboard steamers that convey them to France to work in the fields”). Aside from this disjunct note, however, it would be surprising if this proximate context—especially its first image, with the direct visual address of its half-naked Chinese subject’s interrogative gaze as he submitted to inspection of the sounds hidden in his chest—were not recalled to linger in the (sub-) consciousnesses of many people who on the following Sunday read of Asai’s not wholly dissimilar, albeit more voluntary, subjection to a medical doctor’s certifying expertise.

The self-motivated origins of the tenor’s examination demonstrated his agency, and thus his difference from the unnamed Chinese laborers destined for France; but both accounts positioned their subjects as orientalized Asians who required a doctor’s approval before working among white people. While the paper explicitly stated the racial taint of this ascribed need regarding Chinese laborers and left it only implied for Asai, in both cases it summoned up a powerful sense of a hygenic white social body that was honor-bound to guard itself against contagion.35 Such articles show how the keepers of this sanitary cordon worked not only at Angel and Ellis Islands, but equally—and sometimes with more visible effects—at many of the nation’s newspapers, where beliefs of this sort were asserted even in some musical journalism.

Read later in 1918 in reprinted form, Asai’s tale of his visit to the doctor may have acquired more meanings from new contexts. The article was first

published early in March. That spring a scourge of influenza had spread across Europe, and by the fall a horrendous nationwide epidemic had struck the United States, causing many public spaces such as movie theaters to close (DeBauche 1997, 147–48). It is likely that Asai distributed his reprints of the article late that year. Read in flu-stricken times, his examination and doctor’s approval may have seemed a more pointed assertion that Asai’s body, and in literal fact his singing, were not a potential vector for contagion. Not, of course, that this doctor’s visit had taken place recently enough to matter medically in that way; but the sheer invocation of an M.D.’s approval of this immigrant’s throat must have had some such connotations during a crisis of pandemic disease spread by airborne transmission, and thus potentially communicated from the same respiratory tract with which Asai sang.

In this context, the vocal products of his Japanese body were potentially tractable to a fearful aura driven by rhetorics of social contagion from Asian immigrants and recent (and lethal) biological contagion from the microbes of a “Spanish flu” that may have originated in China. That those foreign germs could be carried invisibly in a performer’s singing breath (or in the less melodious exhalations of a stranger seated next to one in a theater audience) gave all public performance an undercurrent of danger in the fall of 1918. In the minds of some Americans during that time of disease from abroad and public worry about a yellow peril in the nation’s social body, this may have lent Asai the unspoken but disquieting aura of a specifically foreign threat.

These modes of remaking and certifying Asai’s body show how master narratives of pedagogical, religious, and medical assimilation could be deeply entangled with the U.S. presentation and reception of an Asian musician. In
his teachers’ mentoring of an internal transformation of vocal uses of his lungs, larynx, and mouth, this process metaphorically foreshadowed later medical practices of bodily remaking towards Eurocentric norms. Prominent among them is plastic surgery on the eyelids of Asian and Asian American people to craft faces resembling more closely a white model, one privileged for reasons construed as professional (more often for men) or aesthetic (more often for women). It may be a mistake, however, to think of such procedures as necessarily signifying capitulation to dominant notions of white beauty; as Traise Yamamoto points out, to do so could deny the agency of Asian Americans who choose to undergo these transformations not as a means of trying to be “(mis)taken for white” but to “divest the value assigned to difference and thus refuse identification with the face—and all that it signifies—that one has been forced to adopt” (1999, 99). That antiessentialist possibility resonates back in time to suggest another reading of Asai’s brochure: that what many white people surely read as an uncomplicated and happy “assimilation” of a musical sort may not have been that so much as a process by which one musician tried to evade racialization altogether.

Just as surgical procedures may be bound up with other transformative processes or anti-essentialist desires, Asai’s mentored musical remaking of his own body was grounded in diverse kinds of social and somatic practice. In a sense, he stood in an intermediate—or simultaneous—position between that of a religious convert (since European concert music was an object of almost religious veneration by many white Americans) and that of a seemingly eager subject of bodily assimilation (by physical acts of vocal training). This joint

36. Two discussions of this are found in Palumbo-Liu (1999, 93–105), C. Chang (1999); more are cited in a supplementary text (not part of this dissertation) available from the author.
transformation of body and spirit located him as, in a barely veiled way, a singer of his own conversion. This was true not only as a musical metaphor, but also in the religious sense. While sources found to date do not show with certainty what his actual faith was, from the perspective of reception the point is that most Americans who heard him singing his oratorio excerpts would have had no doubt, rightly or wrongly, just where things stood in that regard.

Missionary narratives of the singing of hymns in Asia, Asian America, and other distant places often told of conversion by means of enlisting body and soul in the creation of Christian song. This was a key interpretive frame for making meaning from Asai’s musical practice, which was rooted in both physiological and metaphysical domains of sound production and religious repertoire. While his brochure made no explicit reference to his faith, and it did not proselytize, it was imbued with the ethos of a conversion narrative—one in which he sang of, and by means of, psychic and bodily transformation. In a historical context saturated with narratives of missionary activity in Japan, China, and U.S. Chinatowns, many white people must have heard Asai as living testimony to his own Christian Americanization by musical means. The conjuncture of religion and bodily training in Asai’s tale was familiar from documents of missionary activity in Asian America and Asia. It also was contemporaneous with diverse projects of involuntary social conversion through performance, including the forced assimilation of Native Americans by such means as Shakespeare productions at the Carlisle Indian School, and with the presence of other Japanese musicians in U.S. cities. Examples of

the latter include pianist Fukiko Osawa of the Doshisha Girls’ School, who studied in New York in 1919,39 and Kosçak Yamada.

After invoking the doctor’s authority, the article told how the singer had engaged a new teacher despite his inability to pay the usual price for lessons:

“So then I wrote my father and informed him of my decision. Quite naturally he thought me a little mad. But I was not dependent on him for anything. I told him I would still sell prints if he sent them to me, and pay him 10 per cent. commission on my sales.”

And so the matter was settled.

“I knew,” he said, “that I had no musical heredity behind me. I realized that if it took an American ten years to be trained it would probably take me twenty. Still I was sure I would succeed.”

Asai’s reference to his lack of “musical heredity” could suggest the biologic racial terms of a non-musical Japaneseness, or that he came personally from a family with no musicians in it. Either way, it betrayed a notion that only some individuals “have a voice.” This reinforced an elite musical belief seen earlier in the request that each reader imagine her or himself “possessed of a voice,” an idea to which his medical examination had given scientific grounding.

This positioned Asai’s process of musical assimilation as one focused on a specific, upper-class ideal (a musical location to which some people lower in American social hierarchies not infrequently aspired). But most interesting here is the reference to Asai’s continued role as a seller of Japanese prints. Apparently he had not attained sufficient popularity to support himself with his musical career; and by continuing to feed some white Americans’ hunger for Japanese art while pursuing his chosen path of singing non-orientalist European music, Asai’s ongoing work for his father exhibited what may have been some sort of acutely lived aesthetic tension or compartmentalization.

Based on his self-presentation, it is plausible to surmise that Asai wanted to build a professional singing life in which he would set aside the U.S. taste for supposedly authentic orientality, at most invoking as quickly as possible his national origins—as if to clear the air before moving on to musical practice not contingent on his Japanese birthplace, heredity, or upbringing. Yet for at least some of his career, economic need led him to continue in the family business of importing Japanese prints destined for the walls of New York apartments. Who knows: perhaps some of the white Americans who went to hear the “sweet voice” sounding forth from Asai’s dress-suited Asian body, as he sang Handel with “marvelously correct pronunciation,” went home after his recitals to walls decorated in orientalist style with the prints he sold.

Asai clearly strove to build a fulfilling artistic life in a context filled with contradiction. Taking his desire for musical enculturation into European oratorio singing as an evident personal aim (not as a model privileging assimilative Americanization), it is clear that he faced daunting obstacles. To engage mostly white audiences with his musicianship in non-orientalist terms must have been well-nigh impossible. This is seen in Asai’s own publicity packet, in which—due to his desire to include the full text of Corcoran’s article—the singer twice was termed “the first tenor of his race.” By framing Asai’s story with this phrase at the beginning and end of the article, Corcoran situated him (despite Asai’s efforts) as not just an accomplished musician but also a racial novelty. This demonstrates the power of dominant tropes and modes of reception to impose an orientalist frame around a singer who apparently tried to exclude orientality from his performances. This discourse still found its way into the self-published promotional materials with which
he sought to build his career. By reproducing a testimonial to his abilities as they had been praised in dominant media, Asai had to reframe his musical identity in the racial terms that he had carefully and fleetingly invoked, only to move beyond, in the press excerpts he chose for the brochure itself.

Other kinds of racialization came into play as the article proceeded and Corcoran read personal character from Asai’s body, doing so in a way reminiscent of earlier accounts of cranial indices to racial character.40

Following Asai’s supposition that it might take him twice as long as “an American” to become a proficient singer of European song, Corcoran wrote:

TO a casual Occidental liable to enter life by the nearest opening, without thought for the talent that might be intrusted to him, this decision sounds not merely awe-inspiring but somewhat epic. And looking at Mr. Asai, his round, honest head and short, sturdy frame, you wonder whence he draws the moral force that would enable him to face such a struggle without shrinking. He had much need of that force in the years before him.

This recourse to almost phrenological language is striking. Without explicitly referring to racial typologies, Corcoran positioned Asai’s physical appearance as signifying the singer’s moral qualities, and he located the reader as a fellow spectator by returning to the direct address of “you wonder.” This drew the reader in as if to perceive at first hand Asai’s “round, honest head,” thereby to learn of his inner nature by means of the body’s evidence.

The article then turned to Asai’s financial victimization:

“I went to one teacher after another,” he told me. “Oh, what a crime it is for these people to pretend to teach! One and all they were enthusiastic at first. A Japanese tenor! The first in the country! What an honor if they could bring him out! Then they grew lax. But they took my money.”

And hard-earned money it was. All his summers were spent in going from one hotel to another, singing for the recompense of a night’s lodging and such pennies as the guests cared to give.

“But I usually cleared about $300,” he said.

And all of it went into the pockets of those teachers.

40. For an example focused on beliefs about Chinese traits, see Tchen (1999, 148–51).
This seems a poignant instance of a common trope (one grounded in reality) of an immigrant’s exploitation by avaricious local folk of longer residence. Here it converged with a specific narrative of fleeting fascination by the exotic novelty of an Asian musician. Asai’s frustrating succession of teachers may have repeated, more or less, his experience with Mme. Newhouse’s initial engagement and subsequent loss of interest. This reflects the unreliable effects of a thirst for orientalized musical novelty of various sorts, something seen in spectatorial ways in vaudeville and played out here in a pedagogical domain.

Corcoran next alluded to a period of financial and personal crisis for Asai, a long dark night of the soul precipitated by a friend’s betrayal of his trust. (For an evocative sense of simultaneity with no causal links, while Asai was struggling through these troubled times in New York, Miura soon would depart Japan for Europe.) That watershed moment carried the article back around to Asai’s existential discovery of new resolve on a New Jersey beach:

It was then that he pitted himself against fate. He had just enough money for a fare to Atlantic City. He decided to go there and seek an engagement as a singer.

“And the first proprietor I went to,” he said, “paid me $15 to sing on New Year’s Eve, and got me another engagement for the following night at the same price.”

With $18 in his pocket, he returned to New York—but not, this time, to sing. First there was the debt to be got rid of. It amounted to over $500. By February, 1915, it was paid. And once again, Tomijiro Asai resumed his career.

Asai’s return from the edge brought the article to its final section:

“I WENT first to a great man who had just returned from Italy, and asked him to give an opinion on my voice. He showed me some defects in my manner of placing it. I picked up some more tips from a book written by Caruso. Then I met Harry Horsfal, the very best friend I have ever had.”

Harry Horsfal is the English organist of the West End Presbyterian Church, a distinguished and experienced musician.

“I know nothing about voice production,” he told Mr. Asai, “but I know a lot about the voice itself, and about music. You have all the knowledge, industry and brains to teach yourself. I will be your critic.”
And so for the very last time Mr. Asai set himself to study. Now, to quote his own words:

“I offer my humble services for engagement, relying upon the kindness of the American people which I enjoyed on former appearances.”

Tomijiro Asai is ready for his career as the first tenor of his race.


In a more settled tone which reflected the calmer personal times of which it told, this closing passage returned the singer to European and American mentoring, in person and via the written words of the acclaimed Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso. (The mention of Italy and Caruso invoked the towering presence of the idea of Europe as an arbiter of an ambivalent Asian musical assimilation into American high culture, more specifically by means of the canonical touchstone for the cultured European male voice.) The reader can only hope that Harry Horsfal proved worthy of Asai’s faith; perhaps he did.

Important here is how Corcoran finished the article by reasserting that Asai was “the first tenor of his race.” Coming at the end of a text in which he had tried to be supportive, the writer probably meant this retreat to typology as an assertion of the singer’s attractive novelty; but despite its promotional intent, it reduced Asai to a racial prototype and undermined the defining sense of the singer’s own self-presentation. Evidently wanting to distribute the complete story as an independent mark of his credibility, Asai seems to have had no real choice but to reprint, to insert into his brochure, and then to distribute to those he hoped might hire him, an article which—despite its evident enthusiasm—still embedded orientality into the center of even this tenor’s own self-published, and otherwise wholly non-orientalist, brochure.

Asserting his role as self-publisher, Asai followed this reprint with his own response. While he did not openly critique Corcoran’s orientalist rhetoric (perhaps because to do so would have seemed ungentlemanly?), the singer
reframed one critical aspect of the article’s content. Set in bold type which seems to signify the weight he gave to his own views, the note read in full:

**MY OWN STATEMENT**

Some of the things in the story that are quoted above as having been said by me are not wholly true, and the reader is particularly requested to bear in mind this important fact:

I entertain no unkindly feeling toward anyone; above all I have a great respect and very warm regards for Mme. Newhouse, and also for all the others under whom I studied at one time or other in the past. While it may be true that there are some charlatans among the vocal teachers as in any other profession, I have never met one and therefore have no right to speak of it.

However, the story is written in an exceedingly kindly spirit and for which I feel very grateful.

Tomijiro Asai

Much of the “no unkindly feeling toward anyone” tone of Asai’s response no doubt reflected a desire to turn the other cheek (at least in hindsight, having cut loose in the interview with a few righteously aggravatred opinions about teachers who had exploited him) according to the precepts of the religion whose songs he sang, and of which he seems to have been an adherent. It might reflect as well the value placed on respect towards one’s teachers in many Japanese settings, if this was part of his individual experience and psychological makeup. It also may have been encouraged by the economic and social realities of building a musical career: specifically, conflicting desires to set the record straight after being inacurately quoted or to revise what one inadvertently said to a journalist (but thought better of after the interview), but not to offend or embarrass the reporter by doing so—because that would risk enjoying less (or less positive) press coverage in the future.
The remaining item in Asai’s packet was a small sheet with a list of oratorio excerpts he sang. His featured repertoire of religious selections from Haydn, Mendelssohn, Barnby, and Handel confirms that he was not singing orientality in the sense in which Tamaki Miura was—he did not appear as an embodiment of familiar oriental roles. To many white Americans, Asai must have seemed an icon of musical assimilation uncomplicated by any notion of staged oriental authenticity. Beyond these pieces’ absence of orientality, the fact that he specialized in these Christian songs positioned Asai as having assimilated into himself—and in the public eye, as having assimilated himself into—European traditions not only of musical language and vocal technique, but also by religious conversion (regardless of his actual religious beliefs).

Re-Presenting Tamaki Miura & Tomijiro Asai—Comparative Take 2
While Miura’s embodiments of Butterfly pointed “back” towards a Japanese homeland overlain with orientalist imaginings (back, that is, within the fantasized geography into which many white Americans mapped Puccini’s heroine and its nativized singer, whom they also saw as an authentic Asian marvel of musical westernization), Asai’s U.S. performances of songs from European oratorios must have effaced his origins as far as his audiences could hear, despite his visible Japaneseness. The seeming absence of any reference to real or imaginary Japans in Asai’s performances—at least in the music he sang, if not perhaps in spoken words with which he may have introduced it—could leave open a space in the minds of white listeners, one which in certain other settings was filled with the orientalist constructions of Puccini’s opera.

This difference in preferred hearings of Asai’s and Miura’s performances may have paralleled certain ways in which they positioned Japanese music.
Miura built her American career embodying orientality through an unending European musical tale of Japan; some accounts have her speaking of Japanese music almost as needing westernization to become modern and good, as in the idea “that Japanese music will be incorporated into European music, as Mr. Puccini has done in ‘Butterfly.’ Japanese music will not be changed from what it is now, but it will be worked into Occidental compositions to make something very beautiful.” Asai made no mention of Japanese music in his story of personal exploration; and based on his publicity packet, he seems not to have sought U.S. audiences by connecting his musicality to his birth nation.

This is not to imply that intercultural performance with few perceptible representational links to one’s actual or imagined place of origin is somehow better than a musical practice more tractable to orientalist interpretations. Rather, to note these differences is to suggest that even within the constrained professional opportunities for Asian and Asian American singers of European music in the United States, there were various (but often constricted) ways of presenting one’s self, being presented, and being heard. These singers’ varied performance contexts and repertoires gave some white Americans a diverse, even if infrequent, range of experiences from which to construct ideas of embodied musicality in essentialist terms as oriental, Asian, or both: sung identities heard as if they were sounded through willing enactment or by still-perceptible traces lingering after their seemingly assimilative disavowal.

As seen in the personal statement with which he reframed the article, Asai’s conflicted worry about contending issues of accuracy and offense brings home a crucial piece of the contexts in which he, Miura, and other

singers were functioning: a competitive world of professional music-making, a place where little was certain and much could be anxiety-provoking. This is true of many professional music scenes; but the almost vertiginous sense of day-to-day and year-to-year uncertainty and struggle must have been extraordinary for these singers in a strange country, one in which anti-Asian racism was rampant and highly restricted Asian immigration was the law. Although these singers’ personal histories are not the main topic of this study, it is crucial here to remain aware of their inevitably difficult social positions.

Without noting this, any analysis of how these performers negotiated their musical careers and presented themselves to white American audiences could seem to be a judgmental critique of vocalists’ decisions to embody an operatic orientality or to sing what many heard as Eurocentric assimilation. Such a critical turn would be a wrongheaded sort of ahistoricism, one worth unpacking for what it tells us about the performative grounds of their U.S. reception histories. Each of these musicians almost certainly lived in a fraught conjuncture of artistic desires, musical struggles, intercultural dilemmas, social complexities, and perhaps economic or immigration anxieties. The almost painful care with which Asai tried to calibrate the readings people might give to the *World* article is a telling reminder of one such position.

These issues came down in many ways to ideology and commerce. The power of the marketplace is clear in the embedding of orientalism into Asai’s own publicity materials, and in the fact that he supported his musical career by selling Japanese prints to New Yorkers. While to some extent he could frame and enact his performances in non-orientalizing ways, at the moment of his entry into musical commerce he seemed to have but two options, and
apparently he had to take up both of them to keep his singing career viable. On the one hand, he could keep a roof over his head by falling back on a non-musical line of work that involved feeding an often orientalist U.S. taste for Japanese prints. On the other hand, he could choose strategically to make use of largely affirmative responses to his singing from dominant media while striving to contain their orientalizing gestures as best he could.

In a sense, these two responses sat to either side of Miura’s position as a Japanese singer of Butterfly. Asai seems almost to have looked purposefully off to each side of the sung embodiment of orientality, and to have charted a course that pushed notions of the oriental off towards a non-musical means of subsistence and a dominant mode of mediated reception beyond his control—or perhaps these moves were simply side effects of a desire to sing a Christian repertoire in a European tradition in America. Without judging the ways in which either musician dealt with the exigencies of building a U.S. career, it would seem that Miura’s decision to inhabit a ready-made oriental role gave her a more clear-cut path (which is not to say necessarily an easier one), one that afforded her substantial renown. But while true in a sense, this would offer a too-simple tale of these singers’ U.S. presentation and reception.

To wrap up their different career trajectories, degrees of success, and social meanings as being neatly iconic of two essentialized (and essentially different) paths determined by repertoire and gender, within an overarching domain of orientalized Japaneseness, would risk erasing the histories of other Japanese sopranos who had less successful U.S. careers singing “Butterfly.” It also would beg the question of whether the two singers’ respective American audiences may have perceived in Miura’s and Asai’s voices a difference of
quality (one of timbre, skill, or both) unrelated to ideas about race and questions of racialized presentation, but based on normative genre ideals. Given the seeming absence of documents offering any direct comparison between Asai and Miura in their time, this question must be left open.

A more useful conclusion to draw from comparing these singers treats their histories of reception as indicating the importance of local context to the diverse processes by which people make meaning from musical acts. Despite the often homogenizing effects of orientalist ideology, it was played out in these musical events and discourses in manifold and unpredictable ways. This is true even in the specific domain of the U.S. presentation and reception of a few Japanese singers of European music in these years. The raciological assumptions that framed such moments still allowed some space for agency on the part of these singers, who could suggest to their audiences their own preferred ways of interpreting some aspects of what they did on stage.

(The matter of agency also raises interesting questions in regard to both singers’ actual vocal practice; despite the differences noted here, most of the works Miura and Asai sang to U.S. audiences were in European languages. One could hear this practice in a theoretical way as a musical enactment of tropes of masking, eliding, ignoring, or displacing the vocality of Japanese language, and to think about it in those terms might be useful; but to push this towards a reading of such vocal practice as completely ventriloquistic in those ways would write out these musicians’ agency in choosing the musical traditions they chose—and could fall prey to the essentialist idea that a person “should” only perform her or his “own” music. In these lights, this matter of language is best left as a provocative area for further thought.)
While these singers’ repertoires, venues, and marketing styles differed radically within their American scenes of European vocal music, in some ways they ended up framed as authentic representatives of orientality. That imaginary essence could be visibly ascribed to Miura’s body, or heard as a marked absence in Asai’s voice, which could signify the idea that training had removed an oriental essence from his body in order to make room for something many thought to be better; but a similar transformation, if one differently directed, was perceived as being true of Miura as well, as seen in narratives of her training under European tutelage. Once again, oppositional pairs of meanings are insufficient for explaining these musical practices. A better way in which to understand these singers’ U.S. meanings is as an overlapping aggregate of contending and coexisting interpretations.

Stepping back from individual documentary traces to the broader fact that white Americans’ reception of Miura and Asai took place in the minds of uncountable individuals, the impossibility of distilling into a neat package the social meanings they made from these singers leaves us with a sense of some of the ideological apparatus that white Americans could use when making racial meaning from musical performance in the teens and twenties. It also shows that any unitary or deterministic model of how these listeners heard would ring hollow. Public discourse about these singers did not conform to binary oppositions; it offered a more varied toolkit for interpretation. This suggests the latitude experienced in reception and the hegemonic processes that could guide people as they made cultural meaning in such moments.

Those meanings often did cohere around the era’s dominant ideological poles of white American belief in Japanese Americans—and often, through
raciological slippage, all Asian Americans—either as eternal aliens deserving exclusion by any means possible or as immigrants among whom there might be individuals deemed fit for Americanization. But these tropes of exclusion and assimilation were played out in nuanced and disjunct ways, whether in published texts or individual minds. The framing of any one performance in its program notes, and in the press before and after an event, could provide interpretive models, paths, and hints for reception. Guided in sometimes subtle ways by socially powerful beliefs, each listener or reader could use these to construct individual meaning from her own direct or indirect experience of a singer, drawing on a set of dominant interpretive strategies while framing or supplementing those widely shared moves with whatever may have been her own more idiosyncratic beliefs or predilections.

Many white Americans’ interpretations of what these musicians’ U.S. performances signified did stick close to pervasive ideas about authentically embodied orientality, the assimilated voice, or both, while other listeners constructed their own kinds of sense with less reliance on such widely followed guideposts. Dominant American ideologies of musical and racial difference had a profoundly hegemonic effect on the U.S. reception of diverse Japanese singers of European songs, but an effect which was not always a determining one. These musicians and the people who constituted their audiences were individuals thinking and feeling and acting their way through complexly mediated circumstances. As participants in the musical construction of ideas about racial and cultural difference, they made conscious and unconscious use of dominant ideologies in diverse ways.
Chapter 3

Hearing Familiar Novelty in Oriental Acts
The Presentation and Reception of Asian/Americans in Vaudeville

Lee Fong, like little Ah Sid, is a Chinese kid with a penchant for jingling rhymes and
dance-inspiring music. Lee has only recently come to public notice, in fact it was only
the day before yesterday when he was discovered in a Fourth-street washhouse by the
manager of a local variety show. Lee’s debut into musical circles is to take place at a
very near date.

Extensive as is every San Franciscan’s knowledge of the city's Chinatown, nowhere can
be found a citizen who has any recollection of hearing of a Chinese who played popular
airs on a violin with any sort of a touch that is suggestive of early training and an
ardent admiration for music. But Lee Fong is just such a heathen prodigy, with a
history that is of exceeding interest.

“I will introduce you to this musical Celestial,” said Fong’s manager with a smile.

“We call him Tom Flanagan,” for, strange to relate, the boy has a great liking for Irish
airs and melodies, and plays them in preference to the compositions of German or
American composers.”

Tom being formally introduced tucked his violin under his arm and proceeded to give
an account of himself.

Unfortunately Tom has not mastered the English language with the same amount of
proficiency with which he has learned to manipulate the bow and catguts. Being more
conversant with the vocabulary of the washhouse than with the dialect that would
better become him as a future theatrical attraction.

Tom came to California about eight years ago. He first listened to the playing of a violin
at a theater in Oakland. He liked “Melican music,” and often stood for hours at a park
or open-air concert listening to a brass band discourse popular airs.

Finally the idea struck him that it would be possible for him to learn to play the fiddle,
so straightaway he hied him to a second-hand store, where he purchased a violin for $6.

“Me no likee China music,” said he, with a contemptible [sic] sneer. “Too much dum,
dum, too muchee squeak.”

With the help of a German, who jokingly undertook to give Tom a few preliminary
instructions in the production of harmonious sounds, the Chinese learned to handle the
bow with considerable dexterity. His advance was rapid, and in less than two years
Tom could do musical justice at any country hoedown, and inspire even a more
elevated social gathering with exhilaration when he drew music out of the violin
strings.

Denizens of the neighborhood of Fourth and Howard streets often seconded Tom’s
services for an evening entertainment.

“Ilish music heep lively,” said Tom, as he drew his finger along his violin’s base [sic]
string. “You like me play for you?”
“By all means.”

“I play.”

“The Wearing of the Green,” “Killarney” and an Irish jig followed in measured succession. Tom’s arm swung with an easy motion and his foot beat time. His eyes dilated a little and his mouth twitched, showing that he felt in his very soul the vibrations of the sweet melodies of Celtic origin.

A few American and English tunes were next tried, the “Arkansaw Traveler” [sic] making a decided hit with Tom’s limited audience.

“Never in my lifetime have I ever heard of a Chinese becoming a musician,” said Tom’s manager when the heathen had departed from the room. “Really Tom is a wonder, and will undoubtedly be sought after by showmen when they hear about him.”

“No; I do not think Tom has any rivals among his countrymen.”
—San Francisco Call, 1894

Not only elite musical genres offered experiences of voices and bodies many white Americans heard as oriental. While some Asian and Asian American musicians performed European vocal music for U.S. audiences, others were active and audible in more down-to-earth settings. These included the nineteenth-century variety stage, which offered some musical acts not unlike the one recounted above. One such popular form that was national in scope and widely enjoyed throughout this study’s decades was vaudeville theater.2

Vsudeville, Race, & Typological Novelty

Asian and Asian American performers frequently appeared in vaudeville. That theatrical form thrived on notions of novelty and enactments of racial and cultural difference by, on the one hand, performers whose stage personas were conflated with their own real-world identities and, on the other, white

2. Venues for related but distinct kinds of spectatorial experience included certain nightclubs in U.S. Chinatowns. The best known of these was San Francisco’s Forbidden City, which was active in mid-century decades after vaudeville had declined (and after those central to this study); see Dong (1992), Chun (2000, 65–70). A sense of the club’s heyday is conveyed in Arthur Dong’s film Forbidden City U.S.A. (Los Angeles: Deep Focus Productions, 1989).
vaudevillians whose offstage selves were identified as distinct from their onstage characters, enabling them to demonstrate mimetic skill. Promotional texts for such acts as that of a musician billed as “Etai Look Hoy, who introduces a novel Chinese offering, including songs and dances” appealed to the drawing power of generic novelty and specifically oriental status.

Reflecting its long history as a massively popular form, vaudeville has been discussed by many writers. Some were alive during its heyday and wrote about it during or shortly after those years; others have examined it more recently. A summary of this literature would be excessive, but we may frame this chapter’s specific topic by noting that vaudeville was a theatrical form which appealed especially to working-class people but still could enjoy socially heterogeneous audiences; that well before the teens, it had been “refined” in ways that made it acceptable to many women as well as men, unlike some of its rougher precursors; that it had an internal hierarchy of lower- and higher-status venues; that many of these theaters were owned by national or regional syndicates; that performers often traveled from town to town for weekly engagements; and that most bills on which they appeared consisted of many short acts by different musicians and other performers, who often sought to amuse audiences with acts perceived as novel. A concrete sense of these contexts may emerge below from primary sources; more historical and theoretical framing is available in secondary works.

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3. The binary tone of this language reflects a ruling, but not total, ideological dichotomy that framed much of this practice; for more on openly mimetic acts, see Chapters 4 through 7.


This chapter focuses on recurrent themes in how white Americans’ experiences of Asian/American vaudevillians were framed and received in racial terms. This offers a counterpart to work focused more on production-side and biographical aspects of these histories. Notable among those studies is Krystyn Moon’s dissertation, which offers behind-the-scenes accounts of some Chinese American performers whose public personas figure below (2002). Moon’s archival research illuminates key aspects of their lives in ways that were absent from dominant media and from the meanings most audience members made from them. In one sense the topic here is narrower, in its focus on the latter aspects of representation and meaning construction; in another, it attends more widely to Chinese and Japanese American vaudevillians’ public roles as performers embroiled in much the same currents of racialization.

The key matter of performers’ (as distinguished from audiences’) agency makes Moon’s work a crucial counterpart to this one. With the main points here being to understand how white Americans made racial meanings from these performers, and how those meanings were bound up with culturally related confluences of performance and race, it would be all too easy for Asian American vaudevillians to be tacitly relegated here to an apparent (but false) position as passive objects of white spectatorship. That was not the case. As Moon’s work (and shorter studies cited in immediate connections below) has shown, these performers were active agents in their own professional lives. And as some studies of vaudeville and related histories demonstrate, Asian and Asian American performers in U.S. theaters could actively oppose racist social contexts and expectations. For example, among other findings concerned more with community history than outsider perceptions, Nancy Rao’s research on Chinese opera in New York shows how such performers could embody oppositional political stances by which they positioned themselves not at all as passive victims (Rao 2002). While the focus below is on dominant representations and patterns of reception, both often based on ideas of imposed exoticism and raciological belief, those things—no matter how unremitting they could be—did not define the lived experiences of the people upon whom many white presenters and audiences mapped them.

A song published as a souvenir commemorating the opening of a theater in Hartford, Connecticut conveys some aspects of vaudeville’s history, business practices, performance contexts, and marketing rhetoric. Published in 1916, the cover for “Welcome Mr. Poli” offered a sense of performers’ nearly endless travel from city to city around organized circuits of theaters.
Surrounding a central photograph of Sylvester Poli, it used as a frame a chain of interlinked images of his theaters, locating those buildings as sites for successive presentations by the performers he hired—who orbited Poli as the economic center of the image. The cover also gave prominent play to several free-floating bits of enthusiastic text. Those words’ individual meanings and their juxtaposition of fun and finance preserve a trace of vaudeville’s mix of performance, pleasure, and business. Below the top of the cover’s doubly iterated, friendly-but-firm command to “Keep Smiling” (presumably directed towards both performers and audiences), the image of Poli and his theatrical empire resided comfortably between capitalized textual pillars stating the man’s method and reward for bringing the ever-novel joys of vaudeville to his increasingly distributed audiences: “ENTERPRISE” and “SUCCESS.”

The proclivity of vaudeville presenters to frame performers by their ascribed race, culture, or nationality (often lumped together) had important effects on the presentation of Asian and Asian American musicians. Along with differences of class positioning, this differentiated much vaudeville orientalism from its operatic counterpart. Opera publicity and reviews commonly referred to singers prefaced by national adjectives (“the French bass”), doing so in regard to Japanese sopranos with extreme consistency; as seen in Chapter 1, this positioned them as natural occupants of a gendered racial category shared with the Butterfly role they sang so often. Not just one among systematic equals, that category confounded singers’ social identities

6. James Thatcher, “Welcome Mr. Poli: Souvenir Song” (from the Sylvester Poli theater in Hartford, Connecticut), Washington, DC: Thatcher Publishing Co., 1916. The chain imagery also may suggest, by unintended associations with histories of literally enchained African American labor, a metaphorical reading which would conflate radically different modes of exploitation, but which may have occurred to some vaudeville performers—who often received the short end of dealings with circuit owners, theater managers, and booking agents.
and fictive roles more deeply than did most notions of national voice; but in full operatic productions, its musical enactment took place over a full evening of orientalist performance. In contrast, vaudeville often featured a quickly flickering array of diverse racial and ethnic types, all staged in fast succession.

Most paradigmatically in recent social memory, these figures included those played in blackface; but vaudeville also gave its audiences an endless stream of ethnicized white performers, Native Americans, and other cultural, national, ethnic, and racial types. (Because these category systems so often melded into one another in vaudeville, many uses of any one of those terms below stand in context for others as well.) These categories were fundamental to the ways in which many performers, presenters, and audiences thought about both onstage acts and the offstage identities of certain performers who embodied them. This may be seen in the comments of a backstage observer:

In watching a bill from behind for the first time, one is at once struck with the great dissimilarity of the people who compose it. In a theatrical company the actors and actresses have more or less in common and their interests are to some extent similar; but in vaudeville this is not so. Americans and foreigners, white men and negroes, people of refinement and those without it, all occupy the stage in turn as the card boy shifts the numbers.7

A crucial distinction for its effect on reception is that vaudeville artists were especially often framed by advertisements, program notes, and so on in terms of their own real—or at least what were presented as “real”—ethnic or racial identities. Because of this contextual difference, the otherness signified by musical acts framed as oriental could seem at times to be just another dish

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from a menu of novel racialized performances, all positioned as differently amusing essences filling bottles that were typologically equivalent.8

The notion of a racial diversity that could be represented by means of performance had contemporary counterparts. A visual trace of this is a 1910 “Sunday School Crusaders” postcard displaying a variety of nationally typed children (including Chinese and Japanese girls) as converts or potential converts to Christianity (fig. 3.1).9 The card was made “for world-wide use as an emblem of the spirit of world-conquest for Christ.” Typological images of these sorts supplied one interpretive frame for performances of orientality that were heard and seen in sequence with other ethnic and racial types on the vaudeville stage, and in images of such performers in visual culture.

Many streams of musical performance were related in contextual ways to racialized acts in vaudeville. One category that illustrates this was that of singers presented as “native Indian” performers. Princess Watahwaso’s performances were framed as authentic interpretations of Indianist music composed or arranged by white American composers including Thurlow

8. Vaudeville’s categorical leveling of such identities through sequential performance was akin to other ways of serializing human difference that still are common. As Kimberly J. Lau has written of series publications of folktales (with a comparative glance at multiracial performance series), such projects “cannot help but crystallize versions of tales and people”: “published collections are often little more than essentialist, metonymic representations of the given culture or group, which is assumed to be an integrated, identifiable whole” (2000, 73). Similar difficulties can attend musical education. Representational issues endemic to world-music survey courses and textbooks can arise from the epistemological effects of serialization, despite authors’ best efforts. There are, however, key differences in some examples of such presentation—not least, their common use of self-critical framing, and their less frequent propagation of overtly racializing subtexts like those endemic to vaudeville performance.

Lieurance. A 1918 advertising pamphlet promised U.S. consumers aesthetic pleasure in her artistic gifts and audible experience of her racial authenticity:

These songs, adapted by Thurlow Lieurance from native Indian tunes, find an ideal interpreter in Princess Watahwaso, the noted Indian singer. Princess Watahwaso (Bright Star) is the daughter of a Penobscot Indian chief of near Oldtown, Maine. This singer has a rich mezzo-soprano voice of great sweetness and emotional power; to her natural musical gifts she brings all the romance, poetry and traditions of her race. The records are issued as a further contribution to the work the Victor is doing in the schools.

To address most aspects of this passage would lead us astray, but the idea of performing dominant versions of one’s culture of origin is directly relevant. Such singers as Princess Tsianina Redfeather performed under the same rubric of authenticity. An advertisement for Redfeather’s performances with Charles Wakefield Cadman stressed her vocal authenticity as a performer of his Europeanized versions of Native American song: “Princess Tsianina Redfeather, genuine, full-blooded Indian (great-granddaughter of Chief Tecumseh, famous in history), a strikingly beautiful and artistically gifted girl, sings inimitably, with appropriate gestures and posturing, the songs of her people.” Another appealed to ideas of authentic voice, stating that she:

…is a young woman of fascinating personality, gifted with a mezzo-soprano voice of haunting beauty, which she employs with intelligence and artistic impulse in singing the melodies of her people. Princess Tsianina wears—

12. Vast histories permeate this appeal to authentic lineage, native essence, class background, geographical location, musical gifts, and romanticized tales of the ostensibly vanquished. A few apposite studies include Slotkin (1973), Berkofer (1979), Drinnon (1990 [1980]), Dilworth (1996), Deloria (1998). Beliefs and rhetoric similar to those in the Watahwaso passage were seen in many Americans’ reception of Molly Spotted Elk, a Penobscot dancer (McBride 1995).
always and everywhere—the traditional leathern dress, beaded moccasins and feather head-dress.14

Redfeather’s wearing of her costume “always and everywhere” could apply to some Asian/American performers’ appearance in theaters and printed images. The fact that these practices sometimes were enacted with Asian and Native American referents on the same stages on the same evenings speaks of their structural interchangeability within certain systems of representation.

Analogous in some ways to Japanese sopranos’ embodiments of Butterfly, these staged versions of Native Americanness were sounded and heard in geographically tighter representational loops (within one continent rather than two or three) of self-mimesis using cultural outsiders’ texts. Asian American singers’ renditions of orientalist songs in vaudeville could evoke a faraway orient known in opera, or Chinatowns on the American continent. Many ways of hearing these acts also relied on ideas of vocally audible race.

The previous two chapters have supplied a sense of how the voice could signify the musical history of the body producing it—histories often heard as entailing some mix of originary racial essence and subsequent training in how to rework or suppress it to meet the demands of certain European traditions. By means of various kinds of framing and interpretation, this could recast interethnic histories and contemporary struggles into more evanescent acts. This may be seen in an article on the pedagogical philosophy Redfeather’s voice teacher enacted in working with her. A representative passage summons up a notion of native authenticity made comprehensible to white

Americans through mentoring in European vocality—but mentoring left purposely incomplete to preserve an audible trace of difference. In his words,

“…I have not tried, and shall not try, to eliminate from her tone the peculiarly individual Indian quality. Her tones have a peculiar ‘tang’ that I have never heard in a paleface voice, and my effort in training her is to bring her voice into its greatest possible beauty, through free amplification of resonance, without eliminating this native quality. A good cook does not try to eliminate the ‘gamey’ taste in a wild fowl, but merely neutralizes it sufficiently for the civilized palate. No more would I try to eliminate the quality in this delightfully natural girl’s voice that is its true characteristic. Her success, whenever she has appeared in public shows that the appeal of the primitive is still felt, even in our day of artificiality.”

These ways of hearing, and of writing about hearing, could displace any awareness some audience members may have had of the lived specificity of communities represented on stage. As a musical elision (or even erasure) of the histories of racialized groups of people whom many white Americans believed these singers to represent in song, this made their images into exotic half-real referents of a transitory spectacle—one made lighthearted by the absence or romanticization of realities they set aside. This racial framing of vocal quality, training, performance, and reception used some of the same devices as did similar discourse about Asian and Asian American singers. These relied on belief in the body as the site of both race and musical practice. When used to make meaning from Asian American performers, these moves could displace real histories with tropes of alienness and exotic orientality.

One common tool for this displacement was the rhetorical assimilation of Asian American vaudevillians to the category of the oriental, often by means of textual practices that were in one sense subtle but in another blatant. This was seen in a notice that a San Francisco bill would include “Tock and

Toy, Orientals of American birth, in songs and dancing.”16 Constructing their orientality with a nominal phrase (“Orientals of American birth”) set off with commas as simply apposite to their stage names, such matter-of-fact framing made these American performers’ exoticized status seem to be their natural condition. Along with performative aspects of some such acts, these moves tended to shift musicians’ perceived social locations away from roles too readily associated with domestic otherness (in such politically contested domains as those of offstage labor) and towards more safely distanced exotic human types associated with aestheticized orientality across the Pacific.

Illusions of Authenticity in American Vaudeville’s Asia

These kinds of racialization framed many performers in contexts populated by riotous numbers of other ethnic and racial representations. A closer look at some specific moments will show how orientality was situated in these ways.

One early Asian or Asian American musician who toured widely was a singer usually billed as Prince Lai Mon Kim.17 Many vaudeville performers worked with invented titles that bestowed upon them a kind of ethnicized royalty. These appellations’ use by performers of Asian heritage lent their personas an elite air akin to that of racialized royals dating back to literary and theatrical constructions of Pocahontas as an “Indian Princess” (Berkhofer 1979, 90–95). In general ways, this marketing practice played up racial novelty while suggesting elite status; in these instances, it also may have evoked the imagined and spatialized past (one still present) of an orient ruled by despots.

17. Presumably his family name was Lai; but absent certain evidence (and given the wild ways in which vaudevillians adopted stage names), this discussion uses his full name.
In the case of vaudeville’s Asian/American stage royalty, this broad literary and performative discourse intersected with a specific raciological tradition of staging difference as at once familiar and novel. By describing Lai Mon Kim as a “Chinese tenor” and presenting images of him in Chinese clothing, B. F. Keith’s circuit of vaudeville theaters traded on his Chinese heritage (and perhaps nationality) as a novel selling point. He sang a varied repertoire which was not limited to orientalist works (if it included them at all), but which did feature pieces advertised as “Chinese songs” along with operatic material and popular songs in English.

Because any distinction between Asian and Asian American performers is scarce in such vaudeville sources as advertisements, newspaper reviews, and theater programs, it is difficult to refer accurately to nationality or ethnicity when discussing these musicians. This is complicated further by the common use of partially or completely invented stage names, and by many performers’ fondness for publicity stunts and racial mimicry. But despite their potential for misreading, these media sources are useful for what they reveal about dominant ideas regarding musical orientality when it was embodied and envoiced in this less elevated context. Class distinctions of venue were not absolute in regard to where performers sang and how they were marketed (remember Haru Onuki’s billing as a Japanese prima donna for engagements on the Orpheum’s vaudeville stage and as Butterfly with the San Carlo Opera Company), but much of what went on in vaudeville was unlike anything in opera. Although many vaudevillians relied on the same,

18. For a press image, see “…at the Local Theaters,” San Francisco Daily News, 25 July 1914.
19. Other than the small number who became famous enough to merit inclusion in biographical reference works (e.g., Slide 1981, 1994).
set-piece shticks for years on end in a reiterative mode not unlike the repeated touring of such operas as *Madame Butterfly,* these theaters also provided a forum for a huge variety of more rapidly changing, less codified acts—at least for as long as any one of them could hold an audience, if not a moment more. Published traces of the careers of several such vaudevillians, beginning with Lai Mon Kim, ground these generalities in more historically specific ways.

In January of 1914 a vaudeville-column notice for Keith’s Bushwick Theatre in Brooklyn included a reference to “Prince Lai Mon Kim, Chinese tenor.” Keith’s advertisement listed “Prince Lai Mon Kim” as the eleventh of its “MIDWINTER JUBILEE 15 STAR FEATURES.” This was not the only opportunity for New York vaudeville fans to see an Asian performer that week; Keith’s Bronx Theatre was presenting “the great Asahi troupe of Japanese entertainers.” Among many other events promoted on the same page as the Bushwick bill were a talk by travel lecturer Burton Holmes (see Stoddard 1939), who was to speak at Carnegie Hall on “The New Manila,” and an appearance at Hammerstein’s by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle.

Also advertised was a spectatorial experience of mimetic Chinese orientality in a social setting engaged with Asian New Yorkers. This was a

23. Holmes toured nationally for years to lecture on countries including many in Asia, which at times he split into temporalized national halves; for two successive 1910 presentations in San Francisco, he spoke on “New Japan” and “Old Japan” (Garrick Theater, “Burton Holmes Travelogues” [advertisement], *San Francisco Chronicle,* 6 April 1910). As the nation’s premier ballroom dancing couple (see Chapter 7), the Castles—he born in England, she in the United States—afforded European Americans an elegant spectacle of consummately cultivated grace framed in the unmarked racial terms of the tacitly white body, even when dancing to James Reese Europe’s Syncopated Society Orchestra, comprised of African American and Puerto Rican musicians (Sanjek and Sanjek 1990, 13).
“special Oriental matinee” of Percy MacKaye’s play *A Thousand Years Ago*, for which the box seats were to be “occupied by the leading Chinese and Japanese officials and merchants of New York.”24 A later account conveys the play of real and mimetic Chineseness that event offered as part of Lai Mon Kim’s metropolitan context. The article’s prominent mention of the play’s millennial title seems also to push the afternoon’s orientalized goings-on far back in time, suggesting to its readers that to pass through the doors of the Shubert that day was to step into a small (and safely contained) moment of the past, fleetingly restored to life and transplanted to midtown New York:

The “Oriental matinée” of “A Thousand Years Ago” took place at the Shubert Theatre yesterday afternoon with fifty Chinese women and children attending the performance in addition to the Chinese Consul and the members of his staff. After the performance 200 people gathered on the stage for a reception which was held in an Oriental manner. The menu consisted of Chinese dishes and tea. Among the special guests were Geraldine Farrar, Ruth St. Denis, in Chinese costume; Percy Mackaye, author of the play, and the Chinese Consul, Y. Y. Yang.25

After attending this show (and mingling with the preeminent American singer of *Madame Butterfly*, the nation’s most famous orientalist dancer, the city’s chief Chinese diplomat, and a large number of “Chinese [American?] women and children”), there still would have been time for a hypothetical audience member to hop over to Brooklyn and catch Lai Mon Kim’s late set of songs in Chinese and English, probably sung in costume as well.

About a month after this, Lai Mon Kim appeared at West Coast venues on Keith’s Orpheum circuit. A San Francisco newspaper’s theater listings for the first week of March, 1914 ended with this note:

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Prince Lai Mon Kim, the Chinese graduate of the universities of Oregon and Washington, has been given an Orpheum circuit route. Kim is said to be the only oriental with a complete understanding of occidental music.26 That summer he performed across the bay at the Oakland Orpheum as well.

A program from that theater described him as “Prince Lai Mon Kim / The Noted Chinese Tenor.”27 He also continued to sing at the San Francisco Orpheum, and a listing for that venue described his act in this way:

Prince Lai Mon Kim, the noted Chinese tenor, is one of the verry [sic] few Orientals gifted with an appreciation of Occidental music and a voice which enables him to do it full justice. Lai Mon Kim sings principally in English using a program which ranges from grand opera to popular numbers and includes many favorite ballads.28

Another note for that engagement stated that “Prince Lai Mon Kim, Chinese tenor, will sing a program of Chinese and English songs. He includes the famous grand opera arias.”29 This San Francisco run lasted at least into early August, after which he seems to have returned to the road to play other Keith houses; by early October, he was at the Orpheum in Omaha, Nebraska.30

By singing “Chinese and English songs” as well as “famous grand opera arias,” Lai Mon Kim positioned himself (or perhaps was positioned by his managers and presenters) in a way which straddled distinctions seen in some other singers’ careers. Another notice for his San Francisco engagement also positioned him as an ostensibly rare example of a person of Asian heritage

26. Theatrical column [title unseen], San Francisco Call & Post, 28 February 1914. The column’s listings for other theaters included “Harry Lauder, the Scotch comedian,” performing dialect songs; “Erno Rapee, the Hungarian court pianist”; and Charles Judel as “an Italian tenor who has lost his voice.” Rapée is now best known for his work with film music (see Chapter 10).
who was able to sing “occidental” songs due to exceptional talent. Its nearly verbatim correspondence to the quotation above also shows how theatrical columns often ran presenters’ texts with little or no editorial intervention:

Prince Lai Mon Kim, the noted Chinese tenor, is one of the very few orientals gifted with an appreciation of occidental music and a voice which enables him to do it justice. Lai Mon Kim sings principally in English, using a program which ranges from grand opera to popular numbers and includes many favorite ballads. His rendition of Chinese songs is vastly entertaining.31

This marketing hyperbole’s emphasis on his near-singularity located most “orientals” as people whose musicality was not only alien but inferior. This rhetorical effect was seen also in accounts of Miura and Asai as members of an exceptionally talented few. In one sense, such notices constructed Lai Mon Kim as an occupant of a shared discursive space with Miura and Asai. But while separate newspaper accounts broadly construed all three performers as musically exceptional orientals (as a vocally gifted model minority within Asian America), there were key differences among their practices and press.

Although Miura did not sing only orientalist music, her defining public role was that of Puccini’s “Butterfly” and its relatives; conversely, Asai seems to have shunned or been uninterested in orientalist song. Lai Mon Kim, however, performed pieces that spanned “Chinese” and non-orientalist U.S. songs, and encompassed highbrow operatic arias as well as more popular material, in a way reminiscent of Haru Onuki’s blurring of distinctions between high and low repertoires of music that one might imagine to have belonged exclusively to one performance context. If his publicity photographs are any indication, he did this in Chinese clothing. This wrapping in national costume had common ground with Miura’s kimono-clad embodiment of

Butterfly insofar as it encouraged listeners to believe they were hearing authentic orientality; but in another sense it was different. Lai Mon Kim was not singing a stock orientalist role. Rather, as mentioned above, he was singing “principally in English using a program which ranges from grand opera to popular numbers and includes many favorite ballads.”32

In combination with Asian/American singers’ racialized novelty, this mingling of high and low had distinct marketing potential. A notice for Lai Mon Kim played up the novel interest of his apparent disjuncture of genre, venue, and ascribed identity: “Prince Lai Mon Kim, the celebrated Chinese tenor, will sing a program of Chinese and English songs. In his extensive repertoire he even includes the famous grand opera arias.”33 Onuki’s material for vaudeville engagements often was described in parallel terms; one announcement stated: “Haruko Onuki, the dainty little Japanese prima donna who scored such a success during her previous engagement at the Orpheum, will be heard in a repertoire of English and Japanese songs….34 However, unlike recurrent references to Onuki as “dainty” or “little” in conjunction with her Japaneseness, the reception of this 1914 performance by Lai Mon Kim offered less compartmentalizing words of approval. A critic reported that “Prince Lai Mon Kim, the Chinese tenor, sprang into instant fame with several popular selections. His voice is exceptionally clear and his personality charming.”35 As did Asai’s selected review excerpts, such items could frame a singer with a stock orientalizing phrase, but then proceed to a less raciological assessment of vocal quality and stage manner without describing his body.

33. “Orpheum” [theatrical column listing], San Francisco Call & Post, 25 July 1914.
34. “Musical Farce for Orpheum,” San Francisco Call & Post, 4 April 1918.
35. “Orpheum” [theatrical column review], San Francisco Call & Post, 27 July 1914.
The national presence of Asian and Asian American performers—and orientalist acts—in vaudeville may be seen in a two-page listing in *Variety*, the entertainment business magazine, of performers scheduled to appear across the United States and Canada in theaters on major vaudeville circuits for that October week in 1914.36 Among its many venues and acts, the list included:

- NYC, Proctor’s 58th St.: “Dream of Orient”
- NYC, Proctor’s 23rd St.: “Dream of Orient”
- Boston, St. James (Loew’s circuit): Japanese Prince
- Boston, Orpheum (Loew’s circuit): Japanese Prince
- Chicago, Star (Loew’s circuit): Asaki
- Duluth, Orpheum: Asahi 5
- Milwaukee, Majestic (Orpheum circuit): Princess Radjah
- New Orleans, Orpheum: Kajiyama
- Oakland, Orpheum: Harry Tsuda
- Omaha, Orpheum: Lai Mon Kim
- Pittsburgh, Harris (U.B.O.): Ah Ling Foo
- Portchester (NY), Proctor’s: Lung Tchang Yuen
- Toronto, Shea’s (U.B.O.): “Pekin Mysteries”
- Toronto, Yonge St. (Loew’s circuit): Pekinese Troupe
- Wilmington (DE), Dockstader (U.B.O.): Chung Hwa 4

In addition to these acts were many performers billed under the rubrics of other ethnicities, such as the “Slayman Ali Arabs” in St. Paul and “Alisky’s Hawaiians” in British Columbia. Some performers listed above were white Americans acting orientalist parts (Princess Radjah’s Indian persona, for example), but many were “authentic” by the standards of the time in that their stage names were consistent with their heritage.

This was seen in the idea of genuine Arab acrobats. Popular songs told of importing performers from an Arab homeland, a place which included the Egypt of a dancer one song addressed in the voice of an American impresario: “Sunburned Salome, Sunburned Salome, Pack your grip and take a trip, With me across the foam; Don’t put on your shoes and stockings, Leave your clothes at home, And you’ll top the bill in Vaudeville My Sunburned Salome.”³⁷ Al Jolson noted the U.S. presence of “Arab” performers in a 1912 song; “That eastern stuff is all a bluff, and I think your mind is growing dim,” it asserted, as well as “Those Arab boys, had some joys years ago upon their Eastern flat, Now they’re passé, in the way, ev’ry one is just an acrobat.”³⁸

According to one writer, such performers elicited scant response in the streets of Manhattan in 1912. While probably hyperbolic in some ways, the account suggests how authenticated representatives of another ethnicity could spill beyond the walls of U.S. theaters. The article told of Sie Hassan Ben Ali, who was born in Morocco and had become a naturalized U.S. citizen:

He came to this country twenty-six years ago as manager of a troupe of Berber acrobats, brought over to appear with Forepaugh’s & Sells Bros.’ Circus. He liked this country so well that when the troupe went back the following year he stayed to learn more of this wonderful land. To-day he is wealthy, and he has brought to this country almost five hundred Berber performers, whom he has booked with circuses, shows, parks, fairs, and in vaudeville. He has long ceased to perform himself, but his gymnasiuums in Tangier turn out from ten to thirty boys each year, and they go into the various troupes which Hassan controls in all parts of the world.

There is probably no one in New York who has not seen, particularly this year, groups of these Arabs or Berbers going about the streets, or crossing crowded Times Square, as unconcernedly as though they were in their native Tangier. Hassan has almost a hundred of them now in this country, and fifty of them are in New York appearing in the Hippodrome, “The Garden of Allah,” and “Kismet.” They are dressed in native costume, modified to suit climatic

conditions. Most of them wear the cloaks, fezzes, turbans and the baggy trousers peculiar to Morocco, with shoes and stockings, or putters and shirts and collars of American manufacture. But the Berbers at the Century Theatre scorn any compromise with American dress, and during the coldest weather can be seen on Broadway with bare legs, their feet thrust into the yellow leather slippers that they use on the burning sands of the desert. The sight of them is so common so as to excite no more than passing comment.39

This movement of human objects of spectacle outwards from the theater was seen as well in the trope of “natives” in metropolitan streets. For example, a photograph of Native American performers booked at the Hippodrome showed them enjoying an automobile tour of New York City.40 This played to a belief in modern (white) cosmopolitans and primitive (non-white) natives as human categories that could be juxtaposed for amusement on or off stage.

Raciological spectatorship imposed constraints on vaudevillians of Asian heritage, but it also occasionally afforded paradoxically flexible opportunities within the bounds of that orientality. Some Asian American musicians used orientalist notions of Chinese and Japanese interchangeability by taking names from whichever national pool was more marketable at a particular moment. This voluntary movement between names identified with particular national or ethnic origins is seen in one of Nisei singer and dancer Dorothy Takahashi’s monikers; she worked as a ballroom dancer with her Chinese American husband, Tony Wing, in a duo billed as Toy & Wing.41

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41. Yoshida (1997, 109). In Yankee Dawg You Die, a play which deals with issues faced by Asian American performers confronting dominant representations and expectations, Philip Kan Gotanda invokes Takahashi (P. Gotanda 1995). This renaming practice was common in the 1940s, when some Japanese American performers realistically saw their names as a career liability. Sometimes larger political contexts converged with local incentives. Actor Jack Soo
Beyond performers’ strategic moves, vaudeville more generally blurred together Chineseness and Japaneseness. An article on a Delaware revue that featured many Asian American musicians illustrates this generic conflation:

East and west do blend in Lyons, Seabury and Garson’s elaborate revue, “Ching-a-Ling.” Under the guidance of William Collier, who acted as a sort of “godfather” for the collection of Orientals, they put on a most artistic modern revue here Jan. 13. So far as scenic effect, costumes, and taste in colors, it was one of the most beautiful shows that has ever been shown at the Playhouse.

At midnight, when every one of the thirty-five acts, scenes, sketches and what not had been presented, pretty Japanese and Chinese girls served rice cakes and tea.

While the Orientals performed creditably in dancing, singing and comedy sketches with American and even Spanish backgrounds, they seemed more the artists in the sketches from their own corner of the world. Even the girls, most of them pretty in their Japanese or Chinese way, danced better and seemed more natural, when in Oriental costumes. The dramatic travesties, such as the Chinese idea of Chicago gunmen, the Chinese way of producing “Abie’s Irish Rose,” were all well written, well acted and good laugh producers.

The outstanding features, aside from the general humor lent by Mr. Collier, were the Chinese wedding in which the song “Ching-a-Ling,” from which the play gets its name, is sung very well; the Japanese Toy Shop, in which little Phyllis Kono won the hearts of all; the “Island of Java” with its exotic scenery and atmosphere that seemed to put the Asiatic dancers at ease; “Riveting,” a dramatic sketch in which Mr. Collier takes the leading role; “Chopstick Blues” and an acrobatic act by the three Meyakos.

... “What Price Vanity,” one of the most elaborately staged of the sketches, brings out some rather clever pantomime acting from Hatsu Kuma, Japanese. It was written by Arthur S. Lyons. The travesty on “Abie’s Irish Rose,” in Chinese dramatic style, with the burlesque falling on the traditional property man, was one of the best of the sketches. In this act the Orientals were in their own field and they showed it. Michio Ito, a Japanese actor, well known in this country, took the part of the property man well. Jue So Tai, and Yuji Ito, sang “Ching-a-Ling” well in the elaborate wedding sketch. (Miss) Jue So Tai, with the little Jap “Kiddie” Phyllis Kono, in the “Japanese Toy Shop,” sang “Doll from Japan” very appealingly. The pantomime dancers were well liked.

was born Goro Suzuki in Oakland, California; but when working in Ohio as a singer in a Chinese club after his release from the Topaz concentration camp, he “was advised by the owner to change his name to ‘Soo’; the other employees were told that he couldn’t speak Chinese because he came from Iowa” (Niiya 1993, 321).
Miss Hatsu Kuma, who has a very fine voice, sang “Draggin’ the Dragon Drag,” with zest. The dancing in this sketch was novel and colorful, and in keeping with the Oriental style. A drop brought a huge dragon, with gleaming eyes, in the background. The dancers came through the huge mouth with splendid effect.

The scenery with a different set or drop for nearly every one of the sketches was probably as elaborate as any seen here. The costumes were also gorgeous, particularly those of the Orient. The lyrics were written by Roy Turk to the tuneful melodies of Arthur Johnston. Max Sheck and Michio Ito are responsible for the ensemblings and dances.42

Despite the revue’s manic play with diverse stereotypes and the reviewer’s distinction between performers of Japanese and Chinese descent, the show presented a less differentiated orientality—one passed along to readers by the review’s language of “the Orientals,” “the Oriental style,” and so on. Its mention of “the Chinese way of producing ‘Abie’s Irish Rose’” documents a kind of representational layering whereby Asian American performers, who often indexed a comparatively low social status, could play European ethnic types as less-low identities susceptible to parody from further below. Such interethnic mimesis also was tractable to less parodic uses, as seen in the Los Angeles billing of singer Sam Lohk as “The McCormack of China” in 1932.43

Returning to Lai Mon Kim, many years’ memories of experiencing these kinds of staged oriental authenticity gave some white Americans a long-term interpretive frame to use when listening to Asian American singers. Other performers of Asian heritage long had gone from town to town for weekly

42. “Plays Out of Town: Ching-a-Ling,” clipping from unidentified San Francisco newspaper; the clipping does not indicate the production’s year, but its cast and material overlap with those of a 1923 presentation of Ed Wynn’s The Perfect Fool. That show presented “Something in Lacquer” by performers including Florence, Esther, and George Meyako, and it staged “The Test of Perfumes” as “A bridal custom of Javanese royalty” (“Ed Wynn: The Perfect Fool” [playbill], San Francisco: Curran Theatre, two weeks beginning 26 November 1923). This similarity suggests a date in the early 1920s for the Delaware production.

43. “Grauman’s Chinese Theater” [program], Los Angeles, week beginning 9 September 1932. The show also presented Paul Jue as “The Dancing Laundry Man.”
engagements offering vaudeville audiences spectatorial knowledge of this imaginary quality. Many of these acts framed the body as a racial novelty capable of extraordinary things. Vaudeville theaters presented such acrobats, jugglers, equilibrists, magicians, and other wonder-workers more often than primarily musical acts marked as “Japanese” or “Chinese.” Aside from Lai Mon Kim, most of the 1914 Variety list’s performers with Asian personal or ensemble names were not billed as musicians. These performances still encouraged spectatorship similar to that fostered by the framing of singers as Chinese or Japanese by advertising, playbill descriptions, and costumes.

Marked in his publicity and in the programs in his audiences’ hands as “the Chinese tenor” (and probably wearing Chinese clothes), Lai Mon Kim sang in this long-term context as well as in immediate juxtaposition with other acts on the same bills. White Americans could hear his singing of diverse songs as evidence of an oriental miracle, one for which the initial sight of an Asian body offered a foundation for a voice singing a surprisingly non-Asian repertoire. Lai Mon Kim’s body provided the initial term for this apparent wonder-by-disjuncture, one based on cognitive dissonance between information entering the eyes and ears of listeners predisposed to think of people singing only music positioned as their own. When Lai Mon Kim did sing Chinese songs, many listeners probably heard him as singing his own identity. In these ways, audiences could hear him as a miraculous musical contradiction and a categorical novelty. Both interpretations, by contrast or plain reinscription, could reinforce a belief in his embodied orientality.

A few notes on several other performers in the Variety list will illustrate some further aspects of Asian American performance in vaudeville. The
“Asaki” in Chicago may have been a novelty performer billed earlier in 1914 for an Oakland engagement as “ASAKI, the Juggling Jap, on Roller Skates.”

The Asahi troupe had presented acrobatic feats and other wonders since at least 1910. In 1914 the centerpiece of their act was described in ways such as this: “Three men and three women offer a series of feats which include the water trick in which they extract streams of water from the air without the slightest apparent supply.”

The Asaki and Asahi acts were part of a vaudeville subgenre of Japanese acrobats, jugglers, and magicians. Long a recognized category of performers, the many and various groups billed in these ways also included such ensembles as the Araki Troupe (fig. 3.2).

“Kajiyama” was Tameo Kajiyama, who wrote with two hands in forwards, backwards, right-side-up, up-side-down, and mirrored script at least into 1922. He was billed in such terms as “the ambidextrous Japanese writing marvel, in his extraordinary demonstration of mental alertness and manual dexterity.”

A 1914 review of a San Francisco bill gave him pride of place as the topic of its striking title, “‘Double Brained’ Jap at Orpheum”; the article told of his act in language that now evokes other forms of doubleness:

Kajiyama is billed as “the ambidextrous Japanese handwriting marvel in a caligraphic exhibition of phycological interest.” He writes on a blackboard with both hands at once and caused a ripple of astonishment by writing with his hands behind his back and with his face to the audience. The new vaudeville sensation is gifted, it is said, with a “double brain,” allowing him to direct two different trains of thought at the same time.

44. “Oakland Orpheum” [advertisement], San Francisco Daily News, 29 January 1914.
45. Advertisement for following week in “Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco: Orpheum Theater, week beginning 6 November 1910.
47. “Orpheum Theater” [playbill], San Francisco: Orpheum Theater, week beginning 14 June 1914; “Pantages: Week Nov. 11th” [advertisement], San Francisco Examiner, 12 November 1922.
49. “‘Double Brained’ Jap at Orpheum,” San Francisco Call & Post, 15 June 1914.
Interpreting this as an allusion to double consciousness in the DuBoisean sense would be a stretch, but it is suggestive to read it in that ahistorical way.

Harry Tsuda was an acrobat active in vaudeville from at least 1910 through 1916. He may have been the same performer as one who worked in 1901 at Keith’s theater in New York City, where a vaudevillian was described as “Little Tsuda”—perhaps a stage name as a child. The “Pekinese Troupe” had played in San Francisco as the “Imperial Pekinese troupe of Chinese conjurers, magicians and acrobats.” An advertisement billed them as the “Six Chinese Wonders.” Many performances of acrobatics, juggling, and so on were well-received; for example, “Kimso, the Japanese juggler” had been “loudly applauded for his marvelous feats” in a 1905 vaudeville show.

Many performers who were not chiefly musicians included music in their acts. The Pekinese Troupe’s contact person was magician Long Tack Sam, who led groups well into vaudeville’s later years. His performances often featured magic (fig. 3.3) and music, as illustrated by a 1927 notice:

Two vaudeville headliners, Long Tack Sam and The Original Cansinos, will head the new bill starting at the Golden Gate Theater Saturday.

Assisting Long Tack Sam, China’s master wonder worker, will be the Misses Mi-Na and Nee Sa Long, China’s two beautiful girls. The trio will present a medley of Oriental feats, including dancing, singing, magic and contortions.

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Presumably based closely on a press release, this language was much like that used a year later in a program to foreground the troupe’s Chineseness: “LONG TACK SAM AND COMPANY / Famous Chinese Wonder Workers / Just Returned from a World Tour / Supported by his clever daughters / MINA AND NEESA LONG / China’s Most Beautiful Girls.” Neesa (more often Nee Sa) Long was sufficiently popular for her photograph to appear on sheet music covers. Often a single cover appeared with the same art but different performers’ photographs, reflecting the mutual marketing efforts of vaudeville singers and music publishers (Sanjek and Sanjek 1990, 16–17). Although these pieces were non-orientalist songs and Nee Sa Long’s image was literally interchangeable with those of white performers, her costume marked her as oriental. In performance with Long Tack Sam’s “Chinese Wonder Workers,” her voice came from a body readily seen as authentically Chinese. As in the case of Lai Mon Kim, these kinds of framing encouraged people to hear her renditions of such songs as vocal enactments of her own apparent self-contradiction—one which existed only in the minds of many of her listeners, since she was in all likelihood Chinese American.

Many Asian American singers appeared on music covers. The Imperial Chinese Duo (or Trio) often featured Tang Cheong, who appeared on the cover of a wartime song (fig. 3.4). Billed for a 1916 show as “D’Avigneau’s Imperial Chinese Trio, Featuring Tang Cheong, the World’s Greatest Celestial Baritone,” the ensemble presented “Classical and Popular Vocal and

57. “Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco: Orpheum Theater, 27 April 1928.
59. His image appeared on other pieces as well, including “Keep Your Eye on the Girlie You Love” (Ira Schuster, Howard Johnson, and Alex Gerber, New York: Leo. Feist, 1916).
Instrumental Selections.”60 They appeared without Tang Cheong in a 1917 performance at San Francisco’s Orpheum (where Haru Onuki also repeatedly appeared that year), which advertised the duo as consisting of Kwong Chang, the “World’s Greatest Celestial Singer,” and Fook Luk (usually Lok), the “Chinese Pianist and Ragtime King.”61 One notice stressed their typical Chineseness: “D’Avigneau’s Chinese duo, consisting of Kwong Chang, who plays the piano like a cabaret star and looks like a real Chinaman, and ‘Fook Lok,’ who may be Chinese and is made up like one, but who sings with a suspiciously Italian grace and fervor, are highly successful.”62

Another group was a Chinese American vocal quartet called the Chung Hwa Comedy Four or Chung Hwa Chinese Four as early as 1913, and by 1917 simply the Chung Hwa Four.63 Later becoming the Chung Hwa Three, their photograph was reproduced on several non-orientalist songs (e.g., fig. 3.5).64

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61. “Orpheum” [advertisement], San Francisco Examiner, 16 September 1917; “Warfield” [theatrical listing], San Francisco Call & Post, 1 August 1923; “Entertainment of High Order…,” San Francisco Call & Post, 17 September 1917. For a photo, see some versions of “I’ll Come Back to You When It’s All Over” (Kerry Mills and L. Brown, New York: Leo Feist, 1917).
62. “Entertainment of High Order…,” San Francisco Call & Post, 17 September 1917. The notice apparently mixed up their roles as singer and pianist, which appear elsewhere in reverse.
63. “Orpheum” [theatrical note], San Francisco Bulletin, 8 November 1913; “In Vaudeville and Other Playhouses,” New York Times, 31 May 1914; “Orpheum” [advertisement], San Francisco Call & Post, 21 April 1917. Because in its time the group’s name usually seems to have been spelled with “Hwa” rather than “Wah,” the former is used here.
64. Al Dubin, Fred Rath, and Joe Garren, “Just a Girl That Men Forget,” New York: Jack Mills, 1923. Other covers include “Melinda’s Wedding Day” (Al Piantadosi, Joe McCarthy, and Joe Goodwin, New York: Leo Feist, 1913); “The Curse of an Aching Heart “ (Al Piantadosi and Henry Fink, New York: Leo Feist, 1913); and “It’s a Man, Ev’ry Time, It’s a Man” (Al Dubin, Fred Rath and Joe Garren, New York: Jack Mills, 1923). This study uses “Chung Hwa Four” to refer to all of the group’s manifestations; sources found to date do not indicate major changes in how they performed as the Chung Hwa Three. Krystyn Moon (2002, 354–60) has presented biographical details regarding the group; the following account focuses on a few aspects of their interaction with dominant U.S. contexts of performance and reception.
A 1917 Brooklyn program billed them as “China’s Only ‘Quartette’ of Harmony,” using the stock practice of asserting unique status for singers of Asian descent (one seen a decade earlier in Boston listings for “The Find of the Season / LEE TUNG FOO / The Only Chinese Vocalist in Vaudeville / A Remarkable Baritone Balladist” and “Allee Samee Melican Man’ / LEE TUNG FOO / The Chinese Baritone”).65 Other listings billed the group as “Chinese exponents of comedy and song” and “the only singing Chinese quartet in vaudeville.”66 Their repertoire consisted in large part of racially unmarked popular songs, alluded to as “an interesting offering of their own creation” or “new and popular numbers.”67 It would have been surprising in this context if they sang no orientalist songs (which they did, as shall become clear); but most promotional notices did not mention this as a defining part of their act.

This is in some ways analogous to Asai’s concentration on a standard European oratorio repertoire. Both bodies of song drew from a pool of music unmarked by orientalist gestures and sung widely by white performers; but the effects of vaudeville audiences’ hunger for ethnic novelty may be seen in the Chung Hwa Four’s costuming and textual presentation, which played to an orientalist taste—one that was not the sole focus of their actual singing. This was an effective marketing choice in a business ruled by an unremitting desire for the new and an equally strong attraction to staged versions of stock character types. The Chung Hwa Four’s promotion as Chinese satisfied the

latter urge, while their changing selection of popular songs kept their act fresh. This could offer a sort of representational split between the body and the voice. While their Asian faces and Chinese costumes provided visual evidence for white audiences to interpret as signifying physically authentic orientality, their voices apparently sang ever new and often non-orientalist songs. This response to vaudeville audiences’ demands for timeless racial essence and ever-changing novelty led to a performance practice situated in a sense between those of Miura and Asai: one playing to notions of an unassimilated—and thus supposedly authentic—oriental body, but a body nonetheless capable of producing a thoroughly assimilated American voice.

While true in a way, however, this comparison is not entirely accurate. The reasons for this illustrate how dominant media representations of these performers could steer the racial meanings white Americans made from their acts, or just from reading about them. Contemporary published traces of the Chung Hwa Four suggest a fairly static juxtaposition of embodied orientalist authenticity and non-orientalist song; but in fact, these musicians played in quite conscious ways with their audiences’ raciological expectations. This performative dynamic is not evident from most of their press. Fortunately, though, it is clear from a tremendously useful interview conducted when many people who had been active in vaudeville in the 1910s were still alive.

Diane Mei Lin Mark and Ginger Chih interviewed Hugh Liang for *A Place Called Chinese America*, which includes oral-history remembrances from this member of the Chung Hwa Four. Shared with Mark and Chih in a 1979 interview, Liang’s personal—and entertaining, in the lively spirit of an ex-vaudevillian raconteur—account provides an illuminating counterpart to
contemporary traces of the group’s performances. As a rare published version of an Asian American vaudevillian’s recollections of his performances and reception in the mid-teens, Liang’s story lends fresh perspective to dominant media representations.68 Mark and Chih introduce his tale in this way:

A few Chinese artists, writers and performers used their culture to advantage, their popularity based on the presentation of an image the wider American public had come to expect. They often did their Confucius-say routine tongue-in-cheek, as was the case of Hugh Liang and the Chung Wah [sic] Four barbershop quartet. In 1912 Liang was a student at the University of California at Berkeley when he was asked to join the first Chinese barbershop quartet and tour vaudeville:

_We played all around San Francisco and finally, we made the trip to Honolulu—to the Liberty Theater. When we came back, the manager thought we would be a big hit on Broadway so he took us to New York . . . When we got to New York, nobody would believe it. They all said, ‘We’ve never heard one Chinaman sing in key, how’re you going to get four Chinamen in harmony?’ They told us to get out of here. They wouldn’t listen to him._

_So, finally, one Irish manager said, ‘I’ll take you on. . . . I’ll give you a contract for one week at Buffalo. I know it’ll be a failure but I’ll take a chance. One week and then you’ll take your Chinese back to San Francisco.’_

_So, anyway, we went up to Buffalo and you know to our big surprise and to everybody else’s surprise, we were a big hit. ‘Big time,’ they called it. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘They stopped the show! Nobody could follow them!’ We started with a Chinese song, ‘The Song of the Lily,’ . . . We made a joke, saying ‘When we come to the chorus, we would like everyone to join in.’ Naturally, no one came in. We didn’t even know ourselves if there was a chorus. After the song everyone laughed . . . and then we said, ‘Gee, maybe you don’t like Chinese songs. We’ll sing you something American, maybe you’ll like better.’_

_The lights dimmed out and . . . I tell you, you could hear a pin drop because it was such a shocking surprise to hear the change from the ‘crazy Chinese song’ to the harmony in the ‘Chinese Blues.’ . . . After the song, the house just came down. My goodness, they never dreamed that Chinese could sing like that. From then on, it was a cinch. . . . It was easy sailing for 14 years. We played in America and Canada as the first and only Chinese quartet in the world. So that’s it._

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68. This counter-narrative is further enriched by a personal history based on interviews with Liang and published by Thomas Chinn several years after Liang’s death in 1984; that account is worth consulting for a vivid sense of his career and of such moments of interethnic play as a 1912 performance in which his ensemble offered a “Chinese dance” and a vaudeville act before proceeding to their finale, a “Scottish Highland Fling” in which one of Liang’s fellow performers almost lost his kilt on stage (Chinn 1989, 197–205). The story (re-) presented here is found in Mark and Chih (1982, 89–90; italics and ellipses in source).
Liang’s account shows that the group toyed strategically with their audiences’ expectations by making their Chineseness visible and setting up the house musically with a Chinese song as aural corroboration of their foreignness. They then pulled the rug out from under their listeners’ presuppositions with a song in utterly familiar harmony of a close “barbershop” variety. The fact that it was a “Chinese Blues” (the title of several works), not an unmarked piece such as “Sweet Adeline,” offered further grounds for confusion. In the confounding moment of this performative turn, these singers transformed their bodies from visible signs of timeless racial authenticity to suddenly and stunningly incongruous vessels for sweetly assimilated American voices.

For many in attendance, the particular genre with which the Chung Hwa Four executed this turnabout must have rendered it especially disorienting. Many people heard barbershop singing as the sweetest harmony to be heard outside of heaven, and Chinese music as the antithesis of all harmony, earthly or otherwise. This cheerful subversion of dominant expectations played well to their audiences. In true vaudeville style, it seems to have been a running gag which continued to entertain over the years. While it is unclear whether the group pulled exactly this same setup and switch throughout their career, it is likely that they continued to present conscious bodily and vocal play with audiences’ presumptions about how Chinese orientality looked and sounded. The Chung Hwa Four were not alone in making such moves. Lai Mon Kim’s tractability to being heard raciologically as a miraculous contradiction or an authentic novelty must have offered similar performative opportunities.69

69. And other possible, or even likely, contexts for undocumented moments of these sorts abound. As one other vaudevillian example among many, a listing for New York’s Palace Theater stated that “De Fun Gue and Harry Haw, products of Manchuria” would sing “English and Chinese songs” (“For Vaudeville’s Patrons,” New York Times, 25 January 1914).
The Chung Hwa Four’s strategic play with dominant expectations of a correspondence between bodily appearance and vocal sound also had less intentionally performative counterparts in social interactions outside the theater. A 1913 article on “The New Women of Japan” related an anecdote of white Americans’ surprise in an offstage situation. The writer represented Japanese-born, American-educated Ume Tsuda as an exemplary westernized (but still essentially Japanese) woman in ways which foreshadowed accounts of Miura even as it evoked perceived disjunctures of voice and body, which were central to the Chung Hwa Four in the different domain of vaudeville:

Coming to America when she was seven years old as one of five little girls sent by the Japanese Government to receive foreign education—the first to leave their country—she spent ten years in Washington. During those years she acquired a knowledge of English and an accuracy and precision of speech that put most Americans to shame. The writer well remembers the start of surprise with which strangers who heard her voice and turned to see the speaker found a foreigner using this exquisite English.70

This shows how some modes of musical reception were related to less formal spectatorship and interactions. Film star Anna May Wong began a serialized memoir with an indignant critique of similar observations: “A lot of people, when they first meet me, are surprised that I speak and write English without any difficulty. But why shouldn’t I? I was born right here in Los Angeles and went to the public schools here. I speak English without any accent at all.” The way in which she then reiterated this point betrayed an assumption that real (unmarked) Americans are white, a powerful belief that insinuated itself even into her oppositional account: “…my parents complain that I speak with an American accent, while on the other hand, Americans are constantly being

70. “The New Women of Japan,” The Outlook, 30 August 1913, 977–79, this at 977.
surprised when they meet me, because I speak English without a trace of the
sing-song Chinese accent.”71

Tsuda’s and Wong’s tales recount a widely reenacted moment of audibly
contradicted racial assumptions, one played out in vaudeville and daily life.
The sense of revelation and approving astonishment elicited by the Chung
Hwa Four is reinscribed to this day by some white Americans to strangers
whose features strike them as Asian. With blithe disregard for the idea that
such a face could belong to someone as American as they themselves, the
statement consists of variations on: “Why, your English is so good!” Despite
the friendly intentions which motivate it, this troubling praise is based on a
raciological belief in the alienness of people of Asian heritage in the United
States. That belief motivates the first comment’s equally frequent precursor—
the question “Where are you from?” As poet Janice Mirikitani has written:

There are people
who admire
the aesthetics
of our traditions.

And ask politely,
Where are you from?

Lodi
Minneapolis
Chicago
Gilroy
South Bend
Tule Lake
San Francisco
New York
L.A.

71. The quotations are from Anna May Wong’s “The True Life Story of a Chinese Girl,”
parts 1 and 2, as republished on the Silents Majority web site with source citations to the
magazine Pictures, August and September 1926 (not seen for this study); URLs for those
republished versions are http://www.mdle.com/ClassicFilms/FetauredStar/star49e1.html
and http://www.mdle.com/ClassicFilms/FetauredStar/star49e2.html. Some recent works
on Anna May Wong’s life, career, and popular reception are cited in the previous chapter.
They persist and ask again.

Compliment our command of the English language.72

In their recourse to an equivalence of bodily appearance with identity and a perceived disjuncture between a body made foreign and a voice heard as assimilated to an English-speaking U.S. norm, these utterances give voice to the same assumptions which underlaid many white Americans’ earlier responses to orientalized singers in vaudeville and other musical venues.

In all of these domains, the same ideas linked bodily appearance to expectations about inner personal attributes, and to belief in the voice as an audible sign of those less visible characteristics. The anecdote about white Americans’ off-the-cuff responses to Tsuda shows how monolithically these orientalist ideas about the body could be applied (to Japanese-born students resident in the United States or to Chinese Californian vaudevillians), and it suggests the social power of stage acts that were open to such interpretation. In the teens, few white Americans would have met or overheard Tsuda or her similarly situated peers; but much of the U.S. population could go out to hear musicians including Japanese sopranos with touring opera companies, recital singers such as Tomijiro Asai, and especially vaudevillians such as the Chung Hwa Four. Although these musicians articulated their diverse repertoires, performance practices, costumes, and publicity tactics to dominant expectations in highly varied ways, many white Americans heard them all as singing an authentic orientality.

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72. These lines begin the poem “American Geisha,” all of which is germane to this topic (Mirikitani 1987, 21–26).
Against this shared baseline, however, these performers’ reception could differ, perhaps especially when guided by tropes of authentication (Japanese Butterflies), assimilation (Asai), or gleeful subversion (the Chung Hwa Four). These frames could coexist in ways which located performance as polysemic representation. This was seen in tales of Japanese sopranos as both authentic Butterflies and signs of progress towards an Americanized New Japanese Womanhood. If butted up against one another in a logical way, these multiple interpretations would have produced contradictory understandings of what these singers signified; but many people seem to have viewed these moments’ surfeit of available meanings as offering an array of options for individual response. The degree to which any one person followed these leads was contingent on individual predispositions towards contending views about music and race, and it could vary widely even for any one performance.

Liang’s first-hand reminiscence interjects into this chapter the element of performers’ strategic, in-the-moment play with the interpretive frames their audiences could glean from publicity materials, programs, and ideas about oriental difference. This complicates in a useful way our sense of how white Americans may have made meaning from the Chung Hwa Four. It also serves as a useful warning about the uncertainties of an analysis of reception history based on published sources. Since reliance on such documents often is the only option in studies of popular reception too far in the past for interviews to be useful, many of this study’s interpretations are necessarily speculative (and are framed as such). This returns us to the point that reception involves heterogeneous processes of constructing meaning. Rather than seeking a single canonical significance in a practice, act, or text, it is more useful to
elucidate some of the various meanings which audience members could hear and see in it—but without supposing that to do so exhausts or delimits the universe of interpretations that were available even to any one listener.

A Vaudeville Microstudy: Jue Quon Tai’s New York Press in 1915

With this sense of how U.S. vaudeville presenters framed Asian and Asian American performers, a microstudy of one musician’s coverage in New York newspapers may offer a finer-grained understanding of how people could make racial meaning in this cultural domain. This offers a vaudeville-focused counterpart to Chapter 1’s readings of journalistic writing on Tamaki Miura and Chapter 2’s look at Tomijiro Asai’s mediated representation and reception. As different perspectives on microhistorical contexts and broader discourses, these case studies attend to these performers’ textual presentation in order to imagine what they may have meant to many white Americans.73

In December of 1915, the New York Herald linked dominant notions of Miura’s identity to a Chinese American female vaudeville singer soon to perform in that city. The paper did so in starkly physiognomic terms:

For the second time within a few weeks New York is to hear an almond eyed prima donna. First came Mme. Tamaki Miura, the diminutive Japanese soprano, who appeared with the Boston Grand Opera Company and the Pavlova ballet at the Manhattan Opera House in the title rôle of “Madama Butterfly.” Now comes Miss Jue Quon Tai, of China, who will make her metropolitan début as an entertainer to-morrow at the Palace Theatre. It is said she left China because of the overthrow of the empire. She has a programme of popular songs.74

73. Just as Chapter 1’s unpacking of Miura’s reception by some white Americans may offer a counterpart to such studies as Mari Yoshihara’s forthcoming article on that singer’s career, this look at another moment of racialized performance through the lens of the New York press may complement Krystyn Moon’s archival work on Jue Quon Tai (Moon 2002, 367–70). 74. “Girl Musicians of China and Spain to Be Heard in Vaudeville Here: Miss Jue Quon Tai to Sing at the Palace ...,” New York Herald, 19 December 1915; by way of local discursive context, cf. an advertisement for Ruth St. Denis on the same page as one for Jue Quon Tai in the same newspaper (“Hudson Theatre” [advertisement], New York Herald, 19 December 1915).
This assimilated both Miura and Jue Quon Tai to a category of race, gender, and vocal range (as well as the aura of behavioral associations borne by the term “prima donna”). This category’s racial aspect was blindly ascribed in advance with the rhetorical trope of “almond eyed,” a phrase commonly used in journalism and song lyrics to signify Asian faces, especially female ones.

Press coverage of Jue Quon Tai’s New York appearance shows in detail how media reports ascribed authenticity to one vaudeville singer. The city’s two major newspapers, the Herald and the Times, covered her presence at the Astor Hotel before it became clear that she had come to New York to sing at B. F. Keith’s Palace Theater, the pinnacle of vaudeville venues. While Jue’s arrival was set up as a publicity stunt and only gradually revealed as a hoax, reporters from the beginning were dubious about her initial assertions that she had come from China (rather than having been born on the West Coast); but many accounts still dwelt upon notions of her exotic Chineseness.75

This December flurry of press attention illustrates some key aspects of her popular construction as a racialized Chinese (not American) singer. This will show how a belief in musically embodied authenticity was common to the sustained coverage of operatic orientality and to more fleeting moments of public attention to less elite performers. Certain rhetorical strategies were central to public discourse in both cases, while others were less so; but in both situations, white Americans could hear singers as embodying and envoicing a basically unitary racial essence—even as many aspects of their performances and publicity strategies differed due to the contexts in which they appeared. This microstudy also suggests how female vaudevillians often were framed in

75. Krystyn Moon has found that Jue was born in Los Angeles in 1901 (Moon 2002, 367).
ways that played openly to ideas about gendered orientality, while sources bearing on male performers noted above tended more often to elide gender. This followed broader cultural currents that often located oriental femininity as an attractive thing, but oriental masculinity as an oxymoron or a threat.

Jue’s arrival in New York was announced in the Herald and the Times on 9 December 1915. The Herald carried her photograph and reported in an article titled “Princess Jue Quon Tai Here, Bringing Only a Negro Maid: Explains That She Came to New York on a Sort of Runaway Trip”:

A young Chinese woman with a negro maid walked up to the desk at the Astor Hotel yesterday and registered as “Princess Jue Quon Tai.” She asked for a sitting room, bedroom and maid’s room. The Princess is nineteen years old, and, according to her story, is on a sort of runaway trip from San Francisco, where she declares she ought to be at present. She seems to be a princess of mystery.

Somebody let the newspapers know, and when reporters went to the hotel they heard that a member of the “royal family of China” was in a suite on the third floor.

The Princess was attired in a dark red suit trimmed with black fur. She showed the reporters her mandarin robe and said she had never been on the stage, but once had sung for charity in San Francisco. When she’s short of money she just lets her mother know and, bang! comes a check for a couple of thousand dollars. She says she just gave away $3,000 in Chinatown in San Francisco just in sheer compassion for the poor Chinese.

Her father, she said, is Jue But Hee, a mandarin of the fourth rank. Her passport is in dear old ‘Frisco, and she’s not at all sure that she will call on the Chinese Consulate here. Usually, she declared, she’s entertained by society persons of this country. She’s been here for three months, and may be in New York for three days.

The Princess remarked that her parents had sent her to an American finishing school in Canton. “The first thing they taught me there was to smoke,” said the Princess, “and I used to smoke fifty to sixty cigarettes a day. You know it is so strange here. Women reporters in Chicago come to see me, and they begin article sayin’ I am the most up-stage Princess that ever has been in the Chicago. They gave me an awful roast. In Detroit they did not come to see me ‘cause I did not say on the register I was Princess.

“I was goin’ to Winnipeg when they stopped me and the conductor tell me to say I was a Jap. But I don’t want to go posin’ as a Jap. I should say not. My people would be mad. They don’t even know that I’m comin’ out to New York alone.”

The *Times* presented a similar article titled “Chinese Princess Here: She Says ‘Gee’ to Reporters and Smokes Sixty Cigarettes a Day,” with a similar tone of tongue-in-cheek half-disbelief in the authenticity of the “Princess”:

Miss Jue Quon Tai of Peking, China, who confesses to having been a Princess before the Celestial Empire became a prosaic republic with ballot boxes and suffragists, is staying at the Hotel Astor for a few days. Princess Jue Q. Tai arrived yesterday afternoon from San Francisco, where she had been seeing the fair for four months, and she expects to return to Peking when she has achieved her life-long ambition of seeing New York. The Princess is 19 years old and uses colloquial English.

“Gee,” she said to a group of six surprised reporters yesterday, “but my father would certainly be wild if he knew I was here in New York all alone. He objected like everything to my coming, but I just came anyhow. You see, I have never been around very much alone. I learned to speak English from a tutor, and oh, yes, I went to a finishing school for girls near Canton. But all I learned there was to smoke cigarettes. I smoked fifty or sixty a day.

“When I first came here alone this time, I had a hard time to get used to newspaper men, I slammed the door in one’s face in San Francisco, and he gave me the awfulest roast next day. His paper said I was the most up-stage royalty that had ever come to San Francisco.”

“Do you think there is any chance of your country becoming a monarchy?” she was asked.

“All the chance in the world,” was the prompt reply. “The royal party has all the money.”

The Princess’s father is names [sic] Jue But Hee. According to the Princess, he is of royal blood, and is a mandarin of the fourth rank.77

Already in these accounts, it is clear that reporters took her claims to royal status with more than a grain of salt; but they either were not aware of her real reason for being in town or played along with her delay in announcing it. Without invoking music, both stories of this musician played consciously—as did the singer herself—to notions of China as a place of mystery and, at least for some, opulence; but by reporting on her use of slang and cigarettes, they also invoked less racialized stereotypes of free-willed female modernity.

These articles laid the foundation for Jue’s later unveiling as a singer who was framed as an exotic Chinese novelty—but one whose performance

and off-stage public persona did not embody an authentic orientality rooted in her origins. Rather, it used her audiences’ and readers’ belief in that quality as a contrastive ground for enacting an American “New Woman” femaleness. This employed tropes of physically inborn orientality in ways somewhat akin to the different relations to such beliefs seen in Miura’s and Asai’s U.S. presentation and reception. Insofar as Jue and her managers played up her Chinese origins as a marketing ploy (initially not mentioning her upcoming performance in order to position her simply as “the Princess”), her press is reminiscent of Miura’s incessant characterization as a “Japanese soprano.” But Jue was framed more as an up-to-date, even wild, Americanized woman than as a typified sign of Chinese femininity. This positioned her Chineseness as past-tense background, similar in some ways to the rhetorical space to which Asai’s brochure assigned (or tried to assign) his Japaneseness. In this way Jue and her agent(s) played to prospective audiences’ expectations, but used them as a starting point for purposeful contradiction. Like the Chung Hwa Four’s strategic play, this engagement with raciological beliefs could challenge or complicate such ideas; but as a practice still framed by rubrics of orientality, it also could reinforce the very ideas it subverted.

The Herald ran a follow-up the next day. Titled “So Many Reporters Bother Princess: She Is So Busy Answering Questions About China She Cannot See New York,” it took a reflexive turn:

Princess Jue Quon Tai, the young Chinese girl who seems to be a mystery, still was at the Astor Hotel yesterday, and by last night she was so tired of being interviewed by reporters that she declared she had dined at five and was going to retire soon after six o’clock.

“I have not even had time to see anythin’ of New York because about six million newspaper persons came to see me today,” quoth the Princess, who incidentally is accompanied by a solitary negress, her maid.
“The telephone has been ringin’ an’ ringin’ mos’ of the day,” she added sighing. She looked very pretty and has an excellent figure and mere dots of feet that are shod in the latest style of American high shoes.

“I did not go out,” she went on, “an’ if any more reporters bother me I probably shall be goin’ away from New York for good to-morrow. They are so curious. They want to know all about my life in China, why I smoke so many cigarettes when I was at school and even ask me to pose for moving picture. One artist ask me to have my picture painted. I would like to know when this goin’ to stop. I have not had a single call from any Chinese people.”

Here the tone shifted to emphasize Jue’s Americanization, despite her mock protestations; and with that shift, her press coverage began to decline. There may have been some causal link, or perhaps her novelty was simply fading.

The following Wednesday, the Herald’s attention to her had shrunk to a brief notice telling of her real reason for being in New York:

Miss Jue Quon Tai, a Chinese singer and actress, will make her first New York appearance at the Palace Theatre next Monday. She will be heard in several songs that are said to be particularly suited to her soprano voice. Merchants and professional men of the New York Chinese colony will be represented at the Palace on Monday. The stage setting will be a scene from the grounds of the Summer Palace at Peking and the orchestra will play the Sennin music.

And that Sunday, the Herald ran the piece which assimilated Jue and Miura to the category of the “almond-eyed prima donna.” The same paper carried an advertisement making full use of the stunt: “FEATURE EXTRAORDINARY! A PEARL OF PEKIN / A ROYAL MANCHU PRINCESS. / PRINCESS JUE QUON TAI / DIRECT FROM THE ROYAL PALACE OF PEKIN / TO THE VAUDEVILLE PALACE OF NEW YORK.”

advertisement in the Times; but reflecting the diminished appeal of her hoax, that paper’s item for the theater’s bill just stated:

PALACE—Nazimova in “War Brides,” the tense little drama in which the Russian actress was seen last season; Adelaide and Hughes, in a program of dances radiating the Yuletide spirit; Princess Jue Quon Tai of China, making her debut as a singer; Hunting and Francis, in “Love Blossoms.”81

Notices in the coming days reflected a rapid decline in attention to the singer once her novelty had worn off, and after the intriguing contradictions of identity she had adopted for the stunt had been resolved into her role as a vaudeville musician, albeit still a Chinese “Princess.”82

Despite reporters’ waning interest in the singer, the theater did not give up on the marketing power of her construction as an Americanized Chinese Princess. Keith’s management found another way to connect political affairs and her ostensible lineage as a selling point. This new twist enticed the Times to run one last substantial piece, “Revolt in China, but Only Among the Royal Shades: Jue Quon Tai, One of Their Descendants, in Vaudeville Here….” The article took a lightheartedly sarcastic tone of disbelief towards the theater’s assertions, but the ploy had its desired effect: a few more column inches in a major paper, which again invoked (credulously or not) Jue’s status as a genuine Chinese royal singing for all New Yorkers who cared to attend:

82. As were their male counterparts (cf. Prince Lai Mon Kim), such titles were common. Ten years later, another article on a performer in another New York theater reported: “Accompanied by the weird sounds produced on the Oriental instruments of her troupe of six musicians, Chan Wei Wong, a Manchu princess, sings continuously for five hours in her production of the Chinese opera, ‘Chuck Mang Ong,’ in Miner’s Theater just off the Bowery” (“Manchu Princess Sings Five Hours in Ancient Chinese Opera,” Musical America, 2 August 1924, 31). Already in Jue Quon Tai’s time, vaudeville’s unending procession of foreign “royalty” may have rendered her less newsworthy once she was known to belong to this familiar category.
Information was given out yesterday at the Palace Theatre that the Manchu dynasty is in revolt, this time over the appearance of Jue Quon Tai, one of its princesses, in vaudeville.

Three hundred honorable ancestors are fretted over the predicament. But the editor of the programme, realizing the inconvenience which it would cause to so many shades to venture forth from comfortable tombs in the winter of their discontent, considerately omitted the names of the royal ancestors or any other facts which might lead to the identity of Jue Quon Tai. Behind the veil of this Pekingese incognito no one is permitted to peep, but lest the deep, deep purple—rather yellow, the Chinese royal color—should be neglected, the management has indulged in a few descriptive lines. One of these, in bold defiance of the royal presence, or the ancestors of the presence, admitted that “the Princess came direct from the Imperial Palace of Pekin to the vaudeville Palace of New York.” This may bring the Manchu family tree out of the woods, willy nilly.

But the management of the Palace brought out Jue Quon Tai yesterday afternoon. In a tea garden and an Oriental costume she sang “America, I Love You” and “If You Only Had My Disposition.” Later a velvet curtain, appropriately monogrammed, concealed the tea garden, and in front of this, with the touch and speed evidently born of much experience in “the continuous,” she sang other songs, including “Annie Laurie.” She has a pleasant vivacity which would seem more peculiar to San Francisco than to Peking, and her voice, too, is pleasing.

Besides the Princess there is a cheerful variety of plain American players, including Adelaide and J. J. Hughes in new dances; Willard Sims, indigenous to slapstick soil, presenting “Flinder’s Furnished Flat;” Hunting and Frances, in “Love Blossoms;” Mme. Nazimova, in “War Brides;” Winsor McKay, Kramer and Morton and Roy Hurrah’s skaters.83

This made more apparent the initial hoax’s relationship to its political context. In December of 1915, a great deal of U.S. news coverage was being devoted to the potentially chaotic flux of Chinese political events. The government of President Yuan Shikai, a former bureaucrat and warlord, had enjoyed American backing in previous years. Yuan continued to nurse unrealistic monarchical ambitions in republican times even as he succumbed to intense pressure from the expansive desires of the Japanese state (Jiang 1988, 48–54). This situation was highly visible on the front pages of many U.S. newspapers,

83. “Revolt in China, but Only among the Royal Shades: Jue Quon Tai, One of Their Descendants, in Vaudeville Here…,” New York Herald, 21 December 1915.
where it played to general interest in China and to some readers’ anxieties about a perceived Japanese peril that could become detrimental—or even openly antagonistic—to U.S. economic and political interests in Asia.

In this context, assertions that the Manchu family was vexed by the New York appearance of one of their own in vaudeville located Jue as a figure far removed from the ordinary run of “plain American players.” Vaudeville promoters may have felt freer than opera impresarios to play creatively off of contemporary politics in such publicity stunts. While the Palace could spin tales of royal Chinese displeasure at a New York vaudeville act, it is harder to imagine a hypothetical scenario of San Francisco publicists for the San Carlo Opera Company linking Haruko Onuki’s 1919 appearance as Butterfly to the same week’s press coverage of treaty tensions between Japan and China over Shantung and of Japan’s claim to the Marshall and Caroline Islands. Stories on both situations appeared next to articles on the opera engagement, but to have cooked up a spurious connection to Onuki would have undermined the opera’s claim to universal appeal rooted in a depoliticized aesthetic domain.84

Another such opportunity forsaken is seen in 1917 coverage of Miura’s return to the Bay Area. One writer characterized her in the usual way, stating that “The dainty Japanese prima donna, Tamaki Miura, is firmly established through her admirable Cio-Cio-San, of a year ago”; next to that piece was an article on the impending West Coast visit of the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury of Japan.85 But despite the availability of such material, publicity

84. One of the opera articles is “‘Bravos’ Greet Opening Opera of Season,” San Francisco Call & Post, 11 February 1919; other pieces on these historical contexts appeared widely that week.
that gratuitously linked opera performers to these political contexts probably would have struck fans as hopelessly déclassé (in contrast to more deeply felt paeans to the raciological equivalence of singers’ on- and off-stage identities).

Local interpretive contexts were available to Jue’s New York audiences as well. The month before her arrival, the Astor had been the site of a highly publicized reception honoring the new Japanese emperor’s enthronement. The press located that event under a governing sign of native orientality: “Brilliant costumes of the Orient and the Occident mingled last evening in the north ballroom of the Astor Hotel, where the reception given by the Consul General of Japan and Mrs. Nakamura was held. Many of the Japanese women wore native attire.”86 Music figured in the event as well; the national anthems of the United States and Japan were played for its 300 prominent guests.

Articles such as these played to an idea of New York as a site for oriental incursions by musical and non-musical means. As a publicity-seeking singer, Jue offered journalists and readers a compelling instance of embodied and envoiced difference. Despite her mock protestations, she happily gave those curious onlookers abundant opportunities for grounding their notions of racial difference in a singular (but typified) body and voice. Her presence as a willing spectacle and interlocutor offered more personal grounding than did tales of geographically distant political intrigue, but still it enacted a condition many thought to be fundamentally unlike (white) Americanness. While her musical status as a singer located her voice, and thus her body, as seemingly natural and legitimate objects of public attention, her racial status left no doubt that what people could hear and see in them was orientality.

As a trace of a marketing ploy by a major vaudeville house, the “Revolt in China” article shows how dominant media could be used to connect the racialized (almond-eyed) nationality of a singer of Chinese heritage and public interest in Chinese politics. In this light, it is difficult to imagine a repertoire less marked by orientality (or for that matter, by any other form of socially constructed difference from unmarked U.S. norms) than the pieces Jue sang: “America, I Love You” and “If You Only Had My Disposition.” But while singing those songs, she was contextualized on stage in oriental costume and a tea-garden setting, until a curtain drop provided scenic variety for another unmarked song, “Annie Laurie.”

This grounded Jue’s orientality not in her repertoire, but in the body with which she sang it. As in the cases of many Asians and Asian Americans who performed for mostly white audiences, her costume and stage set framed her as a visual sign of an essence her audiences saw as authentically oriental. This framing of a Chinese American performer as a sign of orientality was not new, as demonstrated by the example of a “real Chinese actress” who had appeared in a minstrel parody of the *Mikado* some 30 years earlier;87 nor was it unique to her at the time, as seen in much of Tsen Mei’s media coverage.88 Rather, it instantiated a move that tended to constitute American singers of Asian heritage as novel signs of racial difference, no matter what they sang.

87. The minstrel *Mikado* was the one noted in Chapter 1; two primary sources are “Haverly’s United European-American Minstrels” [program], San Francisco: Leavitt’s Bush Street Theatre, 21 September 1885; Betsy B., “Drama” [column], *San Francisco Argonaut*, 26 September 1885.
88. For a document illustrative of Tsen Mei’s framing in this way, see “Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco: Orpheum Theater, week beginning 24 July 1921.
Revisiting Audible Authenticity in Vaudevillian Voices & Bodies

Because these articles did not specify the nature of Jue Quon Tai’s vocal practice, they leave open the question of whether her enactment of racialized difference was unequivocal in a literal sense. Any marked pronunciation or timbre would have orientalized many listeners’ hearings of her performances, even of non-orientalist songs; or if her singing did not display those signs of difference, a perceived disjuncture of her body and voice may have echoed the effects of the set-up and switch routine with which the Chung Hwa Four lulled their audience into a belief that they would hear one “crazy Chinese song” after another, only to have that expectation radically upended by a song sung with “normal” timbre and harmony. Such meetings of “Chinese” and (European) American musicality were common; for example, in 1913 Hammerstein’s had presented magician Ching Ling Foo and “His Own Company of Fourteen Orientals” including Chee Toy (fig. 3.6), “The only Chinese Prima Donna in the World who Sings Popular American Songs.”

An act similar to the Chung Hwa Four in this sense was the duo of De Fun Gue and Harry Haw. As mentioned, a 1914 notice for an appearance at the Palace said that the singers, “products of Manchuria, offer the Chinese version of the Tango and Texas Tommy, besides singing English and Chinese songs.”

A 1916 Oakland listing described “The Children of Confucius” [sic] as “a Novel Offering of Songs and Dances with MISS DONG FONG GUE and MR. HARRY HAW,” suggesting that this overlapping duo also mixed

90. For biographical work on Haw and his associates, see Moon (2002, 360–67).
musical practices ostensibly ancient and modern.92 Similar ideas underlay such press coverage as a notice stating that for a San Francisco engagement, “Haru-Onuki, the Japanese prima donna, has a song act of original Japanese numbers, as well as a few of the latest American numbers.”93

Despite his inventive billing as Manchurian, Harry Haw was born in California. As Thomas Chinn recounts, the performer was a younger friend of Hugh Liang, a founding member of the Chung Hwa Four. Haw attached himself as an understudy to the quartet and then launched his own career as a singer and dancer. In the early 1920s, he assumed the stage persona of “Honorable Wu” (fig. 3.7 shows him in that role) and offered audiences on major vaudeville circuits a show combining orientalist trappings with jazz-inflected music (Chinn 1989, 211–15). Chinn tells of “Honorable Wu himself portraying Al Jolson or Eddie Cantor or Frisco Joe” (214), and quotes a Los Angeles News review that extolled the charms of his “soft and musical voice as well as a capably executed fantasy”: “Faint odor of temple incense, stirring jangle of native instruments, and contrasted with modern jazz…. You will never forget the enchantment of it all…” (215). The broad sense of this mix of exotics later would be played out at such venues as Charlie Low’s Forbidden City, which opened in 1938 in San Francisco (218–19).94

Although determining how any one Asian or Asian American musician or ensemble came to embody orientality in the minds of the people who made up vaudeville audiences (aside from the few who wrote published reviews) is fraught with uncertainty, these performers were, in an emic sense, a known

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93. “Golden Gate” [theatrical note]. San Francisco Examiner, 10 September 1922.
94. For more on the Forbidden City, see several studies and a film cited earlier in this chapter.
category of acts. A recurring feature on vaudeville circuits, they were framed explicitly by racialized Chinese or Japanese nationalities (which in some cases did not reflect performers’ actual ethnic identities). The ways in which these musicians’ press materials promoted them suggest strongly that many white people in their audiences believed in the reciprocal significance of their supposedly authentic bodies and voices, and did so strongly enough that perceived disjunctures of Asian origins and singing style could figure centrally in their performance and reception. This could take place by fairly straight reinscription or by musicians’ creative play with those expectations.

Many singers used costumes to encourage audiences to see their bodies as authentically oriental, either to support actual orientalist performance or as an initial foil for subsequent audible contradiction by singing in unmarked American English. Instrumental performers also could play to these notions of authenticity. One example was Mrs. Michitaro Ongawa, who appeared in kimono and tabi (Japanese bifurcated socks) while seated at a piano in one photograph.95 Another was Pickard’s Chinese Syncopators, a dance band who performed in costume as they played music ranging from orientalist songs to pieces that did not refer to that kind of racial difference (rec. 3.1).96

95. Affiliated Lyceum Bureaus, “Mrs. Michitaro Ongawa,” lithographic lobby card with a halftone image after a photograph, early 20th century. For brochures for English-language presentations of Japanese plays given by Ongawa and her husband (with illustrations and review quotations), see “Traveling Culture” at the American Memory project (accessible on the Internet at Web addresses noted above).

96. This group appeared in such productions as “Pickard’s ‘Ling Ting Foo’ (Beautiful Garden), a jazzical fantasy of the Orient, with the Chinese Syncopators and the Eight Chinese Rosebuds,” presented in San Francisco during a week in 1925 when another venue featured Long Tack Sam (“Plays and Films Coming on This Week’s Programs,” San Francisco Examiner, 8 November 1925). Their image appeared on sheet music for “China Girl” (Henry Halstead, Don Warner, and Louis Singer, San Francisco: Sherman, Clay & Co., 1924) and at least three other (non-orientalist) songs; for another published photograph, see Amiel (1932, 124).
A popular attraction to orientalized American performers of Japanese or Chinese birth or heritage was most evident in vaudeville, but figured in many other settings as well. Dominant media accounts generally discussed Asian American dancers in ways similar to those in which they characterized musicians. Some made explicit recourse to the racialized body as at once a site of originary difference, an obstacle to non-Asian artistic training, and an eventual sign of assimilative accomplishment in European-derived practices. Some of these accounts also hearken back to the rhetorical presentation of singers such as Miura and Asai as “the first” soprano or tenor of their “race” to master the singing of grand opera or oratorio by virtue of expert mentors.

An account of one student’s inculcation into ballet illustrates this. Along with a photograph captioned “Japanese toe dancer, who ignores traditions of her race on the American stage,” a 1923 article told of her dance training:

Florence Koba, San Francisco-born Japanese girl, shattered the traditions of her race today when she appeared at the Granada Theater in Mahr Miechkofski Ballet Russe—the first girl of her race to successfully encompass the intricacies of toe-dancing.

Particular pride is being taken in little Florence Koba’s appearance, due to the fact that Japanese women are not built for the dances of the Caucasians, and her achievement of the most difficult of all dancing work—toe-dancing, constitutes a high tribute to her instruction and adaptability.

“Japanese women,” says Mme. Mahr Miechkofski, “have stocky limbs and frames. Their knees are accustomed to the plier bending—that is straight bending. They cannot squat. When seating themselves they bend their knees straight forward and virtually sit on their heels, carrying most of their weight on their toes.”

Florence Koba, 14, pupil of the Girls’ High School, has mastered the trick of straight legs, graceful movement, and facial expression, also taboo among her race. She has accomplished what has long been considered impossible for Japanese women—the modern feather-tip wafting on toe ends—a ballet development.

In part this language of the ill-suited body could be read as reflecting physical traits statistically common among phenotypically related populations, and

perhaps the effects of life-long experience in an ethnic group’s culturally normative uses of the body; but its tone of mentored mastery against all odds still betrayed raciological assumptions. As did many tales of singers, this told of a performer as a living sign—one of the susceptibility of an Asian person’s body to white teachers’ instruction in European performance. In its language of personal achievement through mentored transcendence of the limits of a racialized body, this story shows how some ways of making meaning from musical acts also were available to audiences of other performance genres.

Readers easily could relate such accounts of Asian American performers to ideas of racial essence and a (Eurocentric) assimilative potential which some white Americans believed to reside in certain Japanese—perhaps more often than Chinese—Americans. In this case, and regardless of the dancer’s own views on the matter (which were not represented in the piece), Bay Area residents could read about Koba’s body as a site for public displays of racial essence, the desirability of instructed assimilation, and the embodied limits of such processes. The story of this dancer’s accomplishments differed little, in these ways, from true-grit tales of Japanese sopranos determined to sing Butterfly. In its broader suggestion that all performers of Asian heritage were natural representatives of a “race,” it was consistent with dominant beliefs and discourse about many musicians active in transcontinental touring circuits for performing in vaudeville, as well in such other forms as opera.

With a more grounded sense of how Asian Americans’ performances in vaudeville could seem authentically oriental to many white people in their audiences, we may recall vaudeville bills’ sequential streams of racial types. The contexts within which vaudevillians of Asian descent performed, and
within which their publics made meaning from them, were rife with all types of cultural, ethnic, national, and racial difference. Right after Jue Quon Tai’s Palace listing, for instance, a notice stated: “Another girl musician from a foreign land will make her début to-morrow at the Colonial Theatre. She is Miss Christeta Goni, sixteen years old, a violinist, and a native of Almeria, Spain. She has come to New York by way of Havana….”

Along with actual performance, print media were important here. These staged versions of human difference were widely seen in mediated form, often presented with preferred readings that went straight to race. One article, titled with almost ingenuous directness “Freak Theatre Advertising,” reproduced a photograph of the “Hippodrome Indians” wearing Plains headdresses while touring the streets of New York (noted above). The article cast the Hippodrome press agent in a role probably much like that played by the Palace publicist who managed Jue Quon Tai’s visit to the city:

In a company that was touring through the New England States was a leading lady whose fad and special diversion was the study of Indian folklore. Locating in a town near a reservation of Indians, the press agent used greenback persuasion to induce the band to elect the lady a member of their tribe and instigate a war dance in her honor. Newspapers all over the country recorded the event, and the theatre was filled to overflowing by the curious who would see the star that had been made a member of an Indian tribe. Naturally, the press agent was the power behind the reportorial throne.

Along with common marketing practices, spectacles of embodied orientality could coincide with those of other kinds of difference in literal ways. One example noted above is an image of Miura in Native American costume. A more rhetorical instance is a newspaper’s 1917 reference to her as “the world-famous Japanese prima donna, who proved last year that she is not a ‘freak’

singer, but an artist of the first rank.” The category of the “freak” was common in entertainments involving spectatorship of bodies seen as abnormal. The invocation of the word in connection with Miura initially made her susceptible to that category, but its dismissal used her talent and skill to elevate her to the more rarefied artistic level of the prima donna.

In wrapping up Part 1 of this study, vaudeville and opera offer useful comparisons for thinking about some dominant ways of constructing ideas of authentic orientality, an essence many white listeners thought they heard in musical form in both theatrical settings in the teens and twenties. Certainly opera was a forum for staged enactments of racialized stereotypes of gender and nationality. Such musically imagined identities were embodied in Carmens envoicing an essential Spanish femaleness, Othellos singing their male Moorishness (whether or not audiences believed these essences to exist in their singers offstage), and Japanese Butterflies—in whom many more white Americans heard and saw an equivalence of character and real identity. But enactments of such types representing radically disparate racial locations were not so frequently strung together sequentially within one opera; while racially unmarked white characters routinely met with other types, Moors and pining Butterflies less often shared the stage in a single performance.

In contrast to the rapid-fire succession of a sequence of vaudeville acts, opera’s more sustained spectacle of what many people heard and saw (in the performances most central here) as an authentically envoiced and embodied Japanese Butterfly may have allowed more audience members to sink deeply

100. “Association in Opera Cast is Unique,” San Francisco Call & Post, 17 February 1917.
into what they were hearing and seeing. This may have made it easier to feel that their musical experience told them some larger truths, and to bring those beliefs (and ideological subtexts) home as a lasting part of their engagement with the real social world. But of course, each listener had some individual combination of assumptions, predilections, and ways of listening, and could as easily seek extravagant spectacle, emotional catharsis, or almost anything else from their operatic experiences of an orientality many deemed authentic.

People in vaudeville audiences, too, could have any number of stances towards the shows before them; but in many cases, much of the orientality experienced in the course of an evening at the Orpheum or the Palace may have been susceptible to reception almost as if it were just a different color of light glancing off the shimmering spectacle of a brightly lit stage. Orientalist representations in vaudeville were not free from ideological content (far from it), but for contextual reasons their impact on some audience members may have consisted chiefly of an evanescent thrill of novelty—and a diffuse and lingering sense that orientality was an odd thing, and that people who lived it must not really be Americans. But no doubt some white Americans were only lightly affected by hearing Japanese sopranos sing Butterfly, and some of those at Tomijiro Asai’s recitals may not have cared a bit about any larger social processes others heard him as embodying—and some vaudeville fans may have headed home after the show with a clear sense that dominant ways of categorizing humanity were all the more natural and true by reason of the ease with which they infused an evening of entertaining musical novelty.

In all of these cases, even seemingly fleeting diversion or amusement could offer incremental hegemonic support to raciological beliefs that had
serious social consequences; but the many qualifiers above—“some,” “many,” “may have”—reflect a key aspect of musical reception, even in ideologically loaded contexts. The truest conclusion here may be that no unitary meaning is to be found in the ways people understand performances, even those that offer strongly preferred readings as acts of authentic embodiment. A huge range of ways of hearing musical and racial difference is available at almost any such performance; but the interpretive latitude people enjoy within such an expanse affords abundant room for hegemony, and thus it does not at all inhibit listeners from making meanings that reinscribe dominant ideology.
Imagining the Mimetic Oriental Body

Yellowface Practice & Raciological Embodiment

Pulling you this way and that, mimesis plays this trick of dancing between the very same and the very different. An impossible but necessary, indeed an everyday affair, mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being Other. Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity. —Michael Taussig (1993, 129)

I think that it was in those days of the China-Japan War that I had more chances to speak English; to anybody I came across [in San Francisco], I tried to explain the difference between China and Japan, and above all, why we won the fight. A certain Mr. Creelman lectured here on the so-called Port Arthur brutality, on his way to New York from the war field at Manchuria. On the night of his lecture, I appeared with my protest, which I had all ready to deliver against that lecturer on the spot, if my courage had not failed. The vogue of the Mikado or the Geisha, a comic opera, at that time made my true Japanese heart pained, as I thought it was a blasphemy against Japan; how often I wished to shout from the pit or the gallery on its absurdity. To play a patriot or an exile was one of my pleasures at that time.

—Yone Noguchi (1914, 16)

At first glance, they looked at my face and prepared themselves in advance
For what kind of person I am, an Asian.
I watched them uncomfortably guess my “original” nation.
This is the overplayed scenario like the replayed songs on the radio.
Over and over like there ain’t no end to it yo.

Since the first day of school I heard it.
Ching chong chinaman chinky winky twinky
DO YOU SPEAKEEE ENGLISHEEE?
From the first moment, I felt it.
Can you really see through those eyes?
Oh how cute, two oriental girls. Are you twins?

... 

I am who I am, I be who I be
See me for me,
Then you’ll get the reality.
—Olivia Chung (2001b, 266, 268)
Chapter 4

Watching the Mimetic Body
Yellowface Performance as Theatrical Spectacle

Discussions of “good” and “bad” stereotypes have, more often than not, focused on the distance between image and reality. However, stereotypes of Asian Americans are not simply distorted versions of Asian lives in America. The Yellowface coolie and model minority, despite their apparent contradiction, not only coexist but, in fact, can become mutually reinforcing at critical junctures because neither is created by the actual lives of Asians in America. What produces these stereotypes is not just individual acts of representation, but a historical discourse of race that is embedded in the history of American social crises. —Robert G. Lee (1999, 8)

As we leave performance often interpreted in its time as presenting embodied authenticity and move on to practices that audiences generally understood as involving racial mimesis (but seldom by that term), it is important to revisit and debunk a dangerous tendency of any invocation of the latter notion: the ease with which it may seem to impute the false idea that racially mimetic acts really do reference some biological group essence in the social world.

All orientality presented in performance was mimetic for the simple reason that orientality was itself imaginary, regardless of who enacted it. Nonetheless, many white Americans believed that orientalist acts by Asians and Asian Americans were authentic embodiments of performers’ own essence. Audience members could base this reading on physical appearance, national origins, or even names. Conversely, virtually everyone understood white American enactments of orientality to be wholly mimetic embodiments of difference. While some critics assessed the mimetic skill displayed in such performances in terms of what they perceived as authenticity or realism achieved by white performers, the operative word here is “skill.” Most U.S. writers located the authenticity (or lack thereof) of white performers’
orientality in their dramatic gifts and professional training, not in an essence thought to have flowed naturally into their bodies before they were born.

To avoid any misreading of terms such as “mimetic orientality” below, it is necessary to state plainly that stereotypes do not represent real lives lived by real people. They offer imaginary ideas that many people ascribe to others. Most of these are sewn together from local cultural cloth. The fabric of each of these stock notions of cultural or racial difference may include a thread or two derived from spectatorship of people as distanced others, or from actual social interactions; but more often it reweaves tropes salvaged from earlier representations. Because of this, the referents of most stereotypes are largely imaginary, and the performative mimesis of racialized types is no exception.

This is not to assert that authors, performers, or audiences of yellowface enactments never believed in their real-world referentiality. Far from it: such roles were widely thought to index Asian and Asian American people and cultural locations. Often those imagined links to real people were central to white Americans’ understandings of what these performances meant; but the primary referent of such raciological embodiments was in fact a fiction—an imagined essence with a mélange of attributes which many non-Asian Americans associated with Asia (shuffling steps, stilted speech, inscrutability, and so on). This could figure in both popular reception and critical response; for example, a 1917 review of a staged version of Chineseness lamented that:

“The Sweetmeat Game” is an episode from the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, and while no one questions its artistry, there are so few in any audience familiar enough with the Oriental’s legends and traditions to pass upon its fidelity that much of its real charm is lost.¹

Critics and other audience members brought various interpretive frames and expectations of authenticity (or its lack) to such plays. The raw material for most yellowface practice, however, consisted of prior representations of the same imaginary essence, at times leveraged by techniques meant to emulate people of a specific Asian culture. Regardless of the performative means that brought them into being, virtually all such acts represented a wholly fictive orientality, one that often conflated Chineseness and Japaneseness (fig. 4.1).

To sift through yellowface acts for credible and nuanced traces of Asian and Asian American experience would confirm a fact well known: that in dominant U.S. discourse, such experience generally was elided through its displacement—or prevented from entering into spaces already abundantly filled—by imagined versions of racialized experience enacted by performers not subject to the racial categories they portrayed. The most useful things these practices tell us concern the ways in which performance works in ideological contexts to propagate ideas about race, ideas whose credibility in the minds of many white Americans had major consequences for them and other people. Weighing in as (only apparently) credible and entertaining evidence for the existence of racial types, performances of these imaginary essences contributed to the damaging effects of raciological belief.

The reception of Tamaki Miura and Geraldine Farrar as Butterfly illustrated how white Americans could perceive operatic orientality as the natural condition of an authentic body or the conscious product of a white performer’s skill. Beliefs about bodily authenticity or inauthenticity guided the social meanings many listeners heard in specific performances of Puccini’s role. White sopranos’ Butterfly acts constituted a specific kind of orientalist
spectacle; but in these decades, openly mimetic orientality also was a defining part of many other acts by white Americans. These took place in venues ranging from vaudeville theaters to gatherings at home around the piano, as well as the often musically supported setting of the dramatic stage.²

The four chapters in Part 2 of this study examine a variety of practices that enabled many white Americans to hear and see orientality or to embody it themselves, often in explicitly instructed ways. The practices and modes of spectatorship treated in these chapters often centered on ideas of the mimetic body; but in many, the body was an instrument for vocal mimesis as well. These diverse uses of white American bodies—professional and amateur, watching and listening and doing—made up a dense universe of mimetic practice. Because any one performance in this universe bounced off others in its moments of creation and in the meanings people made from it, this and the following chapters consider diverse kinds of orientalist embodiment. Not all of these were musical in a conventional sense, but all were part of a broad stream of cultural experience that flowed through many kinds of activities.

**Surveying Orientalism on the American Stage**

As a popular song becomes popular because it fits into the life of the day and is the individual expression of the spirit of the moment, [composer] Charles K. Harris was doubtless right when he said:

“The biggest secret of success, according to my own system, is the following out in songs of ideas current in the national brain at the moment. My biggest song successes have always reflected the favorite emotion—if I may use the word—of the people of the day. How do I gauge this? Through the drama! The drama moves in irregular cycles, and changes in character according to the specific tastes of the public. The yearly mood of the nation is reflected by the drama and the theatrical entertainments of the year. At least, I figure it out this way, and compose my songs accordingly.”

(Page 1915, 367)

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White Americans heard and interpreted musical orientality in historical and performative contexts of mimesis that involved music to varying degrees. Theatrical productions were a major venue for orientalist performance, most notably by means of practices now termed “yellowface” (see Introduction).³ The meanings invested by performers and audiences into any one such act could be guided by many factors. These included authorial beliefs written into scripts; performers’ interpretive ideas; immediate contexts of preceding acts; long-term performative backdrops of earlier productions; broader social and political contexts; and each audience member’s own assumptions and cognitive styles. The precise forces behind any one person’s interpretation of a mimetic performance now are as opaque as if it were the result of Brownian motion driven by random collisions with other cultural moments;⁴ but because these performances relied on shared conventions and spurred related kinds of responses, a look at those moves may illuminate factors which contributed strongly to the meanings many white Americans invested into mimetically oriental bodies. In the Brownian metaphor, those moves were among the heavier and more numerous cultural particles in play (in another metaphor, what one could call alpha memes). Because of their prevalence and momentum, they were most likely to affect people’s interpretive trajectories.

Contemporary theatrical authors, producers, critics, and audience members clearly understood orientalist stage productions to constitute a sub-genre of U.S. performance, a shifting aggregation of works differentiable by the traditions (opera, legitimate theater, vaudeville, dance) within which they

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3. For a recent study offering historically situated general discussions and analyses of certain such plays (including some discussed here in specific regard to music or embodied mimetic practice), see M. Liu (2003, 34–142). Studies of certain individual plays are cited below.
4. By metaphor to the unpredictable behavior of specific molecules in gaseous or liquid states.
were performed, and by the places (China, Japan, Arabia…) they evoked. In this sense, mimetic orientality was a strong current in U.S. theatrical life; in a quasi-steady state, yellowface enactments of racial difference almost always were present in some form on the early twentieth-century stage. It also, however, was subject to the ebb and flow of dramatic fashion in response to a fickle public taste for novelty, as seen above in regard to vaudeville. While somewhere in the United States, some sort of yellowface act probably took place virtually every night throughout these decades, their number, nature, and overall popularity at any moment were contingent upon audiences’ shifting whims, performers’ broader popularity, audiences’ and critics’ assessments of whether a particular narrative was compelling, and topical connections to non-theatrical contexts of domestic and international politics (e.g., Asian immigration, the Russo-Japanese War, or the fall of the Manchu Dynasty). All of these things bore heavily on the construction and reception of orientality in theatrical as well as more primarily musical domains.

This chapter’s glance at some dramatic productions will provide a base for the next chapter’s look at the views of two prominent actors regarding their ways of learning to embody orientality. That, in turn, will lay some historical and theoretical groundwork for understanding how musical consumers made sense from other orientalist experiences. While showing along the way how certain stage productions used music to evoke racial difference, this consideration of yellowface will illustrate some modes of meaning production which were common in many orientalist practices.

5. E.g., on music in the play Sumurun, see Gertrude Lynch, “Sumurun,” Theatre Magazine, February 1912, 54–57 (comments on music at 54).
Offering a far from comprehensive selection of titles of U.S. orientalist productions with white cast members in yellowface, the list below suggests how common was mimetically staged orientality during these decades. The list’s weighting of certain years is chiefly due to this study’s temporal focus, but it also reflects a turn-of-the-century European American taste for romantic orientalist narratives set in Japan (some offered in parallel response to the audience demand which made Madame Butterfly so popular, others as attempts to ride on the coattails of Belasco’s play) and a spurt of martial productions around 1905, when the Russo-Japanese War inspired some writers and producers to exploit dramatic possibilities they saw in the Japanese state’s military defeat of its European opponent. Producers and directors of some of these shows had taken part in earlier yellowface plays; for example, David Belasco was involved in an 1870s presentation of The Chinese Question in San Francisco (Belasco 1925, 14). The list includes a few works populated by Korean, Indian, Filipino, or Tibetan characters, but the large majority of its entries mark productions with Chinese or Japanese roles.6

Remembering that many more such plays were staged, here are a few:

6. Excluded are revues and other productions that included individual orientalist pieces in “Follies,” “Vanities,” “Passing Shows,” “Gaeties,” or “Scandals.” Plays from pre-Mikado years—e.g., Chow-Chow, The Chinese Question, The Chinese Must Go, The Little Tycoon (an “American-Japanese Comic Opera”), and My Partner—are left off due to their less direct connections here. Years listed are for first U.S. performances documented in sources found to date; some premiered earlier than reflected below. Many were staged on and off for years or revived in later decades; several were written and performed in England but also presented in the United States. The list is based primarily on contemporary newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, programs, and ephemeral lists of production histories (e.g., in “Twentieth Anniversary Historical Souvenir,” Hartford, CT: Parsons’ Theatre, 1 April 1916). Some entries are derived from secondary sources such as Gerald Bordman’s chronicles; a few are based on plays’ mention in studies which also cite many dramas not listed here due to uncertainty about whether they were performed (Bordman 1978, 1985, 1994, 1995). For a long list of plays related to China and staged in New York, see Du (1992, 305–15); for a list of 1870–1970 productions in New York with Asian characters, see Choi (1999, 248–54); for a list of China-centered, U.S.-published plays, see D. Williams (2000, 247–53; see also 1997).
1885  The Mikado
1888  The Pearl of Pekin
1890  A Trip to Chinatown
1891  Wang
1893  Shing-Ching, Daughter of the Moon
1895  Heart of Ruby
      The White Rat
1896  The Mandarin
      The Geezer
      The Geisha
      Burmah
1897  Bimbo of Bombay
      The Cat and the Cherub
      The First Born
      The Idol's Eye
      The Walking Delegate
1898  The Koreans
1899  The Japanese Girl
      His Japanese Wife
      San Toy
      The King of the Opium Ring
      The Queen of Chinatown
1900  Across the Pacific
      Broadway to Tokio
      Madame Butterfly
      A Night in Chinatown
      Slaves of Opium
      Uncle Sam in China
1901  A Flower of Yeddo
      Miyo San (White Lilacs)
      Midnight in Chinatown
1902  The Darling of the Gods
      A Chinese Honeymoon
      Japan at Night
      The Sultan of Sulu
1903  The Isle of Spice
      The Tenderfoot
      China Baby
      Chop Suey
      A Japanese Nightingale
1904  A China Doll
     The Man from China
     Dealers in White Women
     Queen of the White Slaves
     The Forbidden Land: A Tibetan Comic Opera
     Princess Fan Tan
     The Cingalee
     The Sho-Gun
     The Third Moon
     The White Tigress of Japan
     A Prisoner of War
     The Japskys

1905  Fantana
     The Isle of Bong Bong
     The Heart of a Geisha
     The Mayor of Tokio
     The Shadow Behind the Throne

1906  The Boy Behind the Gun
     Chinatown Charlie
     The Lily of Chee Foo
     The Tourists

1907  The Isle of Bamboo
     The White Chrysanthemum
     The Battle of Port Arthur
     The Geisha’s Dream
     Yama

1908  The Flower of Yamato
     Funabashi
     Opium Smugglers of ‘Frisco; or, Crimes of a Beautiful Opium Fiend
     A Broken Idol
     The Isle of Nippon: Japanese-American Musical Comedy
     A Trip to Japan
     A Yankee Mandarin

1910  The Code Book
     Suey San

1911  The Mousmé
     Bow Sing

1912  A Chinese Courtship
     The Typhoon
     The Honor of Japan (Japanese Honor)
     The Flower of the Palace of Han
     The Daughter of Heaven
     The Yellow Jacket

1913  The Lady of Luzon
1914  A Thousand Years Ago
       A Japanese Honeymoon
       O Mimi San
       Hari Kiri
       Mr. Wu
       Chin-Chin
       The Dragon’s Claw
       Twenty Minutes in Chinatown
       Twenty Minutes on the Barbary Coast

1916  Yokohama Maid
       Cherry Blossoms Burlesque: The Yellow Peril
       Little Cherry Blossom

1917  A Daughter of the Sun
       If
       Bushido
       Chu Chin Chow
       The Willow Tree
       The Sweetmeat Game
       Land o’ Poppies

1918  A Chinese Puzzle
       The Song of Lady Lotus Eyes
       A Dear Little Wife
       The Willow Pattern Plate
       East is West

1919  The Faithful
       The Son-Daughter
       Shakuntala
       The Rose of China

1920  Chin Toy
       His Chinese Wife
       Hello Tokyo
       The Lady of the Lamp
       The Mandarin

1921  A Japanese Romance
       Chinese Love
       The Green Goddess
       The Poppy God

1922  Jappyland
       Chinese Lantern
       East of Suez
       The Hindu
       On the Stairs

1923  Out of the Seven Seas

1924  Flame of Love
       The Little Clay Cart
These productions ranged from one-act vaudeville “playlets” to full-scale “legitimate” dramas, and from small-scale operettas to Broadway musicals and an opera. This was *Fay Yen Fah*, which premiered in 1926 in San Francisco (where a review stated that its music “breathes the spirit of the Orient”) and has received scholarly attention from Nancy Rao. Many not chiefly musical in nature still used music to establish mise-en-scène; for example, a scene in

Eugene O’Neill’s *Marco Millions* began with this direction: “From the darkness comes the sound of a small Tartar kettledrum, its beats marking the rhythm for a crooning, nasal voice, rising and falling in a wordless chant. The darkness gradually lifts. In the rear is a section of the Great Wall of China…” (O’Neill 1927, 63).

A 1927 review of the Theatre Guild production of *Marco Millions* shows how central sound could be to these plays’ reception. Vocal practice could make or break an illusion of realistic orientality that many audience members perceived in them. One critic wrote that a leading actor in this New York run:

...instead of shielding the weaknesses of the final scenes, exaggerates them by running away from the impressive simplicity he shows as the young Kaan to let loose a deep-throated and meaningless series of vocalizations. The full sweep of this opulent production is, however, as studded with compensations as it is dimmed by obscurities. Of the many acute characterizations, Dudley Digges’ shriveled Cathayan sage, Chu-Yin, stands out in the highest relief, cold with the imperturbability of the East and wise with the wisdom of the ages.8

The caption to a photo of Digges in his yellowface role stressed the physically displayed and spoken aspects of his performance: “In posture, costume, make-up and voice he catches the cold inscrutability of the East.” In some cases, however, a critic’s dim overall view of an orientalist production left no room for any performative redemption. A 1928 example is a brief note about *The Light of Asia*, which one writer “dismissed” as treating “scenes from the life of Buddha” in a way that was “about on the level of a discussion of the latest Swami by a small town woman’s club.” In his estimation, *The Light of Asia* dragged its cast right down with it. “The dignified Walter Hampden making himself thoroughly ridiculous in the part of Buddha” was one aspect of this.9 But in many yellowface plays, offstage music (and in some, other

kinds of sound) and onstage performance combined to offer illusions of orientality that many found persuasive in both audible and visible ways.

Long-Lived Orientalist Productions

The duration of these plays’ runs varied from ephemeral brevity to nearly undying longevity. Some blurred together eastern and western orients in ways reminiscent of Chinese characters’ appearances in Aladdin stories. One such convergence was the long-running *Chu Chin Chow* (rec. 4.1). Along with their yellowface roles, many plays featured white actors as European or as white American characters transported into orients evoked by sets representing imagined Chinatowns, Chinas, or Japans. Some presented white actors in yellowface and performers of Asian birth or heritage (with the latter distinction often made unclear). A notice for one producer’s 1912–1913 season promised that in the 200-strong cast of “his most elaborate production,” *The Honor of Japan*: “Real Japanese will be mingled with American extra people,” along with which “wooden figures, showing through perforations in the backdrop, will give the illusion of a crowd of a thousand.”

Alongside often shorter-lived productions such as those listed above, *The Mikado* was popular throughout this period, Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* was widely performed beginning in 1907, and other orientalist operas enjoyed enduring popularity. Orientalist dancers such as Ruth St. Denis, Roshanara, and uncountable Salomés performed across the country during much of this period. The English musical plays *The Geisha* and *San Toy* also were popular.

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in the United States, where—like *The Mikado*—they presented white casts in yellowface, singing English light opera in ostensibly Japanese and Chinese scenic and narrative surroundings. Recorded examples 4.2–4.5 offer a sense of that repertoire, which also was transformed in various ways—for example, as heard in a 1922 Fox Trot record based on material from *The Mikado* (rec. 4.6).

In later years, *The Geisha* would become an occasional vehicle for Japanese sopranos including Tamaki Miura and Hana Shimozumi; more often, all of its characters were played by white performers in yellowface. A 1919 newspaper notice (probably cribbed in large part from a press release) for a San Francisco production with Miura in the leading role of O-Mimosa-San conveyed the bubbly tone of much of the enduringly favorable response to the play’s “many gripping, scintillating numbers, full of action, like ‘Jolly Young Japs,’ ‘Dear Little Jappy-Jap-Jappy,’ ‘Chon Kina’ and ‘The Interfering Parrot’—jingles that one invariably finds himself whistling or humming at the close of the opera,” and to “a song that has gone rippling down the years, ‘Chin Chin Chinaman,’ recognized by all the high school glee clubs.” A widely perceived and loved effervescence of tune buoyed the orientalist lyrics of these plays up into the daily consciousnesses of untold numbers of happy U.S. listeners, whistlers, and hummers, as well as into countless glee clubs.

Steadily ongoing or frequently revived performances of English light operas or musical comedies such as *The Mikado, The Geisha,* and less often *San Toy* constituted one sustained context for more numerous productions that were presented for shorter runs. A quick look at these three works’ directions for mimesis will provide a sense of how their physical practice was similar to

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that of many stateside works, and how U.S. productions of these plays tended to circulate the same physical tropes of orientality. Taking them in order of their years of publication, degree of U.S. popularity at their peaks, and longevity of re-enactment, we can begin with The Mikado, which easily places first in all three categories. Its enactment on thousands upon thousands of American stages followed such scripted instructions as “Japanese nobles discovered standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings” and myriad locally directed moments of fan-waving, bowing, and so on. Despite a sung disclaimer that “If you think we are worked by strings / Like a Japanese marionette, / You don’t understand these things...,” stock ideas about the body as a sign of race often worked performers in The Mikado.13

First presented in 1896, roughly a decade after the premiere of The Mikado, The Geisha offered a not dissimilar imaginary Japan. Set to music as English as that of The Mikado and offering occasional bits of sonic orientality, the play’s lyrics sang happily of tea, bamboo, and porcelain; flirting, dancing, singing, and fan-fluttering geisha; and other canonical “antics Japanesey.”14 Some U.S. productions of The Geisha played to an interest in oriental elegance like that seen in more elite operatic venues. Announcements for a 1903 presentation promised that it would “be...gorgeous and unique” because “the scenery was painted by a Japanese artist in the town of Kobe, Japan,

while the company were touring that country” and that the juvenile cast would appear in “costumes also…made there at the same time.”\textsuperscript{15}

White American casts for \textit{The Geisha} assumed the usual costumes, fans, and “almond-eyed” facial attributes of the stereotyped Japanese protagonists celebrated in the lyrics (90). \textit{The Geisha} called for enactments of Chineseness in several characters, and its authors wrote a more consistently “Chinese” successor piece in the form of \textit{San Toy}. Also widely presented in the United States (but less often revived in later decades), \textit{San Toy} supplied a context of lanterns and audible gongs for the delivery of such pseudo-dialect as “I Am Li His sly and wily Plivate Secletaly” by performers in wearable chinoiserie.\textsuperscript{16} With \textit{The Mikado} reigning supreme among them, these three English yellowface musical works were long performed in the United States.

\textit{Entr’acte: Magicians’ Yellowface Mysteries}

Another steady stream of professional yellowface was enacted in more private venues, in engagements of which fewer documentary traces survive. White orientalist magicians appeared in both public and private settings, and often invented names and personas that sounded vaguely Chinese or Japanese. A few examples are Theo Bamberg’s “Okito,” the “Chang Chi Tung” played by Otto F. Regling, and the “Rush Ling Toy” of George La Follette.\textsuperscript{17} Anthony Slide lists other performers of this sort, including one he

\begin{footnotesize}
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terms “the best known” of them (1994, 330). This faux-Chinese vaudevillian seems to have based his stage identity on that of magician Ching Ling Foo:

A New Yorker born William Ellsworth Robinson, Chung Ling Soo shaved his head and, with the use of Oriental makeup, had audiences believe he was of Chinese origin. He never spoke onstage, but instead used a Korean assistant, posing as a Chinese, to introduce his magic tricks. He began his career in vaudeville in the 1880s as “Robinson, Man of Mystery,” and later worked as an assistant to Harry Keller and Alexander Herrmann. In 1899, he returned to vaudeville with his own act, billed as Chung Ling Foo, and as Chung Ling Soo, he opened at London’s Alhambra Theatre…. (Slide 1994, 476)

Notable aspects of this account are the ease with which Robinson took on a Chinese persona, the interchangeability of Koreanness and Chineseness, and the assumption (whether realistic or optimistic) that his audiences could not distinguish a person of Chinese heritage from a white man in yellowface.

The economic condition and material underpinnings of many lesser-known performers of such acts may be gleaned from a 1932 advertisement placed in a magicians’ trade magazine by a Long Island man who was leaving the business. Herman Weber of Bayside, New York put his entire show up for sale because his primary job no longer allowed him time to enjoy this sideline. “Chinese Magic” was one of the two acts constituting a full-evening show which had “earned about $5,000” for him “over a period of years in Church, School and Club work and on the Chautauqua.” His asking price for all of his secrets, tricks, and the apparatus necessary to stage them—including “a beautiful Chinese robe and hat worth $50”—was $125, a sum which he promised that a buyer would “get back for two or three performances.”

The largely unknowable history of most such magicians’ engagements is suggested by a flyer (probably dating to the late teens) for a performer who worked as “Mora.” This promotional sheet offered photographs of

him in yellowface and in untransformed form—the latter as he posed on a New York street with the famous Ching Ling Foo, perhaps as a means of self-authentication. Below an image captioned “Chinese Mysteries,” he promised that his services could “be utilized in many ways for” associations, bazaars, conventions, churches, clubs, colleges, dances (between numbers), department stores, directors’ meetings, dinners, entertainments, factories (meetings), fairs, fraternities, gatherings, institutions, lodges, meetings, musicales, noon-day affairs, private homes, parent-teachers schools, social affairs, social centers, theaters, universities, women’s clubs, Y.M.C.A., etc.19 Mimetic gigs in such settings often went unpublicized and unreviewed; but despite this (and although some of Mora’s exhaustively catalogued venues may have engaged such performers in less regular than intermittent ways), this suggests that people saw these acts in a wide range of social contexts.

Selected Moments of High-Profile Dramatic Yellowface

Many higher-profile acts were better documented. The dramatic yellowface spectacles which were widely seen on the U.S. stage in these decades can be illustrated by five productions: The Heart of a Geisha (1905), The Daughter of Heaven (1912), The Yellow Jacket (1912), Chin-Chin (1914), and East Is West (1919), situated by brief contextual notes. These plays illustrate tropes that were common in dramatic practice, and thus were readily available to white Americans involved in the production or the reception of yellowface. Unlike many overviews of theatrical productions of a certain time, place, and theme, this whirlwind tour refers only in passing (or not at all) to the stories of these

plays. This is not to diminish the importance of narrative to theater, but to maintain local attention to performance, dramatic uses of music, and ways in which their reception may have been guided by various contextual factors; these are the aspects of these plays most apposite to this study’s concerns.

THE HEART OF A GEISHA

Playwright Colgate Baker’s *The Heart of a Geisha* brought together gendered tropes of cherry-blossom aestheticism and a militarized yellow peril. These kinds of female and male orientality met in a play which was billed before its 1905 San Francisco debut as being “likely to create a sensation not only for the beauty of its scenery and costumes, but its frank exposition of little understood Japanese customs and characteristics.” This notice grounded the play’s representational authority in its author’s first-hand experience: “Juliet Crosby plays Kohamma San, the fascinating queen of the geisha girls of Tokio, a character sketched from life by Mr. Baker, who has lived long in Japan and knows its people thoroughly.” An advertisement for *The Heart of a Geisha* played to a taste for authenticity by noting its inclusion of “a Special Cast with Japanese Jugglers, Acrobats, Native Scenery and Costumes.”

One notice stated that “Juliet Crosby, who was delightful in ‘Madame Butterfly,’ will create the role of the Japanese dancing girl,” illustrating the tendency for performers who had been successful in one yellowface role to be

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20. Readers interested in the tales these plays told may find plot synopses in cited reviews.
22. Alcazar Theater, “First Time on Any Stage, Magnificent Spectacular Production of Colgate Baker’s Drama of Modern Japan The Heart of a Geisha” [advertisement], *San Francisco Evening Post*, 8 July 1905. On the same page was a photograph from *Princess Fan Tan*, then being presented by a cast of children whose performance included “Chinese Dances” (“Eunice Gilman, Who Will Play the Title Role in ‘Princess Fan Tan’ at the Chutes To-Morrow Afternoon” [photograph], *San Francisco Evening Post*, 8 July 1905).
cast in others. In a broad sense, The Heart of a Geisha offered one kind of novelty among other staged versions of racial and cultural identities; but it also made a political point, one which spoke implicitly of its historical context of Japanese immigration to the West Coast and the anti-Asian racism endemic to much of white Californian society. Another review shows in part how it evoked an aestheticized Japan: “The setting and scenery of the play are most artistic. The costuming is picturesque. The odor of incense comes from the stage and almost convinces one that the papier mache gods and tissue paper wisteria and cherry blossoms are quite real.” But quaint trappings aside, this was not an Old Japan safely contained across the Pacific. While the review asserted the greater art and originality of Belasco’s Darling of the Gods, it saw a deeper political message in The Heart of a Geisha: “The awakened Japanese attitude toward the rest of the world is suggested in this play in a manner that portends something more than a menace. It is a defiance, and only those who are intimately familiar with Japan and its people even realize the extent of this danger.” Here the Japanese military’s triumph loomed as a steely sign of industrial westernization behind tissue-paper wisteria.

For this reviewer, that orientalized militant threat slipped outwards to become a general attribute of Japanese-ness and of Japanese Americans, one which could be ameliorated onstage by assimilating Japan to American ways of thought or through more drastic measures. The critic wrote that the play “brings to the attention of the Western world a condition of life and thought in Japan which shows in a few startling pictures how eternally alienated is the civilization [sic] of the East from the West, and how the peoples of the two

races will never even approach an equality until a system that makes possible a samurai and a geisha shall be obliterated.”

In hindsight, this seems to have foreshadowed the rhetoric of total war that became prevalent some 40 years later; in a more historically situated sense, it illustrates the serious linkages some early twentieth-century writers made between yellowface productions, race, and American politics in their international contexts (cf. Dower 1986).

In this way, a single orientalist production could play to many white Americans’ wistful fondness for aestheticized tropes of cherry blossoms and to their worst fears of an invasive yellow peril. Both stances infused much U.S. culture, and both were widely propagated in media and performance. Almost always differently gendered as a feminized safe exotic and a masculinized threat less susceptible to romantic containment, they often appeared separately in journalistic writing; but the two could meet on stage, as well as in such other fictive contexts as song lyrics and literary texts.

Chance conjunctures of yellowface dramas with certain contexts could present this gendered dichotomy even to audiences of plays in which one of its terms was largely absent. A Washington, DC vaudeville program from the same year exemplifies this. It featured “Valerie Bergere and Co. Presenting the One Act Playette by Grace Griswold, ‘HIS JAPANESE WIFE.’” Bergere directed this production of the play (which had been performed in San Francisco at least as early as 1899) and played its leading yellowface role of “O Chicka San, Madame Darling.” Two advertisements in the program suggested local contexts to which the audience could relate the play. One played to a congruent sense of pleasantly orientalized Japaneseness by urging

24. “‘The Heart of a Geisha’ The Play of the Year: Will California Regard the Story as Realism or Fiction?,” *San Francisco Evening Post*, 18 July 1905.
theatergoers to “Visit THE JAPANESE BAZAAR,” where they could buy “Direct Importations of Oriental Art Goods” at “the lowest prices in the city.”

Another advertisement, however, took a radically different tone towards the city’s Chinese American community, locating the people within it in ways unlike any cheerful vision of a distant Japan. This full-page advertisement for the Potomac Laundry featured an anti-Chinese screed with transparently self-serving economic motivations. Most of it was given over to a broadside-like, white nativist appeal, one headed in large and peremptory capital letters urging vaudeville audiences in the nation’s capital city to “READ THIS”:

While the Chinese exclusion law is being agitated by Congress stop a moment to think whether you are one of the many who help to support one of these Celestials in this city.

Did you ever stop to consider that by having your laundry done by a Chinaman you are giving encouragement and support to the very class of labor that we are trying so hard to keep out of this country.

There are in Washington more than Three-Hundred Chinese Laundries, Why? Because they are supported by the public. How many of them employ help? Do any of them support our public schools or churches, or elevate the character and condition of our community?

The Potomac Laundry gives employment to intelligent men and women the year round, and pays out thousands of dollars in the course of a year in wages, which goes into the channels of trade, and is the means of enabling many young women, who are compelled to earn their own living an opportunity to do so.

If Chinese are not wanted in this country do not employ them to do your Laundry work, and it will mean that many more good American men and women could be given profitable employment, and their wages so earned spent here and not taken to China.25

The tone here is familiar from nineteenth-century anti-Chinese documents. This exclusionary stance took for granted the ideas that “American” rightfully meant “white American” and that while Asianness was fine in distant oriental (ideally female) forms enacted on stage or viewed in touristic ways, it was something else when embodied close to home by working-class men.

The juxtaposition of the advertisement’s yellow-perilist argument with the program’s listing of aestheticized (mimetic) Japaneseness shows how a yellowface performance could gain meaning from accompanying textual materials. Any audience members who paged through the program while following the performance encountered the laundry’s exclusionary diatribe almost right before watching Bergere embody the leading role of His Japanese Wife, after which they came across the advertisement for imported Japanese home decorations. This offered tropes of safely distant or contained female Japanese orientality and economically threatening male Chineseness.

Although other documents from this period represented shy and harmless Chinese women and (less often) men, and many texts warned of militaristic Japanese yellow perils, in this instance the chance framing of a yellowface production made it easy for audiences to read specific meanings from it.

**THE DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN**

The many yellowface plays which offered aestheticized spectacle could do so on Japanese or Chinese subjects. Two treated here, The Daughter of Heaven and The Yellow Jacket, were of an early-teens moment some observers saw as a time in which Chinese themes began “to allure the imagination of our playwrights” in ways unlike those of “former days” when “the Chinaman of the stage was invariably funny”: “To-day we see the Chinaman seriously as the Chinaman sees himself.” Evident in the quoted article’s title of “Reading the Heart of the East Through the Drama,” a concern with verisimilitude and (imagined) Asian essences informed the production and reception of these and certain other plays. Along with offering plot synopses of embodied chinoiseries, that article positioned China and Japan as equally apt sources for
the texts and practices of staged orientality: “Having thus exploited China and stripped her of her secrets, our managers will no doubt shortly invade Japan and give us plays showing that almond-scented country from the inside, not, as heretofore, from the point of view of the Occident.”26

Sumptuous spectacle was the main draw of a high-budget play called *The Daughter of Heaven.* This was written by French orientalist authors Pierre Loti (who long before had penned the story upon which John Luther Long partially based his “Madame Butterfly”) and Judith Gautier, whose story “La Marchande de Sourires” had provided the Japanese-themed source for *Heart of Ruby,* an 1895 play that bombed miserably in New York (despite orientalist sets which some saw as “exquisite” precursors to those for David Belasco’s later hits).27 *The Daughter of Heaven* was first staged in that city in 1912, a year when New York and London producers offered so many plays set in eastern and western Asian locales that one observer wrote of “the Oriental wave that has swept over the dramatic field, leaving wrecks of costume and Shakespearian, problem and musical comedy productions in its path.”28

Some parts of this wave flowed through France. For example, *L’Honneur Japonais* was to move in translation to New York from Paris that year. “The plot of the piece turns on an incident which Western minds would consider trivial, while Orientals esteem it of deep consequence,” wrote one critic who doubted—and then set aside the matter of—the production’s authenticity:

The taste of an exhibition of barbarism like “Japanese Honor” may be questioned by American audiences; but there are in this play qualities which should bring it success here. It has a kind of rude but robust moralism and it

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27. Winter (1918, 1:482); on the later play’s location in Loti’s career, see Spence (1998, 148–53).
also has a sort of nobility of sentiment. One would have to be a genuine student of historical Japan before he could say that the story of this novel drama, as a picture of ancient manners and morals, is not garbled, but having accepted the view of a strange society, one would hesitate to pronounce it untrue to human nature.29

This mix of qualified admiration and underlying hesitancy also informed the U.S. reception of some similar contemporary plays, as will be seen below.

According to Gautier, the actress Sarah Bernhardt spurred the creation of The Daughter of Heaven. Bernhardt approached Loti with the idea after she saw a “Chinese sketch” by Gautier in a Paris vaudeville theater.30 The resulting production, however, would be far more elegantly staged than was vaudeville fare. As a contributor to the Theatre magazine put it, “The writing of this play caused a strange mental mating, that of two Orientalists, Judith Gautier, daughter of the famous poet, Theophile Gautier, and Pierre Loti, the well-known academician and novelist.” The article elaborated upon this in a way which goes to the heart of much orientalist ideology: “Both are mentally and largely in a social sense hermits. Judith Gautier knows more about China than the Chinese themselves, because she has delved yet more deeply into its rich past. She knows the habits, the color, the language of China. She is impatient of the present because to her it is commonplace, insipid.”31

As Gautier stated in 1913: “I know the psychology of China, while Pierre Loti knows its geography, its customs, its commerce and its material values and achievements.” She had never been to China, but lived “surrounded here by their music, their literature and religion” in her Paris apartment, in which

29. Willis Steell, “French Successes Shortly to Be Seen Here,” Theatre Magazine, October 1912, 118, 120, this at 118, 120.
she assured an interviewer she was “in touch continuously both personally and by correspondence with the finest of their people.” Gautier’s apartment was “made up of little rooms, decorated and furnished with Chinese prints, draperies, ivory gods, tables, vases, chairs. There was nothing foreign to the atmosphere of the Orient save several bronze groups, designed and executed by Mme. Gautier, [and] a grand piano which apologized for its presence by a surface display of Chinese music.” As critics have observed, her concern with surface evocations of orientality also was enacted in the language of her and Loti’s play (e.g., its use of exoticized names for many of its characters).

Dating in some ways back to the early influence of her father, Théophile, Gautier’s connections to orientalist practice were varied and sustained. For example, the cover for one volume of her collection of Les musiques bizarres à l’Exposition de 1900 bore a lithograph of Sada Yacco and Kawakami. The text offered a French translation of the script for their La Ghèsha et le Samouraï and descriptions of tableaux for “Késa”; the music comprised pieces including “Consécration de la Cloche (Danse Nau.)” and “Etigo Dzissi” [Echigo Jishi], referencing Japanese theatrical music from nô and kabuki.

Gautier (and Loti’s) concern with the authenticating effects of surface decoration is seen in documents of the play. A set of souvenir postcards (fig. 4.2) offers a trace of this in a medium which enabled audiences to convey these images to correspondents far and wide. These cards were free for the

33. As noted early on by Schwartz (1927, 56–58).
34. On broader contexts of French orientalist theater, see Pao (1998); see also Brody (1985).
35. Gautier (1900d).
asking in the lobby during at least some performances of *The Daughter of Heaven*, for which the producers must have seen them as promotional devices for generating word-of-mouth buzz about the play. A program encouraged playgoers to request them and even promised to pay for their postage: “‘THE DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN’ SOUVENIR POST-CARD ALBUMS Containing two scenes of the play, may be had gratis upon request in the Main Promenade. Addressed post cards dropped in the theatre post-box, will be stamped and mailed by the management.” This offer’s undercurrent of seeming urgency may have been driven by a fiscal squeeze caused by the production’s expensive staging and its less-than-rave reviews.

The premiere of *The Daughter of Heaven* elicited severely unenthusiastic critical response. A review in *The Independent* stated that the play “ends on a note which may or may not ring true in China, but sounds in our ears less tragic than false.” The writer saw some limited success in its orientalist spectacle but more notable failure in just about everything else:

Typical of Loti, and—for I do not wish to slight his collaborator—typical, it may be, of Madame Gautier, is this play’s emptiness of ideas. As an interpretation of Chinese character or ideals it is no less barren. But the authors aimed at none of these things, and need not be severely blamed for not achieving them. What they have tried to do they triumphantly accomplish. This is the suggestion of a series of dazzling stage pictures, each beautifully adapted to the emotions which spoken word and action are designed to stir. Thus the first scene, in the garden, with blossoms and falling petals, and fountains, and chinoiseries, is an ideal background for the veiled love-making of courtly Arrow-bearer and Golden-Lotus; for the first suggestion, too, of the Tatar Emperor’s romanticism. The gorgeousness and goriness of the other scenes need no key. And what wonderful pictures they will make, staged!

So far as the reputation of Loti goes, however, all this adds nothing. Is it not significant that Paris yields the honor of producing “The Daughter of Heaven” to New York—city of wonderful stages and deplorable acting?38

The critical response to *The Daughter of Heaven* was so dismissive—aside from appreciation for the visual feast it offered—that it prompted some writers to foresee a cyclical cooling-off of U.S. interest in orientalist stage productions. One critic lamented a producer’s decision not to bring a dramatic version of *Turandot* across the Atlantic from Germany for this reason:

The play had been scheduled for production in America this fall, but the cool reception recently accorded to the Gautier-Loti Chinese drama may bring about a change of plan. Managers like to swim with the tide. If a play of the Civil War scores a hit, quickly they present another piece on the same subject. The Oriental play “Sumurun” won a great triumph. Immediately it was followed by “Kismet.” Sometimes the tide takes them in the opposite direction. A Chinese play fails to please; therefore all Chinese plays are bad. That is not reasoning; it is the way of the tide. Mr. W. A. Brady had purchased the American rights of “Turandot” with the intention of presenting Grace George in it, but he has changed his mind….39

Gautier’s desire for authenticity affected both visual and musical aspects of the play. The Century Theatre program stated that its incidental music and overture were “selected from the original Chinese by Mme. Judith Gautier and transcribed into the Occidental system of notation by M. Benedictus of Paris.”40 (Years earlier, Benedictus and Gautier had collaborated on their transcriptions of Asian and African musics at the 1900 Paris Exposition.)41 For *The Daughter of Heaven*, organist Frank R. White performed Gautier and Benedictus’s music “on the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra, a new instrument by which a single musician plays all the instruments of a full orchestra.”

40. Concern for authenticity in theatrical music operated in various ways and settings; as a later example in which musicians’ genre (in-)expertise and visible racial identities were seen as hurting a presentation of the touring Tokio Players, a San Francisco critic wrote that “It is to be regretted that the rules of the Musicians’ Union made it necessary for the Players Guild management to use a trio of American musicians in the orchestra pit. It was entirely out of atmosphere” (Curran D. Swint, “Tokio Players Give ‘Different’ Theater Fare,” *San Francisco News*, 17 December 1928).
41. Gautier (1900a, 1900b, 1900c, 1900d).
orchestra from a key board much like that of an organ. In the incidental music only such instruments as are suitable to render Chinese music are used.”42

Journalists were well aware of the commonality of the yellowface spectacle seen in *The Daughter of Heaven* with that of other genres of staged orientality. One writer connected such plays and the upcoming concert season of Ruth St. Denis, the country’s foremost orientalist dancer:

This season Miss St. Denis chooses an interesting form in which to set her dances—the Japanese. Following close upon “The Daughter of Heaven,” which, while not altogether satisfactory dramatically, was interesting as to the possibilities of color in the Oriental setting, came the “Yellow Jacket,” that most artistic expression of the Chinese idea which delighted those of imaginative perceptions and in a degree prepared the way for the Japanese dances.43

**THE YELLOW JACKET**

Some orientalist plays popular in the United States were written by European authors, but many such works were home-grown American products. One of these was George C. Hazelton and J. Harry Benrimo’s *The Yellow Jacket* (1913). A prominent drama on a Chinese theme, this play constructed orientality in part with sets and music: “The walls pistured in rich colors with dragons, and the ingenious arrangement of doors of cloth folding upward, with other accessories, keep you entirely satisfied with the impression of reality and Oriental locality. In an alcove [at the] back sit the musicians. The admirable restraint of this music, used only on apt occasions for emphasis, is to be noted.”44 Embedded in the narrative as a play-within-the-play was a sort of pseudo-Chinese opera. The same review reported that in it “Mr. Benrimo,

42. “First Time on Any Stage of ‘The Daughter of Heaven’” [program], New York: Century Theatre, n.d. [1912]. The use of the Wurlitzer Hope-Jones linked this production to cinema presentation; as “the most famous theatre organ style,” this instrument was widely used to accompany motion picture screenings (Bowers 1986, 170–89).
long acquainted with the Chinese theatre in San Francisco, is undoubtedly holding to the fact within his own observation. The spirit of it is genuine.”

Benrimo had acted a yellowface role years before in the San Francisco production of *The First Born*. An 1897 review suggests how music and other sound could contribute to the authenticity many theatergoers believed they heard and saw in that and other plays. The critic observed that “It remained for an Easterner—a Bostonian—to discover that a field for the playwright lies at our doors, in the attractive alleys and byways of Chinatown”:

Francis Powers has done on the stage what Edgar Kelly did in music and Chester Bailey Fernald in literature—he has written a little Chinese play in one act, which within its brief moments runs the gamut of love, life and death, and all in true phlegmatic Chinese fashion.

It is a play of few words, for the Chinese are a silent people. They chatter volubly over the little things of life. For the big things they have deeds, not words.

Mr. Powers has been in San Francisco some years, always an admirer of the Orientalism of the almond-eyed quarter. His mornings were spent in ramblings among the vegetable and fish mongers’ stalls; his afternoon in conversation with the prosperous merchants. He has drunk deep of the lore that is to be found in the picturesque region, and his little play is saturated with all things Chinese.

…”It seemed to me that the Chinese field was a fertile one and almost entirely overlooked,” the player-author said yesterday. “I spent as much time there as I could, for I like it, all except the smell. The Chinese airs I copied down by ear, note by note, though I am not a musician. One night we heard a weird tune from an upper room. We simply went in, and they treated us very kindly.”

Not so the scene painters. When they tried to copy the Minyen Temple with brush and colors, the Chinese fairly mobbed them. They had to resort to snap shots taken very early in the morning.

Everything in the play has been carefully studied out, and it is full of little touches that are really artistic and show how well Mr. Powers understands his subject.

The dialogue is all in English—good English—with a few interjections in Chinese. The supers are real Chinese, but so cleverly are the actors and actresses made up that it is impossible to tell where Caucasian blood begins

and Mongol ends. The women jiggle on little shoes, while the men shuffle about, and the learned doctor, Pow Len, in his blue skirts, lavender stockings and big horn spectacles, makes his entrances and exits with the dignity of his caste.

The highbinders of the See Yup Tong are exceedingly well managed, especially Hop Kee, the mender of pipe bowls. The story of Chan Wang is simple. His wife has deserted him for Man Low Yek, a Sam Yup. All his love and devotion center, as is customary in a Chinese household, about the person of his first-born son. The little lad is stolen by his mother, and when the father attempts to rescue him by force is killed.

Chan Wang mourns his son and murders Man Low Yek in an artistic and highly Oriental fashion. At the end of the second scene Chan Wang stands sullenly smoking in a doorway of Bartlett alley. Looey Tsing, a slave girl, who also has a score to settle with Man Low Yek, warns the bereaved man of his coming. There is a sharp stab in the back, a body is thrust through a dark doorway, and Chan Wang stands placidly smoking as before.

The real climax of the play is the death of the first born. Over his body, the nurse, Cho Pow, sings a death wail—also a literal reproduction.

The babel in Chinese of the genuine coolies in front of the bulletin announcing the boycott is as real as the flower-pot balcony, where the unfaithful Chan Lee appears in the fragrance of burning punk, which wafts over the footlights.

The slave girl, Looey Tsing, is better than a volume of sermons or missionary appeals, and her emphasis when she speaks of her setter, the Cantonese dog, is inimitable. All the dialogue is rich in adjectives, as is Chinese speech. It is always ‘the beauteous Chan Toy,” the little first born. The Americans are white devils and their country a barbarous land. A restaurant peddler vanishes with a melodious cry of Chinese olives, a party of tourists pass, fleeced by their guide and credulous of everything.

In a word, the manifold panorama of Chinese life, all unobserved by us for the most part, passes in review. Mr. Powers has caught it as in a mirror, and the strong simplicity of his primal passions wins even to the frivolous American heart. …46

For this observer, aural experience—of “silence” and “chatter,” “weird tunes” gathered in situ, “good English” garnished with Chinese interjections and effusive adjectives, a Chinese “babel” of “genuine coolies,” a “death wail” in “literal reproduction,” and a parting “melodious cry”—was central to the play’s reception as a compelling representation of essential Chineseness.

With this account of The First Born in mind, we may return to The Yellow Jacket of some decade-and-a-half later. A flyer (figs. 4.3, 4.4) promoting the

production’s impending move from New York to Boston for its 1913 opening there and a publicity photograph (fig. 4.5) suggest what the play looked like on stage.47 Wenwei Du’s narrative-centered analysis locates The Yellow Jacket as a U.S. fantasy based in part on Chinese sources, one that constructed an imagined Chineseness distinct from earlier stagings of ostensibly comic “Chinamen” but still fraught with assertions about gendered racial difference (Du 1992, 92–113). Without rehashing that apt interpretation, it may suffice to note Du’s observation that the play’s orientalist feminizing of its male characters took place in part through performed characteristics of their lines (109–13). This linked through language the authors’ scripted representations of orientality and the casts’ embodiment of it in performance.

An English reviewer of the play’s 1913 London production saw a beneficial kind of transformation in Benrimo and Hazelton’s dramatic reinterpretation—a view probably shared by many U.S. playgoers:

The beautiful “Turandot,” greatly as we liked it, was far from being characteristic of the Middle Kingdom; “The Yellow Jacket” is much nearer the real thing, but it must be owned that it is the Chinese play elegantly adapted to Western tastes. The actual Chinese theatre contains too much meaningless noise, an excess of fighting, and too gross an inconsequence to fit in any way with Western standards.48

In a foreword to the script, the authors explained this process of adaptation as one of taking Chinese performance practices construed as childlike and reworking them to fit ostensibly universal U.S. theatrical conventions:

The purpose of the creators of this play is to string on a thread of universal philosophy, love and laughter the jade beads of Chinese theatrical convention. Their effort has been to reflect the spirit rather than the substance. To do this,

47. See also photographs by Arnold Genthe (known for his Chinatown images) illustrating the published script (Hazelton and Benrimo 1913) and images in programs (e.g., “The Yellow Jacket” [program], Boston: Tremont Theatre, week beginning 24 February 1913). 48. “‘The Yellow Jacket’ at the Duke of York’s Theatre,” The Academy, 5 April 1913, 434–35, this at 434.
the property man had to be overwrought; the Chorus had to be introduced. Signs usually indicate the scenes on the Oriental stage; the Chorus voices them for us. While the story of THE YELLOW JACKET is not taken from any direct source, it is hoped that it may convey an imaginative suggestion of all sources and reflect the childhood of drama.

This sutured together notions of the primitive and the oriental into a common evolutionary scheme. This was based on the idea that all human groups could be arranged on a scale of progress ascending towards a Eurocentric norm, and on the belief that this social phylogeny recapitulates human ontogeny: “Primitive people the world over begin to build their drama like the make-believe of children, and the closer they remain to the make-believe of children the more significant and convincing is the growth of their drama.”

The Yellow Jacket inspired a short poem by the same title; its opening stanza used aural images that moved the play’s soundscape out into print:

The delicate sound of a tinkling bell,
A soft-falling silence—the Orient’s spell,
An exquisite odour of bright cherry flowers,
A fantasy whispered in fairyland’s bowers.

The play left a lasting impression on many theatergoers. After its 1912 New York premiere, it toured to other U.S. cities and later enjoyed another New York run. Hazelton and Benrimo’s work served as a touchstone for critical comparison for years. A 1917 review of a China-“inspired” dance piece, “The Yellow Feather,” described its sets and entertaining inauthenticity, and said that the production was “reminiscent of ‘The Yellow Jacket’ in name only.”

49. Hazelton and Benrimo (1913, unpaginated preliminary page).
51. See J. H. Gardner Soper, “Signor Perugine in ‘The Yellow Jacket’” [frontispiece illustration after a painting], Century, December 1918, facing 145. It also was staged in Berlin, Munich, Vienna, and Budapest by Max Reinhardt; in Moscow, directed by Stanislavski; and in Madrid, in an adaptation by Jacinto Benavente (Dickinson 1921, 723–24).
That same year, an article titled “Harrowing Moments in Popular Plays” categorized a revival of The Yellow Jacket as one of three “Oriental” thrillers popular in recent vaudeville and legitimate theater. Another was the yellow-perilist concoction If: “Among the war plays, ‘If’ contained about as much killing as any other. It was a dream play of a Japanese invasion of California. Somehow its harrowing moments did not strike its audiences quite as seriously as could have been expected, but nevertheless there was plenty of violence.” The other was characterized as one of the “two most morbid plays of the season,” and invoked a narcotic trope of orientalized danger—a peril laden with heavy innuendo of a woman’s drug-abetted fall from gendered sexual morality into a state reminiscent of tropes of so-called “white slavery”:

In “The Man Who Came Back” a young man whose life has been everything but upright is sent by his friends to the Orient to avoid being imprisoned for forgery. There he goes from bad to worse. Some time after his arrival, drunk in an opium den, he cries out for some one to drink with him. From behind darkened curtains a voice answers. It is a girl, an American girl, drunk with opium. He looks, and in a moment recognizes her. It is some one whom he knew in San Francisco, about the only woman for whom he had any respect. She was honest when he left, but when he was gone she had changed. The Orient had caught her in its meshes.53

The review mentioned that “ANOTHER Oriental play, ‘The Yellow Jacket,’ revived at a series of special matinée performances contains a weird Oriental murder.” The category of the oriental linked these white actors’ embodiments of three overlapping tropes of entertaining danger: a violence-laden vision of an invading, militarized yellow peril; a fearful scenario of more personal invasion of European American bodies and souls by opiate addiction and moral debasement; and a “weird Oriental murder” perhaps, due to its apparent singularity, less systematically threatening than exotically chilling.

As mentioned in the review quoted above, The Yellow Jacket featured musicians in an upstage alcove. The script specified their location: “In the center at the back is an oval opening surrounded by a grill, within which the musicians sit” (1921 [1913], 276). Throughout it, the sounds of gongs and cymbals marked many entrances and exits; the general direction “Music” accompanied many others. These musical cues were tied to stage business which presented such physical enactments of oriental character as this:

WU SIN YIN gazes solemnly before him; his whole action on entrance is consciously done to display his costume; when seated he spreads his legs and turns out his toes, displays his finger-nails on his left hand, two of which are very long, one being gilded and the other colored green; he fans himself; during this business the orchestra plays, the cymbals crash, the drum rolls and the wooden block is struck. The cymbals are struck also, when he mentions the name of the Emperor. (276)

Another stage direction began: “Enter DUE JUNG FAH followed by her maid, TSO, door left. Both hold their fans before their faces and walk with mincing steps to center, during music” (277). Other directions to musicians included “Screeching sound played on instruments” (281), reminiscent of language-based tropes of music—or anti-music—unwillingly or unhappily heard by white Americans in China or U.S. Chinatowns.

In contrast to this directed use of musical instruments to create social distance through sonic effects designed to fall short of local notions of music, the play’s language was comparatively free of unidiomatic dialect. Most of the dialogue took a tone marked less by any purposeful shortcomings of grammar or pronunciation than by its elevation above ordinary speech: for example, “Who are you that impedes my way with clamorous noise?” (305) and “I beckon your sublime presence” (306). This located the action in a quaint, exotic, and distant past rather than positioning the characters as substandard speakers of English, but it left open the question of how actors in
these roles interpreted their lines. These interpretations probably drew upon dominant practices of orientalized vocal production examined below.

Related topical material remained popular in the theater in subsequent seasons. Chester Bailey Fernald’s *The Cat and the Cherub* offered yet another dangerous excursion into oriental dramatic space inhabited by well-spoken yellowface characters. That production was set in San Francisco’s Chinatown. A 1914 review praised its language for clearly representing a racialized threat: “All the suave cruelty, sneaking savagery and impenetrating passivity of the yellow man is admirably characterized by Mr. Fernald’s incisive and well-chosen English.”54 *The Yellow Jacket* itself was revived for years to come. 55

CHIN-CHIN

Another 1914 China-referential production was less fraught with peril. This was the wildly popular *Chin-Chin*, which starred the musical comedy duo of Dave Montgomery and Fred Stone in yellowface. *Chin-Chin* featured widely recorded hit songs and enjoyed a famously long run in New York. An early review of an October performance in Philadelphia conveyed the show’s tone and presciently foresaw the enduring popularity it would enjoy:

> Garbed in the costumes of China and as funny as ever, Messrs. Dave Montgomery and Fred Stone were the stars to-night in a new production by Mr. Charles B. Dillingham at the Forest Theatre. “Chin-Chin,” the new offering, is by Miss Anne Caldwell, Messrs. R. H. Burnside and Ivan Caryll, which when some few edges are pared seems due for a long run when it reaches Broadway.

55. In the season of 1928–29, for example, New Yorkers could attend the play at the Coburn Theatre, where the cast included Schuyler Ladd in a yellowface role he had played long before. See Coburn Theatre, “The Yellow Jacket by George C. Hazelton and Benrimo” [advertisement], *Theatre Arts Monthly*, December 1928, [unpaginated preliminary page]; Schuyler Ladd in *The Yellow Jacket* [photograph], *Theatre Arts Monthly*, January 1929, 15.
The review stressed the role of music as a sign of racial difference:

Having the old nursery classic of Aladdin as a basis, it is not difficult to surmise that the two stars would be slaves of the lamp. As Chin Hop Low and Chin Ring Chang the Messrs. Montgomery and Stone respectively worked hard and made the audience laugh heartily. Between them they had three songs in the first act and a dozen or so scattered throughout the programme, and they were applauded by an audience which enjoyed the fun which the two “slaves” had with a party of Americans who were en route to Pekin. Their Chinese song and Temple Bells in the first act were the keynotes of the scene.56

This performance of Chin-Chin used music not just to mark orientality, but also to connect the show to contemporary political events. According to the Herald’s reviewer, “The song now ringing along the battle front in Europe, “It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary,” which has been published in the HERALD, was sung by the two stars and aroused enthusiasm.”

Montgomery and Stone were famous entertainers who often stirred together varied ethnic and racial caricatures for the sake of comedy, doing so in ways permeable to political events and social issues. Their interpolation of a song iconic of the war in Europe is one example of this. Another is their nod towards the debate over women’s voting rights alongside orientalist mimesis in a notice for an appearance three years earlier in Stockton, California: “The Japanese ballet, the cowboy ensemble and the suffragette chorus are other incidental numbers which have been signalized by especially noisy marks of approval.”57 An accompanying photograph portrayed the duo as Swedish immigrants. Chin-Chin itself presented a mix of yellowface and less cosmetically marked characters framed as Chinese and other types.58

Fred Stone was known for his embodiment of multiple character types in a single performance, and in Chin-Chin he appeared not only in yellowface: “...Mr. Stone has steadily progressed in his gift for ‘make-up,’ until it has become not unusual for him to be half a dozen personalities, different in every essential, such as voice, mannerism and even size, throughout a single evening. If in ‘Chin-Chin’ he were to omit his disguises something would be missing in the play.”59 This situated the orientalist aspects of Stone’s act among other kinds of mimesis; but his yellowface parts were most widely represented, being shown on covers for almost all of the show’s sheet music.

His sequential acts were similar in some ways to parades of such types on vaudeville bills, or over the duration of an opera season, or by actors in various roles. His, however, were embodied successively by a performer whose quick-change enactments of human categories served as a vehicle for a tour-de-force display of his and his partner’s mimetic virtuosity. This offered a vision of racial surfaces known more surely than ever to be only skin-deep in their makeup and costume, if more deeply internalized in practices of voice and movement. As Anthony Sheppard has noted, the drawing power of quick changes into or out of yellowface figured as well in such earlier shows as A Trip to Japan, which opened in 1909 at the New York Hippodrome (see Sheppard 2000; see also fig. IN.46 above for a souvenir program’s cover).

Montgomery and Stone soon took Chin-Chin from Philadelphia to New York, where it became a nearly permanent fixture. This longevity became a point of interest in its own right. In September of 1915, the New York Times ran an article playing to public interest not only in the play itself, but also in the

second-order fact of its durable popularity. The newspaper’s statistics give a concrete sense of the scale of one big-city, big-time production which featured yellowface performance among other types of racial and ethnic mimesis:

“Chin-Chin,” in its second year, has established some unique records at the Globe. At practically every performance Montgomery and Stone have played to absolute capacity. Not a single member of the company has missed a performance, nor a single change has been made in the orchestra or stage staff. The curtain has risen at the same time every evening, and the running time has not varied a minute either way since its opening. In addition to the company of 110 people, 80 stage hands are employed to handle the production behind the scenes. A staff of 10 women assist the wardrobe mistress in handling the costumes. The number of people employed in the company and theatre totals 310.

The average attendance has been 12,000 per week. More than a million dollars has been paid over the box office window for seats. The newspapers have been the only medium of advertising, no billboards being used.

During the 350 performances the chorus, averaging eight changes of costume at each performance, have had to make more than 3,000 changes. It is estimated that Fred Stone as Mlle. Falofski had ridden 300 miles around the circus ring on the horse. During the run of “Chin-Chin” Montgomery and Stone celebrated the twentieth anniversary of their partnership. More than 12,000 mail orders for seats have been received.60

Whether the article’s numbers were completely true or skewed upwards for publicity purposes, a huge number of New York theatergoers—no doubt including many repeat customers—witnessed Montgomery and Stone in their yellowface act. Chin-Chin would close its run at the Globe that December with its 600th performance in that venue, after which it moved on to Boston.61

Beyond its documentation of sober or exaggerated attendance figures, the article’s emphasis on exact repetition played to a desire for predictability akin to that for the reiterated ethnic mimesis of national types in vaudeville. Along with the article’s quantitative bent, its stress on utterly consistent running times seems to have appealed to an aesthetic of invariance in which

precise repeatability indexed a machine-age professionalism, one conceived in an industrial mode of time-clocked labor and technical precision. This points up how smoothly polished were some solidly-backed yellowface productions. Certain aspects of their production and reception were broadly akin to industrial processes of commodity production, which could be only seemingly distant from these more theatrical forms of labor.

Some reviewers saw Chin-Chin as a kind of glorified vaudeville revue. The Theatre Magazine located it midway between “real” Broadway productions and more rapidly changing vaudeville bills:

“Chin-Chin” is like a happy country, it has no history. When Montgomery and Stone’s names are flashed on Broadway we know that the real theatrical season has struck town. The plot of “Chin-Chin”—if there is a plot—is so thin that you cannot find it. But what does it matter if in each act you find real enjoyment. It may be called a vaudeville extravaganza with a “punch” in it, and when the curtain goes down on the last act you wish it could start all over again. Music, girls, costumes are all above par. As to Stone he is a real artist and alone worth the price of admission.62

The sense of personality-driven pleasure in evanescent spectacle described here is indeed reminiscent of vaudeville. But despite its founders’ drawing power, Chin-Chin survived beyond the involvement of its original stars and grew to include other musical acts. A 1919 presentation in San Francisco advertised its cast as “WALTER WILLS and ROY BINDER / Company of 65—Mostly Girls / TOM BROWN’S CLOWN SAXOPHONE BAND.”63 The production was ending a run at a theater where it had drawn large audiences for four weeks.64 The saxophone band’s involvement in Chin-Chin dated back at least to 1915, when they appeared in a New York program for the show.65

64. “Columbia” [theatrical column listing], San Francisco Chronicle, 7 September 1919.
Their picture was featured on some versions of its sheet music, and in 1916 the group recorded a medley of pieces from the play (rec. 4.7).

*Chin-Chin* gave rise to massive editions of sheet music and recordings. While much of the show’s published music was nearly barren of orientalist gestures, in performance it featured such pieces as “Shopping in the Orient,” “Chipper China Chaps,” and “Go Gar Sig Gong-Jue.” The popularity of its sheet music is significant due to the number of families whose pianos must have borne images of Montgomery and Stone in yellowface. By far the most common *Chin-Chin* cover, that icon of the show appeared on its biggest hit (“Good-Bye Girls I’m Through,” fig. 4.6), seven other songs, a vocal score, a selection, and a Fox Trot (fig. 4.7). Edison, Columbia, and Victor issued pieces from *Chin-Chin* as vocal recordings and instrumentals for dancing (rec. 4.8). Advertisements in its programs encouraged audience members to extend their evenings of orientalist recreation after the show in more public ways as well. One promoted a cabaret called the Tokio, a block south of the Globe Theatre; an advertisement for that establishment, “New York’s Newest Novelty,” depicted a woman in kimono serving champagne.

**EAST IS WEST**

Sheet music published in conjunction with the 1918–1919 play *East Is West* also was hugely popular. The production featured “Chinese Lullaby” and

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68. Anticipating overlap between purchasers of various exoticist music, this “Chin-Chin Fox Trot” was advertised on sheet music for “Hawaii I’m Lonesome for You” (Albert Gumble and Jack Yellen, New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1917); cf. Chapter 8 on such practices.
other “Chinese songs” by Robert Hood Bowers, whose other works included suites to accompany “Japanese” and “Burmese” dances by Ruth St. Denis.\textsuperscript{70}

The play’s incidental music also incorporated other orientalist pieces. At Brooklyn’s Majestic Theatre, selections from \textit{Madame Butterfly} and \textit{The Geisha} were interpolated for entr’actes, and a San Francisco production of \textit{East Is West} included Hosmer’s “A Chinese Wedding Procession” (rec. 4.9).\textsuperscript{71}

Bowers’s “Chinese Lullaby” was published in variants with photographs of the play’s starring actresses in yellowface. Fay Bainter was the best known player of the leading role. She was portrayed on the most common covers for “Chinese Lullaby” (fig. 4.8) and “East Is West,” as well as in such media as die-cut advertisements (fig. 4.9), flyers, and magazine illustrations and advertisements.\textsuperscript{72} The program for a 1921 presentation informed the audience that “The Chinese Lullaby as sung by Miss Bainter is for sale in the lobby. Price, 35 cents.”\textsuperscript{73} And in a way akin to the routine Hollywood practice of casting Hispanic extras in Asian walk-on parts, Lupe Velez played the lead in the synchronized-sound film version and also was pictured on sheet music; this played to category systems that could use a white/non-white binary logic or perform a kind of casting triage among white, black, and other.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{71} “William Harris, Jr. Presents East Is West” [program], Brooklyn, New York: Majestic Theatre, week beginning 1 November 1920; “East Is West” [program], San Francisco: Century Theatre, beginning 24 October 1921.
\textsuperscript{72} See also Silvio Hein and H. Short, “East Is West,” from \textit{East Is West}, New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1919; “‘East Is West,’ a New Comedy Now Being Presented at the Astor” [photograph], \textit{Theatre Magazine}, February 1919, 95. In another instance of nested mimesis, Bainter’s yellowface act became an object of other performers’ imitations; e.g., see a photograph of Adele Rowland in “Three Favourites in ‘The Lady in Red’” [photographs], \textit{Theatre Magazine}, July 1919, 17.
\textsuperscript{73} “East Is West” [program], San Francisco: Century Theatre, beginning 24 October 1921.
\textsuperscript{74} See cover of Robert Hood Bowers, “Chinese Lullaby,” from \textit{East is West} (Universal film), New York: G. Schirmer, 1930 [1919], reproduced later in this dissertation as figure 8.63.
“Chinese Lullaby” was widely recorded. Many records of soprano Olive Kline’s rendition of the piece have survived 85 years of potential breakage to remain common today, suggesting how popular it was in its time (rec. 4.10). Bowers conducted the piece for an instrumental recording (rec. 4.11) more marked by orientalist coloristic devices in its orchestration than were many others; presumably this reflected his taste and the song’s rendition in the theater, where the composer sometimes directed the orchestra.\(^7^5\) New Yorkers who enjoyed watching *East Is West* during its Manhattan run could go to the Waldorf-Astoria afterwards to dance the fox trot as Joseph Knecht’s Orchestra played the show’s theme song, and listeners across the country could do the same using the Columbia record of that group’s performance (rec. 4.12).

Beyond the popularity of musical compositions played with *East Is West*, Bainter’s performance apparently inspired a piece published a year later. The cover art for that seeming tribute, “The Sing Song Girl Intermezzo,” showed Bainter in yellowface and referred to her as “the original SING SONG GIRL of the MUSICAL COMEDY EAST IS WEST.”\(^7^6\) Four years after that, Bowers’ “Chinese Lullaby” would resurface—complete with a note about its assimilative move from dialect to standard English lyrics—in a 1924 compilation of music for film accompaniment (see Chapter 10).\(^7^7\)

*Musical Intertextuality in Orientalist Theater*

Just as productions of *East Is West* incorporated extant orientalist music that was previously unrelated to the play, so did later theatrical presentations use

\(^7^5\) “East Is West” [program], New York: Astor Theatre, week beginning 1 March 1920.
\(^7^7\) Erno Rapée (1970 [1924], 338–39).
its much-loved “Chinese Lullaby.” One among many examples is seen in the accompaniment for The Shanghai Gesture as it was staged in New York in 1928, starring Florence Reed. Among the many pieces its music included were Friml’s “Po-Ling and Ming Toy,” “Moonlight on the Ganges,” excerpts from Madama Butterfly, and Bowers’s “Chinese Lullaby,” which was played as exit music and thus could ring on in its audiences’ ears as they headed home.78

The Shanghai Gesture also shows how yellowface productions’ marketing materials, press coverage, and published scripts could convey a sense of a play to people who did not attend it. So popular in book form that it reached its fourth printing in thirteen months, the script included many directions that aurally evoked orientality through enactment on stage and in the minds’ ears of the drama’s readers. Some discontiguous excerpts illustrate this:79

[answering a telephone, a Chinese character] [takes off the receiver and replies in the squeaky voice Orientals always feel it is necessary to employ over the wire.]
Herro! Herro! Herro! (31)

Her English speech is almost perfect. The speech of a Chinese woman who has learned her English in a cosmopolitan school. If anything, it is a little too precise, her “a’s” too broad and the difficult Chinese “r” meticulously avoided. (49)

[She crosses to the cages and draws her stick across the bars, giving the GIRLS a sharp order in Chinese. Instantly the GIRLS begin a queer falsetto chanting refrain.]
THE GIRLS IN THE CAGES
[Chanting.]
Goddà—dammo—Goddà—dammo—Goddà—dammo—hai! Hai ho hai! [The strumming of a Chinese mandolin and the squealing of a Chinese flute accompany this chant.] (57)

[She comes rushing across the galleries—half falling down the staircases, crying out her strange Asiatic wails. At the bottom she pauses, then steals softly over to the dead

78. “Florence Reed in ‘The Shanghai Gesture’” [program], New York: Century Theatre, week beginning 20 February 1928; pieces noted here and not previously cited are Rudolf Friml’s “Po Ling and Ming Toy” (Boston: Boston Music Co., 1924); Chester Wallace and Sherman Myers’ “Moonlight on the Ganges” (New York: Harms, 1926). See also “Florence Reed in The Shanghai Gesture” [photograph], Theatre Arts Monthly, June 1926, 365. For more on Reed in this play, see Choi (1999, 95–104).
79. Reformatted here from the published script, Colton (1926).
body. She kneels and peers into the dead face. Slowly she begins to pull the body toward the staircase. The dance music rises and falls…. (244)

I’ve been waiting for three gongs.—
[From the opened door the music from the celebration outside swells into the room.]
MOTHER GOD DAMN
Shut the door! Keep out that sound—keep out that damned—dance music—keep it out— (246)

[She gathers the body in her arms and begins to croon a lullaby—the queer chant with which Chinese mothers put their babies to sleep.]
Na—ngne—na ngne—no—ni—ne—na—na ngne—na ngne—na—ni!—
[She finishes the chant brokenly, then rises and spreads the length of yellow silk gently over POPPY’s body.]
THE CURTAIN FALLS (255–56)

These passages show how scripted directions for yellowvoice practice guided the musical acts of stage performers and the aural imaginations of readers at home, and how atmospheric directions for offstage gongs and so on wrapped both kinds of experience in more densely orientalized acoustic environments.

Along with this audibly supersaturated air of exotic strangeness, the dramatic text’s current of racialized sexual spectatorship was played out in pictorial form in media beyond that of the book’s cover illustration. A set of publicity postcards bore cover images (figs. 4.10, 4.11) that pandered to a kind of “white slavery” sensationalism, with cutouts in the cover offering a teasing glimpse of women’s faces from one of six photographic postcards of stage scenes which could be viewed by opening the folio. These kinds of acts and images were seen against a backdrop of performances that overlapped in various ways with any one play’s cast, iconography, or music. For instance, four years earlier Reed had starred in East of Suez, and an image from that play appeared on the cover of sheet music for Bowers’s “Chinese Flower.”

associated with *East Is West*, Reed held a chordophone that was one in a long line of *shamisen* and *sanxian* depicted in U.S. images of Asian musicality.

Many other productions of these and later decades used Chinese or Japanese musical gestures, instruments, or imitations to construct orientally exotic theatrical space. Some were part of less “legitimate” performances, such as those of magician—or in his preferred term, illusionist—David Devant, whose acts included the well-known “Indian Rope Trick” and his more idiosyncratic creation of “The Burmese Gong.” That illusionistic act was “suggested by seeing an old gong in a shop,” and it played to stock literary and journalistic associations of resonant gongs and mysterious goings-on: “Three people were placed in different positions on the stage, and every time the gong was sounded they played a kind of invisible ‘family coach.’”

One last pair of elite examples is found in the memoirs of Katharine Cornell, who rose to prominence in the 1920s and 1930s. In the season of 1927–1928, she starred in *The Letter*, in regard to which she quoted a Boston reviewer as writing: “Next to no one hereabouts knows the Malay Peninsula; but seeing is believing at the Morosco Theatre; while upon the sensibilities of the audience plays the Chinese flute, haunting the chamber where the letter is sold and bought, sounding suddenly upon the final scene—a repetitious tune eternal as the race and the East, to Occidentals lulling and piercing both.”

Nine years later, Cornell assumed one of her best-known roles as the Javanese character of Oparre in *The Wingless Victory*. Quoted in a review, her words show how her part was linked to its dramatic ancestor: “Inevitably—and in the best manner of Madame Butterfly and such-like Orientals soiled by

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82. Quoted with incomplete source citation in Cornell (1939, 237).
the white man’s careless hand—Oparre will commit suicide.” Along with the self-destructive role’s lineage, its dramatic context was clear to the reviewer, who continued: “But she will take the children with her, out of any worse fate’s clutch. And inevitably, too, her white man will repent too late, will rededicate his broken life to the ways of the sterile sea. It is Mr. Anderson’s triumph...that he can keep this finale from being either sheer horror or sheer opera.” In this and countless other acts, white America’s imagined orientals were played—and often died again and again—for audiences during and beyond the century’s early decades; and they routinely did so with musical or narrative elements that linked them to histories of other racial mimesis.

This variety of performance provides a backdrop for the practices of Blanche Bates in Belasco and Long’s Madame Butterfly (1900) and in Belasco’s The Darling of the Gods (1903), and of Walker Whiteside in The Typhoon (1912) and Mr. Wu (which had its U.S. premiere in 1914, after opening in London in 1913). By grounding yellowface practices concretely in the body and the voice, the next chapter’s interpretation of those performers’ tales of mimetic learning and practice will deepen our understanding of dramatically embodied orientality beyond that afforded by spectatorial accounts. Close readings of Bates’s and Whiteside’s first-person tales may illuminate the bodily and vocal practices which enabled their high-profile yellowface acts, the interpersonal relationships behind these practices, and the cultural, socioeconomic, and political contexts which surrounded and often guided those relationships and the meanings many people made from them.

83. Quoted with incomplete source citation in Cornell (1939, 333).
Staging the Mimetic Body

Grounds & Methods of Professional Yellowface

The story of how Walker Whiteside became a Japanese is a tale with a moral. All is fish that comes to the net of an intelligent actor. The Japanese came, the actor saw and mastered.

The most difficult traits to master were the quick, high tones of their informal converse with each other and the walk so unlike the free American stride.

The yellow faces were made yellow by two coats of grease paint and the high eyebrows were set a facial story above the eyebrows, that were whitened or shaved. The moveless muscles were stilled by association, and taken on as the actor shuffled himself into the soul and skin of Tokeramo.1

Most accounts of U.S. yellowface were based on reviewers’ spectatorship of acts on the stage. Critics sometimes tried to assess the authenticity of such characterizations, but they seldom addressed the processes of transmission, emulation, and appropriation which took place before such a play opened. Two prominent white actors, however, shed some light on these aspects of mimesis by explaining how they developed their yellowface acts. Published in widely read magazines, these accounts became part of public discourse. This gave some audience members tools with which to interpret what they witnessed on stage, how it had come to be, and what it might mean.

As were the ways in which audiences understood such enactments, the processes by which performers learned to embody orientality were bound up with their social contexts. Chief among these in the cases below were their day-to-day interactions with Japanese-born people in the United States. Many such moments were grounded in histories of Asian immigrant labor and in the power relations endemic to economic meetings of people in disparate

positions of race and class. Not all yellowface was based in these hierarchical situations, but some sources in which performers of orientalist roles reflected on their techniques were similar in this regard. Personal experience in the domestic sphere was a common foundation for such enactments.

These performers’ accounts lead to a more inward-looking focus on their means of somatic and kinesthetic mimesis of orientality, as well to ideas and histories beyond the theater. This analysis focuses on discourses and practices enacted and discussed by white actors, but an account by Yoshio Markino, a Japanese consultant for an English production of *The Darling of the Gods*, interposes a comparative perspective. Markino’s story documents one Asian person’s experience of a related process of intercultural transmission. His tale of mentoring white English performers’ mimetic Japaneseness shows how a London yellowface production acquired social valences partially different from those prevalent in U.S. discourse about orientalist performance.

Nearly ubiquitous in these performative settings was a belief that actors could represent a racial or national subset of humanity as a categorical type homogeneousbly bearing certain stock attributes and not others. Performances of this type reasserted the hegemonic status of that principle as plain common sense, encouraging audiences to see this epistemological model of the social world as a credible one. Beyond offering content for such categories as “the oriental,” they also asserted the supposedly good sense of structuring one’s entire mental map of humanity by means of racial typology. Many such moments did this in a paradoxically compelling way: by taking such beliefs for granted, and thus demonstrating that this was just the way things were.
Blanche Bates & The Darling of the Gods

Diverse essentialized figures not only strode operatic and vaudeville stages, but also appeared in “legitimate” drama. Some characters appeared in more than one genre, as seen in a pre-operatic incarnation of Madame Butterfly. That version’s primary exponent was Blanche Bates (fig. 5.1), born in Oregon in 1872. Bates later would star as Yo-San in The Darling of the Gods, also set in Japan and produced by David Belasco, who gave that play its setting because of her popularity as Butterfly. Belasco had in mind the idea of a new version of Il Carabiniere, an Italian play he had reworked before; but “remembering the success of Miss Bates in his Japanese tragedy of ‘Madame Butterfly’ he altered his purpose and determined to base on the old Italian tale a romance of Japan, and he proposed to John Luther Long,—well versed in Japanese customs,—that he should help him in the work” (Winter 1918, 2:71).

Together Belasco and Long developed The Darling of the Gods as a successor to Madame Butterfly and a new vehicle for Bates’s mimetic practice. Belasco was a towering figure, a man who “had set standards of realistic theatrical production in New York that most other producer-directors aspired to achieve”; in staging his plays he paid “lavish attention” to decorative surfaces in ways which struck many people as offering “frequently thrilling jolts of authentic experience, performed by ‘personality stars’ but couched

2. Winter (1918, 1:471; see 469–73 for more on Bates). Bates also was widely depicted in visual media (e.g., Otto Sarony Co., “Blanche Bates,” gelatin silver print photographic postcard, ca. 1907; Detroit: Detroit Publishing Co.).
3. Belasco himself had embodied such racial types as Uncle Tom (Winter 1918, 1: facing 258).
4. For plot synopses, see “‘The Darling of the Gods’—A Japanese Play,” Collier’s Weekly, 27 December 1902, 8–9; Winter (1918, 2:74–76). For an analysis of the play’s narrative and other representational practice (not focused specifically on practices of embodiment as such) in its contexts of social and political history, see M. Liu (2003, 48–57). For a recent examination of Bates’s enactment of these roles in a wider context of white American women’s engagement with orientalist culture, see Yoshihara (2003, 77–87); see also Choi (1999, 68–79).
within a comfortable respectability to cushion the delicate tastes of female auditors” (McConachie 1990, 64). For these two productions set in Japan, he traded on a combination of orientalist surface and star drawing-power.5

Theater historian Lise-Lone Marker’s study of Belasco’s scenic practices shows how these productions were seen as evincing the “stage naturalism” central to his aims in many productions. This was a key context for Bates’s performance of orientality. In these two plays, he preceded her appearance with atmospheric curtains (for Butterfly) or tableaux (for Darling of the Gods) representing such things as rice fields, gardens, and lanterns (Marker 1975, 124–25). After these introductions, the productions framed her with compelling lighting effects, which Marker characterizes as playing for Belasco “the part of visual music”—one able, in his quoted statement, “to realize impressions that mere words or scenes could not suggest” (Marker 1975, 86). Marker sees this as being especially true of Madame Butterfly, in which he conveyed the slow passage of a long night of futile waiting through gradual transformations of a lantern-lit evening, darkening shadows, and brightening and fading stars leading to a “gray dawn” and eventual sunrise, all of which served “to intensify characterization, mood, and situation in the play” (87).6

Belasco’s illumination of Bates’s act relied on then-new electric lights behind a set with shoji-style windows made of “semi-transparent linen” (88–89). In front of this mix of late-Victorian high technology and Japanese

5. A broader sense of the racial discourse surrounding (or narrowly missing) Belasco himself may be gained from an analysis of his own social position vis-à-vis his Jewishness at a turn-of-the-century moment of anti-Semitic caricatures of producers more strongly identified as Jewish (Hodin 2000); a recent study of Edward Gordon Craig’s more symbolist response to Japanese traditions of staging and scenic design offers a contrastive counterpart to Belasco’s quest to evoke in his audiences a sense of realistically staged naturalism (S.-K. Lee 2000).
6. See also Winter (1918, 1:481) for a similar description of the scene.
representational form, Bates’s barely moving body, kimono-clad yellowface surface, and imagined essence patiently waited. Marker tells of similar effects in Belasco’s promptbook for *The Darling of the Gods*, which called for “long and dark” shadows, flickering lanterns, “soft blue moonlight” filtering through a misty courtyard beyond open *shoji*, and so on, and she links these practices to the “exoticism” and “dreamlike, shadowy relief effects” of pantomimes and “Chinese” shadow plays popular in Paris in the 1890s (89–90). Lighting conjured an air of “grim suspense and drama” for an elliptically represented dungeon threatening Yo-San’s torture, underpinned a double suicide, and lent an “unearthly, ethereal” atmosphere to a ghostly scene of “the symbolic reunion of the dead lovers” (91–92, 25). Belasco sought tangible authenticity by importing “nearly all the furniture…from Japan” (61).

Marker also mentions a Belasco production which did not feature Bates and was set in San Francisco’s Chinatown rather than an Old Japan. His New York presentation of *The First Born* used incense and music to wrap the play’s audiences in a multisensory evocation of a North American pocket of orientality represented through the eye, nose, and ear—an illusory essence which audiences had to inhale with every breath as they internalized it in audible form (63–64). This attention to scenic effects suggests their seeming power to evoke the “real” and the imaginary nature of their referents. That tension is seen in what Marker describes as Belasco’s “perhaps apocryphal yet nonetheless characteristic exclamation during rehearsals for *The Darling of the Gods* that he did not want a mere moon—‘I want a Japanese moon’” (77).

Belasco’s sumptuous versions of Japan offered journalists a touchstone for comments on humbler shows. A review of a San Francisco presentation of
Macbeth by Japanese students played to readers’ presumed familiarity with
the producer’s sets as a high-water mark of beautiful verisimilitude, one the
writer saw as being far from attained by this event. An invocation of Belasco’s
lofty standard set the scene for a critique of this low-budget production’s fatal
shortcomings of scenic luxury, representational veracity, and mimetic skill:

The scenery also left much to be desired and would hardly have won
commendation from a Daly or a Belasco. It is true that real high art needs no
accessories, but then, it was not the highest form of art that one found in the
pavilion last night, and one’s sense of the eternal fitness of things was a bit
shocked by perceiving the dangerous proximity of a sofa, which represented
the state furniture of Macbeth’s castle, to a brawling brook, which apparently
babbled through a Japanese tea garden.

Nor did the presence of a pretty hand painted screen of Japanese work add
to the verisimilitude of the sleep walking scene, in which the murderous lady
of Shakespeare’s fancy was attired in a kimono of blue, on which silver stars
blazed defiance at the footlights. If William Shakespeare could have seen the
Japanese idea of his masterpiece, he might have been heartbroken, but he
certainly would have smiled, for the master playwright was a humorous bard
if he was nothing else.

It was in the banquet scene in the third act, as presented by Japanese stage
managers, that the real climax in the way of stage setting came. Four bottles
of soda waters fizzed and sparkled on the board, round which clustered the
entire cast, save only the murdered king. Not content with the effect thereby
produced, the stage manager spread a red table cloth over the festive board.
Banquo’s ghost walked stiff leggedly, because of his gilt armor, into the midst
of the diners—and unfortunately tripped over the end of the cloth.7

This sarcastic tale conveys a sense of all that was not Belasco-like. Whatever
shortcomings this Macbeth had, the critic’s glee in skewering them made
it clear that while Belasco could represent Japan, it was ill-fated for these
Japanese-born players to enact the tragedies of Scottish lords and thanes.8

7. “Japanese Students Present Comedy Version of Macbeth with Unique Stage Settings,”
San Francisco Call, 18 November 1907.
8. As another example of Belasco’s fame, his name offered a verbal hook on which to hang
favorable comparisons of smaller-scale orientalist offerings. One such event was a Ruth St.
Denis dance recital, for which an announcement promised “there are light effects worthy
of David Belasco, and stage settings which might frame an elaborate play” (“Ruth St. Denis
to Give Her Dances — Interpreter of Oriental Themes Will Make First Local Appearance
at Columbia,” San Francisco Chronicle, [possibly 2 April 1911]). For a contextual sense of
published discourse that year regarding foreign stars on the U.S. stage, see Archie Bell,
“America the Melting Pot of the Stars,” Theatre Magazine, November 1911, 163–64, 166.
Belasco’s *Madame Butterfly* featured Blanche Bates in the title role for a long run beginning in 1900. She enjoyed similar success in *The Darling of the Gods*, beginning with a Washington, DC premiere in November 1902 and 186 performances in New York starting that December. A 1905 San Francisco program billed it as having played 342 times in New York’s Belasco Theatre and 145 times in St. Louis for a “World’s Fair Run” (fig. 5.2) concurrent with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The 1905 program announced a double-bill matinee that would feature Bates as both Yo-San and as Butterfly.

White American writers generally positioned Bates’s enactment of these roles as being unlike her own character and thus completely mimetic. This enabled her embodiments of Butterfly and Yo-San to testify to her dramatic abilities. A 1903 *Theatre* magazine interview with the actress began:

> The difference between the individuality and the power of players to best portray the creations of dramatic authors is one of the seeming paradoxes of the profession.

> Not infrequently, the exponent of the most tragic rôles will be found off the stage to be a person of infinite jest; while, vice versa, the most expert comedian, who is capable of setting the playhouse in a roar, is often a creature of morose and retiring disposition. Another syllogism is the frequent disposition of comedians to essay tragedy and tragedians to sport with the comic muse.

> An excellent example of these two conclusions is to be found in the person of Blanche Bates, whose artistic, powerful and moving rendition of Yo-San in “The Darling of the Gods,” during the past season, has been the delight of thousands of theatre goers.

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10. “David Belasco Presents Blanche Bates in The Darling of the Gods: A Drama of Old Japan” [program], San Francisco: Grand Opera House, beginning 2 January 1905. Various kinds of racial representation in these events’ programs offered immediate interpretive contexts. This one’s announcement for the double bill faced a hardware-store advertisement depicting a white man who needed a new hammer because he had just broken the handle of his by striking the head of an African American man. Another advertisement in this program, for “Leonhardt’s Oriental Grotto and Tamale Cafe,” promised playgoers “Selections from all Operas played in Ragtime” and a “BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL SOUVENIR.”
Miss Bates was born amid the breezy spaces of the West and as a product of that impulsive locality combines all the dash, fire and enthusiasm of the accepted Westerner. Yet nothing could be more characteristic of her capacity to subdue the natural into the requirements of the mimic than the manner in which she combines the personal fervor of the Occident with the calm and stoicism of Yo-San, the daughter of the Orient.\textsuperscript{11}

Bates’s popularity in these roles raised the question of whether she might become limited to playing orientalist parts. Had this happened, it would have been partially akin to the later typecasting of “Japanese sopranos” as eternally (if not exclusively) fated to sing their own ascribed orientality. But the interview raised this issue only to dismiss it, doing so in a way which also foreshadowed Geraldine Farrar’s ability to be heard as an exemplary exponent of Butterfly without being forever consigned to orientalist parts.

The interviewer asked Bates: “Are you not afraid that having achieved your greatest successes interpreting Japanese character you would be forced to indefinitely continue those rôles?” In reply, she “spoke of the tendency towards specialization in every walk of talent and industry” and continued:

“Well, I’m at least booked for another season of Mongolian grease paint, and sometimes fear that I had better buy that commodity by the wholesale. It is astonishing if you become identified with a certain line of parts, how loath managers are to let you break away from them. Still I have no fear that Mr. Belasco will keep me forever in kimonos. Yo-San is a most grateful character to play, and when she is a central figure in such a magnificent production as ‘The Darling of the Gods,’ one has little cause for complaint.”\textsuperscript{12}

This offers another instance of the freedom many white performers had to enact orientality without limiting themselves to such roles in the future.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Edward Fales Coward, “Blanche Bates...,” \textit{Theatre Magazine}, July 1903, 164–66, this at 165.
\textsuperscript{13} This race-based freedom to escape typecasting is corroborated by George Arliss, one of Bates’s fellow stars in \textit{The Darling of the Gods}. A white Englishman, he recalled that after performing the play in New York and on the road for a year-long American tour: “The play went on for another season, but this time I declined to continue with it. I found that I was in
Moving to the experiential underpinnings of professional yellowface, several key questions arise here. How did these practices acquire credibility in relation to ideas about authentically embodied racial essences? How did they involve the voice? How deeply embedded were they in contexts of class and race that enfolded Bates’s performance? These contexts supplied her with grounds for mimesis and gave her audiences interpretive cues. Some processes of mimetic learning coexisted with power disparities between domestic laborers and employers, in ways partially comparable to aspects of blackface. Others took place through white actors’ observation of Asian people in less clearly hierarchical contexts of intercultural encounter.

Bates based her enactments of Butterfly and Yo-San in domestic modes of study and kinesthetic appropriation. In a 1913 interview, she reminisced about how she had developed her means of embodying orientality by studying with—and simply studying—her Japanese maid.14 Her account speaks to bodily and vocal mimesis, and to her ability to pass unwittingly as Japanese even in the minds of fellow actors she encountered backstage.

The relevant passage began by evoking a slip of the actress’s memory: “Miss Bates started to call Suki, her colored maid, then quickly stopped short and whitened a bit.” While the mention of Bates’s whitening is provocative here, the reference to Suki as “colored” may be more startling. It evoked a danger of being regarded as a specialist in Oriental parts. Already I was receiving innumerable plays written round Japanese noblemen, Chinese ministers and Indian potentates. I felt I was in peril of getting into a rut. Moreover, I had a desire to play a part which gave me more freedom of expression in both voice and action. The perpetual restraint of gesture and emotion which is part of the Japanese character began to get tiresome. So we booked our passage home” (Arliss 1932, 211–12; see also 264).

14. Wider discourses of Asian people’s tutelage of white American artists (in a broad sense) also were at play throughout these decades; as a later example pertaining to visual art, see “Three Artists Who Transcend the Bounds of East and West,” Asia, February 1931, 115–17.
broad category of the non-white subordinate and a specific kinship with histories of African American domestic labor. At least in hindsight after many intervening decades, Bates’s reference also recalls histories of white minstrels’ blackface mimesis of African American uses of the body and voice.

Also resonant with histories of white American references to African American servants by first name only, Bates never mentioned her Japanese servant’s family name in the article. In a casually offhanded way, this absence subtly affirmed the unequal nature of their relationship.15 The actress went on in that way to explain her mistaken utterance and stricken response:

“Poor Suki,” she moaned. “She was my maid for several seasons, both before and after playing ‘The Darling of the Gods[,]’ Suki was the original of both my Butterfly in ‘Madame Butterfly’ and Yo-San in ‘The Darling of the Gods.’ Our talking about the old plays brought back memories of her. She died a few seasons ago. Suki was one of those California Japanese who was not coarse in her humility, like most of the lower class Japanese as we find them on the Coast. She greatly aided both Mr. Belasco and me when these two Japanese plays were produced. She became my maid when I was playing in ‘Under Two Flags’ in San Francisco. From her I learned how to fan myself in true Japanese fashion and, more importantly, how to walk ‘Japanesely.’ Suki also taught me the proper way to sit down and get up, to hold a cup of tea in my hand and sip the tea, and the hundred-and-one little things that Japanese women do that, all added together, make them the fascinatingly interesting women on earth. She taught me how to gain a Japanese accent with English words, by certain little inflections of the voice, thereby giving a Japanese swing to the lines and showed me the A, B, C’s of Geisha-girl coquetry. And she helped me in my makeup to such an extent, in the part of Yō-San, especially, that on more than one occasion I was mistaken for Suki by different members of the company while standing in the wings!”16

15. Unfortunately, this elision of her family name also leaves this analysis no other option than to refer to her as “Suki” (with, in this context of white authorship, disturbing undertones of false familiarity and subordinate status) or not to refer to her by name at all, but only by her social roles—which would efface her memory even more to the status of an anonymous representative of a type of domestic laborer. Shifting between those options in an attempt to avoid either extreme, the interpretation below is best read with the awareness that neither approach offers a satisfactory counterpart to the protagonist’s family name of “Bates,” and that this disjunct naming practice could reinscribe the hierarchical assumptions of its source. 16. Wendell Phillips Dodge, “A Chat with Blanche Bates,” Theatre Magazine, July 1913, 22–24, viii, this at 24.
Bates’s focused work on her staged Japaneseness brought together bodily and vocal mimesis, mentoring, and appropriation. Voice and body were wedded in the physical processes by which actors made racial difference audible and visible. For Bates, those practices included techniques for moving the body, transforming her speech, and remaking her skin’s surface into a visible counterpart of her kinesthetic representation of female orientality.17

She based her practice on a process of transmission and appropriation, one in which her own close observation and imitation was enmeshed with her teacher’s attentiveness and instruction. Yet despite the reciprocal importance of both women’s agency in these intense day-to-day interactions, their social and economic context was far less balanced. Bates did not hide the fact that her mentor was also her maid, but she presented that double role as neutral narrative background drained of any great significance. This absence of any critical reflection on her personal servant’s contradictory position as also her expert teacher is an unsurprising reflection of Bates’s social locations.

This aspect of Bates’s story—the ease with which she could elide a relationship of radical inequality into an aesthetically faded, pastel backdrop behind a romanticized personal interaction devoid of power—makes her tale a multivalent one. It signifies one way in which dominant assumptions were played out not only in yellowface acts but also in the formative processes which enabled them, as well as in published accounts of those processes. Texts such as the interview with Bates could contribute directly to the social meanings fans and critics made from their experiences of her yellowface acts.

17. For a sense of broader contexts of such self-transformations and audience expectations regarding the cosmetic aspects of her yellowface practice, see Judson D. Stuart, “The High Cost of Stage Beauty,” Theatre Magazine, May 1915, 238–40; see also Yoshihara (2003).
Bates next spoke in a way further reminiscent of many white Americans’
accounts of sentimental feelings for African American servants. Such tales’
surface warmth did little to conceal a chillier inequality, one often elided:

“Dear little Butterfly, the sweetest part I ever played, and I copied Suki in every
particular for my portrayal,” she continued. “She always had a frightened way
about her that was sweetly pathetic, as though her head was always under a
sword.

“I will never forget her show of deep emotion and anguish when she
received a letter from her brother telling her of the torture to death of her lover
in far-away Japan on the eve of his departure to join her in San Francisco. She
cried all that afternoon—it was a matinée day—and all during the evening
performance crouched beside my trunk in the dressing room. That was during
the last days of ‘Under Two Flags.’ Later, in ‘Madame Butterfly,’ in the scene
where poor little Butterfly kills herself, I tried my best to be poor Suki over
again when she received that letter. At every performance Suki would watch
me most carefully from the wings—she seemed to be made happy over having
that sad memory brought back to her. Again, in ‘The Darling of the Gods,’
I made use of that same anguishing touch in the chamber of horrors scene.
It was Suki that I was playing, Suki, Suki!” (24)

Bates told this story in a way which located the significance of Suki’s tragedy
chiefly in relation to the gravitational center of her own career. Interweaving
personal loss and mimetic acts, the narrative located the meaning of Suki’s
experience as existing in yellowface performances. Suki’s weeping and her
crouching beside the actress’s trunk gave her a model to emulate and rework;
switching roles as observer and observed, Bates then enlisted the memory of
her maid and model to validate her enactments of Butterfly and Yo-San night
after night. But Bates also was observing in those later moments, watching
Suki watching her, studying her servant and teacher’s reactions to the public
enactment of what was once Suki’s own grief, committing to memory for later
retelling her imaginings of what swelled in her Japanese observer’s heart.

This is not to take Bates personally to task, but to invoke her account as
symptomatic of its time and place. The avenues connecting yellowface theater
and social interactions were not limited to literal or metaphorical enactments
of racial dynamics on stage and to their presence as interpretive context for theatergoers. These dynamics also could guide the ways in which actors created yellowface characters and in which they spoke about these processes.

Yellowface was not unique in this mutual embedding of socioeconomic issues and performance. By mimetically embodying her maid’s sufferings but effacing her teacher’s tenuous social position, Bates positioned Suki as a role model who shared some ground with blackface minstrels’ Mammy figures. All of these performers played female types that they knew as members of a racial category of female domestic subordinates. Wrapping warm sentiment around hierarchical relationships, recasting them by eliding inequality and making room for fond affection, this narrative’s nostalgic mood made it a safe frame for aesthetic enactments of race. Within it was a space where mimesis could be abstracted from real life, without engaging the subordinating (from one perspective) or discomfiting (from the other) aspects of racialized labor.

Bates did not find living models to be necessary for all her enactments of human types. Her interviewer asked: “‘For your part in “The Children of the Ghetto,” I presume you made daily visits to Hester, Orchard and other East Side streets in New York’s Ghetto?’” She answered: “‘Not a bit of it. I am not one of your rubber-neck sociologists…. …Mr. Zangwill very carefully drew a mental picture of his conception of the part for me, and so realistically that I could not help but see and act her as he meant her to be’” (viii).

David Warfield’s account of how he “created ‘Simon Levi’” by means of a “novel quest for local color in the ghetto” exemplifies the role of actor-associological-tourist that Bates eschewed. Along with notes on “the coloring of the skin,” Warfield wrote: “When you first go among them one of the first
things you notice is the expression of the eye and mouth. It is pleading, fearful, intelligent and gentle. The voice corresponds with the face, being seldom loud, harsh or indignant. The favorite tone is a piano and often a pianissimo. They use the body, especially the hands, in gesticulation.”¹⁸ But in developing her Butterfly and Yo-San, Bates found in her maid an already (literally) domesticated exemplar of what she took as an essential type upon which to base her performance. Perhaps the degree of difference ascribed to non-European types made observation and tutelage seem more crucial to her for enacting Japanese parts than Jewish and other ethnic European roles.

Although the passage’s final cry of “It was Suki that I was playing, Suki, Suki!” asserted an individual model for Bates’s practice, her characterization of her Japanese protagonists must also have enacted a generically gendered orientality. Had it not used standard techniques of bodily and vocal mimesis, it would have risked unintelligibility. No doubt she garnished that repertoire with specific uses of the body and voice she learned from Suki, and infused it with the charisma she clearly possessed. In any case, in regard to the cultural circulation of these practices, Bates’s high profile as Butterfly and Yo-San afforded ample opportunity for other yellowface performers to emulate her “original” imitations of Suki, and thus for her personally developed moves to pass into the more general repertoire of U.S. tropes for enacting orientality.

While we can only guess at Bates’s intent in telling of her Japanese role model’s enjoyment of the actress’s mimetic Japaneseness, her recounting of it offered two clear meanings. Suki’s enjoyment signaled her approval of Bates’s theatrical “playing” of her, making it clear that the actress had not imitated

her maid’s practices against her will (if this would even have been an issue at the time). It also gave Bates a general imprimatur of authenticity, one that was a kind of complement to appeals to Asian singers’ European tutelage as a sign of operatic credentials—and more directly, to invocations of bodily training for such ballet dancers of Asian heritage as Florence Koba (see Chapter 3). The ability of Bates’s yellowface performance to entrance her Japanese maid certified it as an accurate portrayal of a racial essence.

Common in writing about plays set in China or in Japan, such appeals to authentication by spectators identified with a production’s supposed referent connected many kinds of performance. Various articles told of the affirmative response of Asian or Asian American audience members to yellowface plays. A 1905 review of The White Tigress of Japan reported that “Hundreds of Japanese are present at each performance and the usual quietude of the subjects of the Mikado is not evident, however, for they shout ‘Banzais’ at the top of their lungs and cheer the actors with vehemence.”19 Another example is the press attention paid to the validating effects of Chinese and Chinese American theatergoers at the “Oriental matinée” of A Thousand Years Ago (see Chapter 3).20 Many accounts vouched for such performances by suggesting their ostensible veracity as representations of real racial essences.

In other articles, the less vocal presence of audience members whom the reviewer perceived as having authentic grounds for assessment could prompt wishful speculation about their opinions. A review of The Heart of a Geisha took that tone: “There were a number of Japanese men and women among the audience. It would be interesting to have the criticism of some intelligent,

competent Japanese authority to answer the question whether the philosophy of the geisha girl is as truly applicable to Japan as are the fine sounding theories of our own Goddess of Liberty to this country.”21 This ethnicized authentication of performative skill did not always rely on direct observation of audience members. A 1917 notice on Miura’s impending return to San Francisco appealed to the subcultural press to vouch for the representational accuracy of the Japanese singer’s Italian American supporting cast member:

When “Madama Butterfly” is given, the Suzuki of the cast will once more be that delightful artist, Elvira Leveroni, a Boston girl of Italian parentage, who is possessed of a mezzo-soprano voice of liquid quality and a sense of characterization that is all too rare upon the operatic stage. With such fidelity does she portray the role of Suzuki that the Japanese newspapers of this city praised her highly last year. The association of the real Japanese and the “imitation” one in this presentation of “Madama Butterfly” is unique.22

The connection between ethnicized spectatorship in the theater and in the world outside did not escape Bates’s interviewer. In another article that year, he put the real-life spectacle of Ellis Island on a rhetorical stage: “Here real dramas are enacted daily. No theatre anywhere presents such a repertoire of plays and actors, and nowhere are to be found such types. Not even the wonderful stage effects and “types” of David Belasco…can compare with the continuous performance at Uncle Sam’s Theatre of Immigration.”23

Casual spectatorship was central to other orientalist uses of the body. Actress Mabel Bardine invoked firsthand observation of residents of San Francisco’s Chinatown as the foundation for acting by the cast of Suey San, a 1910 vaudeville piece set in that locale. She told of this experience to refute

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21. “‘The Heart of a Geisha’ The Play of the Year: Will California Regard the Story as Realism or Fiction?,” San Francisco Evening Post, 18 July 1905.
22. “Association in Opera Cast is Unique,” San Francisco Call & Post, 17 February 1917.
the idea that physical characterizations in the play were based on *The First Born*, and so to claim creative originality for herself and her fellow players:

“I have never seen “The First Born,” said Miss Bardine, as she loosened the tightly drawn bands of hair and let them fall in long, dark strands over shoulders that it seems a pity to hide beneath her Chinese costume, “but I have been told that the only resemblance my sketch bears to it is in the Chinaman standing in the doorway smoking and it would be foolish to criticize it on that account. That is a characteristic custom, as any one walking through Chinatown may see for themselves. Carlyle Moore, who wrote ‘Suey San,’ was stage manager at the Alcazar when ‘The First Born’ was produced there and so was very careful to avoid any similarity.”

24

Here as in Bates’s account, a key unspoken assumption was that to imitate convincingly an Asian/American person’s “natural” ways of using the body was a badge of professional accomplishment, while to imitate another white actor’s already mimetic act would be a sign of derivative unoriginality and subordinate artistic status, or even of a crass kind of industrial espionage.

In contrast to the notion of certain white actors as authors of their own yellowface practices, this positioned Asians and Asian Americans as raw material for actors’ creative processing in their reworkings of bodily stances and gestures seen on the street or in the home. This distinction also underlay many enactments of stock types including European immigrants and African Americans. Mimetic performers of these categories often invoked observation as the basis for their acts, investing them with a double aura of authenticity and creative authorship, while ethnic performers who lived those social locations often were seen as merely natural players of themselves.

Japanese immigrant domestic laborers were readily available to upper-class white American households in the teens, and newspapers referred to these workers as a category. Employing them offered a means by which

yellowface actors could enjoy sustained mentoring by—and observation of—“authentic” role models. By paying the low wages of a servant, an actor could retain a “native” expert coach in culturally normative Japanese ways of using the voice and body. In regard to the yellowface body (if not the voice), this took place for silent cinema as well. Before shooting the 1915 Famous Players version of Madame Butterfly, Mary Pickford “engaged a Japanese maid” specifically “to assist her in interpreting the part” for the screen.25

BLANCHE BATES & THE DARLING OF THE GODS IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT, 1: YOSHIO MARKINO IN LONDON

Suki was not the only Japanese consultant for The Darling of the Gods. After its U.S. premiere and again in 1914, Herbert Tree presented it in London. Tree retained expatriate Japanese artist Yoshio Markino for his cultural expertise.26 Markino had higher social status than Suki, and those who wrote about him gave more weight to his identity and agency. This is clear from references to him by his full name: “Mr. Yoshio Markino has supervised the manners and customs of the characters, thus many historic touches are added to the elaborate production, and a result is arrived at which is both rich in terror and tragedy, as well as in æsthetic charm and grace.”27

Markino served as a consultant for the London production of the play in 1903, as well as providing illustrations for a souvenir program created for the

26. For brief background on Markino, see Sato and Watanabe (1991, 164, 134). Markino consistently interpolated the “r” into his family name, which now would be transliterated as “Makino”; this study follows his spelling. Tree’s revival of the play “met with an enthusiastic reception at the hands of a large and brilliant audience” (“‘Darling of Gods’ Pleases: Tree’s Revival of Belasco Play in London a Great Success,” New York Times, 18 January 1914).
27. Egan Mew, “‘The Darling of the Gods’ at His Majesty’s Theatre,” The Academy, 24 January 1914, 122.
play’s 100th performance in that city. He devoted a chapter of his memoir to that episode in his life. As a trace of one Japanese person’s experiences as an advisor for a yellowface play, albeit for the English stage, it offers a useful counterpart to the interview with Bates. Unlike Tomijiro Asai’s brochure, Markino’s book was not self-published, and it may have been subject to a (non-Japanese) English or American editor’s pen. But its personal tone and authorial voice—over and above its Philadelphia publisher’s preservation of unidiomatic turns of phrase—suggest that it did reflect Markino’s views. Beginning with a tale of arrival at the theater, it shows how invested he and his employers were in the idea of his authentic Japaneseness:

IT was the beginning of November, 1903, when Mr. Spielmann told me that Sir Herbert Tree (Mr. Tree, then) was going to reproduce a Japanese play called “The Darling of the Gods.” I might be a useful help for him. Did I care to work that? I answered him positively. Only a few days later I received a letter from Sir Beerbohm Tree, “Will you come to see us immediately?”

I went to the stage door of His Majesty’s Theater. First person I met there was Mr. Michael Morton.

“What part of Japan do you come from?” was his question.

I answered most rapidly—“Aichi Ken, Mikawan o Kuni, Nishikamo-Gori Koromo cho O-Aza Komomo Aza Jimokudai.”

I was sure that he could not catch a single word, but he showed a most satisfactory smile. Afterwards I learnt from him that he was rather afraid that I might not be a real Japanese, because I “don’t look like Japanese.” Good gracious! I wanted so badly to show him my Keidsu (family tree), which my brother is keeping in Japan. With that family tree you can trace as far back as more than a thousand years, when my ancestor was a royal prince. “Shika mo Seisei toto taru Seiwa-Gengi no Matsuyeo nari Anakashiko, Anakashiko!” (At least, am the descendant of the purest and most worshipful Gengi family, the true offspring of the Emperor Sewa. Amen! Amen!) (Markino 1910, 108–109)

Despite—or even because of—its unintelligibility to Morton, Markino’s fluent recitation adduced geographic and linguistic evidence that authenticated him as a true representative of an exotic essence. The recounting of Markino’s

lineage in his second Japanese-language statement assured all concerned of his credentials not just in national, but also in class terms.

After discussing other topics, Markino told of his satisfaction with the business side of his consultancy: “Morton brought me to Mr. Dana’s room, and we settled the ‘business matter.’ Gentler, easier and fairer than any business I had before! I said to myself, ‘Oh, I don’t hate the business matter now! I see it does not always taste like castor oil. This is perfectly honey!’” He then confessed his embarrassment at failing to recognize Tree and praised his skill: “Why, how could he transfigure himself such as Richard II. last night? He is most wonderful actor for “making up,” and I renewed my amazement once more when he “made up” himself as Zakuri [Markino’s spelling]. A real Japanese villain!” (110–11). Having brought the narrative around to staged Japaneseness, Markino addressed his own work:

The way Mr. Tree and Mr. Morton drilled all those “extra” ladies and supers was wonderful. I can never forget their patientful task. They asked me to make them “real Japanese,” and “to be very particular for everything, and not a bit of mercy for that.” Every word of mine was the rule for them. I knew I was such a dreadful demon to them. Poor “extra ladies” so often had to sit on the hard floor half-an-hour, or even an hour, according how the rehearsal was going on. Those leading actors and actresses shared this torturing all the same. But they were so wonderful the way every one of them caught the real spirit of Japan. (111)

Markino and his employers believed in a national essence which could be communicated through bodily mimesis. Hired specifically as an expert consultant, he enjoyed some appreciable latitude to issue directives from a position less tenuous than those of Japanese maids in the United States.

Markino’s less subordinate status also was clear from the fact that he developed friendships with some of the actors and actresses he coached:

There was a Japanese restaurant near Bloomsbury at this time. One afternoon I took Mr. Tree, Miss Ashwell, Miss Constance Collier, and Mr. Morton there.
We sat down on cushions and ate Japanese dinner with chop-sticks. Mr. Tree said, “I really feel that I am Japanese,” and I saw on the stage that he was as good as his words.

Miss Ashwell copied my sister so well from her photo. I often wished to call her my sister.

As the first night was approaching I began to be so busy. Besides the daily rehearsal, I had to look after costumes, coiffure, and scenery painting, to see if all the details were correct. Last few nights the rehearsal was going on as late as four or five o’clock in morning, I could not sleep more than four hours.

My actor friends used to invite me to “a Samurai dinner” at various restaurants. Yes, we all were “samurais”—mock Samurais of the prosperous English actors, and one real Samurai in miserable poverty.

I am still keeping the intimate friendship with some of these “Samurais.” (111–12)

His observation of these actors’ and his own different economic positions illustrated his awareness of who was profiting most from their arrangement, but did not dissuade him from enjoying friendships with cast members. He presented this as a structural aspect of their social positions, not a form of exploitation. Rather than focusing on such disparities, Markino emphasized his friendship with his students (perhaps assimilating himself to their social standing despite their different financial situations) and the quality of their transformations—and thus his own accomplishments as their teacher.

Writing several years after this experience, Markino looked back upon it:

Was the rehearsal of this play merely a pleasure to me? No, there was something more serious and more important for my life. I don’t think I have ever told that even to Sir Beerbohm Tree before. Now let me confess it freely. It was such a valuable study for my art. It was a best chance to look all those pretty ladies and handsome actors so closely and to watch all their movements. Where else could I have such a chance! I stared at their faces and I stared at their figures all through the rehearsing time. Nobody thought of me vulgar, as it might happen so if I did the same at any public place, for it was my duty to rehearse them. And when I went back to my room I used to draw them from memory. What a good life class it was! (112–13)

Along with showing how Markino’s experience as an artist served his role as an acute observer, this suggests the bidirectionality of spectatorship in such moments, even though white Americans’ accounts of work with Japanese
servants tended to focus on their own acts of looking. All of these people’s socioeconomic positions affected whose versions of these stories entered into public discourse, and from there into many Americans’ mediated belief in the raciological accuracy of yellowface acts. Most often this belief was grounded in white actors’ tales of observing Asian or Asian American people, or of their tutoring by such role models, often framed by contexts of domestic service. That frame had the credibility of widespread European American experience (as upper-class employers, observant middle-class passers-by, or lower-class economic peers) with servants of Asian heritage. Rhetorically situated in a position well below that of the stars they served, their double location as racialized servants and expert mentors could affirm notions of servile Asian character while validating the results of white actors’ performative work.

Markino’s memoir is unusual in its reflection of his public interactions with cast members of The Darling of the Gods, and for his ability to leave a published trace of his understanding of what mimetic processes entailed—and meant to him. He emphasized the conscious work necessary to teach his students ways of using the voice and body that were new to them: “Of course I was as faithful of my duty as possible. So my brain was twice busier than Mr. Tree was imagining” (113). In consort with Markino’s comments about how closely he observed the cast’s every move, this belies any notion that he served as an un-self-conscious model. Unidirectional relations of looking and imitation underpinned yellowface acts based on “slumming” trips to U.S. Chinatowns, but a broader range of foundational experiences was available.

The final paragraph in Markino’s chapter is fascinating for its brief but emotionally resonant evocation of his stance towards The Darling of the Gods:
After this play was put on I often visited the theater to meet all my actress and actor friends. One evening while I was watching the play from the wing, the stage manager teased me to push me on the stage. I was so frightened that on the same night I had a nightmare, and when I was awakened and found myself in bed I was so happy. I am sure that the stage manager’s joke affected on my nerves too much. (113)

Having given his account of this episode in his life, Markino chose to leave his readers suspended at a charged and vivid moment: the writer lying wide awake in bed in the dark of night, nerves still jangled by a nightmare spurred by his fear of forced bodily exposure to the gaze of a London theater audience which was enjoying the fruits of his prior labor with the cast—but with his simultaneous feeling of profound relief at the knowledge that he was safe at home, far from the risk of involuntary visual examination by English theatergoers. Markino does not tell us about the root cause of his almost vertiginous fear or the actual scenario and narrative of his dream, but their foundation in his belief that he was about to be pushed out into the midst of an orientalist production he had helped to construct is telling. It leaves little doubt that he was deeply aware of the power of categories ascribed on the basis of visual perceptions of the racialized body—potentially his own.29

Despite the disjunctures between Markino’s situation and that of “Suki,” they had a certain ambivalence in common. Both were in far from comfortable

29. That power would be borne out in an article in which the author made explicit his belief that Markino’s national origins made him an authentic representative of a racial essence: “If there are many men in Japan like Yoshio Markino, the supremacy of the white race is nothing more than a chance survival, an instance of our vain self-love.” He then read national and individual character from Markino’s body, using such latently phrenological phrases as “the forehead is spacious, wide, and high.” This language was like Corcoran’s regarding Tomijiro Asai—e.g., his reference to that singer’s “round, honest head.” Harris also used Markino’s voice as the object of an interpretation reminiscent of ways in which Asai’s singing would be characterized; both used expatriate Japanese men’s English-language abilities to signify upwards assimilability (Frank Harris, “A Talk with Yoshio Markino: ‘A Japanese Artist in London’,” The Academy, 17 December 1910, 582–84, this at 582; N. Corcoran and Tomijiro Asai, “Up the Scale with a Japanese Tenor,” New York World Magazine, 3 March 1918).
financial positions and shared their cultural expertise with yellowface actors, and thus they inhabited social locations which may at once have drawn them downward as economic inferiors and upward as cultural authorities. These can only have been complex positions. Read together in this way, Markino’s self-told tale and Bates’s story of Suki show that certain behind-the-scenes ways in which U.S. yellowface constructed orientality were seen as well in English practice; but the meanings most available to their audiences could differ because of their interpretive contexts. Markino’s stress on class may be juxtaposed to more frequent invocations of race in some U.S. writings, with orientality often teetering in them on the brink of a black/white dichotomy.

The presentation of *The Darling of the Gods* in two countries also supplies an example of how attributing mimetic veracity to the help of consultants or models could open a door to disputes over authorial credit for what many saw as realism. A 1918 biography of Belasco offered a partisan trace of one such contest, spurred by a review of the play’s London premiere in 1903:

A characteristic instance of journalistic meanness was then provided by “The London Times,” which ascribed the beauty and perfection of Japanese detail in the production to the influence of Mme. Sada Yacco,—a Japanese eccentricity who had appeared on the stage in London and profoundly agitated the esthetic circle of “souls” resident in that city. As Tree’s presentment of the tragedy of Japan was made in faithful adherence to Belasco’s prompt book thereof and as Belasco never saw the Japanese actress, either on the stage or off, it would be interesting to learn in what manner her “influence” was exerted on him or his work. (Winter 1918, 2:109)

The author answered what he derogated as this “paltry carping” with a letter of testimonial in which Tree championed Belasco for having sent him a script in which “‘Every detail, every bit of costume, every piece of business, every light, is set down for us, and every note of music furnished, making it all so easy to produce that we can only claim credit for carrying out instructions!’”
He credited the production’s entire “genius and imagination” as being “all Belasco-Belasco-Belasco, from the rise to the fall of the curtain” (2:110). When producers felt their originality to be under siege, they could yank usually more attractive notions of oriental authenticity right back into the wings.

**MUSIC & *THE DARLING OF THE GODS***

As Tree asserted in a letter noted above, *The Darling of the Gods* used music as a key means of constructing orientality. William Furst composed and directed incidental music specifically for this drama.30 Along with crediting Furst as composer and musical director, a New York program stated that “The Japanese musical instruments on the stage are—The Biwa, Samisen, Koto, Tsudzumi and Fuye.”31 Whether these were played is unclear from sources found to date, but they were at least displayed as visual signs of orientality. As seen in various images elsewhere in this study, similar iconic use of Asian instruments was common in yellowface plays and related visual culture.

The popularity of *The Darling of the Gods*, and of Bates in its leading role, apparently inspired the composition of other music titled “Yo-San” but not performed with Belasco’s production, as well as pieces which referred to the play’s title. One of the latter was “My Japanee: You Darling of the Gods.”32 Two “Yo-San” pieces were published in variant editions during the play’s initial run, suggesting the sustained desire for music related to *The Darling of the Gods*—even if just by title and references to Japan. The lyrics to one offered

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a condensed version of the play’s narrative. This “Yo-San” was first published as a tribute bearing a photograph of Bates and a testimonial from Belasco, who stated his approval of the reference to his production; the following year, it reappeared as a supplement to the Boston Sunday Herald. This testified to its subject’s continuing popularity and brought the composition into many more homes; this edition probably was distributed with other newspapers across the country the same day, as was common practice for these supplements.33

The name “Yo-San” appeared in many songs after 1903. To note some of these will show how a small and codified trace of one famous yellowface act could circulate widely as a floating signifier in amateur singing and other shows. In 1904, the song “Little Fighting Soldier Man” played to popular U.S. interest in the Japanese military, and it also was published as a newspaper supplement. Its lyrics sang of a soldier fighting “To save the honor of old Japan.” Having “fought that Russian soldier-man,” he would “come back to sweet Yo-san” in a musical setting where she would be “Playing softly on her samisen, To welcome back her soldier-man” in a place where “’Neath the cherry-blossom gay / She’s singing softly all the day.”34 Other invocations of Yo-San were many; some took slightly more highbrow form.35

33. Byrd Dougherty and E. Hanegan, “Yo-San, The Darling of the Gods,” music supplement to Boston Sunday Herald, 12 June 1904. Original publication was New York: Sol Bloom, 1903. The cover of another 1904 “Yo-San” was rendered in quasi-Japanese woodcut style, presenting a graphic analog of Bates’s orientality. This piece was sufficiently popular that it was reprinted that same year in different colors from the same stones; see variants of Al W. Brown, “Yo San: A Japanese Intermezzo Two-Step,” Chicago: McKinley Music Co., 1904.
34. Dispelling any doubt about the name’s significance, the song was dedicated to Belasco. Lillian Coffin, “Little Fighting Soldier Man,” music supplement to Chicago Sunday American, 14 May 1905, 5–8; for another musical Yo San similarly positioned vis-à-vis a sailor headed off to war, see Bennett Scott and A.J. Mills, “Farewell, My Little Yo San!,” n.p.: n.d.
35. Best known for evocations of India (e.g., “Kashmiri Song”), Amy Woodforde-Finden also wrote a “Yo-San” as one of her “Five Little Japanese Songs.” Amy Woodforde-Finden and Charles Hanson Towne, “Five Little Japanese Songs,” New York: Boosey & Co., 1906.
The figure lived on into later decades, for instance as the object of an overseas Japanese man’s longing for his sweetheart back in the “old Japan” of “I Want to Go to Tokio” (1914).36 Songs titled “Yo-San” were published in 1919 and 1920 (in a piece which made the character a “Chinese maid”), and an identically titled “oriental operetta” also appeared in the latter year.37 A 1921 song cast its traveling Chinese protagonist to the less than tender mercies of a Manhattanized Yo-San, one remade as a mickey-slipping, thieving chippy—a “Pretty slick cute Broadway chick” who “stirred his tea till he danced with glee”: “Then his eyes grew sleepy / When he woke up with the dawn / All his Chinese coin was gone.”38 The female lead in the 1927 musical Cherry Blossoms bore the name; and in 1929, a “Yo San” seemingly was summoned out of retirement to pine away in the lyrics of “In a Japanese Garden.”39

The character was so well known that it became the object of a 1903 musical parody which was performed in New York and published as a supplement to the San Francisco Examiner (and probably other newspapers). “Whoa San” was billed as “The New Musical Success in the ‘Darling of the Gallery Gods’ at the New York Theatre Roof Garden.”40 The production also appeared at New York’s Crystal Gardens, where its pieces included “My

40. Ben M. Jerome and Matt C. Woodward, “Whoa San,” from The Darling of the Gallery Gods, musical supplement of the San Francisco Examiner [no specific publication date], 1903.
Japanese Baby.” At the roof garden, Emma Carus sang the piece in a doubly distanced and purposely askew imitation of Bates’s more serious mimesis of Suki, re-pitched to appeal to the “Gallery Gods”—often-vocal theatergoers who occupied the cheapest seats in the house, in contrast to the generally better-behaved fans of Belasco’s dramas. The layered mimesis of “Whoa San,” with one white performer caricaturing another’s ostensibly realistic imitation of her Japanese servant, recast the emotional meanings of gesture, stance, and carriage in a chain of embodied signification.

**BLANCHE BATES & THE DARLING OF THE GODS IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT, 2: LENORE ULRIC AS ANOTHER OF DAVID BELASCO’S “LITTLE GIRLS”**

Cultivating and presenting typified female characters was one of Belasco’s specialties. Bates’s Butterfly and Yo-San were not the only such roles in his productions. Along with mentoring openly mimetic yellowface acts, he also presented supposedly authentic female types, as seen in his co-presentation of a “dusky Hawaiian prima donna.” His most famous female dramatic characters, however, were played by white performers. One of Bates’s near-contemporaries in this regard was Lenore Ulric. Ulric starred in The Son-Daughter, set in China; sheet music from the play bore covers portraying Ulric in yellowface (fig. 5.3). She also played a Hawai’ian part in Belasco’s

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42. “Hawaiian Band Receives Ovation upon Return,” San Francisco Evening Post, 22 September 1905. See Chapter 1 for another article’s similar language about the singer.
43. Belasco’s plays also spurred such performances not under his direction. Several years before Radha brought her substantial attention in 1906, Ruth St. Denis developed a dance titled “Madame Butterfly” in response to Belasco’s Madame Butterfly and Darling of the Gods. Dressed in Japanese costume, she performed it “with his permission in small vaudeville houses” (Kendall 1979, 47).
44. The play premiered in Baltimore in November 1919 and moved to New York later that month (Belasco 1925, 25).
production *The Bird of Paradise* and the leading role in *Wetona*, and she starred in the Eurasian part of Daisy in his 1930 production of *East of Suez*.45

An article titled “Belasco’s Little Girls” stated that Ulric “plays primitive emotional parts with dash and feeling,” citing as examples “the Hawaiian heroine of ‘The Bird of Paradise,’ the Indian ‘Wetona,’ and now the wild, lovable French-Canadian ‘Tiger Rose.’” Differentiating the characteristics of these parts from Ulric’s own personality, it quoted the actress’s belief that she was suited to them because of her bodily characteristics:

> When I came into her dressing-room after the performance, she had slipped into a demure negligee, but still wore Rose Bocion’s vivid makeup and impudent hair. “Ah,” I thought, “she is primitive!” But in a moment the hair, rippling down in soft waves about her face, and the makeup rubbed off, changed her to a gentle, modest girl with only the touch of the “wilds” in her delightful lack of Broadway sophistication.

> “How did I come to play these ‘wild’ parts?” she echoed my question, with just a suspicion of the clear-cut accent she used on the stage, “first of all because I’m dark, I think. Naturally people associated me with Spanish and Indian characters. And then, you see, there are so few small actresses who can play emotional parts.”46

All concerned seem to have understood Ulric’s embodiment of “primitive” parts to be thoroughly mimetic, but in producers’ eyes this white woman’s naturally “dark” skin tone and small stature still equipped her to embody racialized characters. This casting practice was common. A 1917 article on “The Staging of ‘Chu Chin Chow,’” for instance, described a prospective understudy as “a tall, athletic, handsome young woman of the Oriental type, for ‘Chu Chin Chow’ has the East for its locale”; a year earlier, another had bemoaned casting based on “type,” rather than on acting skill, for roles both

racialized (“the humorous ‘slavey’ role”) and not, or at least not explicitly so (adventuresses and ingennes, gentlemen and villains, dowagers and so on).47

Just as certain comments on Miura’s dramatic skills could complicate the idea of her innate authenticity as Butterfly, this blurs from the other, mimetic side any notion that people always understood embodiments of race as pure acts of innate authenticity or of skilled mimesis. Many white actors did play racialized parts without being seen as physically predisposed for them; for example, Geraldine Farrar also appeared in film roles including one termed “primitive-souled.”48 Producers saw the “dark” but socially white Ulric, however, as being naturally suited to the enactment of exotic characters. This usefully complicates the notion of how yellowface casting ascribed race based on bodily appearance. That ascription was not simply bounded by a rigorous opposition between ideas of authentic Others naturally performing their own natures, and white performers mimetically enacting characteristics thought to be completely disjunct from their true selves. Such a binary system offered a decent first approximation of many people’s views, but its paired terms also could define the endpoints of a continuum along which some attributes of its exotic terminus also could be ascribed to some white performers’ real selves.

The construal of Ulric’s “dark” skin as a sign of innate “primitive” qualities shows how producers’ and writers’ beliefs about temperament as a correlate of skin color could be nuanced in gradational ways. This could be based on anticipated subtleties of spectatorial response that blurred ideas of

racial types in reception as well. This linkage of categories ascribed to performers and their parts figured consciously in some of Belasco’s casting. His concern with naturalistically embodied, realistic “atmosphere” led him not only to have the cast for The Darling of the Gods rehearse in costume, but also to cast Japanese (American?) performers in minor roles. These practices were founded in his desire to represent the “temperament” typical of each human type (Marker 1975, 113). As Marker notes, Belasco saw that goal as one best served by embodiment, whether construed as authentic or mimetic: “‘Ibsen should be represented by Norwegians or other north of Europe peoples, or at least by actors who either have or understand the northern temperament,’ he insisted, ‘for unless they have the “atmosphere” none of the externals of stage settings can produce it’” (1975, 113). His notions of scenic “atmosphere” transcended sets and lighting to be grounded in bodily acts.

Moving from casting practices to Ulric’s own analysis of her reception, she noted her audiences’ exoticist tastes in a way that acknowledged multiple authorship of her practice. Within the limits of certain assumptions common in her time—that each “out-of-the-way” place is home to one essential type of person and that all residents of each locale share a unitary “soul”—she seemed to hit the mark with an insider’s interpretation of why so many people found her performances compelling:

“…the public likes the unknown—either in types or atmosphere. That is why, being an ingénue in size, and yet being able to play these elemental characters, it has found a place for me. We love what we don’t know and live every day. That is why people flock to Mr. Belasco’s plays which take them to out-of-the-way places, because, through him, they see the very soul of things that otherwise would be just vague to them.”49

If one relocates such a group soul as a discursive construction rather than the homogenous essence of an actual human group, Ulric’s quotation is useful as a self-aware distillation of what she believed audiences saw in her, and it gains value as a performer’s emic analysis of what may now be understood as a strand of raciology woven into her reception. It is impossible to know how well Ulric’s views did represent those of her audiences, but her success in playing to their tastes suggests a substantial correspondence. Her comments evoke the ideological load carried by any one of her “elemental characters”—the cloud of associations adhering to an enactment of a Hawai’ian or Chinese role—and its performative reconfirmation of belief in human typology itself.

MULTIPLE AUTHORSHIP OF DRAMATIC RACE IN THE DARLING OF THE GODS

As beliefs pervasive in U.S. society, these were the original product of no one act or person. While more discretely bounded, even the question of who invented specific aspects of any one such characterization is complex. As another kind of collaborative work enmeshed with actors’ study with (or of) their models, producers and directors contributed to the means by which yellowface was enacted. Belasco was an unremitting taskmaster in these and other ways, as seen in a passage from Bates’s fellow actor George Arliss:

The rehearsals of “The Darling of the Gods” were long and arduous. Almost from the beginning we rehearsed in Japanese shoes and kimonos in order to become thoroughly familiar with the costume. I would often watch Belasco with keen interest as he worked out a scene; sometimes when he met difficulty he would suddenly stop the rehearsal and walk up and down the stage for as long as half an hour in absolute silence; but when he found the solution it was worth waiting for. He had really no idea of time. Members of the brotherhood would bring him occasional meals of cake and milk, and sometimes he would go on till two or three in the morning.50

50. Arliss (1932, 207); also quoted in part in Marker (1975, 107). For photographs of Arliss, see Winter (1918, 2: facing 82); Arliss (1932, facing 210).
But the rigor of rehearsals for Belasco’s orientalist plays did not signify a wholly top-down process for developing all aspects of their yellowface acts. Another anecdote from Arliss documents the collaborative work by which these individuated but stereotypical enactments of orientality came to be, and—while keeping in mind the tendency for memoirs to aggrandize their writers—how actors’ ideas could affect not only their own practice:

The part of Sakkuri [sic], for which I was cast, was, I believe, originally intended to be played with its humorous side dominating…but as the rehearsals matured I am of opinion that Mr. Belasco was secretly pleased to find that I was developing rather the subtle villainy of the part and allowing the comedy to slide. He took tremendous care and interest in the “Torture Chamber” scene and introduced various bits of business that enriched it. But one day I got worried by the presence of some spies shooting about during a certain speech of mine and I asked Mr. Belasco if he felt it necessary to have that action at this particular moment. (209)

After Belasco asked “Do you find it distracting?” and Arliss replied that he did, the director continued (in Arliss’s no doubt self-congratulatory memory):

“Then of course it shan’t be done,” he said. He...beckoned every one on the stage to come around him.... “Now, folks, I want you to understand this is Mr. Arliss’ scene. Whatever he says goes. ...I’m going out for half an hour, and Mr. Arliss will take this scene and whatever he wants done, you put it down in the script and it stays. It’s Mr. Arliss’ scene and he knows just what he wants. Now, folks, pay attention to Mr. Arliss,” and he went out of the stage door. I suspect that he went no farther than the front of the house and that he watched every detail of what happened. But he was following out his system—to give me confidence. He came back apparently much refreshed by his half-hour’s rest, and although I had done nothing of the slightest importance, he expressed himself much gratified at the vast improvement. (209–10)

Despite this passage’s likely mix of self-elevation and false humility, it offers a trace of Belasco’s directorial give-and-take with his yellowface stars. Read against Bates’s account of modeling herself after her maid to craft avowedly autonomous means of embodying Japaneseness, Arliss’s story suggests that variously enforced or subtle collaboration could lead to these performances.
The frequent contestation over these practices’ creative origins is evident in a passage on *Madame Butterfly* from an early biography of Belasco:

A notably effective scenic innovation was the precedent use of “picture drops,” delicately painted and very lovely pictures showing various aspects of Japan,—a rice field, a flower garden, a distant prospect of a snow-capped volcano in the light of the setting sun, and other views,—by way of creating a Japanese atmosphere before the scene of the drama was disclosed. Blanche Bates embodied the hapless *Butterfly* and animated the character with a winning show of a woman’s fidelity, with a lovely artlessness of manner and speech, and with occasional flashes of that vivid emotional fire which is her supreme attribute. Her personation [sic] at first caused laughter and at last touched the source of tears,—but the predominant figure in the history of this play, both at the first and now, was and is that of Belasco: more, perhaps, in respect to “Madame Butterfly” than of any other of his productions it may properly be said that his personality seemed to have permeated every detail of this performance and its environment. (Winter 1918, 1:482–83)

This biographer’s concern with celebrating the producer’s magisterial role is clear.51 Even more than did some of Belasco’s own statements, and despite its praise for Bates, this downplayed her role in representing the character. This was at odds with her own narrative of engagement with Suki—engagement that took place in situations from which the producer most often was absent.

Ulric spoke to this issue of collaborative authorship of performance in reply to the question of how she worked out a part: “First, I develop my own conception—good or bad. And then, when I feel I have done all I could, Mr. Belasco “edits” it, he polishes the good points, shows me where I am wrong, and then develops the material that we select as worth while.”52 A similar process fit both with Bates’s tale of founding her character in one-on-one work with Suki and with Belasco’s role as a producer and director infinitely

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51. See Winter (1918, 2:83–84) for this account’s framing context and a quotation from Belasco about a moment of accidental discovery of techniques for the performed conjuncture of bodily, scenic, and stage-lit evocation of a Japanese “River of Souls”; related rhetorical moves framed an account of her performance in *The Darling of the Gods* as embodying “action graceful, alert, vigorous, and free from all restraint of self-consciousness or prudery” (77–78).
attentive to detail and to the presentation of compelling illusions of realism. As claims and counterclaims to having created the orientality she embodied, their accounts corroborate from another direction the sense of sources treated above—that many yellowface acts founded in the imagination or based on direct observation of people of Japanese or Chinese heritage were seen as original, while the use of (similarly) stock conventions based on practices already employed by other white actors was considered to be derivative and inartistic. It also suggests the layered nature of these representations.53

A colonial metaphor of nested roles as raw material and creative agent is apposite here. While yellowface performers often positioned Asian models or mentors as human lodes for their discerning appropriation, directors could redefine those actors in turn as unfinished goods in need of artistic processing (the subtitle to “Belasco’s Little Girls” was “Showing how the Wizard of Broadway develops successful stars”); but to try to unravel these people’s precise contributions would be beside the point. As with any multiply authored performance, whether by playwright, producer, and actor or by composer, lyricist, and singer, these acts were no one person’s creation. As examples here, their utility has less to do with parsing authorship than with demonstrating how collaborative modes of appropriation, representation, and reception were intrinsic to white actors’ embodiment of orientality—with showing some aspects of how yellowface acts came into being and gained representational power. The second of this chapter’s main sections, on how

53. A more publicly argued dispute about authorship concerned matters of text more than performance; this took place between Belasco and Winnifred Eaton (and their champions) over issues of authenticity and derivation in The Darling of the Gods and Eaton’s A Japanese Nightingale (Ferens 1999, 240n11; M. Liu 2003, 52–55); see also Honey and Cole (2002, 2–21).
a male player of orientalist roles crafted his performances of race, will make these social facts clearer in differently gendered and contextualized ways.

**Walker Whiteside’s Yellowface Practice**

Another white actor known for yellowface enactments was Walker Whiteside (figs. 5.4, 5.5). Both Bates and he based their mimetic practice on first-hand social interactions with Japanese people with whom they spent a great deal of time; but in contrast to her emulation of her servant, Whiteside’s Japanese models were neither socially nor economically subordinate to him. An article titled “How Walker Whiteside Became a Japanese” presented his own detailed version of how he learned to embody orientality for the stage.54

This piece told of his friendships with Japanese Consuls in Denver, St. Louis, and New York, as well as with Japanese people resident in the United States as students and in other capacities. When he met his first Japanese friend in Denver, he was starring as “the dreamy young Jew” in *The Melting Pot.* Whiteside “had at that time no thought of ever playing one of the little yellow men from Nippon, but the able actor is a negative on which all events and persons make a distinct picture. Besides this, Mr. Whiteside had the mental stimulus of a genuine liking for his small, seemingly inscrutable neighbor,” the Consul. The men sustained this relationship for three years.

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For Whiteside its “neighborly converse left in his mind a vividly complete picture of Japanese externals and Japanese character,” a picture he later supplemented through observation of subsequent Japanese acquaintances.55

When Whiteside had finished his work in *The Melting Pot*—once the play “had carried its message of the assimilation of the races to the last corners of America, and…finished its long course”—he was at loose ends.56 After he had read many scripts but found none satisfactory, “a long package, wrapped in manila paper, came to his home at Hastings-on-the-Hudson, and with the remark that it looked as though it had come from the meat market, although it bore a mailing stamp, he tossed it on his desk, and it lay there unopened for several weeks.” The package seemed almost to be a kind of proxy for a nation characterized in the article as “the conquerors of the Russians”: “Yellow and small and unprepossessing,” it “gave no hint of the strength of what was within the unpromising cover.” Whiteside found within it *The Typhoon*, best known in more recent decades in the form of Sessue Hayakawa’s later film.57

After finding that the script’s “power and novelty grasped him with strong hands,” Whiteside “carried the play to a manager, who declined it.” He then “decided himself to produce it” and faced the question of how to

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55. A. P. [Ada Patterson?], “How Walker Whiteside Became a Japanese,” *Theatre Magazine*, June 1912, 180–81, this at 180; subsequent quotations from same page. Histories of diplomatic exchange could have unintended but durable effects on staged embodiments of national (read racial) stereotypes. This is seen as well in a later caption to a photograph of a dancer “whose vivid and pliant style is adapted to the dances of many nations”: “As the son of a man in the diplomatic service, Mr. Cartier’s has been an extraordinarily nomadic life. Born on a boat bound for Calcutta, he has lived in Japan, South Africa, among the Hopi Indians, and later in Japan again. These experiences have helped him in his work, for Mr. Cartier has picked up racial traits at first hand and managed to present them in his dancing with a sure and heightened sense of style” (“Jacques Cartier,” *Theatre Arts Monthly*, August 1927, 635).

56. On the critical reception of ethnic stereotyping in the play, see Kraus (1999, 11).

57. For a synopsis of the drama’s plot, see “‘The Typhoon’: A Dramatization of the Yellow Peril,” *Current Literature*, May 1912, 567–73. On Hayakawa, see studies cited in Chapter 10.
embody its leading Japanese character. For this he drew on his recollections of Japanese voices and bodies, reconstituting those memories as attributes of a racial type. These slid from skin color, speech, and stance to character and social status. In the article’s paraphrase, Whiteside implied a transparent correspondence between audible and visible form and inner nature:

Then mercifully came pouring back upon him in a flood his memories of the Japanese Consul who was his neighbor in Denver. He recalled how the Japanese students on board the Transatlantic steamer talked to each other, the queer, sharp, staccato tones, that changed when he encountered their Caucasian fellow passengers to slower, suaver speech. He remembered the changeless calm of the smooth, yellow faces. Memory repictured the swift, pleasing half smile and the odd little duck with which they greeted their slightly superiors, the bend to the knees with which they saluted persons of consequence, the eye to eye unbendingness of their intercourse with each other. The sensitive, almost uncanny, hands fluttered before his memory vision. The short-stepped, half-effeminate gait recurred to him as though a procession of the little men was passing before the eyes of his body.

These memories’ visuality evoked, now in raciological terms, a sense of camera vision foreshadowed early in the article: “the able actor is a negative on which all events and persons make a distinct picture.”

Attending to Whiteside’s coaches, the writer played out this metaphor:

Memory developed the photograph plate to a nicety. But lest the plates had been under or over-developed, Mr. Whiteside invited two Japanese men to sit every day at rehearsals and watch every step, every gesture, listen for any possible false intonation. Here were three stage directors, instead of the usual one, an American and two Japanese. The Japanese listened, as they always did, with inscrutable faces.

“Vera nice,” they said, with their diplomatic duck and smile. “Vera nice.”

But the star insisted every day at the close of rehearsals upon a minute report of every slightest discrepancy between the Japanese of the stage and the Japanese of real life. The reports were brief. The jury, after three weeks of rehearsals, pronounced the production perfect, as though it had been rendered in Japan by Japanese. But lest accustomedness cause the “letting down” that is so much dreaded by a company, the star never tired of consulting his jury.

In a more formalized way than that seen in Bates’s tale, this actor adduced his Japanese consultants’ hearsay testimony to authenticate his mimetic practice.
The recurrence of this validating move suggests that it was central to many white Americans’ ideas of how to gauge the realism of yellowface mimesis. Inscrutability and accents bolstered the unnamed jurors’ credibility by framing them as genuine representatives of a race; and beyond even their findings as such, the rigor with which he subjected himself to their expert evaluation strengthened his credibility as a devotee of realistic portrayal.

All told, the article presented Whiteside’s dedication to the finer points of yellowface as a sign of his consummate skill in practices by which he could embody and make perceptible an oriental essence. Quoted in this chapter’s epigraph, its conclusion invoked racial hierarchy, mastery through spectatorship, gendered vocality, and shuffling away from a “free American stride.” In all of these regards, his personal experience lent apparent credibility to racial mimesis as a kind of first-hand performative testimony.

The mimetic skills involved were useful to Whiteside well after his work in The Typhoon. In what seemed a lateral move from embodying Japaneseness to Chineseness, he appeared in yellowface in later productions including Mr. Wu and The Chinese Bungalow. This suggests how actors could use similar practices to represent character types associated with diverse Asian locations.

**VERISIMILITUDE & TYPICALITY IN THE RECEPTION OF WHITESSIDE’S MIMESIS**

With this in mind, we may look at Mr. Wu to examine some ways in which writers located the referents of yellowface in the world or in theoretical space. A U.S. reviewer found the actor’s choice of the play to be consistent with his earlier Japanese role: “Mr. Walker Whiteside did not go astray with his dramatic instinct when he played in ‘The Typhoon’ a few seasons ago, or when he chose for his present activity a play entitled ‘Mr. Wu,’ in which a
Chinese merchant of great wealth and mysterious power seeks revenge upon a so-called superior civilization, which, through the passion of a youthful Englishman, has debased his daughter.” The writer characterized Mr. Wu as “involving…a conflict between civilizations” and thus as finding its success in those categorical terms as “novel, picturesque and effective.”

The reviewer attributed much of the play’s efficacy to Whiteside’s portrayal of Chinese character in a moment of potentially murderous crisis:

It is not always possible adequately to describe an effective piece of acting such as this was. It is easy to see that if the contributory circumstances were not absolutely strong and illusive that the situation would fail. At the same time it is a very fine piece of acting. The acting of the subordinate Oriental characters, which had to be in keeping, their task being one of simulation which had to be kept up at every moment, was excellent throughout. Mr. Whiteside’s performance is noteworthy. Whether a true study of Chinese character or not matters little. His impassive face, stiff bearing and gestures fit a theory at any rate. (264)

Providing a sense of what made Whiteside’s Wu so effective, this raises the question of how ideas of verisimilitude figured in the reception of yellowface.

Despite the actor’s emphasis two years before on his real-life interactions with Japanese men as models for his practice, this critic located its efficacy not in its approximation to the attributes of human groups, but in its embodied exemplification of “a theory.” For this viewer, the point was precisely the actor’s ability to create a compelling illusion, not to emulate racially marked inhabitants of the social world. Despite any protestations we might imagine Whiteside crying out in reply, the question of whether this illusion had any actual offstage human referent was of no great importance to this reviewer.

As staged in 1914, the play’s dramatic crisis—in which “Mr. Wu, or Mr. Whiteside for him, has a few busy and tragic moments”—hinged in part on a

gong: “He attempts to slay the woman, and with almost the last swing of the sword he strikes the gong which is to release his intended victim.” As seen and heard in The Yellow Jacket and other plays, gongs resounded as icons of orientality, filling theatrical spaces with echoes of Asian difference.\(^{59}\) These instruments would resonate for decades to signify orientalist nightmares of domestic despotism as well as threats of murder and insidious vengeance in the minds’ ears of many readers of popular fiction; this was true, for example, in various passages in Louise Jordan Miln’s (1919) novel version of Mr. Wu.\(^{60}\)

Also in 1914, Whiteside reflected on his move towards character parts, beginning with a Jewish role in The Melting Pot and continuing to yellowface parts in The Typhoon and Mr. Wu. His chief motivation was frustration with the onerous practical requirements that audiences imposed on Shakespearean players. Among these was the grueling rehearsal schedule needed to present many dramas in rotation. By portraying character types, he found a forum (and audiences) for sustained enactment of single roles. Driven in part by the greater popularity of some contemporary plays than of Shakespearean drama, this also reflected a popular hunger for such embodiments of racial types.

Whiteside wrote that The Melting Pot attracted his “own public and also a number of those foreign-born residents who have come to America in the tides of immigration”: “Here was a public our theatre had been neglecting, a people whose problems were ours through assimilation. ‘The Melting Pot’

\(^{59}\) The gong as a sonic and visual marker of this sort figured earlier in Mr. Wu as well: “Orders are given that the doors are to be opened for her when he strikes a gong” (264).

\(^{60}\) Reprinted for years, Miln’s text sounded the metallic menace of ominous gongs in print while offering dialogue and descriptions of bodily stance and movements perhaps based on her experience of Whiteside’s performance in the role. The possibility that Miln heard and saw the actor’s embodiment of Wu, and actually used them in writing, is neither supported nor ruled out by the documents located for this dissertation.
attracted my former Shakespeare following because of its message and it appealed to our foreign-born neighbors and their children because it recognized that they were a part of us.” 61 More members of the cultural group mimetically represented in a given play seem to have attended The Melting Pot than his orientalist dramas; neither his article nor any review seen for this study mentions substantial numbers of Japanese people among his audiences for The Typhoon, or of Chinese theatergoers attending his Mr. Wu.

Despite these less-than-parallel histories of reception, in Whiteside’s view his embodiment of character types in all three productions shared an assimilative stance, one which claimed transcultural interest because they portrayed difference within a universalizing frame: “In…‘The Typhoon’ and ‘Mr. Wu’ this same appeal has been made from different angles. Their themes have been of what might be called world interest for they delineate a composite picture of our own problems and emotions and those of alien races” (314). This strategy’s effects were akin to those of some U.S. hearings of Japanese singers of Butterfly. Arising from belief in a white actor’s mimesis of a racial type or in an Asian singer’s embodiment of her own ascribed essence, these ways of making raciological meaning from performance constructed difference in typified form and assimilated it to a Eurocentric universality.

WHITESIDE’S LATER YELLOWFACE & ORIENTALIST DURABILITY

Whiteside would play other oriental roles. His reception in them shows how consistent his yellowface practice remained, how amenable were his techniques to playing Japanese and Chinese parts, and how people often

understood his performances in fairly consistent ways over decades and within settings both in and distant from major theatrical scenes. Along with demonstrating the national scope, long duration, and largely codified nature of these modes of performance and reception, some quotations from reviews offer a sense of how critics wrote about such plays in language that evoked their atmosphere for readers who did not see these shows themselves.

Several reviews of a Milwaukee production of *The Chinese Bungalow* in 1930 offer a case in point. One newspaper also interviewed Whiteside and discussed his career, noting that despite having “made his early success in Shakespearean dramas, he never plans to do Shakespeare again”: “He has been too successful in his international scope of character interpretations. Chinese in the old favorite ‘Mr. Wu’ and the new favorite, ‘The Chinese Bungalow,’ ‘The Hindu,’ ‘The Arabian,’ and Israel Zangwill’s ‘The Melting Pot’ speak for themselves.”62 But even as they situated him as a character actor in general, audiences could associate him primarily with oriental roles.

One review noted that Whiteside was “starring…in another of those amazing impersonations of the oriental character for which he has long been famous.”63 Another emphasized his means of vocal and bodily mimesis:

> Oxford and his forefathers mingle strangely in Sing’s voice and pronunciation. It is in such tricks as combining Occidental words and Oriental tones that Mr. Whiteside’s genius for characterization thrives. The star is at his best in Sing’s double-edged remarks, the menace of which is all but concealed by the velvety tones in which they are spoken.
> In telling contrast to the visible trembling of Europeans in his grasp, Sing moves with deceptive calmness. He is as soft footed as his Persian cat which plays so dire a part in its master’s revenge. It is only when the English veneer is scratched that the Oriental heart is revealed, beating true to the Confucius who

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taught that to “approach the princely conduct” is well, but to demand an eye for an eye is necessary.

Mr. Whiteside moves through his role with telling certitude. Up to the final scene, he makes no effort, other than to wear a shiny black wig, to look Oriental. Yet the man within the white suit suggests Sing, the Chinaman, so vividly that it would be difficult to escape the illusion that the eyes above the European necktie slant upwards and that the finger nails, below the black satin waistcoat, are long and pointed.64

Another critic called the production a “smooth and silken drama of the East, sinister and terrible in its velvet evil at moments, but so compelling that an audience seems scarcely to breathe through the whole three acts of it”:

The silence of the audience, except, of course, at the drop of curtains, was a compliment, indeed, to Mr. Whiteside and the persons who so beautifully are captured in the web of his play. The fact that there are quite as many Occidentals as Orientals in it, with the stage generously shared with the former, two of whom are handsome women in Parisian creations, must compel even the most superficial of us who sometimes give a wave of the hand and say—“I don’t care about that Chinese stuff—much.”

... This play, unlike so many of those with an Oriental background, has a refinement in speech and setting, with the English element so important, that one sometimes forgets it has its setting in the bungalow of Yuan Sing on the Sarong river. Yuan Sing is no Chinese with a queue, but rather with an Oxford accent. In act one and two, he is outfitted in white linen and by a Bond Street tailor, it is to be supposed. In act three, he is to be seen in the luxurious satins of his country, and in them he speaks of his contempt for the westerners whom he honestly regards as immoral, shallow and childish.65

A Chicago review of The Chinese Bungalow in that city took a more jaded view but still found Whiteside’s performance admirable. It began:

Again the insidious Chinaman. By now the dreadfully charming Oxford-accented Orientals have been so thoroughly exploited in fiction, film and stage that it’s just a bit of a bore. This may or may not be true in the spots where Walker Whiteside is a perennial favorite and a frequent visitor. He is one of the very few independent stars keeping persistently to the road and quite possibly he can carry this play.

As a matter of justice “The Chinese Bungalow,” for all the familiarity and triteness of its fundamental formula does manage to tell its narrative with

commendable economy of means and the creation of some reasonably tense moments. On top of which Whiteside has given it a very decent production and a competent supporting cast.

It is always a pleasure to watch and to hear Whiteside. His cultivated voice, ease of manner, and quiet command are indeed worthy of better scripts and less melodramatic folderol than has been his lot in recent seasons. It is probably not easy to find the right sort of script. Whiteside’s road following has been given and expects plenty of “action” which places definite requirements in the matter of choice.

This plot tells the adventures of the English wife of a Chinese mandarin, her sister who lives with them and is the real object of the Chinaman’s passion, and two English gentlemen who have a plantation across the jungle river. Whiteside spends the latter part of Act III dying from a self-inflicted poison. In a chair down by the apron he expires with numerous flutterings but always respectful attention.66

For this critic, too, the production’s interest seemed to derive above all from the Chinese typicality the actor conveyed through sound and motion.

Five months later, a West Coast review of the play noted the actor’s long association with oriental character roles and his skill in playing them:

Walker Whiteside adds another Oriental type to his gallery of portraits, and another violent death to the list of such casualties in which he has at various times been concerned, by his performance of Yuan Sing in “The Chinese Bungalow”…. He has been Japanese, Chinese, Hindu, Arabian, and has repeated some of these nationalities, as he does in the present play in which he is a Chinese planter in the Malay States, a rich man, educated at Oxford, with the surface polish of the Occident covering the cunning and craft of his Oriental blood.

This critic heard the performance as offering something new in some ways: “Whiteside gives us a different Oriental from the others in the rather long list of such roles he has played, and even in the monotone in which most of his speeches are read there are the matchless richness of his voice and the beauty of his elocution.” Despite this twist, his characterization was known by the play’s last act to be a conventional enactment of orientality; in it, Whiteside was “supreme”: “One sees the poison begin its work before he knows that he

has drunk the deadly draught....”67 With this study’s three decades having begun more or less with the rise of Butterfly narratives, his daily poisoning some 30 years later reminds us of a recurrent narrative frame for yellowface, which often served tales in which to be oriental was to face untimely death.

WALKER WHITESIDE’S MIMEIS IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT: ALLEN ATWELL’S ACTS & THEIR TYPOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Since the story of Whiteside and his diplomat neighbor could falsely imply a divide whereby male yellowface performers—unlike such female stars as Bates and Pickford—did not base their practice on domestic relationships, a brief account of the foundations of one more actor’s mimesis will be useful. Less well known than Whiteside, Allen Atwell (a judge’s son and University of California graduate) also specialized in racialized parts; but he based his practice on remembered observations in different kinds of social settings.

A 1910 notice asserted the realism of Atwell’s orientality: “Most persons who have seen the dramatic army sketch, ‘The Code Book,’ which comes to the Orpheum next week, believe the man who plays the Japanese spy is a full fledged Jap. He is not. He is Allen Atwell, a native of California, and a free-born American of good standing.” Invoking his personal history to vouch for the realism of his act even though he “never saw the shores of Japan,” the Orpheum quoted him as saying: “I have perfected my part wholly by hard study of the Japanese in San Francisco.... I was born and reared in San Francisco. We had Japanese servants in our home.” Like Whiteside, but in the less elite domain of vaudeville, this actor was known for playing such roles: “The Japanese character is not a new one to Mr. Atwell. He played the part of

the Japanese servant in ‘Paid in Full.’” Nor was his character repertoire
limited to oriental types; his “first part was that of the Mexican in David
Belasco’s production of ‘The Rose of the Rancho,’” and in The Code Book he
enacted a nested double mimesis in the role “of ‘Jose,’ who, though in reality
a Japanese Colonel and military spy, passes as a Filipino body servant to
Major Jarvis, U. S. A., whose life he has saved.”

Actors readily could observe domestic workers of Japanese (and other
Asian, chiefly Filipino and Chinese) descent. As noted regarding an article
asserting the danger of Japanese servants moving from Chicago to the West
Coast (see Chapter 1), yellow-perilist narratives could use the rhetorical
figure of such workers; but in various yellowface actors’ anecdotes, it
carried a less threatening aura. Many advertisements in these decades
categorized Japanese servants as such. The classified listings in a 1918 issue
of the San Francisco Chronicle included such items as “JAPANESE, excellent
couple, wish jobs in private family; man as cook, wife wait on table and do
second work, sewing; city or country; refs.”; listings for firms such as the AA-

These U.S. conjunctures of belief about domesticity and treason took specific racialized
forms, but domestic service and fears of spying have converged in various social contexts;
e.g., regarding German maids in the Netherlands in the 1920s and 1930s, see Henkes (1990).
He also appeared in the part of “Oku” in the play “Bought and Paid For” in Boston in 1913
(“Bought and Paid For” [program], Boston: Majestic Theatre, week of 24 November 1913.).
70. “Japanese Head West by Pairs and Threes, Assertion in Chicago,” San Francisco Call &
Post, 13 March 1916. For further discursive context, see “The Confession of a Japanese
Servant,” The Independent, 21 September 1905, 661–68.
71. “Situations Wanted—Male” [classified advertisements listing], San Francisco Chronicle, 8
April 1918. Many similarly marked advertisements appeared in other newspapers; e.g., the
classified listings in many issues of the New York Herald included a long line of items that
began “JAPANESE…” (e.g., “Situations Wanted—Males,” New York Herald, 2 October 1914).
Whiteside’s reflections on his career linked his embodiments of Jewish, Japanese, and Chinese characters; other articles linked Bates’s Japanese and Jewish parts, or Ulric’s enactments of Chinese, Hawai’ian, and other types. The Orpheum notice for *The Code Book* also located Atwell’s acts within an overarching system of racial categories. At its top level, it could appear to contain each essential type as one among many structurally equivalent bins, each containing a set of distinctive attributes and bearing a label such as “Chinese.” But in actual practice and belief, some of these bins held hugely overlapping sets of attributes. One group of such bins comprised those labeled “Japanese” and “Chinese” (and at times, other Asian national labels).

The traits that indexed these terms often were those of an orientality signified by gestures, vocal mannerisms, and so on that were derived from one national type but could point to others. Seen above in Whiteside’s smooth transition from staged Japoneseness to Chineseness, this referential mobility within yellowface was visible in Atwell’s nested mimesis of a Japanese character beneath a diegetically mimetic Filipino visage. A white actor’s layered enactment of attributes linked to Japanese and, say, Mexican characters may not have been as readily understood by his audiences. Although it must be read as promotional hyperbole, the Orpheum notice documents this conflation of orientalized types. The passage about the actor’s role as a Japanese officer who “passes as a Filipino body servant to Major Jarvis, U. S. A.” continued: “Mr. Atwell’s characterization is so wonderful in its fidelity, that it is hard to believe that it is an impersonation.”72

These mimetic layers embodied a complex vision of a white performer passing as a dangerously oriental figure who passed in turn as a different oriental type, one rendered doubly safe as a colonial subject and domestic servant. Enacted within the drama’s world by a military spy and outside that diegetic frame by the actor who played him, the double mimesis of The Code Book shows how a white performer could use yellowface to make his body demonstrate, simultaneously, two semi-distinct subtypes of orientality.

Yellowface wrapped physically internalized practice in visible surfaces produced by makeup. This external aspect of these plays also offered codified signs of race. The Orpheum told of such preparations for The Code Book:

To make up for the character, Mr. Atwell uses only grease paint, with which he darkens his light complexion to the necessary Oriental hue. The arched eyebrows and slant eyes, are produced wholly by physical effort—an effort which is very tiresome, according to Mr. Atwell. He must maintain the expression for the full twenty minutes of the sketch.73

While the term “yellowface” might seem to denote a purely surface effect of facial makeup, many professional yellowface performers’ use of grease paint was integrated with conscious muscular practices. For Atwell, this involved a form of static exertion that gave his act the added value of expert labor.

As seen above, Whiteside’s use of makeup also was inseparable from internal disciplines of the body; but his bodily practices required a form of self-consciously enforced muscular stasis in a more relaxed position:

The yellow faces were made yellow by two coats of grease paint and the high eyebrows were set a facial story above the eyebrows, that were whitened or shaved. The moveless muscles were stilled by association, and taken on as the actor shuffled himself into the soul and skin of Tokeramo.74

73. Ibid.
For both actors, internal bodily transformation was a necessary partner to grease paint. That they trained their facial muscles to attain some sort of stasis—rather than actively changing expressions—may be an analogical sign of the rigidity of the racial categories they sought to inhabit and render perceptible on stage. Making actors’ faces immobile, these practices could literally embody ideas of oriental inscrutability and impassivity.

*Racially Transforming Commodities*

This close meeting of grease paint and bodily practice was implicit in Bates’s tale of her studies with Suki, who taught the actress how to paint her face and how to move and hold herself when embodying Butterfly and Yo-San. When Bates’s fellow players mistook her for her maid, Bates charged their confusion to cosmetic techniques: “...she helped me in my makeup to such an extent, in the part of Yo-San, especially, that on more than one occasion I was mistaken for Suki by different members of the company while standing in the wings!”

Earlier in the interview, Bates referred to the makeup for her Japanese characters as “Mongolian grease paint.” Whether she actually used such a product or used the term as a metaphor for Japanese supplies whose names would have been unfamiliar to readers, her easy slippage from notions of the Japanese to the Mongolian raises the question of what supplies were available to U.S. yellowface performers. A look at sources for such makeup will ground these acts in some of their material contexts. Many firms marketed these goods to professionals, amateurs, or both, not only for theatrical use but

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76. Another possible interpretive context for white actors in yellowface was puppet shows with stereotyped Japanese or Chinese characters; for examples, see J. Bell (2000, 26, 30, 32).
also for participants in such events as costume balls. This also shows how, in some ways, the boundary between these domains was far from absolute.

Along with supplies for blackface and mimesis of other racial types, theatrical supply houses sold everything a yellowface performer could desire. These supplies ranged from makeup for transforming white skin to a yellow hue, to wigs for framing yellowed faces, to costumes that completed this enclosure. These commodities enabled actors to wrap almost every visible inch of themselves in the trappings of an oriental type marked by clothing (enfolding the body), hair (diegetically attached to it), and skin (the visible bodily interface between self and world, performer and spectator). That “yellowface” and “blackface” have become common critical terms for these traditions seems due to the status of facial makeup as their most initially striking aspect, as seen in a small booklet titled *Make Up Book for Professionals* (fig. 5.6). Transforming the surface of the body itself, makeup did more than costume to blur the grounds for assigning a person to any one racial category. This had a powerful social charge. As a term distilling a long history into a single metaphor, “yellowface” suggests both raciological cosmetic practice and the emotional weight of such visually striking embodiment.

What materials could an aspiring or accomplished yellowface performer buy? Throughout this study’s decades, many companies published catalogs of supplies including makeup, wigs, and costumes representing a standard repertoire of human types. As one-stop mail-order shopping outlets, some also sold plays; one from the Trademore Company was billed as “The Most Complete Dramatic and Masquerade Catalogue Ever Issued.” That 68-page

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77. Chicago: F. W. Nack (early 20th century).
publication listed scripts for everything from lodge plays to tableaux to minstrel shows, and it offered musical notation and instruments as well.78

Among its many plays with ethnic roles (African Americans and European immigrants, for the most part, with a few Native Americans) were pieces with orientalist parts. Scripts “FOR MINSTRELS” included:

CHINESE SERVANTS. Farce in act by Wm. Courtright. Characters, five. Plays fifteen minutes. Two darkies disguise themselves as Chinamen and are employed as servants. The fun is furious, and the play goes with a swing that is always a success. Price, 15 cents. (3)

Along with such plays as The Rainbow Kimona, another was:

A FLOWER OF YEDDO. A transcendant novelty and dainty Japanese comedy by Victor Mapes. Characters, four. It is a Japanese Fantasy, dainty, quaint, pictorial, artistic and poetical. Time of play, thirty minutes. This is the daintiest comedy imaginable, sparkling with fun and smiling with faint conceits, both of language and situation. It can be played by four ladies, or by three ladies and one gentleman. Just published. Price, 25 cents. (9)

“Entertainment Novelties” included a version of the Aladdin story featuring “Chinese costumes, recitations, and ‘Little Ting-a-Ling’s March, Drill, and Song’”; Japanese Fantastics, a “20 min. Japanese costume pantomime and drill” with “68 movements and attitudes,” promised “Two large group photos of Geisha girls, 10 attitude photos, portrait of Sada Yacco (famous Japanese actress), and full music.” Midway, a burlesque “based on the famous Midway Plaisance of the World’s Columbian Exposition,” featured a “Japanese Village,” “Japanese Bazaar,” and more (31). Another burlesque was:


78. “Descriptive Catalogue of Plays, Number 17,” Jersey City, NJ: Trademore Co., [1906?]. The “Number 17” suggests that it was one in a long succession of catalogs from this firm.
This work also was listed with minstrel and variety farce plays, where a note stated: “First performed on the minstrel stage by Carncross’ minstrels, at their opera house, Philadelphia, where it had a run of three months” (42).79

Complementing these scripts were supplies for bodily transformation. Makeup powders included “No. 9 Chinese” and “No. 14 Japanese” (67); wigs included “Chinese” products (with bald tops and queues) for $1.00 or $2.00 as well as “Mikado” and “Japanese” wigs at $3.50 (60). “Best Wigs” included ones called “Chinese,” “Japanese,” “Chinaman with Queue,” “Chinese Lady,” “Mikado,” and more (65). A pitch for a make-up book promised that it would teach customers how to use these supplies to simulate the “Distinctive and Traditional Characteristics” of an encyclopedia of physiognomic types (49):


These facially made-up stereotypes of culture, race, nation, and temperament were further supported by costumes. For $2.50 one described as “Chinaman, Coat, Trousers, with Skull and Queue” could be had. Other cloth costumes for men included two for Japanese characters; among those for women were ones for a “Chinese Lady” and “Japanese Lady” at $4.25 (54). Also comprising types from national, occupational, and other categories, “Paper Costumes for all Occasions” consisted of $1.50 outfits for “Masquerades, Costume Balls and Skates, Amateur Theatricals, Church Fairs, etc.”; men’s paper costumes were:

79. Various other products for sale offered other orientalist possibilities; a list of magic tricks described “The Japanese Butterfly Trick” as having been performed in London by “O’Kito” (56); in a list of “Song and Dance” was “My Geisha of Tokio” (68).
No. 1, Chinaman; 2, Clown; 3, Japanese; 4, Turk; 5, Pierrot; 6, Santa Claus; 7, Mexican; 8, Spaniard; 9, Cuban; 10, Filipino; 11, Russian; 12, Scotchman; 13, George Washington; 14, Uncle Sam; 15, Sailor; 16, Snowman; 17, Jockey; 18, Monk; 19, Negro; 20, Dude; 21, St. Patrick; 22, Quaker; 23, Gypsy; 24, Irishman; 25, Tyrolean; 26, Farmer; 27, Cowboy; 28, Rough Rider; 29, Page; 30, Mephisto; 31, Devil; 32, Indian.

Among the female types were “Chinese girl” and “Japanese Girl” (53).

The racial categories and marketing style for yellowface commodities seen in the Trademore catalog were not short-lived. T. S. Denison & Company advertised a similar range of makeup and wigs in such combined books and catalogs as their 1923 “Make-Up Guide for Amateur & Professional.” It sold grease paint in colors including “Japanese,” as well as men’s “Japanese” and “Chinese” wigs; the Japanese wig was said to be suited to spy characters, and the Chinese one “would stand a hard pull on the queue,” a supposedly funny form of abuse that lay in wait for yellowface characters as it once had for Chinese immigrants (T. S. Denison & Co. 1923, 25, 36–37; see fig. 5.7). The catalog also sold sheet music for pieces including “Chinese Love Song.”

This publication itself offered step-by-step instructions for transforming white facial skin into a raciologically marked surface. With the definite article “the” hammering home each type’s unitary character and appearance, a few of these were “The Gipsy,” “The Irishman,” “The Negro,” “The Tramp,” “The Indian,” “The Yankee,” “The Southerner,” “The Mexican,” “The Chinaman,” “The Japanese,” and more. Instructions for the last two show how highly codified these kinds of makeup could be:

**The Chinaman**—The “ground tone” of the yellow man is No. 16 Grease Paint. This is freely applied to face, neck and hands. The actor should, of course, use a wig with queue, such as that on page 37, and the connection between wig and forehead should be hidden by grease paint the color of the

80. “A novelty number, plaintive and appealing, with a musical arrangement that is distinctively different. Featured in the play ‘Chinese Love.’” (T. S. Denison & Co. 1923, 61).
face. Wrinkles should be lined in to help the disguise. The eyebrows can be raised, blotted out or modified as necessary with the “ground color,” and their outer corners should be turned up in Oriental effect. This should be done skillfully, as on it depends the success of the make-up. Use the Artists’ Stomp for all finer touches. The eyes should also receive an upward slant by careful shading at their outer edges. In this connection a study of the Chinaman, drawn from an actual “make-up,” on page 37, will be instructive [see fig. 5.7]. The ears should be prominent and the cheek-bones high, which is a matter of careful shading with the brown lining pencil. The Chinese face is often deeply wrinkled, and if as in some plays he wears a mustache, the upper center of the lip is bald. (21)

The Japanese—The Japanese type requires a special grease paint known as No. 19. His eyes are made up similar to the Chinaman’s but his hair is usually cropped close, very coarse, and black. He also favors a short stubby mustache. In attire he is as the white man, unless in those plays that deal with purely Japanese life. A very characteristic modern Japanese wig is shown on page 36. The Japanese Lady has the same “old ivory” skin, but her hair is arranged and decorated with ornaments in a peculiar style which must be studied through pictures. She generally wears a kimona [sic] with a broad sash of contrasting color bowed at the back. (21–22)

The tenor of these instructions was consistent with that of many such texts, some of which also invoked tourists’ accounts of Asian people in Asia (e.g., as being “yellowish”) and noted as touchstones such authenticating events as Sada Yacco’s tours.81 Printed in national publications that went through many editions, these instructions demonstrate the type and degree of standardized appearance to which many yellowface performers aspired.82

While unable to dictate to performers, this guide offered a touchstone of professionalism and a pragmatic handbook of audience expectations for racial types made readable from made-up faces. Even as it promised expert results and implicitly foreseeable audience approval, its professionalizing rhetoric made it clear that yellowface performers needed supplies sold through the catalog. This was, after all, a commercial venture.83

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81. E.g., Fitz-Gerald (1901, 68–69).
83. Amateur and professional theatrical catalogs in later years continued to offer similar materials. A typical mail-order flyer offered grease paints in colors such as “Chinese” and
These sources of yellowface commodities were pervaded with a mass-market sensibility; but as did Bates and Whiteside in telling of how they came to use their bodies in certain ways, some performers told of having developed personal makeup techniques, invoking unusual supplies and practices to signify their artistic skill and seriousness. Articles about the stars of two 1912 productions illustrate this, and show how transformations of white skin could evoke orientality associated with West Asia as well as with China and Japan.

A big year for orientalist plays in New York, 1912 saw such productions as *The Yellow Jacket* as well as dramas set in more western orients. An article on the star of one of these, *Sumurun*, dwelt on cosmetic mimesis, but it first invoked her body as a sign of orientality made visible in ways of moving:

Fraulein Konstantin straightened up her beautiful, lithe figure, flashed her wondrous hazel eyes, and then let herself loose in a series of fiery, passionate Oriental movements. With her wonderfully plastic art, the tremendous fire and passion of the movements of her body, and her fluidly expressive facial play, she “told the story” far better than it could be told with words, of the Beautiful Slave of Fatal Enchantment.84

The writer located these internalized practices within a visibly mimetic surface, recounting the technical minutiae of Konstantin’s coloring for the stage and her means of restoring her appearance to unmarked normality:

The Beautiful Slave’s dressing room at the Casino looks more like a modernized Harem bathroom. There is a real, regular-sized bathtub opposite to the large electric light-framed mirror. This is Fraulein’s make-up table! She is not a dark-hued maiden off the stage; on the contrary she is the fairest of fair-skinned. To get under the skin of the beautiful Oriental Slave Girl, she takes a “copper bath.” With her own secret formula for the right copper hue, she makes up for the Slave with a liquid preparation consisting principally of burnt sienna and ochre, which she applies all over her body with a sponge. As soon

“Japanese” at 35 cents per stick; its blending powders included “Chinese” and “Japanese” types. Also available was a “Chinese Mustache” made of black hair; mohair wigs included a “Chinese Queue” for men and a “Japanese Girl” wig (untitled advertising flyer, Syracuse, NY: Willis N. Bugbee Co., [ca. 1930?]).

as it is rubbed over the skin it dries, leaving her face and body a wondrous dark Oriental tint.

When the “Sumurun” company reached the Casino, among Fraulein Konstantin’s “props” was a foot bath tub—the regular Continental bath. But when Mr. Ames learned what it was to be used for, he immediately had a real American bathtub set up in her dressing room. Now, before each performance Fraulein Konstantin takes her make-up bath, and after each performance she takes her makeup-off bath. She says it takes her twenty minutes to make-up in the bathtub with a sponge, and after the performance she is out of her dressing room in twenty-five minutes, after taking a sponge bath. She removes her bathtub make-up in the bathtub with soap and water. (ix)

Konstantin’s sponge bath served her practice both in its direct effect on her appearance and by its rigor, which marked her as a serious performer (and, by reassuring virtue of its reversibility, as only mimetically oriental).

Otis Skinner’s preparations for the lead in another such play, Kismet, also told of cosmetic practices as a means of transforming his skin and as evidence of his dedication to dramatic craft. This mirrored his embodied moves, which were founded in experiences similar to those of actors who visited U.S. Chinatowns to prepare for Chinese roles. When asked how he could “learn so thoroughly the characteristics of the Orientals,” Skinner replied:

“I have watched Orientals at Gibraltar, and my blotting paper took up some of their ink,” he said, “and when I found I had to play Hajj I, of course, read several authoritative works on the Orientals. One was Sir Richard Burton’s. I read these to acquire knowledge of the externals. For instance, an ordinary gesture, to command attention, would be like this”: He raised his hand sidewise, his fingers slightly curved. The gesture was effective. It arrested my attention, also that of the girl in pale blue broadcloth and the woman in autumn-leaf velvet. “But the Oriental gesture is this”: The hands outspread, the palms turned upward, the fingers closed.85

The actor wrapped this kinesthetic mimesis in an oriental exterior which also took effort to effect, but even more work to undo after each performance:

He seemed a bit tired, and he confessed that he was. The daily cooking, to rid himself of the last brown stain of Hajj’s beggarly personality, was exhausting.

It was much harder to get Hajj out of his system than to get into that wily beggar’s skin. It required three-quarters of an hour to scrape the outer layers, so to speak, of Hajj’s coloring off his face and body, no square inch of which is not represented in brown, and a daily Turkish bath to remove the remnants of Hajj that lurked in his pores. The work of the bath attendants had been effectual. No trace of Hajj remained except the profound eyes, dark and bright, yet dreamful, that belong only in the face of artists. (101–102)

Skinner’s difficulty in shedding visible traces of orientality had an internal equivalent. When asked “how he forgot by day the beggar he portrayed at night,” the actor answered: “‘I don’t want to forget him, and don’t try.’” He explained: “‘Unconsciously I am always thinking of him, how to better him, what should be done to perfect him, and these thoughts, drift thoughts though they seem, lead to an improvement here and there in the evening’s work’” (103). While such engagement with one’s creative process is common, here it shows how internal and external mimesis were bound up with one another, and how tales of such things could lend a semblance of veracity to acts representing comparatively yellower or browner character types.86

Just as some actors used special makeup techniques, such high-budget yellowface shows as The Yellow Jacket often used specially designed costumes rather than stock “national type” ones. This played to a desire for glittering spectacles of expensive clothing and sets, a taste seen in the response to the

86. A wide variety of productions offered artistically browned white skin in staged Asian settings. An example referencing South Asia is a 1904 musical which presented a mimetically Singhalese soprano (see “The Current Plays,” Theatre Magazine, December 1904, 292–98). A California newspaper told, only half-sarcastically, of the visual pleasures that show offered:

A prima donna in bare feet is one of the sights in “The Cingalee.” To make it a general thrill the floor will have to be relaid at a steeper incline, as it is now only a portion of the audience can see Cingalese tootsies; and if Genevieve Findlay ends up as well as she begins, everyone would like to admire her feet as well as her face. She is a teagirl in Ceylon and apparently a slave. It looks as though the actress, loyal to her art, takes off her stockings and wades in a bath of tea before each performance. The brown hue of her skin is accentuated by a white gown and headdress. (untitled theatrical column clipping, San Francisco Evening Post, 3 November 1904)
extravagances of The Daughter of Heaven, despite the play’s otherwise cool reception; and opera companies continued to present Butterflies in elegant kimono, sometimes with more characterization by costume than makeup.87

Exotic costuming was suited to display both in upscale productions and by amateurs in non-theatrical settings. Requiring neither the expertise and messy discomforts of makeup nor the kinesthetic skill needed to internalize movements, costumes were easily bought and worn for untrained mimesis in venues ranging from school festivals to society balls. This ease of playing dress-up made clothing the sign of orientality most often assumed in those participatory contexts. But before moving from spectator-driven professional acts to amateur mimesis, a glance at a few mainly gender-based kinds of staged difference will show how ideas of race, gender, and class all were at work here. All of these categories could meet in any one performer’s body.

Yellowface as Drag: Mimetic Crossings of Race & Gender

Chapter 3 sketched some contexts for the reception of Asian American vaudevillians. As do the ways in which raciological makeup was marketed, that offered a sense of category systems of race, nationality, ethnicity, and culture that framed many performances, and of the ways in which those roles often constructed male and female variants of racial types. A quick look at chiefly gendered modes of vaudeville mimesis will lend some perspective by showing that not all mimetic embodiments of essential types were based

87. Cf. montages of Miura as Butterfly with white co-stars cast as Suzuki—e.g., with an image of Elvira Leveroni kneeling in kimono (but with basically unmarked makeup) as a pensive Suzuki (“Association in Opera Cast is Unique,” San Francisco Call & Post, 17 February 1917).
above all on notions of race. In immediate or simultaneous juxtaposition with mimetic representations focused above all on orientality, vaudeville presented many acts based primarily on gender roles and cross-dressing.

Critical writings on transvestism and the social construction of gender have related these ways of enacting male and female types to crosscutting, and partially coextensive, category systems based on race. In the words of Marjorie Garber, “One of the cultural functions of the transvestite is precisely to mark this kind of displacement, substitution, or slippage: from class to gender, gender to class; or, equally plausibly, from gender to race or religion.” Locating the transvestite as “both a signifier and that which signifies the undecidability of signification,” she describes this figure in terms that may be read as apposite to yellowface: “It points towards itself—or, rather, towards the place where it is not” (Garber 1992, 36–37). Examining a photograph of Oscar Wilde costumed as Salomé (339–46), she interprets his embodiment of the role as radically disrupting a binary relationship between an orientalist male gaze and its presumed-female object. His momentary act for the camera recast that point of focus as “not a woman or a man, but a transvestite” (343), positioning “the specter and spectacle of transvestism…as that which constitutes culture” (346) within his body and its mediated trace.

Garber’s book is useful to read alongside studies focused on race for its attention to ideas of gender and sexuality that intersected with raciological embodiment. Most apposite here is her point that mimetic acts can variously

88. Other useful correctives are found in studies of blackface that explicate ways in which its raciological practices also spoke strongly of class, gender, and sexuality; e.g., Garber (1992, 276–78 and a page of images of male minstrels in female roles), Lott (1993), Rogin (1996).
89. The popularity of certain such acts was related to a proclivity for mimicry of individual personalities; on that more specific post-turn-of-the-century trend, see S. Glenn (1998).
embodi, reinforce, and disrupt categories of identity, can offer diversely located spectators different tales of what those enactments signify, and can convey their significance in ways that reinscribe or contest—or do some mix of these things to—audiences’ presuppositions about gender, sexuality, class, and race. This sometimes paradoxical mix of ideological reinscription and fluid meaning exists not only in professional enactments of gender (in cross-dressed or naturalized forms), but in daily life. Judith Butler has written of offstage, often unconscious, performativity as a means of constructing social selves within received categories. While this dissertation focuses more on self-conscious acts of performance, Butler’s insights are relevant to almost any consideration of gender as a system of typological referents signified through performance and as the embodied practices that do this signifying work.

The key connection here is the realization that “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts [proceed]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.” This links performances of gender to those of race even as it differentiates the two. Specific locations in both category systems may be enacted through stylized repetition as well as makeup and clothing, but often race has been held to be more credibly visible even in the static body.

90. As further theoretical framing for this entire study, a supplementary text (not part of this dissertation as such) available from the author includes some discussion of Garber’s writings on transvestism and Traise Yamamoto’s key articulation of Butler’s work to the idea of “racial drag.” Yamamoto writes: “In one sense, racial drag implies the possibility of interrogating originary racial difference, but only to the extent that racial parody circulates in a social or discursive arena separate from a polarized racial economy in which difference is the necessary component of self-definition.” As Yamamoto notes, white Americans’ racial drag seldom, if ever, takes place in social conditions sufficiently non-polarized for those kinds of real interrogation to be possible (1999, 31). The performative and historical contexts that generally framed the mimetic practices examined in this dissertation were no exception. 91. Butler (1990b, 270, her emphasis; see also 1990a).
through the signs of its skin, hair, and physiognomy. These are attributes of
gender identities, too, but in the latter case they are at times easily subverted
by ways of moving and speaking—acts sometimes less able to contravene a
more stubborn core of involuntary racial identity. In regard to this study’s
focus on reception and ascribed identities, many Americans would assign a
white person wearing a beard and men’s clothing while behaving in ways
conventionally regarded as “feminine” either to the category of “gay man”
or that of “woman in drag.” Few such observers, however, would relinquish
interpretations of less performatively embodied signs of race in the case of a
white person moving and speaking in ways stereotypically associated with
Chinese Americans. In that instance, the signifying force of statically visible
skin would overpower any behavioral cues indexing other identities, leaving
a white person’s act of racial mimesis as the one probable interpretation.

This intransigent raciological power of the body’s surface can diminish
the ability of performed acts to redefine a person’s perceived “real” racial
identity. This is multiply significant here. It adds resonance to analyses of
the reception of certain acts of orientality as authentic, reminds us that a clear
distinction between white yellowface performers and their stage roles was at
work in the minds of most or all of the people in their U.S. audiences, and
points up the importance of makeup and costume to yellowface practice,
which necessarily relied on the visible remaking of an otherwise white visage.
It also is the crux of one difference between many performed and witnessed
moments of race or of gender, despite their many overlaps. In Butler’s words:

Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by
nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy.
Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly,
with anxiety and pleasure, but if this continuous act is mistaken for a natural
or linguistic given, power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds. (1990b, 282)

While certain staged and more quotidian performance of race afford latitude for counter-hegemonic expression, racial identities often are ascribed in the wink of an eye—before there is any opportunity to use the body in ways that might undermine its involuntary, and often irreversible, assignment to the racial category associated with certain attributes of physical appearance.

In some cases, this offered performers such as the Chung Hwa Four an initial ground for subsequent subversion—at least of a partial sort, one able to cause entertaining kinds of disoriented confusion in an audience even if it could offer no true escape from the role of the authentically oriental. For these and other performers, race was indeed “passively scripted on the body” in many ways, even as it was paired at times with voluntarily enacted signs of oriental difference (as in Tamaki Miura’s renditions of Butterfly) or subtexts of musically contained assimilation (as in the case of Tomijiro Asai).

Returning to openly mimetic practices of cross-dressing in gendered or racialized domains, white Americans’ acts of orientality were always already preceded by the irreducible evidence of their skin. Whether hidden beneath the grease paint of theatrical yellowface or plainly visible in unconcealed faces above the costumes many white Americans donned for amateur shows or society events, this phenotypic hue—or more precisely, its audiences’ knowledge of its existence, whether it was in view or not—gave their true racial identity a more rigidly ascribed intransigence. Yet while this may have given these acts of orientality fewer redefinitional possibilities than those enjoyed by cross-dressed embodiments of gendered stereotypes, these performative traditions still had some common ground, and exponents of
both often appeared on the same U.S. stages. The prime venue for this, and thus the most fitting example for comparative purposes, was vaudeville.

Cross-dressing was common in vaudeville. Female vaudevillians such as Julia Arthur appeared in male roles including that of *Hamlet* (Kibler 1999, 89–109). These acts’ reception was enmeshed in debates about the role of women on the stage, the upwardly mobile positioning of vaudeville (e.g., B. F. Keith’s efforts to render it socially suitable for women and children by purging it of overtly sexual content), and public negotiations of encompassing hierarchies of high and low culture. Much of this was relevant to the appearance of women on stage in any capacity, but could be especially charged regarding their embodiments of maleness. While not the first appearance of an actress as Hamlet, Arthur’s appearance in the role (which she first conceived in 1899, but did not present until 1923) raised complicated issues of gender and artistic hierarchy because of its context. Her cross-dressed enactment in vaudeville of a Shakespearean role bumped up against less highbrow acts in ways which struck many critics as more troubling than entertaining, and—perhaps worse—seemed to many audience members simply to be less interesting than the more lively acts surrounding it (Kibler 1999, 89, 104–109).

Male transvestite acts also were an established subgenre in vaudeville. Critical appreciation of the skill of these “female impersonators” generally was accompanied by homophobic aversion to any offstage display of behaviors judged to be effeminate, and even to the onstage embodiment of movements which might summon up the specter of homosexuality. The anxieties which breaching this containment could stir are exemplified in the

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case of impersonator Julian Eltinge, who struggled to craft a conventionally manly offstage image uncontaminated by his onstage acts of femininity. This containment of drag within a formal spectatorial space was not unlike distinctions many yellowface performers made between their performance of orientality and their real selves. Both practices could evoke fears of blurring psychologically foundational social categories (cf. M. Douglas 1994 [1966]).

In the case of vaudeville drag, however, fears of boundary transgression elicited in some observers a more visceral revulsion. A 1915 Variety editorial railed that “The offensive, disgusting, effeminate male or ‘fairy’ impersonator is now in line for expurgation” (quoted in Slide 1981, 51). In contrast to even the harshest reviews of yellowface acts (which mercilessly disparaged actors’ skills and playwrights’ texts), that vitriolic call to arms suggests that cross-gender mimesis could be more deeply threatening than most orientalist acts. This may have been due to the greater perceived threat that, for example, a white male performer might actually be gay than be Asian. Audiences could assume the latter scenario of closeted racial identity to be a near-impossibility, one which (even if it were true) chiefly would reflect the actor’s lower status in a dominant racial hierarchy; but the former scenario of real-world sexuality could seem more possible—and if it were true, it would recast the actor in the eyes of many as both a sinner and a moral threat.

Most male cross-dressing vaudevillians “relied on gorgeous gowns and adequate ‘female’ singing voices to put over their acts”; in 1912, one Divine Dodson “advertised that he wore $3,000 worth of costumes on stage” (Slide 94. Senelick (1992), Mizejewski (1999, 104–105). 95. While their valuative charge reflected a common heteronormative intolerance, perceived links between drag acts and lived identities could have some connections to offstage reality; many cross-dressing performers had followings in gay subcultures (Kibler 1999, 168–69).
The appeal of elegant spectacle in orientalist shows had a gendered counterpart here. The novelty of boundary-crossing vocality also figured in professional transvestism; but cross-dressing men in some venues embodied gender and race in ways founded in sheer appeal to visual spectatorship.

A 1918 performance by Navy sailors featured one such act:

IN “Leave It to the Sailors,” a musical comedy, recently produced at the Chicago Auditorium, Charles Moesser Terrill, of San Francisco, who had danced professionally before his enlistment in the U.S. Navy, did an East Indian dance that created a sensation. Completely out-Orientaling every Oriental on the stage, he danced in black face draperies, ablaze with brilliants [sic]. It was a subtle, exquisitely feminine, senuous [sic] thing.96

Merging gender and race, this sailor’s doubly cross-dressed act of femininity and orientality was at once evocative of orientalist dance by performers such as Ruth St. Denis and Salomés as well as professional cross-gender drag.

Just as Tamaki Miura or Geraldine Farrar each could embody her own, differently inflected (avowedly authentic or mimetic), but still persuasive representation of female Japaneseness as Butterfly, these cross-dressed convergences of human categories also could play to belief in authentic identities. The Ziegfeld Follies offer abundant examples of this in regard to gender. While the Follies included plenty of female-as-male transvestism during their long run from 1907 to 1931, their defining practice used women’s bodies to enact idealized and meticulously honed female identities. As did Miura’s, these constructed images mimetically indexed an imagined essence, one validated by an appeal to audience belief in their inborn authenticity. The central construct in Miura’s reception was race (of a gendered sort), and for

96. “A Sailor Scores in Oriental Dances” [photographs], Theatre Magazine, September 1918, 142.
“Ziegfeld Girls” was one of gender; but both gained credibility from carefully cultivated ideas of real-world belonging to categories they inhabited on stage.

Despite these distinct primary referents, however, Linda Mizejewski’s work on the “Ziegfeld Girl” shows how race was only a seemingly elided, but still crucial, term for this female “image and icon” (1999). The status of the revue’s performers as white was plain to see. But Mizejewski, building on Garber’s work, digs deeper into staged qualities of these women’s public racial identities. Seeing in their cross-dressing acts “the intersection of the Ziegfeld Girl’s studied (heterosexual) respectability and her requisite whiteness,” she examines the “category crisis” (after Garber) that lurked not far below the surface of an only apparently deracinated spectacle:

…the category crisis of race was more visible in the United States in the first three decades of this century than was that of sexuality. However, the eugenicist for an “American race”—a “true” northern European Caucasian race as an American one—paralleled anxieties about a “true” female body. Not surprisingly, the Ziegfeld Girl, a sign of the “guaranteed” American female, often performed in café au lait blackface or in national or cultural drag—as Turkish harem girl, Japanese geisha, or Egyptian princess. These performances worked in the Ziegfeldian theatrical tension between the racy and the respectable, invoking a darker or Asian race but retaining the identity of the white girl beneath the costume.97

This importance of audience members’ knowledge of a mimetic performer’s “true” identity is familiar from tales of orientalist reception, but Mizejewski’s passage illustrates an issue central both to viewers’ interpretations of mimetic performance and to readers’ evaluations of analyses of these interpretations.

Mizejewski sees a key kind of slippage in the “nationalist and racial overtones” of Ziegfeld’s “promotion of his ‘certain girls’ as recognizable, standardized ‘types’” in a time of growing immigration from southern and

eastern Europe and a nativist reaction positing “blondness and fairness” as the aesthetic model of typical American female beauty (1999, 115). In many mimetic forms, performances of race, gender, and sexuality could and can present tight but ever-changing knots of mutually supportive ideological strands. At any moment any one of those elements may slip into the place of some other, assuming visible or audible prominence in ways which mask race behind gender or sexuality, or gender and sexuality behind race, or which offer a shimmering vision of all three in barely perceptible succession.

Having situated orientalist mimesis as one of many coexistent modes of embodying difference, we may examine some practices which were accessible to amateurs, not only to professional players on comparatively formal stages.
Chapter 6

Becoming the Mimetic Body

Instructed Oriental Acts for Children

Yellowface performance was widely available to white Americans as a participatory activity as well as a spectatorial object. As did professional mimesis, the amateur embodiment of orientality could entail both internal and external practices. Amateurs’ externally focused methods were broadly similar to—if simpler than—those of some professionals. Many companies that sold makeup and costumes targeted their advertising towards both, for use on the stage or in more participatory social events, and often for children and adults. This chapter considers instructed mimesis for children; the next focuses on mimetic play by adults. All of these practices were part of a social apparatus by which many white Americans’ bodies and perceptions were, as Paul Gilroy has written in a more general context, “educated to the appreciation of racial differences” (Gilroy 2000, 42).

Both professional and amateur mimesis often mingled representations of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Martha Banta’s work on white American women’s amateur enactments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reminds us that despite the ideological contexts within which many

*Me little boy, though my hair look like a girl*
*Me like-a pigtails, but me no like a curl;*
*Me like-a play, and me mos’ ev’ry-sing,*
*But me no like-a the kind of song you sing.*

*Me like-a Tom-tom playee in a ban’,*
*No like-a music playee in dis lan’,*
*Me like-a music velly diff’ent way*

*Me like a boom-boom! like-a Tom-tom play.*

—from Little Folks’ Song Book (Neidlinger 1915, 44–45)
women enjoyed those forms of play, even weighty historical surroundings do not necessarily mean that people set out to embody ideology when enacting stereotypes or stepping outside of their usual gender roles. Banta writes that in these decades: “There was an active repertoire of conventions and norms on tap to identify masculine and feminine. ‘Proper’ standards were applied to physiognomical appearances, costuming, poses, and general behavior, just as they always had been. At the same time, a new sportiveness had entered into the relationship between the sexes, as well as greater leeway for experiments within the boundaries of gender identities” (Banta 1987, 280).

This “playfulness” with social roles “was not part of a subversive movement that had to be kept out of sight in a cultural underworld”:

Gender switches took place out in the open, sanctioned by popular romances, amateur theatricals, and the Ziegfeld Follies. They certainly caused no social uproar in small-town Indiana, for they were not in the vein of the overt political statements made by feminists such as Dr. Mary Walker or by lesbians like Romaine Brooks who repudiated their heterosexuality altogether…. The costumes worn in Montpelier, Indiana, by the members of the LOPH Club were just that: play-dressing and poses put on for brief and special occasions. (280–81)

These and many other instances of amateur play across categories of gender and race often evinced a yawning gap between (on the one side) participants’ often limited awareness of the social readings such acts made available, and (on the other) the ready accessibility, nonetheless, of precisely those readings. As in regard to professional embodiment, it is useful analytically to separate questions of conscious motivation, intent, and self-awareness from those of the meanings many people made from—or probably felt in unarticulated ways by means of—bodily mimesis. In amateur mimesis, even if a person enacting such practices did not intend to experience or communicate any broad assertions about social categories, these practices offered them and
their informal audiences embodied evidence for the existence and attributes of human types constructed within dominant categories of race and gender.

To trace some of these practices in amateur yellowface (here construed broadly to encompass also performance relying on orientalist costume), then, is not to level spurious accusations of conscious racism against those who enjoyed these activities. Most of them were, as far as they had any means or reason to know, simply having mildly exotic and innocuous fun (witness the documentation of such moments in the photographs shown in figs. 6.1–6.7). Having made this clear to defuse certain misreadings, this analysis of amateur orientalist embodiment will show how these practices often did convey and reinforce dominant U.S. beliefs about types of people thought to inhabit the world, their behaviors and natures, and their locations in social hierarchies and geographies. This conjuncture of processes—one of light-hearted play through embodied mimesis and another of deeper signification of racial ideology—was another case of hegemony at work, and in that sense it may be understood as two aspects of a single process.

A similar sort of double signification took place through audiences’ spectatorial enjoyment of professional performances in theatrical settings; but amateur yellowface enabled many white Americans to feel more deeply a fictive orientality. Somatic mimesis offered different ways of learning to know racial difference. These were made compelling by experiential grounding in one’s own body, and they could be less susceptible to conscious critique by virtue of being performed just for fun. At times, however, this fun was wrapped in purposefully intentioned contexts, chiefly in schools, where physical training conveyed hygienic, racial, political, and other social ideas.
Whether enacted in the pedagogical domain of schoolrooms or in less-structured recreational settings, these practices seldom were grounded in actual observation and emulation of Asian or Asian American models. In contrast to the purposely individualized self-images of Bates and Whiteside as professionals who related tales of first-hand experience and internalization as the basis for their performances, amateur yellowface often drew solely on instruction from published sources. Sometimes it scarcely involved physical enactment at all, presenting bodies orientalized purely by clothing. This chapter examines a wide range of participatory embodiment, beginning with a glance at its material underpinnings in relation to those of professional yellowface. It then considers pedagogical sources and contexts for teaching schoolchildren to embody orientality and moves from there to yellowface practice in more age-inclusive productions such as missionary tableaux and amateur operettas. As genres which often welcomed participants of various ages, these lead to the next chapter, on adult domains of social practice.

While many makeup and costume catalogs oriented only towards professional actors did not list scripts, sellers of theatrical supplies for amateurs often did so. This made some catalogs, such as the Trademore publication noted in Chapter 6, into one-stop shopping opportunities. These documents provide a retrospective glimpse at collocated collections of materials for externalized and internalized acts of commercially supported racial mimesis. These catalogs made their wares easily accessible to mail-order buyers—schoolteachers, pageant directors, municipal dramatic organizations, social clubs, and so on—all across the country, regardless of proximity to cities large enough to support a theatrical-supply store. The
cosmetics and costumes they sold for amateur use were like those purveyed to professionals, but they cost less (and presumably were of lower quality).

Many firms distributed such commodities. As an example from 1915, the Eldridge Entertainment House offered Japanese- and Chinese-themed plays for young casts of various ages.¹ Two gendered oriental types met in “Choo Lee and Haru,” a “decidedly novel exercise and drill” that “Represents Chinese boys and Japanese girls at tea and gives the full directions for costuming and carrying out the different figures” (43). Customers could order make-up to match; along with various (white) “flesh” colors were “No. 16—Chinese” and “No. 19—Jap”; also available was “Mongolian powder” (60).

A catalog from the 1930s shows how these supplies were offered for sale with other material commodities for amateur use, and how this commerce continued into later years. Among the offerings in a “Play and Entertainment Catalog” from the Paine Publishing Company was one described as:

**MISS CHERRYBLOSSOM.** A Musical Comedy by John W. Dodge. Scene throughout the three acts a tea-garden in Japan. Six solo singing roles, two speaking roles. Music quickly grasped, melodious, fine, and musically good. Time, 2 hours. Orchestration on rental. Recommended for High Schools. Complete Vocal Score, $1.00; Stage Manager’s Guide, $1.00. ²

First published in 1917, the play still was sufficiently popular to be listed after a decade and a half.³ The section “Dialogue Books for Children” included:

**Japanese Entertainments**
Recitations, plays and exercises, songs with music, a drill and a dance are included. Full directions for costumes and scenery are given for the plays with several illustrations. Detailed suggestions for arranging decorations. For all grades and for programs of any desired length. **Price, 40 cents.** (38)

The catalog also offered inexpensive “Japanese Parasols, Lanterns and Fans” for school carnivals; a “Japanese Girl’s Wig” and a “Chinese Wig”; “Jap Girl” and “Jap Man” “Character Masks”; and “Chinese” and “Japanese” grease paint. “True-to-Type Costumes for Parties & Plays” included “Chinese” women’s and “Chinaman” costumes at $3 each, $5 for deluxe versions (62).

Mail-order firms supplied these things to national markets of teachers, amateur actors and producers, and costumed partygoers. Using materials easily purchased at any distance by filling out and mailing an order form, amateurs could buy instructions for moving their bodies in mimetic ways and the trappings with which to enclose them for spectatorial view. With a sense of how easy these items were to acquire (and how steadily they must have been purchased over the years, for why else would any business continue to manufacture, stock, and advertise these things?), we can look at instructions which taught white amateurs how to enact orientality with their own bodies.

**Musical Texts for School Instruction in Racial Mimesis**

One prototypical institutional context for instructed embodiment of various kinds was the nation’s public schools. Mark Slobin has located the musical aspects of these scenes as a primary site of state-sponsored, institutionally mandated participation in supercultural practice. “Governments have many tentacles for reaching deep into the citizen’s musical life” (as well as the immigrant’s); “Indoctrination begins in primary school,” he writes, and it affects “subcultures in two ways: through erasure and through stereotypes”:

Erasure is implicit in the unsung melodies of a hundred micromusics, missing from the classrooms of Euro-America. Like the lack of one’s language, the absence of familiar music sends a clear supercultural signal to children. Stereotypes blossom everywhere, often as a part of officially sponsored cultural pluralism. American school music books,
have tended to include songs from a variety of “homelands,” each item brand-naming whatever subculture is depicted. (Slobin 1993a, 30–31)

The practices and material means by which certain such processes have been enacted enable us to see more precisely how they offered such friendly and efficacious settings for internalizing hegemony.

As seen above, teachers could buy a wide range of materials to introduce their students to the educational pleasures of racial mimesis. In use, external trappings for children’s education and entertainment could leverage displays of internalized practice, with these aspects of mentored performance subsisting in various balances. But even without using such supplies, many children had abundant opportunities to gain musically embodied knowledge of orientality as part of a system encompassing a racialized humanity. These processes enacted ideology into and through bodily practices constructed not as expressive of one’s own cultural identity, but as indexical to racial identities ascribed to—and enacted physically in mimesis of—ethnic others.

Three overlapping bodies of sources that illustrate this are songbooks for use in elementary schools, volumes which explained to teachers how to instruct their young charges in pantomimic or danced ways of moving their bodies to represent essences including Chineseness or Japaneseness, and publications which combined scripts, scores, and staging directions for operettas created for school-age casts. Focused on instructed mimetic uses of the body, the voice, or both, these materials for pedagogical practice offer a trace of how young Americans were trained in body and mind to know within themselves their society’s dominant beliefs about an orientalized Asia (and Asian America) and the unitary inner character and outer behaviors of people who supposedly inhabited—and thus, in a sense, constituted in the
minds of many white Americans—that imaginary space.⁴ As a small but tangible sign of how heavily the books cited below were used, nearly all of them exhibit the rubbed and tattered appearance of publications much handled by children, and most are stamped with the names of public school districts or boards of education which owned them in decades past.⁵

Many songbooks did not offer kinesthetic instructions, but provide a framing sense of musical contexts within which students also learned to enact difference. One such collection was Junior Laurel Songs, published in 1917 (with reprints at least through 1934) for public schools’ “Junior classes.” Its introduction told of the editor’s aim “to express ‘The People’ in music—one of the truest forms of community effort and service—our America, the hope of an ideal humanity, with its Washington, Lincoln, and all the heroes of patriotic endeavor whose achievements are made the occasion of public recognition” (Armitage 1917, unpaginated preliminary page).

After linking that not insubstantial project to an upbeat nationalism positioned as the natural condition of the country’s children—“The Key-Note throughout is Joy and Courage and the unquenchable optimism of the American spirit which is the very heart of Childhood”—and expressing satisfaction at the number of U.S. composers represented, the writers laid out their reasons for including other nations’ songs in this Americanist collection:

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⁴. This orient was further constructed in less performative ways by school geographies, in which music and bodily practice generally figured far less; see Schulten (2001, 92–147).
⁵. Many earlier school songbooks included pieces situated as “foreign,” using them in ways which may or may not have played to the specific social currents noted below; such texts from the nineteenth century could afford an interesting area of comparison to this discussion. A more closely related historical moment was that of the international folk dance movement, which played out some of the same ideology in embodied form in regard to this era’s discourse about immigration and Americanization; see Laušević (1998).
Folk music is further represented by examples from various nations. We have a
great population of foreign origin. We should not encourage them to forget the
land of their birth or ancestry, but to cherish sacred memories and traditions,
thus fostering sentiments which rightly directed will create a new love and
devotion for the America of their adoption. The influence of music is exerted
not only on the children themselves, but through them on the parents.

Playing musically both to a widespread urge to Americanize immigrants or
their children as efficiently as possible and to those students’ common role
as cultural and linguistic intermediaries between their parents and English-
speaking U.S. society, this passage set out one motivation—and possibly an
effect—of compilations such as this one, which included songs titled “The
Jasmine Flower” (described as a “Chinese Melody”) and “Japanese Lullaby.”
Among its other pieces were songs categorized as a “Greek Folk-Song” and so
on, offering a smattering of musical links to various immigrant populations.

This educator’s drive to publish materials for musical Americanization
of young immigrants resurfaced seven years later, with a more explicitly
racialist explanation, in *Folk Songs and Art Songs for Intermediate Grades*. In its
introduction, she seemed to invoke the hegemonic power of avowedly non-
didactic musical instruction, suggesting that “great care and thought must
be given to the purpose of reaching the child’s sub-conscious being by simple
formulae that can be embodied in attractively presented songs—songs that do
not so much *teach* as *suggest*” (Armitage 1924, unpaginated preliminary page).

After general thoughts on pedagogy, she turned to questions of music and
cultural difference, cast in raciological language (the italics are Armitage’s):

> It is admitted by all that song is a powerful factor in establishing contentment
> and good-fellowship in every community. Our foreign-born citizens and their
> children, in their aspiration to become Americans, are undoubtedly influenced
greatly by good-will mutually felt among themselves and in association with
> neighbors of another race, and there is no greater and more spontaneous
> expression of companionship and good-will than is to be found in song. *In these
> books much space is given to Folk Song; and no less than fifty racial groups are*
represented by good and characteristic examples. It would be a shortsighted and wholly un-American policy to try to force our songs on the foreign-born to the exclusion of all other songs. In the first place, the effort would fail; their old songs would still be sung, and, moreover, would be sung in their original form and significance. But if the child of the naturalized foreigner is encouraged to sing the songs of his race in the language of his adopted country, it seems obvious that a definite step has been taken toward Americanization. Furthermore he will cheerfully learn and sing our songs when he finds he is not required to forego the familiar melodies of his race. (unpaginated preliminary page)

Here melody (squared up and cut to fit within the limits of staff notation) was to assume the role of a familiar and welcoming friend from the old country, while new English-language texts would cultivate through vocal practice a new sense of American civic belonging. This may offer a musical example of the views of many U.S. “educators and social workers [who] maintained that play could also make an essential contribution to education, emotional expression, social solidarity, and citizenship” (Glassberg 1990, 53).

This language-shifting maneuver took on added significance in certain English lyrics in the volume. Again according to the introduction, “The texts associated with the folk songs in these books are largely from translations or adaptations of the original; and where that has not been advisable the words will be found to be related to the spirit of the music.” Evidently this afforded great latitude; the text put to a “Chinese Folk Tune” presents a severe case:

Ching Loo, China boy, flew his paper kite,
Came a gust of wind and blew it out of sight.
“Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling,” said Ching Loo,
“Never mind, I’ve another kite.”

Ching Loo, China boy, tried to sing a song,
Sang it high and low, but always sang it wrong.
“Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling,” said Ching Loo,
“Never mind, I’ve another song.”

Ching Loo, China boy, went to buy some rice,
Wandered up and down, but couldn’t pay the price.
“Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling,” said Ching Loo,
“Never mind, for I need no rice.” (Armitage 1924, 27)
This cheerful reinscription of stereotyped inadequacy played to tropes of Asian, especially Asian male, inefficacy and to more broadly racist narrative conventions found in such stories as that of the fictive African American boy Epaminondas, whose misadventures of incompetence went through almost a century of reprintings after their 1907 debut (Boskin 1986, 109–10).

Another piece painted a scene of a more proficient and languorously aestheticized vision of a Chinese orient; in doing so, it trafficked in portable images and an underlying mood shared with many songs for adults. Titled “Music in China,” it was printed with two brief explanatory notes:

Rose-girls dance to the moon-guitar,  
Warm breezes play through the wind-bells;  
Down on the terrace hang the chimes of stone,  
Deft hands twirl the barrel drum.

*Bonzes beat on the tiger-box,  
Guards sound a call on the †conch-shell;  
Soft-treading coolies bear the singing-gourds,  
Lads blow flutes of green bamboo.

*Bonze: a high dignitary. †Pronounce konk. (37)

Two other pieces had melodies credited to Chinese sources (44, 49); one was attributed to “Chinese Ritual Music” and had a text translated from Confucius. This book seemed to straddle dual purposes of fostering assimilation and offering a variety of exotic selections to entertain and educate American children already versed in the nation’s dominant culture.

As common as an assimilative urge addressing new (proto-) Americans was a complementary desire to give U.S.-born children—presumptively of native-born parents—a musical taste of other parts of the world. These intentions coexisted in some books; but more often, analogical notions of a musical travelogue, singable school atlas, or curiosity cabinet filled with
exotic mementos and souvenirs supplied these volumes’ organizing ideas. They framed their songs with Asian references as being from the countries they invoked, or as gesturing musically abroad from domestic vantage points.

An example of the latter is seen in a 1923 compilation of *Juvenile Music* (Giddings et al. 1923b). The book offered a musical setting of a text by Robert Louis Stevenson, titled “Foreign Children” (116–17); this song’s smug assurance gained persuasive weight through the lyrics’ repetition:

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
Oh, don’t you wish that you were me?

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
Oh, don’t you wish that you were me?

You have curious things to eat,
I am fed on proper meat;
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
Oh, don’t you wish that you were me?

Songs of this sort invoked racial others in ways which located their young singers as ordinary—which was to say white—Americans, not as tenuously naturalized newcomers or children assigned to racially marked categories. Similar differentiation was common; for example, a 1907 “play song” in a 1912 collection evoked 180 degrees of physical and geographic inversion: “Wing Foo, China boy, upside down! / That is how he looks to me. / When I’m lying in bed at night, / Playing in the sun is he” (Bentley and Loomis 1912, 59). Participatory singing internalized these words into the bodies of the
students who filled public school classrooms, and in the same moments made those child singers voice these beliefs for their own and their classmates’ mutually affirmative hearing.6 Doing this as part of formal education added institutional clout to these songs’ portrayal of a secure and satisfied white American domestic life, a life positioned as superior to that of children who dwelt unsafely beyond the foam and there were fed on curious things.7

A volume from the same year shows how songs about Asian peoples appeared in catch-all educational compilations. Book One of the *Universal Music Book Series* included “Little Japanese” among its more than 100 pieces (Damrosch, Gartlan, and Gehrken 1923, 113). Its musical setting was diatonic in G major (with phrases suggesting an embedded G-A-B-D-E pentatonic scale), but its lyrics invoked orientalist tropes. The song probably introduced some young singers to these tropes and confirmed their veracity for others who already had encountered them. It offered a dense precipitate of images: “I like the merry little Japanese, They walk with gay parasol and fan, When strangers they meet, they bow on bended knees, In the far away Isle of Japan.” Merely to list the songs on this and the facing page suggests the book’s carefree jumble of topics: “The Bird,” “The Donkey,” “The Squirrel,” “Our Baby,” “The Farmer,” “Little Japanese,” and “Big Brown Bear” (112–13).

The other pieces’ lyrics offered similar accounts of typical appearances and behaviors of animals, babies, and farmers (with the last, agricultural worker gaining an individual name, unlike the anonymous “Japanese”). This

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7. This text’s assertion of a nationalistic American exceptionalism and a racialized sense of U.S. cultural superiority to Native America, Turkey, and Japan appealed to compilers of other school collections; later generations of students could sing a setting of the Stevenson text with one more stanza (McConathy, Miessner, Birge, and Bray 1937 [1929], 140–41).
context (and possible performative order) broadly equated the homogeneity of “the merry little Japanese” with that of nonhuman animal species and Linnaean families, as well as infants and occupational groups. This reflects inevitable simplifications which attend elementary-school instruction, but it still propagated to schoolchildren essentializing ways of knowing difference.

A brief litany of orientalist songs in other collections will suggest how nearly ubiquitous they were. Various books presented “Maid of Japan,” “Yo San,” “Chinese Evening Song,” “Hop Sing Lee,” “The Bamboo Screen,” and so on. These ways of having schoolchildren sing of a fictive Asia were situated in a cognitive map which located non-U.S. spaces as imagined destinations of mentored musical tourism. One song expressed this neatly as:

I’m starting on a journey
To far off places;
I want to know the people
Of different races.

Go east, go west,
Wherever it may be!
Go north, go south!
Please come along with me.

We’ll travel over mountains,
And cross the ocean;
We’ll stop in any country
We take a notion.

Go east, go west,
In sunshine or in rain!
Go north or south,
We’ll come back home again. (M. Glenn et al. 1943 [1936]-b, 80–81)

This conveys several recurrent aspects of these songs: a feeling of touristic entitlement inculcated through singing; curiosity across cultural distance;

8. Giddings et al. (1923a); O. Miller (1925); M. Glenn et al. (1936, 1943 [1936]-a). Touristically conceived songbooks with orientalist pieces remained popular well into the century; a few later examples are Armitage et al. (1940); M. Glenn et al. (1941); E. Thomas (1950), Mursell et al. (1956).
a blithely asserted ability to know others without actually traversing that distance to meet them (or encountering local ethnic communities), but transcending it through musically imagined moments in U.S. schoolrooms; and, building on all of this, the categorization of people into “diff’rent races.”

Similar representations figured in collections for piano students. *We’re in the Navy Now: A Musical Journey around the World* departed from the Brooklyn Navy Yard and included China among its “ports of call”; the author encouraged pupils to chart their musical adventures on a world map.9 Introductory texts set the scene for each piece. China was a place of “free time...spent among the narrow streets, alive with ’rickshas and quaint shops,” a land where one heard “the strange music so weird to Western ears” (39). The Philippines offered an exotic backdrop for the U.S. military: “Jack says: ‘It’s just like home seeing this tropic dependency of Uncle Sam, the Philippine Islands.’ He is amazed when he finds natives ‘living up a tree.’ Can you imagine the thrills when he hears that stirring ‘Song of the Marines’” (34). The same composer’s “second book of musical travelogues” offered pieces including “Coolie Dance,” said to represent China.10

A 1934 collection of typologically arranged piano pieces returns us to musically represented ideas of Americanization. *The Melting Pot* bore an illustration of an ocean liner steaming toward the Statue of Liberty; its pieces included “Little Chinaman” and “The Japanese Doll.” That China and Japan were not represented at the time by many newcomers to the United States (due largely to immigration laws enacted from 1882 through 1924) suggests

that the title’s “melting pot” was just convenient rhetoric to latch onto as an organizational and marketing device. These collections of beginning-to-intermediate-level piano solos were structured in the same ways as were many songbooks, and taught the same underlying ideas of race and place.

Along with compilations for class use, other books offered analogous collections of songs apparently intended for amateur use in the home (as were the piano books mentioned above). These volumes encouraged children to internalize musically mediated notions of an oriental Asia, one sung into being in domestic settings which complemented their singers’ more formal group performances at school. Racial distancing in these texts could take musical form in lyrical metaphors, as seen in “The Little Chinese Boy” from the *Little Folks’ Song Book* (Neidlinger 1915). Sung to a pentatonic melody doubled in the pianist’s right hand and set over a left-hand accompaniment of open fifths, the little folks were to sing the words in this chapter’s epigraph (see above). After ambiguating Chinese boys’ gender identity by invoking the queue as an attribute of racialized bodies, those lines constructed Chineseness through the first-person figure’s pseudo-dialect and his reflexive assertion of an innate musicality incommensurable with that of his young singers’ nation.

As a participatory evocation of white America’s most-often unhearing encounters with the sounds of Chinese opera, this inculcated into the singing bodies of some of the nation’s children a second-order knowledge of that history—and its ideological subtext about who did or did not belong in the

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12. Judging from their physical format, introductory texts, production values, prices, general absence of school stamps, and frequent combination of more fragile construction with often better current states of preservation, these were more domestic than schoolroom texts.
United States. The vocally embodied lessons of such a song could remain available for decades. Suggesting how sustained could be the trajectories of publication, personal transfer, and private use of these texts, this particular book bears an original copyright of 1905, another publisher’s 1915 notice, and a hand inscription by a Los Angeles woman who gave it to her niece in 1925.

Because of these books’ broad similarity to classroom compilations, one other turn-of-the-century and one mid-century example will suffice. A 1900 songbook titled *Pretty Picture Songs for Little Folks* included a piece called “Japanesee.” Following a piano introduction that reiterated the four fast and two slow notes iconic of East Asian orientality, the lyrics consisted of counting up to ten and back down by means of a reiterated recitation beginning with “1 little, 2 little, 3 little Japanesee.” Along with visual tropes of lanterns, bamboo borders, parasol, and fan, not only was all of the lettering on the song’s two-page spread hand-executed in brushy letters; in an over-the-top way, this graphic affectation afflicted even noteheads, rests, and clefs, remaking the last into a sort of misshapen Treble (pseudo-) Kanji. (Only two other songs in the book had such tailor-made notation; both were animal stories, one with notes shaped like birds and cats.) In conjunction with the lyrics’ paternalism and a chorus line of barely human, half-froggish dancing silhouettes, this gave young singers fairly unambiguous participatory knowledge of the fondly condescending affection so common to musical representations of Japan they probably would encounter as adults.13

Fifty years after *Pretty Picture Songs for Little Folks, The Whole World Singing* offered songs from many countries; although postdating this study’s

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main period, it offers a clear example of a missionizing subtext often implicit in other books (E. Thomas 1950). It described a “Yangtze Boatmen’s Chantey” as “almost the only kind of group vocal music in China before Christian missionaries taught the Chinese to sing hymns” (29). The title page depicted international friendship through children’s performance with an illustration of a white girl and boy (front and center) dancing hand-in-hand with stereotypically clothed Chinese and Japanese girls and a boy perhaps meant to represent the African Caribbean. An epigraph promised hopefully that “All are comrades, friends and brothers / In the fellowship of song.” The missionizing aura of “fellowship” assumed clearer form in the foreword, which directly invoked Jesus and positioned musical practice as a means for attaining a Christianized world unity:

Music somehow has the power to help us feel ourselves tied together with “the golden cord, close binding all mankind” through the spirit of him who practiced the oneness of the children of God. The voice of every people must be heard to give this dynamic truth full meaning, and the lifting of all voices in chorus attests its reality. (7)

Hearkening back to discourse from a half-century before, this was a thinly veiled call for musical proselytization (cf. sources treated in earlier chapters).

By positioning orientality within a system of national types ripe for conversion, this resonated with earlier songbooks that fostered an Americanizing social assimilation of immigrant children. As in the historically distinct but conceptually relevant examples of Tamaki Miura’s U.S. career singing “Butterfly” and Tomijiro Asai’s appeal as a singer of oratorio excerpts, there was no doubt who would set the notated terms of this transculturally sung attestation to ostensibly universal reality. By bringing
these issues into the open, *The Whole World Singing* makes more apparent the missionizing component implicit in many songbooks with assimilative aims.

To attend to the presence in these publications of dominant ideologies, and to the suasive power of couching them in texts for school singing, is not to charge their authors—or young consumers—with conscious complicity in some musical conspiracy. Nor did all such books offer orientalizing musical representations when they mentioned Asian people. For example, *Folk Songs and Famous Pictures for Beginners* set to a simple melody unmarked by exoticist gestures a song titled “The World Family.” Its lyrics offered a straightforward statement—one probably with a missionary tinge when heard in its time, but suggested more subtly than in *The Whole World Singing*—of imagined sibling relationships to children (not described in essentialist or hierarchical ways) in other countries: “The lassies in far Japan are sisters of mine, My brothers are little lads in far Argentine; In China and Africa, In Spain and Norway, We’re all one great family To help as we may.”14 At the back of the book were photographs for children to cut out and paste next to designated musical pieces; the image for “The World Family” portrayed a Chinese girl in equally straightforward, non-orientalized fashion.

As counterexamples such as this show, there was no totalizing design to use the joy of singing as a covert instrument for convincing young minds that each of the world’s inhabitants who was not a white American belonged unequivocally to a single racial category. Quite the opposite: to unravel the raciological strands of musical practice in these teaching materials is to attend to the often unconscious, and thus particularly powerful, ways in which

musical fun can adhere as a kind of sugary coating around more seriously efficacious ideological substances. Those nastier-tasting payloads can remain concealed until they have passed down—or up through—the throats of those who purvey or enjoy these treats with noble or lighthearted intentions. This, again, is musical hegemony at work; and to point out its efficacy is neither to accuse nor to excuse those involved in its workings, but to demonstrate how effective participatory musical practice can be as a means of inculcating such beliefs into people’s bodies and minds. These pedagogical resources show how these processes could assume authoritative forms in formal education, even irrespective of the intentions of everyone who made and used them.15

**Phonograph Records & Orientalist Education**

The audible aspects of these instructive processes linking music and national essences also were transmitted in ways other than internalization through singing. For example, the brief essays and review questions in a 1926 children’s music appreciation book included a two-page spread on Japanese

15. In fact, and perhaps betraying hegemonically steered aspects of my own situated worldview, it is difficult for me to imagine giving up on the idea of fostering anti-raciological, and anti-racist, understanding through transcultural musical experience. A key problem arises from the ease of bridging perceived distances between “cultures” in ways that engage with people on the “other side” as undifferentiated bearers of group traits rather than individuals who simply tend to use a core repertoire of beliefs, interpretive frames, cognitive styles, and behavioral modes that are not coextensive with the social toolkit closest to hand for one’s own use. Central here is how to understand culturally modal tendencies towards self-identified groups’ centers of lived practice without collapsing heterogeneous individuals into theoretical singularities—a problem central to much anthropological writing (Fabian 1983, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986). Anachronistically eliding for a moment different authorial desires and social contexts (and access to late twentieth-century reflexive anthropological critique), the difficulty of preserving (but not the desire to preserve) a non-essentializing awareness of each person’s own personhood was as endemic here as it is to ethnography. It would be foolish to suggest that people compiling song collections should not have reflected ideology which suffused their social worlds; but without blaming them in a dehistoricized way, one may see how raciology inexorably found its way into their texts, and from there into the sounding chests and high voices of so many American children.
drums and suggested that its readers listen to specific commercial recordings listed at the end of the volume (Kinscella 1926, 14–15). In the book’s preface, the author thanked the Victor company for allowing her to use their photographs as illustrations; not coincidentally, all of the recommended listening examples in the list of “Records Used with Lessons” were the products of that company. As one among many precursors to what now is called product placement in Hollywood films (and, increasingly, in public schools), this interpenetration of public education and the recording industry was not unique. As a party to this convergence of instruction and marketing, the Victor Talking Machine Company was operating in familiar territory.

The firm long had printed in their general catalogs special sections of records deemed ideal for classroom use,16 and it had published separate educational catalogs as well. In a transmedia sense, this commercial practice was not unlike stereo view companies’ making and selling of visual commodities as entertaining and educational means of learning about typologized human difference through technological traces at home or school.

Victor’s sense of the value of this pedagogical market is clear from such sources as a 1912 magazine column (almost certainly a paid advertisement) titled “New Victor Records.” Promoting “The Gaynor Songs” for “PRIMARY GRADES,” it mentioned “The Jap Doll” as a “childhood favorite.”17 Eleven years later, Music Appreciation with the Victrola for Children: Learning to Listen, Learning to Learn, a book published by the firm’s educational department, included a record of “The Jap Doll” in a list of “songs in the minor mode” recommended for lower-grade students as material for “simply hearing,

without comment or explanation” as a means of preparing children to overcome many musical “problems, which later are to arise” (Victor Talking Machine Company 1923, 49).

Victor’s 1921 catalog cross-listed soprano Olive Kline’s recording of that piece in its section of “Educational Records.” Throughout this section were photographs of schoolltime uses of the phonograph as a means of bringing groups of young bodies into organized form. Among its subheadings were “History of Music” (including cross-references to Swan’s “China,” “Chinese National Airs,” “Chinese Song,” “Japanese Instrumental Trio,” “Japanese National Hymn,” and “Japanese Popular Song”) and “Nationality in Music.” The explanatory text for the last subcategory made clear how intricately arranged were these classificatory means of enabling educators to discover and purchase such commodities, and how deeply integrated musical media could be into diverse components of a public school curriculum:

NATIONALITY IN MUSIC—Used also in correlation with Geography. For Folk Dances of various nations, see “Physical Education” Section and Booklet: “The Victrola in Physical Education, Recreation and Play.” For National Airs of various countries, see “National and Patriotic Selections.”

This nationality subsection’s listing by region included “CHINA / Chinese Song / Tambourin Chinois” and “JAPAN / Japanese Instrumental Trio / Japanese Popular Song.” Even considered as marketing speech (since a catalog guarantees nothing about the uses to which teachers put its products), the care and expense invested into educational sections year after year suggest that this was a profitable line of sales, and that many educators found its typology to fit their methods of teaching musically about the world.

The messages and morals conveyed in these ways could assert both racialized particularities and a transculturally gendered universalism, one seen in the statement in *Music Appreciation with the Victrola for Children* that recordings of Japanese, Norwegian, Bohemian, and Chinese lullabies offered audible grounds for teachers to “Bring out” for third-graders the “fact that mother love is universal. Lullaby rhythm is the same the world over” (Victor Talking Machine Company 1923, 109). These pieces’ performance in the recording at issue, “Cradle Songs of Many Nations” (rec. 6.1), shows how homogenizing aspects of arrangement and vocal style could locate this universality in European ways of singing (the Japanese lullaby also was one of those recommended in the 1926 book noted above). This Eurocentric elision of cultural difference, however, did not supplant typological projects.

The book’s section on using records to teach geography began:

> The people of every clime and nation have expressed their characteristic emotional traits, and represented their customs of work and play, through music in game, dance, and song. These “wild flowers of music,” spontaneous expressions of the joys and sorrows, as well as the distinguishing racial characteristics, geographic environment, and occupations of primitive peoples, are of the greatest importance and interest, not only because they reveal the life of peoples of various lands, but because they form the basis of modern composed music. The study of nationalism in music belongs to the upper grades or the junior high school, correlating with the more advanced work in geography. But its foundation should be laid in the lower grades, when the children are interested in hearing the folk songs and playing the folk games of the children of other lands. (161–62)

These broad assertions found concrete form in a list of records with which “studies in geography and nationality may be vitalized for primary children.” This list included the same Japanese and Chinese lullabies and the “Jap Doll” song mentioned above, as well as Tchaikovsky’s “Danse Chinoise.”

The ensuing discussion of geographical instruction for intermediate grades promised that “topical treatment of a country’s music will add to the
pupils’ appreciation of its significance” and then listed the epistemological domains of this learning in their apparent order of importance:

1. Race  
2. Climate  
3. Occupations  
4. Topography  
5. Characteristic Instruments  
6. Folk Dances and Songs  
7. Contribution to the development of the art of music

The recordings proposed to represent specific locations within these musical systems of race, place, and unilineal social evolution included “National Airs” of many countries, China and Japan among them. For the convenience of institutional purchasers, indices and appendices not only offered easy access to records’ individual catalog numbers but an inclusive list of all of the book’s suggested records in numerical order—affording an efficient path to systematic purchasing by completist school staff. Even for teachers at less well-funded institutions, these “musical journeys to foreign lands” still were possible; the introductory text to the list of intermediate-grade records floated the idea of less official sources: “It is hoped that many of the selections may be obtained from the record library of the high school, or the home” (163–65).

The supposition that teachers actually used these recordings in the ways which Victor encouraged gains support from another series of the company’s promotional tools, the educational catalogs mentioned above. A sampling of four such publications from 1916, 1920, 1922, and 1923 suggests their importance to the company and their apparent popularity with teachers and school staff involved in purchasing decisions. Each “Graded List of Victor Records for Children in Home and School” had over 200 pages of categorized listings and explanatory blurbs about many of the records offered within, enlivened by photographs of the many ways in which teachers across (and
even outside) the country found them useful. By 1923, these catalogs were in their ninth edition, suggesting how established a business they served.

Its stability also was evident in what seems to have been a slower pace of change in their contents than in the featured recordings promoted in Victor’s general catalogs, probably reflecting the steadier tastes and purchasing habits of those who selected records for public schools (perhaps due to limited time for lesson preparation and funds for purchasing supplies, as well as to the bureaucratic inertial drag against which curricular change often has to pull). Some selections from these catalogs’ fairly steady textual and visual content give a sense of how some teachers framed orientalist recordings for their classes by using descriptions conveniently printed in the catalog, and of the instructional milieux within which they trained young bodies in raciological mimesis. Most of these words and images appeared in multiple editions of the catalog, not just the specific ones cited below.

The introductions to these catalogs assigned their less highbrow contents an unambiguous status as musical phenomena of historical interest, traces of human sound permanently situated towards the beginning of a unilineal evolution teleologically destined to culminate in European concert music:

> It is no trouble to reconstruct the path down which music has come, if you have the real blocks which paved the way from the primitive folk-songs, games and dances of every civilization, down to the present time. The songs of a nation or people reflect in vivid reality their history, and in turn have in many instances made history.\(^{19}\)

As a key part of the world-aware intellectual framework befitting citizens of what was presumed to be the world’s most advanced nation, it was essential that “Every boy and girl should have as an equipment for life a goodly

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repertoire of these folk, familiar, national and patriotic songs of our own and other lands” (4). Previously the introduction had asserted that “Music, when properly taught, stands as much for mental development as any other subject in the school curriculum”; the “path” metaphor quoted above left no doubt that this process required ranking various musics in an evolutionary scheme, one which brought out the Arnoldian hierarchical sense of “culture” in an initially ambiguous sentence on music and development: “No other subject, save literature, is so highly cultural when opportunity is given to use the real music in a really cultural way” (3). A desire to mentor children’s musical uplift in a specific direction stood firmly behind this assertion. This expressed an uplifting and constraining urge that was half-stated in those accounts of Tamaki Miura which made her a model for children who might apply themselves to European musical forms, which were constructed in this indigenizing discourse (one which at times seems to have relocated a Eurocentric musical identity as belonging in the upwardly-mobile heartland of a U.S. cultural geography) as potentially their own.20

After these general accolades were suggestions for teaching methods which used records for such activities as rote learning and physical education. One aspect of the latter activity invoked once more the use of music as a tool for assimilation, this time by means of the phonograph. This is seen in photographs strategically reproduced in Victor catalogs and the company’s other publications targeting the educational market. In this example, one carried a caption pointing out the eleven different national origins of students in a West Coast class (16). Another depicted a more explicitly colonial,

20. For more on related uses of the phonograph, see Katz (1998).
Hawai‘ian instructional context, and a pair of images from Tokyo and Los Angeles demonstrated the machine’s ability to serve in Americanizing ways even abroad in Asia. The company’s usage of “us” and “their” marked its anticipated readers’ social locations:

In attempting to teach these foreign people who have come among us, if you will use your Victor, playing many records of their native land, and many of worldwide fame, you at once establish a bond of unity. The enthusiasm at hearing their own native music breaks down the timidity, stolidity or frigidity (whichever it happens to be), and you can reach them with your English.

But this not unreasonable strategy of welcoming immigrant children with the most familiar sounds one could muster up (even if played “with the characteristic snap of each country” by the Victor Band, as promised on the same page) was just one aspect of music’s representational duties here.

The other spoke of the authors’ seemingly inescapable dream of an audible hierarchy of human cultures. A section on appropriate uses of recorded music in “Nursery, Kindergarten and Primary Grades” expressed this with another tale of humankind’s musical phylogeny recapitulating children’s musical ontogeny. This interwove a shadow of actual distributions of instrument types among cultures, the simplified maps of these distributions in the minds of many white Americans (with a nightmarish—or insomniac—worldwide profusion of generically non-European “tom-toms” sounding from dusk till dawn), histories of European ensemble development, and common stages in individual children’s musical learning.

A passage from this section conveys assumptions and ways of hearing difference which informed many moments in which white Americans met

with unfamiliar sounds. Among these moments were encounters reflected in
anecdotal or journalistic form throughout this study. The prevalence and long
tenure of these views in educational institutions constituted one segment of a
mutually reinforcing loop of learning, hearing, interpreting, and expressing
ideas about what one had heard. As a document intended to shape teaching,
it—and many similar accounts of musical difference—may have had special
impact by encouraging adults to impress these views upon children:

What kind of music ought young children to hear? The history of the child’s
musical development should be in some sense an epitome of the musical
history of the race. First come the soft lullaby and crooning song that the
mother sings, as mothers have done since the world began, then the drum
or percussion stage, easily supplied by the child himself in his first year with
rattles and sticks. Then should come the clear woodwinds and strings of the
instruments—used just as they were by the children of the early ages when
man first began to discover and make instruments of pipes, reeds, horns and
strings to satisfy his musical tastes.

The combination of a few of the wood-wind and string instruments in duet,
trio or light orchestra is admirable. As accompaniment to their games and
physical exercises, a heavier combination may be used, but for cultural hearing,
the blare of the rude horn and roar of the tom-tom should be modified for the
tender years, both in volume and sweetness of tone quality, by the modern
instruments which have grown from their rude ancestors, as the child has
grown in refinement from generations of civilization.23

This was not an anomalous text in a general way, nor was it unusual as
record-company advertising. A Victor publication a year before had offered
similar tales of homologous social evolution and childhood development:

In the development of the race, music and the dance are the oldest forms of
expression. Of all the arts music has been slowest in growth, yet its place can be
taken by no other. Every healthy boy reflects in his own musical development
the musical growth of the race.

In primitive tribes, we find musical instruments in the form of rattles,
drums and hollow gourds, while in the American Indian, bells and spangles
are much in evidence. So in our infancy, the jangle of the rattle and the tinkle of
the bell suffice to gratify our musical requirements. (Victor Talking Machine
Company 1915, 20; italics in original)

23. Ibid., 14.
Even in those which never explicitly mentioned music associated with Asia—or for that matter, as rather remarkably accomplished in the first passage quoted above, specific locations or cultural groups of any sort—texts such as these laid groundwork with which teachers could help their students make ideological meaning from representations of Asian musical practice, and could do so in the naturalized ways characteristic of hegemony.

The power of this underlying linkage of music and national character in a context of formal instruction about hierarchies of human types is mind-numbingly clear in a statement from the last Victor publication quoted above, which on its cover was titled *A New Correlation* and on its title page bore the promise that “‘The Victor in the Schools’ correlates music with the entire curriculum.” It left scant room for doubt about the hierarchical framework for learning about these correlations, stating that: “Music has embalmed for all times the rhythms and scales of the races; in it we may trace their great migrations. In music we may hear an expression of the ideals of Christian aspirations, as well as of all the pastimes and emotions of the lowly” (22). The undertaker’s metaphor seems apt in a text concerned with technologically mediated sonic documents of living cultural practice, but its sense here transcended the semantic field of those mechanical traces to apply to the company’s records and the practices whose acoustic results they replicated. Here the embalmer was not simply the phonographic recording machine but also music itself, constructed as an eternally invariant sign representing its makers’ unitary and incommensurate human essences, preserved for all time in the form of audible commodities.
The beginning of Harold D. Smith’s foreword to the publication located this belief in the U.S. cultural—specifically, institutional—settings in which it was transmitted. It began by congratulating and reassuring educators who already had introduced the phonograph to their classrooms to inculcate “a more correct musical taste” for high-status genres (or who might yet do so): “THE adoption of Victor instruments and records in the schools of over three thousand cities of this country, has come about largely from a desire to awaken greater interest, and to develop a more correct musical taste in the minds of American boys and girls” (2). Following this praise, it redirected these pedagogical yearnings (and imagined satisfactions) towards a wider range of mediated experiences whose pedagogical benefits could be realized through deep and frequent integration into more aspects of school curricula.

This redirection took on its surface an almost proto-ethnomusicological tone by emphasizing the close relationships of music to other domains of human existence, but did so in a way which appealed to a nearly ubiquitous sense of stereotyped European sensibilities as the ideal model for musical experience—in a sense, as a tacit model for U.S. schoolchildren’s prospective experience of recorded music regardless of its continent of origin:

There lies, however, a grave danger in treating music too much as an art by itself. Americans have long been prone to regard music as something apart from the commonplace events of daily life. For that reason Europeans have inclined to regard Americans as an “unmusical people.” The average European is brought up to look at music quite differently. Music, to him, is a vital part of everyday life. It is not something to be heard only in some special place, or on some grand occasion: it is an expression of LIFE—of life’s joys and sorrows, man’s longings and imaginings. The European becomes just as particular, just as positive, in his likes and dislikes of a symphony, as he is in choosing certain things to eat, or to wear. Music, with him, is not a mere passing whim, but a necessity—it must express his own inner life and must also transmit to him the musical thought and feeling of the outside world. (Victor Talking Machine Company 1915, 2)
Setting aside the obvious but not immediately apposite issues of its gendered language and its fit with Romantic notions of self-expression, this foreword is notable for its emphasis on music as a channel for the literal transmission of cognitive and affective attributes of “the outside world,” and for the double balancing act its author sought to maintain in presenting this ideologically charged call for mediated musical communication. The passage finessed on the one hand the tension between celebrating classroom acceptance of the phonograph and stimulating further sales, and on the other that between contending (but reconcilable) pedagogical goals of aesthetic uplift towards European standards and of fostering an encompassing, almost ethnographic, awareness of music as an audible aspect of a wider range of human existence. The latter aim was one which, along with its service to high-minded ideals, could lead to tremendously expanded sales of records in an educational market far larger than that populated only by music appreciation teachers.

Victor’s text played cleverly to these interwoven aims. It began by invoking a widely accepted narrative of Eurocentric musical betterment, but broadened its appeal to serve educational projects of far broader scope. It still cast this aim in the unexceptional rhetoric of an appeal to modern European (and in the subsequent paragraph, not quoted, ancient Greek) models, but it did so in a way designed to broaden the sonic bases of these listening experiences to require different ideological and pedagogical uses of recorded music to represent human groups associated with more locales, and to do so in more classrooms. In another mutually reinforcing move, this groundwork for a protracted sales pitch for Victor records as mediated means of education elided the massive social fact of all the less-than-highbrow musical practices
which so infused many U.S. cultural domains. In its disdain for those who had no discerning preference for one symphony over another, it may even be read as offering some self-complicating, backhandedly reflexive critique of the same socially driven, wholesale acceptance of European music among the class-conscious Americans to whose tastes the text spoke more generally, but which it construed as too uncritical in this moment of internal contradiction.

Whether that subtext was intended or not, the foreword’s core message was clear. In its author’s unminced and nearly anthropomorphizing words, “Lest the teacher or supervisor may confine the Victor to music only, without permitting it to enter other departments upon whose studies it has a vital bearing, this brochure has been prepared.” This urge to free the school phonograph from unjust containment found support in a notion of the interdisciplinary rights of recorded music itself: “To present repeatedly a record from a musical standpoint only, without pointing out its relation to history, geography, literature and art, would be a gross abuse of the material at hand” (3). The precise terms of these linkages were tied to raciological, often class-bound, and at times literally colonial, dominant U.S. world views of the time.

The pedagogical implications of these assertions and appeals were clear throughout the brochure. One section offered specific suggestions for how teachers could use records in geography classes to teach lessons surveyed in general form in the foreword. The geography section’s introduction began by giving music’s nationally representative power a high-ranking second place right below matters of pure musical form: “As music is universally known and used, through it every country in the world may be represented."
Nationality, next to form, is the strongest principle underlying all music.” It then suggested specific pedagogical methods for using this power in schools:

The folk songs of a nation express the traits and emotions of the people; folk games and dances are representations of the customs of the people at work and at play. Some instructors never lose an opportunity to correlate a selection with its geographical setting. One of the pupils is asked to point out on the map the country from which the song comes. Another pupil follows the first by telling about the customs and occupations of the people of that country; or about its waterways, mountains and cities. In this way every folk-game may be made a geography lesson. A good way to stimulate interest in identifying countries on the map, is to play a few bars of five or six selections from as many different countries. Ask the pupils to listen with books closed, and as soon as the first selection is finished, let a pupil volunteer to locate on the map the country to which the song belongs. Follow the same method in presenting the other records. In this way the pupil associates the music with its proper nationality.

This suggestion for the classroom use of music to represent a spatial array of human types—and, to whatever degree the text’s declarative anecdotes may be taken as more than merely wishful tales, this actual practice—was not wholly disjunct from some present-day “World Music” pedagogy in its less reflexively critical moments. Following this general methodological suggestion, the company recommended records for use in a classroom tour “Around the World with Victor” with stops in China and Japan. Other Victor pedagogical materials also interwove educational text and sales pitches. One example was titled “What We Hear in Music: A Laboratory Course of Study in Musical History and Appreciation for Four Years of High School, Academy, College, Music Club, or Home Study” (Faulkner 1913).

The preface to this 400-page volume began by stating that “there are four

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24. This potentially discomforting commonality between certain past and present educational practices points up the importance of self-critical framing as a means of undermining notions of falsely unitary group identities. A recent dissertation on related aspects of recent U.S. K–8 pedagogy regarding Japanese music, cultural representation, and “authenticity” carefully and seriously thinks through many of these issues with examples that offer direct points of comparison to some early twentieth-century sources (M. Yamamoto 2002, especially 29–32).

A later passage elucidated the first, most germane category:

In all national music...four noticeable features...are easily apparent:
1. The use of differing scales and modes than ours.
2. The constant mingling of major and minor with a decided preference towards the latter.
3. The importance of rhythmic variety.
4. The characteristic instruments used by the different nations. (28)

Focused on European folk musics, the subsequent text ventured beyond Italy, France, Germany, and England to comment that “in Russia, Poland, Bohemia, and Scandinavia certain primitive and Oriental ideas have been retained in the music of the folk.” In a footnote to the word “Oriental,” the book set aside any attention to more distanced exotic sounds (note the singular “has”):

While a few of the principles of Oriental music have been found in the music of European folk, it must be acknowledged that the music of China, Japan, India and Arabia has remained absolutely untouched by Western civilization. A course on music of Oriental lands would be exceedingly instructive, but as the influence of this music is not easily recognized, except by the analytical music student, it has not been included in this course.

This textual and instructive exclusion mirrored in a curricular way the conceptual exclusion conveyed in the first paragraph, which had asserted a purely unwesternized kind of quarantine for a singular “Oriental music.”

In this sense, What We Hear in Music—despite discussing two recordings from Puccini’s Madame Butterfly, but in non-nationalistic terms (301)—differed from Victor publications which sought to spur the use of recorded musical representations of various orients. One more subtle moment, however, shows how the book offered implicit messages about race, place, and gender which were ripe for more engagement in its actual pedagogical use with recordings. A section on “The Tone Quality of Women’s Voices” listed three examples
from the Victor catalog and suggested some questions for discussion. Along with technical queries about vocal range and so on were others such as “Which of these numbers represents pure tone with poetic feeling? Which has national feeling? Which is descriptive?” (15–16). Shorter lists of questions (e.g., 16–17) placed similar emphasis on learning to hear nationality constructed as “national feeling,” a phrase which located each essence as belonging to a geographic location and subsisting emotionally in all people who lived there. Despite the book’s disavowal of instruction in knowing orientality, this musical linkage of physical place and interior experience within a typological system offered a conceptual frame for belief in the ability of sound recordings to substantiate assertions about human difference. Many other Victor publications (and those of other companies) described specific records as exemplifying orientalized subcategories within this frame.

For example, the firm’s 1916 Educational Catalog offered orientalizing descriptions of records available for classroom use. One piece listed under “folk and familiar songs” for grammar and junior high schools was:

**Chinese Song**—Narrative Ballad (with Chinese Orchestra) ... $1.00
The Chinese have one of the oldest musical systems in the world. They attribute the invention of music to an early Chinese emperor, and regard it as sacred. In this record one may hear the last two parts of a narrative song which tells the sad story of a young lady who wished to marry a poor man, but was denied that privilege by her over-scrupulous parents. She finally took matters into her own hands by drowning herself in a well. The singer imitates the unhappy death shriek of the maiden at the end of the record (Side B). One may hear the percussion instruments, gongs, bells and cymbals of the Chinese orchestra, and the penetrating tones of the Chinese horn (cheng). The singer produces a high unnatural falsetto tone by pinching his throat.25

In an interpretive context already set up—or brought to light—by declaring “the blare of the rude horn” anathema to “cultural hearing” and positing the

equivalence of "the drum or percussion stage" in "the musical history of the race" (surprisingly cast here in the singular) and babies' play with rattles, the unstated meaning of this description of "the penetrating tones of the Chinese horn" and the prominent role of percussion instruments was easily grasped. This became even clearer in a more explicit attribution of national character in connection with a military-band recording of two Chinese melodies, also listed as appropriate listening for grammar and junior high school students:

The world is much interested in the political changes that have occurred in China in recent years. That country may claim the distinction of having one of the oldest music systems. The Chinese people also have a number of patriotic airs, which are used in time of war and peace. A primitive fondness for percussion instruments, such as the gong, cymbals and bells characterizes the music of the orient. (82)

Here U.S. tropes of the archaic, primitive, and oriental all congealed around the idea of Chinese music, rendering it an audible sign of difference for the musically mediated political edification of schoolchildren.26

The record's flip side presented a "National Air" from "the Japanese" (rec. 6.2 presents a different issue from the same matrix) who—even as an imagined social unity—fared a bit better in the company's description: "The Japanese are well known for their devotion to emperor and nation; their national anthem, 'Our Lord,' is an impressive hymn of patriotism. The class should know the story of the ancient Japanese "Samurai" (90).

Perhaps affected by the lingering charge of celebrations of Japan's military as "Yankees of the East" after its victory over Russia a decade earlier (in tension

26. Masako Yamamoto has offered a theoretically apposite assessment of musical markers of Japanese-ness in Japanese and (recontextualized and reworked in) U.S. recordings for present-day classroom instruction (2002, 145–65). Her analysis is especially interesting for its inclusion of opinions elicited from American and Japanese music educators, who in many cases offered widely divergent interpretations of such musical attributes as instrumental timbres (acoustic or synthesized) vis-à-vis ideas of authenticity and exoticism.
with yellow-perilist fears), the catalog did not wrap its version of Japan in the orientalizing rhetoric which enfolded its neighbor across the sea. But as if this were too much for American fates of graphic layout to bear, lower on the page happened to be the alphabetical entry for a “Madame Butterfly Selection” said to give “much of Japanese color.”

These catalogs offered other relevant recordings; for example, a section of records for use with intermediate grades included one in which “Miss Elsie Baker gives us a group of songs presenting a stirring picture of life in China, in Scotland and in Germany” (41). But text for two records of violin pieces will suffice for a parting taste of how this company pitched its recordings of a less purportedly authentic repertoire, one whose European credentials made it not just exotic but exalted. A description of Cui’s “Orientale” for a Mischa Elman recording used the piece as a lens through which to view and contrast stereotypical American and Russian character traits:

A brilliant foreign observer once remarked that Americans have every charm but that of repose. Perhaps it is our active, nervous, restlessness that is responsible for the present craze for all things exotic and bizarre—especially Russian. To listen to this weird “Orientale” of César Cui’s, is to submit for a spell to a musical opiate which, even while it deadens the nerves, awakens and vivifies the senses. One sees as through an atmosphere laden with the smoke of tobacco and burning incense, a motley crowd of Russian moujiks. In their midst is a strange fiddler, now playing an indolent pizzicato accompaniment to the curious reedy instruments of the others, now taking up the sensuous, honey-sweet melody himself. Surely a strange, dreamy vision for modern Americans. Life, however, is not all making and spending; at least a little time may be justly given to exploring the recesses and backwaters in the hinterland of the senses….27

In a common rhetorical move that seems askew in a text promoting school commodities, this writer posited musical orientalism as an almost literal

narcotic able to soothe jangled American consumerist souls and open them ever so fleetingly to less commodified sensuous experience.

As a last example, a description of “Tambourin Chinois” at first evoked that work’s musically imagined national referent but soon slipped towards a kind of orientality shared with dominant American versions of Japan:

This is one of Kreisler’s most fascinating short pieces, and one which has been a great success at his concerts. It is a delightful conceit, and might be called a brilliant caprice with a Chinese flavor. Although tremendously difficult, Kreisler makes light of all obstacles, and gives a really wonderful performance of this piquant gem, which a critic has described as “a dizzy and barbaric number which held the very soul of the East—one could hear in it a clashing opulence of sound and color—there were fans and chopsticks, lanterns and temple gongs, incense and water-clocks; it was like a page from one of Lafcadio Hearn’s stories.”

Considered together, these educational catalog descriptions of recordings construed as authentically or convincingly oriental conjure up a sense of certain ideological contexts for classroom experiences of music presented as Asian. These contexts also framed instruction in movements intended to offer embodied experiences of orientality, taught and learned in ways deemed to be pedagogically useful, physically beneficial, and good fun to boot.

Beyond enabling experiences of raciological listening, the phonograph gave sonic support to structured bodily practices in U.S. classrooms and schoolyards. Some of these activities reinforced allegiance to such accepted principles as American patriotism, which students recurrently performed in ways which used their bodies as the grounds for their own internally felt experience and as mutually visible evidence of all participants’ adherence to nationalistic values. Examples of this sort of practice include group salutes while patriotic music played and mass marching to the sound of records such

as one of Arthur Pryor’s Band playing Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever,”
distributed with a label which recommended its use “For School Marching.”29
These musically mediated uses of the body to inculcate national ideology
were widespread. The beliefs they enacted were so openly valued in these
contexts that more subtle modes of transmission and signification probably
were irrelevant, aside from their broadly naturalizing effect.

Musically embodied patriotism proudly wore its ideology right out in
the open, with scant need for any subconscious concealment; but instructed
orientalist embodiment in public schools was less clear-cut in this regard.
By participating in it, students learned to embody imaginary attributes of
human groups that were widely believed not only to exist as aggregations
of undifferentiated types (an assumption which made the imaginative work
of representation easier), but to be inferior to a white American norm. So
what ideologies and political stands did such distinct and non-self-identified
mimesis of orientality signify in these same U.S. classrooms—imperialism?
exceptionalism? assimilationism? exclusionism? And how did it inculcate
ideas of these sorts by means of instructed embodiment supported by music?

Pantomime & the Kinesthetic Transmission of Imagined Difference

Songbooks and educational record catalogs enable us to reconstruct how
some aspects of schoolroom musical experience sounded and looked as they
conveyed ideology to the nation’s students, and reflexive comments in which
some such publications’ authors documented their reasons for creating them

Victor Talking Machine Co., 1916, 34; cf. a photograph of a large outdoor event at which
marching songs were used, in 1921 Catalogue of Victor Records, Camden, NJ: Victor Talking
Machine Co., 1921, unpaginated; see also Arthur Pryor’s Band, “Stars and Stripes Forever
March (For School Marching)” (Sousa), Victor 35389-A (78 rpm record), 1914.
afford an understanding of how they hoped their products would be used. At times they offer images of frozen moments of musically supported, costumed enactment;\textsuperscript{30} but beyond documenting the fact of these moments and their use of recorded music, photographs are unable to show how the bodies they portrayed moved through time and space. These materials tell us little about the performative practices in which teachers instructed their students, and less about what these practices felt like to the children who enacted them.\textsuperscript{31}

Some concrete understanding of these kinesthetic practices is available, however, from other sources. These offered step-by-step directions by which teachers (and parents at home) could teach children how to move their bodies to express the meanings of orientalist songs. As instructed mimesis enacted with singing or sound recordings, this was another musical form of orientalist embodiment, one played out in pedagogically focused social and institutional domains. As a practice presented on its surface as just good fun but one laden with rich potential for inculcating through the body essentialist beliefs about people linked to the racial category being enacted, it offered another forum for naturalizing “common sense” understandings of the world and the categorical types of human beings many believed to live in it.

As seen above, representations of any type of racial difference operated within systems of human types which were incessantly inscribed in many other cultural forms (e.g., missionary imagery). Operatic Butterflies framed as authentic or mimetic performed on the same stages as Moorish Othellos;


\textsuperscript{31} Sources bearing on the latter question may exist as autobiographical writings of self-aware schoolchildren (a genre seldom published), or maybe as piecemeal references in early chapters of memoirs; no such sources were located for this study.
ostensibly real or mimetic oriental singers in vaudeville jostled up against blackface acts and a hundred different kinds of difference as they all bumped elbows backstage and bobbed along successively on the surface of the same performative sea; and internationally minded buyers of educational records could choose from cross-listed merchandise organized by the cultural locations each mediated trace of musical sound was meant to represent. The typologizing urge behind many aspects of how white Americans arranged and understood these practices also informed the structure of many books offering instructions for children’s mimetic embodiment of human difference.

While the analysis below focuses on orientalist components of these texts and practices, these coexisted with other typological representations. Also common were noble-savage versions of Native American lifeways presumed to be vanishing in the face of manifest destiny, romanticized scenarios of happy peasant life in an old Europe quarantined from modernity’s complicating incursions, and many more such visions. Along with supporting enactments of racial or national characters, many books offered instructions for the bodily portrayal of events or sentiments not identified by culturally explicit labels. Fostering the embodiment of unmarked local norms, these included Christian holiday enactments and patriotic pantomimes. These books provided rich material for the instructed performance of stereotypes construed as different from identities lived daily by those who played them and of other, local selves that taught, through somatic practice, locally normal ways of living—and learning to live—normative white American lives.

These instructions were distributed in such publications as songbooks, collections of dances or pantomimes, and amateur operettas. The former
types of books show how movement was integrated into actual classroom instruction and performance. One such work was *Merry Songs for Little Folks* (Gottschalk and Gardner 1904). This book comprised music by Louis F. Gottschalk and song texts by William H. Gardner, with illustrations by Jerome P. Uhl. Preceded by directions for expressive movement in recreational moments of the school day, its musical notation provided the affective underpinnings and rhythmic framework for synchronized movements performed by students arrayed at their desks. The volume was designed to support participatory entertainment in kindergarten classes:

WE have written this collection of songs for the sole purpose of making fun for the little folks. We know how thoroughly children enjoy singing merry little tunes, and we thought it would add greatly to their enjoyment if they could “act” them out. Each song tells a story, and we have given suggestions so that games could be played, tableaux in costume given, or little plays acted out, in connection with the singing of each song.

Hoping that our book will find a legion of little friends who will be able to get a great deal of enjoyment out of it,

We subscribe ourselves,

“Always for the children,”

THE AUTHORS.

So far, this seems like perfectly nonhegemonic fun even in critical hindsight.

Following this general introduction were the authors’ “Notes Regarding ‘Actions’ for Kindergarten,” in which they explained the intended aims and uses of their instructions for physical embodiment in relation to music:

IN preparing the “actions” for “Merry Songs for Little Folks,” we have borne in mind the fact that these songs are all for “play-time,” and therefore they should be different from the ones selected for regular kindergarten school work. They are merely to help the fun along, and we have tried to make them as “merry” as possible. Nearly all of the motions are arranged so that they start with the words against which the number appears, and continue in time to the music, until the next number is given. Of course, this does not apply to all, as in some cases a specific thing is to be done, at the end of a line, or, by pointing to some particular place or thing, as the text mentions it at the time.
In all directions for “action” songs, much must be left to the discretion and ingenuity of the teacher or parent coaching the children. Very young children might find the actions too difficult, or, there might be too many actions indicated for a young child to remember and execute. Our “actions” are given as a guide, and we hope they will be considered in that light.

Along with these kinesthetic suggestions, the authors offered specific “Suggestions for Tableaux” for each piece (discussed as apposite below).

Some final prefatory comments offered a more nuanced sense of how and where these pieces might be performed; these evoked a lighthearted sense of aesthetic play and its enjoyably picturesque results:

We are giving these suggestions for little tableaux thinking they might add to the interest of the children in the songs. On some of them it is difficult to make much out of the story, but on others, very pretty pictures can be made. In some schools or families, one or two can be tried at a time, and in others, a whole evening’s entertainment can be prepared by the little folks with the assistance of their elders from these songs, and the tableaux given to accompany them. Those familiar with the preparation of such entertainments will see chances to add effects, which will increase the enjoyment of those before whom they are to be presented. Nearly all of them can be given at a very slight expense, by simply exercising that particular feminine ingenuity which is “The Mother of Invention.” [all-capital type dropped for readability]

Offered for school and home, these materials afforded teachers and parents (cast as female) musically embodied means for transmitting to their students and own children whatever messages might be understood from the book’s texts for synchronized verbal, musical, and pantomimed performance.

After the list of staging instructions for specific tableaux, the authors proceeded to individual songs. Each gained meaning from illustrations, and each carried precise “Action” instructions with step-by-step links to specific points in the musical notation. Superscript numerals in the lyrics indicated the correspondence of each song’s text, piano accompaniment, and gestural enactment, enabling children simultaneously to sing and perform pantomime.
Along with nonracialized scenarios populated by animals and tales of essentialized types such “The Indian” and “The King of Zambesi,” *Merry Songs* offered two orientalist pieces: “The Chinee Man” and “Little Ah San.” Lyrically set in Japan, “Little Ah San” was framed by illustrations which included a stereotypically Chinese figure with a queue, making its national region of reference a proxy for a more general orientality (a condition to which this male figure gave an ominous cast by means of a subtly looming shadow, an attribute absent from the illustration’s kimono-clad figures). The lyrics sang of a “little maid” asleep in “far Japan,” and its movement instructions bound that image to merry physical enactments of another trope of America’s Japan. These were brief: “ACTIONS—1. Imitate fanning all through verse in time to music. 2. Sway from side to side very slowly. 3. Same as number one” (40).

This action’s gendered valence was reinforced by its timed enactment with the song. Once its young performers had finished singing the final syllable of “far Japan,” locating themselves in that imaginary space, they began waving imaginary fans as they caught their breath to sing the song’s impending second line. In a metaphorical and physical sense, this was a performed moment during which kindergartners embodied beliefs about orientality while inhaling a gulp of air with which to sing about oriental femininity. They did these things in a moment underpinned by piano accompaniment stating an iconic succession of four sixteenth and two eighth notes in the right hand over the interval of an open fifth in the left, sounding orientality through rhythmic and intervallic devices—in a sense, creating an atmosphere of audibly orientalized air for the singers to inhale. Having
enacted and breathed into themselves these overlain representations between musical phrases, the child performers of “Ah San” were prepared to sing of the gender and small size of a fictive character who already was gesturing in kinesthetically felt and visibly replicated form through their own small hands.

The authors’ suggestions for how this piece might be staged as a tableau reinforced its more audible and somatically inculcated meanings by playing to the same gendered construction of a purely female and picturesque Japan:

ARRANGE stage with Japanese screens in back, and decorations of paper chrysanthemums and cherry blossoms. Dress up six little girls in Japanese costumes and let them hold Japanese dolls in their arms. No. 1—Seat them on mats and let them rock in time to music with dollies in their arms. No. 2—Show each little girl lying sound asleep on a mat, with a big white paper lily and big red rose bending over each of them. If possible, turn out lights, so they only show the tableaux. (7)

Accompanied in performance by chrysanthemums and cherry blossoms, children’s embodiment of “Little Ah San” strongly reinforced—or inculcated for the first time—dominant notions of a feminized Japan. Through instructed mimesis, it offered its participants a performative base for bodily memory of an imagined physical knowledge of what it felt like to “be” Japanese, an idea experientially known through the cheerful (ideological) play of fan-waving.32

This musically mediated means of training raciological ideas into young bodies lends an additional charge to representations of fan-bearing Japanese women in many print media. For the many white Americans in the teens and

32. For a relevant critical consideration of images (e.g., of figures in kimono) in recent U.S. materials for teaching about Japanese music and of the received views of Japanese culture still held by many U.S. schoolchildren, see Masako Yamamoto’s dissertation. The latter issue was clear on a recent visit by that writer to a midwestern elementary school, where (based on all manner of media representations) some third and fourth graders “thought that the Japanese always wore kimonos and geta, instead of the actual jeans and sneakers. They thought that most Japanese play koto, instead of piano or guitar” (M. Yamamoto 2002, 199).
twenties who encountered such images and who once had participated in kindergarten fun such as this, the social meanings of fan-laden pictures were available not only from visual memories of other images they had seen, but from within their own bodies’ muscle memory.

Both “Little Ah San” and “The Chinee Man” dealt in crudely categorical tropes of racial difference, but those enacted in “Chinee Man” were less masked by the peaceful surface gloss which coated “Ah San.” This difference may have been due to authorial desire for a varied collection or to specifically anti-Chinese animus (or to the currency of ready-made tropes expressing it); but regardless of intent, it had the result of juxtaposing feminized quietude in far Japan with a grittier—although still avowedly happy—tale of an imagined Chinese American laundryman (fig. 6.8). With the word “Chinee” invoking a common rhetorical part of pseudo-dialect conventions, the lyrics of “Chinee Man” recited a stock litany of attributes such as queues, bowls of rice, and chopsticks, along with canonical narrative activities of making kites and lanterns, wearing “funny slippers,” and washing clothes.

The song wore a superficially friendly face, avowing that “people say they’re heathen, But I don’t think it’s so” because “…he makes fine firecrackers, so he must know a lot, And I wish I could visit him on the spot!” But its deeper tone was one of disdain leavened by condescending humor, in which the sense of lines such as “The Chinee-man is a very funny fellow” was made clear by an image of a grotesquely caricatured figure standing by an ironing board.33 The marginal picture on the next page clarified the narrative’s location, on continental and ideological levels, with a shop sign.

33. Such imagery was far from unique to this book or to musical settings; caricatures of Chinese laundry workers were common in such other visual media as picture postcards.
reading “WUNG CHARLIE / WASHEE CLOZE.” Positioning the song in Chinese America rather than far away in China, this confirmed the implications of the line “He makes the firecrackers We use on July 4,” which suggested a U.S. setting but left open the possibility of importation of patriotically useful goods from overseas. Along with the image, the word “He” made the protagonist a resident of Chinese America and a sign of racialized Chineseness. That enabled this third-person figure to stand for all ascribed Chineseness in all of its transnationality on American, Asian, and other soil. The illustrator rendered the figures on all three pages in roughly the same style as that of the Chinese interloper lurking in the margins of “Ah San,” here as there playing to conventions with sinister associations.

The song’s music traveled a pentatonic course, and for the convenience of the accompanist was put into G-flat major with the annotation “BLACK KEYS ONLY.” Serving as an interlude at the end of the vocal refrain were eight instrumental measures marked “DANCE OF THE CHINESE MAN,” which in the time between the verses’ scripted singing and pantomime may have liberated its schoolrooms full of young performers to riff in freer fashion on some of the song’s physically performed orientalist moves.

The song’s movement instructions were a bit more complicated than those for “Ah San.” “Chinee Man” had a twelve-step pantomime (11):


Considered in isolation, the meanings of all but two of these actions seem imperceptibly abstract. The rubbing of clothes conflated racialized heritage,
economic necessity, and social containment into a naturalized occupational trait, and pointing at the eye has the appearance of a gesture calling somatic attention to the facial feature most stereotypically iconic of Chineseness. The tableaux suggested earlier in the book for this piece also seem unexceptional when imagined in isolation, seeming to agglomerate stock props and poses:

DRESS two children as described in the refrain, in purple bloomers, wooden shoes, flowered coats and big yellow hats with button on top. No. 1—Seat them at table fronting audience, with bowls, eating rice from them with chop sticks. No. 2—Have them ironing clothes, with big fire-crackers hung on one side, and a big kite and lantern on the other. (5)

These actions and scenarios, while trafficking in orientalized Chineseness, still convey little more than an array of illustrations might; but although static visual spectacles of race can have powerful effects, acts of performance moving through musically marked time can have directly embodied impact. Let us try to imagine what “The Chinee Man” offered as an entertaining vessel for musically mediated and hegemonically guided performance.

Imagine a room full of white American kindergartners whose mental models for raciological mimesis were based on the book’s illustrations, and whose teacher has given them the specified objects as props. When we bring the simple actions for “Chinee Man” into analytical synchrony with its lyrics, and we imagine this room full of kindergartners having fun performing this composite text in this way, the open-ended significance seemingly enjoyed by many of these gestures disappears in a flash of semantic narrowing. Certain meanings that remain after this collapse of possibility are more ideologically loaded than others, which seem in a few cases to have been used as filler to maintain the pace of physical activity; but the loaded ones are loaded indeed.
An interlinear recitation of these paired actions and lyrics makes clear their radical constriction of meaning through performance (words underlined below mark the locations of superscript numerals indexing actions; actions six through eight accompanied a refrain sung again following number twelve):

1. *Put right hand round back of head*
   The Chinee wears a *pigtail*, And loves his bowl of rice;

2. *Put right and left hand alternatively to mouth*
   He eats his food with *chopsticks*, Which must be very nice.

3. *Slap hands sharply*
   He makes the firecrackers We use on July 4;

4. *Extend hands way out*
   And if I was a Chinee, I’d make a big lot more.

5. *Nod head quickly*
   The Chinee man is a very funny fellow.

6. *Point down*
   With his *purple* pantaloons

7. *Point to head*
   and his hat of *yellow*.

8. *Form in pairs*
   But he makes firecrackers, so he must know a lot.
   And I wish I could visit him on the spot!

9. *Imitate rubbing clothes, by moving clenched hands up and down*
   Some Chinees keep a laundry, and *washee* washee clothes;

10. *Point to feet*
    They all wear funny slippers With very stubby *toes*.

11. *Shake head from side to side*
    Some people say they’re heathen, But I don’t think it’s *so*.

12. *Point with right fore-finger near right eye*
    They make fine kites and lanterns, And lots of things they *know.*

A few surprises may be found here: the eye gesture was meant to index the mind’s contents rather than a monolidded trope of facial appearance, and these rooms full of head-shaking children were expressing playfully stern disagreement with the premise that Chinese/Americans were heathen. But those moments aside, the net effect of pairing these kindergartners’ actions
and the texts they sang is to see how constrained were the preferred interpretations of these actions and words. In performance, they hammered home reified constructions of what it meant to be Chinese or Chinese American (here undifferentiated identities subject to tropes of physiognomy and behavior such as “funny” head-nodding bowing). These dominant meanings were not just explained to schoolchildren. Quite literally and actively, they were transmitted into their bodies through musically enabled processes of instruction in orientalist mimesis—and all in fun.

This was a more tightly bounded domain for making meaning from raciological performance than were, say, the ones within which white vaudeville fans interpreted the Chung Hwa Four’s play with audience expectations, or within which theatergoers made sense of Walker Whiteside in yellowface. Many such practices afforded people substantial latitude in interpreting what they were hearing and seeing, even as their responses often still succumbed to hegemonic guidance. But schoolroom activities could convey less ambiguous social messages. This was due to their participatory use of multiple kinds of bodily mimesis, the top-down means by which students learned to perform these acts, and their mandatory performance by children in pedagogical domains where authority structures were nearly absolute in their positioning of those who internalized these practices as subordinates whose duty was to listen, do, and learn as they were told.

*Merry Songs for Little Folks* also offers points of connection to other types of source documents analyzed in this dissertation, and these links provide an opportunity to step back briefly from children’s mimesis to consider some general issues central to this study. Uhl’s framing illustrations for “Chinee
Man” are strikingly similar to the cover art for songs from the hugely popular production Chin-Chin a decade later (see Chapter 4). Those songs’ largely non-orientalist notation was accompanied—in store displays and left on view atop pianos at home—by these images of the show’s stars in yellowface.

The commonality of these musical publications’ framing images offers a comparative example for grounding a moment’s historiographical reflection on the use of such sources for reception-centered analyses of popular media, specifically regarding relationships between audiences’ hegemonically steered processes of meaning construction and producer-oriented questions about access to prior models (processes often subsumed to the rubric of “influence”), and analytical issues of causality. The significance of these illustrations’ similarity is not based on a causal relationship. The sheer degree of recurrence of these tropes in musical documents is itself important.

The fact that such images infused these decades’ representational air shows that they were easy pickings for all manner of uses in musical and other cultural domains. These illustrations’ significance lies not in assigning one a location in the other’s genealogy, but in helping to show that meanings available to white Americans from such images could be based on broad familiarity. For however many viewers happened as children to encounter Gottschalk’s book and ten years later to see sheet music from Chin-Chin, the latter could evoke embodied memories of singing and pantomiming the orientalized Chineseness seen in the book’s comparably illustrated music. Via webs of such happenstance links among people’s experiences of countless texts, these images gained meanings that were in a sense personal (based on
each individual’s particular combination of experiences) but in a sense social (since most such experiences involved widely recirculated representations).

This comparison offers a midstream, concretely grounded example for clarifying this study’s aims and methods. The often half-aware processes of interpretive association proposed above illustrate why the sources and attributes of any one representation a particular author created in this trope-laden milieu did not necessarily have much bearing on the interpretive acts by which its consumers made meaning from it. The paths people traveled in the course of reception could be more easily and convincingly chosen—often without conscious thought, as is true for most of us in most situations framed as recreational—based on knowledge of other representations which had indeterminate relationships of production history to the one at hand, but had easily graspable commonalities of perceived form. Because of this, to tease out the precursor models for any one representation would be less useful here than it would be for an authorially centered project focused on the processes by which cultural producers made particular texts. Such a study would tell us more about producers’ intentions than does this dissertation, but might tell us less about how audiences may have made meaning from their experiences of those people’s bodily and textual strategies and techniques. These processes of making racial meaning from performance (and its mediated traces) are the focus of this study, which may complement others focused on production.34

Returning to children’s instructed mimesis, later pantomime songbooks show that these practices lived into the century. May Dickerman Burdick’s 1923 *Up-to-Date Drill and Pantomime Book* included a girls’ “Japanese Drill”

34. For more production-centered work on contemporary U.S. musical texts which offered an orientalizing *japonisme* to adult consumers, see Sheppard (forthcoming).
and a “Chinese Drill” for boys (Burdick 1923 [1931]). It included no musical notation, leaving it to instructors to select their accompaniment; but its instructions included directions to the accompanist (presumed to be a pianist) for musical cues and synchronized linkages between sound and action.

Intended for performers “from twelve to sixteen years of age,” the girls’ piece specified: “They should wear kimonos in Japanese style, with doll fans or other small ornaments in their hair, and should carry Japanese parasols” (5). Unlike the pantomime for “Little Ah San,” the drill involved substantial traveling within the performance space; but both used stock gestures as a physical means of representing Japaneseness. Here these actions included kneeling, peeking over parasols, and a great deal of bowing. The sense of disempowered cuteness this evoked was like that of such pieces as a “Japanese Fan Drill” published in a collection copyrighted in 1906 and 1910 and still in print in 1931; that drill was choreographed for girls who were to dress in kimono and carry fans while dancing to “Three Little Maids from School” from The Mikado. For their entrance they were to “Take small cross steps, body bent over, face all smiles, fans held at side of face....”35

In a fashion similar to Burdick’s “Japanese Drill” but in a way akin to its counterpart in Merry Songs for Little Folks, her “Chinese Drill” text stated: “The costumes should be made in Chinese fashion and should be of figured goods in large patterns. Each boy should wear a tight-fitting, white skullcap to hide his hair, and should have a long cue [sic] and carry a pair of chopsticks” (35). This near-fetishization of queues and chopsticks was

fostered in “The Chinee Man” and in adult yellowface enactments of Chineseness in vaudeville and other settings. Burdick put these objects to work in particularly charged ways.

In the “Chinese Drill,” queues and chopsticks were central props for the boys’ gestures. The chopstick activities featured a sort of patty-cake game of striking one’s sticks together and against a partner’s, and an imitation of eating with musically-driven acceleration designed to create a comic effect:

At a chord from the piano, they halt. At a second chord, they sit down in Chinese fashion. In time to the music they go through the motions of eating with chopsticks. The music should get gradually faster for this movement, which should last several minutes. (37)

The queues enabled other games invoking histories of forcible spectatorship of racialized humans-become-objects whose resistance against display was constructed as futile. With a key mimetic displacement of agency, these games also told bowdlerized tales of racist violence some white Americans had visited upon Chinese immigrants marked and abused by their queues.

Before recounting those aspects of the drill, it is useful here to consider Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s definition of a “racial project.” As Lisa Lowe has observed, this forges a key theoretical link between racial formation, the social production of racism, and various cultural practices (Lowe 1996, 22, 194n57). Although Omi and Winant are concerned more with macro-level social processes than such small-scale acts as children’s activities, their formulation offers an apt account of what this activity enacted through bodily metaphor. Having noted that “From a racial formation perspective, race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation,” they elaborate on the implications of thinking “of racial formation processes as occurring through a linkage between structure and representation”: 
Racial projects do the ideological “work” of making these links. A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize or redistribute resources along racial lines. Racial projects connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning. (Omi and Winant 1994, 56; italics in original)

With this theoretical framing in mind, we may consider how the “Chinese Drill” organized its participants’ bodies into a mimetic version of certain U.S. “social structures and everyday experiences” writ small.

The final parts of the drill were to convey a sense of fun-loving male riotousness of a youthful and harmless nature. But despite what must have seemed to most white audiences the happy surface of these moments, they were amateur slapstick proxies in which children unwittingly re-enacted more serious offstage acts—acts of damaging riotousness by some white American men in years not so long past, in moments whose embodied traces here assumed ostensibly hilarious form:

All shake hands with the audience, Chinese fashion [a gesture earlier explained as “each shaking his own hand”]. Then each boy takes up the end of his neighbor’s cue and holds it out at full length, as if displaying it to the audience. Still holding the cue, he taps the neighbor on the shoulder; whereupon the neighbor is offended and starts to run. All skip around the stage twice, each holding to the cue of the one in front.

From the rear of the stage all come down the center and halt in the positions indicated in Fig. 11 [not reproduced here, this figure indicates a single straight and centered line of twelve equally spaced positions extending from full downstage center to full upstage center].

Then the leader looks back and boxes the ears of the one behind him, who drops the leader’s cue and in his turn boxes the ears of the one behind him. In this manner the boxing of ears and dropping of cues continue to the end of the line.

The leader now shakes hands with the audience and smiles. While he is greeting them, each of those behind him takes hold of the cue in front and holds it out at arm’s length on the left side and then at arm’s length on the right. Next, the even numbers hold out the cues at arm’s length at the left side, while the odd numbers hold out the cues at arm’s length on the right side.

The line breaks up into couples, who start to run around the stage. The boy on the left holds his partner’s cue and keeps a considerable distance from the latter. They circle around the stage once and run off. (38–39)
In this and other books, instructed mimesis offered a surface of participatory fun masking deeper ideological content. Framed as innocent recreation, its performed embodiment helped to naturalize this ideology not as a set of beliefs being taught, but just as a kind of colorful background—one reflecting no difficult social facts while supporting physical comedy. This displaced means of transmitting raciological beliefs about human difference and social power offers another, complementary view of how music and hegemony met, here in a comedic scenario echoing histories of anti-Asian American violence.

After examining *Merry Songs for Little Folks* and the *Up-to-Date Drill and Pantomime Book*, one might wonder whether pantomime content always was so grim. Another book published that year, *Mother Stoner’s Jinglelays for the World*, offers some relatively fresh air in this regard (Stoner 1923). Published for use in “Natural Education Schools,” it paired musical evocations of Japaneseness and Chineseness with comments and movement instructions comparatively free of cultural or racial stereotyping. Its Japanese pieces were “Sunset Song” (“Yuyake”) and “Cho-Cho,” and the latter was printed with only Japanese-language text (“Cho-cho, cho-cho, na no hani tomare. Na no haga iye nara teni tomare”). “Sunset Song” carried lyrics in Japanese and English translation, and below it the authors gave these instructions:

Stand firmly on both feet, hold hands above head and bring fingers to the ground without bending the knees. Do this towards the right where YU-YA-KE is supposed to be—(the sunset) and then to the left for KO-YA-KE, or little sunset. As you finish the jingle, touch fingers to the ground and bend from the waist, moving quickly, with the rhythm of the jingle. Sing first in English and then test your memory by singing in Japanese. Mental strength is gained by being able to express a thought in two languages. The suggestion of sunshine is good also, bringing thoughts of the sun. (Stoner 1923, 27)

These movements still played to the trope of bowing, but did so with framing which sought to locate the piece’s sung and embodied meanings in a basically
non-orientalized domain. The book’s Chinese song was illustrated with a stereotyped image framed by men with queues, but its movements did not inculcate comparable performative tropes:

In singing this little song to the children, first tell them the meaning in English. The mother croons in China even as she does in the United States. Let the children hold a doll as a mother holds her baby and gently rock the folded arms to and fro to the air of the lullaby. The song has a three-fold purpose—to promote a kindly feeling toward the Chinese, to show the child how to hold a baby properly, and to teach him to be rhythmic. (37)

Stepping for a tactical moment into an older analytical frame concerned with parsing positive from negative stereotypes, it is worth noting that while these instructions still sought to transmit singular attitudes towards “the Chinese” as an undifferentiated human group, at least these feelings were cast in a positive mold, one free from assimilative or proselytizing rhetoric, and they were not bound to the wholesale ascription of Chinese character attributes. Even the mentored expression of a universalized parental instinct,gendered as it was in the reified female figure of “The mother,” was not limited to girls; the authors carefully put those directions in mostly gender-neutral language, succumbing only to a presumably inclusive “him” at their end.

This book’s significance here cuts in two directions. It shows that the means by which pantomime books taught adults to teach children how to move to songs with orientalist texts (or translated from Chinese or Japanese sources) could infuse these movements with social meaning in diverse ways: some meant to foster intercultural goodwill, others to entertain through crass physical caricature. The point of attending to these materials’ differently inflected reinscriptions of a system of human categories such as “Japanese” or “Chinese” does not derive from their use of a national typology, which taken by itself can be a not particularly loaded way of denoting countries, cultures,
or languages from which musical texts originated or to which they referred. Rather, it goes to the question of the widespread use of these systems as a master grid not only for these more and less fraught processes of conceptual arrangement but also for ideologically positioning the people ascribed to any one category as undifferentiated bearers of homogeneous beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral traits many white Americans heard and saw as signs of inner “national” or “racial” characteristics. In publications and reception processes where those essentializing moves were common, even similarly organized musical collections that were relatively free of ascriptive stereotyping could reinforce its credibility by implicitly corroborating its framing structures.

In between these structurally homologous but ideologically different extremes were books which offered instructions for embodying oriental types in moods more redolent of aesthetic entrancement than deprecating parody, but which still trafficked in dehumanizing stereotypes cast in invariant bodily form. An example of this more celebratory mode of mimesis is found in Ritual & Dramatized Folkways, published “for use in camp, club, religious assembly, settlement and school” (Jasspon and Becker 1925, title page). The book’s friendly but essentializing orientalist scenarios were set in India and Japan.

The latter consisted of four “Japanese Life Scenes.” Foreshadowing their dreamy melange of affection, awe, and inadvertent condescension, an introductory paean to the country’s quotidian aesthetic charm ascribed to “the Japanese” an unvarying “unique love of nature, and a childlike spirit of merrymaking” (151). Each scene had an illustration rendered in quasi-ukiyo-e style; these were proposed as models for fashioning costumes for the pieces they faced (156). The first scene, “The Feast of Lanterns,” instructed female
and male performers to “dance with mincing steps,” “bow,” “recite in high-pitched voices” the lines with which they summoned fellow peasants to join them in dancing Bon Odori, and perform a fan dance (with boys or men doing the same steps as the female dancers, but in a way that would lend them “a grotesque quality”)—all to the “Chinese Dance” from Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite. This complex recasting invoked Japaneseness, orientalized it, resituated it musically in a China heard through a Russian composer’s exoticism, and performed all of this in U.S. settings where Russian music itself often was orientalized.

The next scene, “Summer in Kyoto,” included notation for music under the voice of an unseen speaker intoning about a “drowsy…O Suye San” who was said to hear “No tinkle of the samisen” as her dreamy portrayer drifted “listlessly” across the stage to disappear in a “soft tinkle of bells”—an extraordinarily tranquilized, low-psychological-affect role even for this sleepy and wistful brand of feminized orientality. “The Feast of Chrysanthemums” offered notation for “Sakura” to accompany the start of a scene in which in a “Mother” arranged flowers one by one, then sang a “Japanese Lullaby” to her generic “Child.” The last sketch was a silent pantomime of Buddhist priests and worshipers bowing, prostrating themselves, and inhaling incense smoke. While none of these scenes purposely denigrated their characters, none of the lines or directions for these “Japanese Life Scenes” hinted at any interpretive space, much less offered suggestions, for any individual characterization. Their authors clearly intended them to be celebratory, in their somnolent way; but performances of these dramatic texts’ remorselessly unindividuated
figures can only have reinforced orientalist ideas through their performers’ somatic experience and the spectacle their acts offered to others.

Not all pantomime books fostered bodily practices transmitting equally raciological beliefs, but the pieces on Chinese and Japanese topics in most such collections of musical and kinesthetic instructions gave performers little encouragement to embody characters other than essential types which many white Americans already believed to populate China, Japan, and the diasporic locations now called Asian America. Virtually all of these books—even the more self-aware ones—were beholden to the category systems within which their authors organized them. Performances based on these texts could hardly help but reinforce belief in those systems’ categories as meaningful tools for organizing one’s thoughts and one’s experiences—imagined or actually lived—with real people. While a few publications encouraged practices that did not purvey embodied assertions that actual people ascribed to such a category—“Chinese,” “Japanese”—were all identical bearers of canonically oriental beliefs, behavioral attributes, and physiognomic traits, these books’ broader discursive context is likely to have had similarly reductive effects.

Categorical labeling by country in these books ended up positioning even less stereotypically framed practices as more typically representative of national types than their authors probably would have wished. This is not to judge them anachronistically; this dilemma still plagues compilers of song collections and musical surveys, who struggle with the issue of how not to make selected examples seem to signify essential types rather than more nuanced locations, small buoys floating on a sea of changing and varied ways of doing the things that make music. Rather, to point out this effect is to say
in another way that authors cannot control the meanings people make from their texts, by reading or performing them, and that often dominant—even if unintended—meanings find their way into people’s interpretations through a sort of uncontrolled diffusion by association.

The dissemination of racist caricatures in some books for schoolroom and playroom use shows more bluntly how musically mediated, youthfully embodied orientalist acts could serve contending masters in more severe ways. Setting aside the anachronistic urge simply to dismissal these sources as hopelessly racist or to berate them for falling well short of more recent social ideals, one may contrast *Merry Songs for Little Folks* and *Up-to-Date Drills and Pantomimes* to such publications as Armitage’s songbooks and the Victor company’s educational record catalogs (and in a less assimilative way which preserved some sense of equal standing at a still categorical distance, *Mother Stoner’s Jinglelays*). This juxtaposition illustrates a broad aspect of hegemonic versatility. Without implying that these now mostly troubling pedagogical materials should magically have been something other than what they were, one may analyze them in their historical and performative contexts as precisely that. While some presented musical representations of racialized difference as tools for fostering social assimilation, mimetically oriental musical practices also could serve resolutely exclusionary ends.

This is seen with terrible clarity in *Merry Songs for Little Folks*, which positioned Chineseness as a racial condition multiply incommensurable with a white American norm. Having looked at some other books, a return to this one can make this point more clearly and with the knowledge that it is neither anomalous nor wholly representative of such pedagogical texts. *Merry Songs*
assigned Chineseness its incommensurability most obviously right on the printed page by means of its illustrations’ portrayal of visible distinctions of physiognomy, and in its lyrics’ pseudo-dialect. As a text for participatory singing, this fostered an internalized mode of representational experience, one put into practice with the lips and tongues of U.S. kindergartners. This used these linguistic stereotypes as evidence of a raciological difference felt and heard, one made audible through its embodiment by all present and further naturalized through the group reinforcement of mass participation.

Beyond affirming its positioning of Chineseness as a unitary set of bodily and temperamental attributes, closer attention to “The Chinee Man” as a foundation for children’s performative fun in schoolrooms reveals another way in which it reinforced exclusionary values. With a moment’s thought about this context, it becomes clear that the authors foresaw U.S. classrooms full of young performer-observers among whom were no students of Chinese heritage. These mentored processes of linguistic and gestural mimesis would have made no sense if enacted by children already ascribed in real life to the racial category whose imagined attributes they were enacting. Clearly these scenarios anticipated no layering of mimesis over supposed authenticity as redundant strata of imitative and naturalized orientality. The authors’ attention to teaching students how to embody imaginary orientality made those practices themselves, and the processes of their transmission, into a conduit for the assumption that orientality—here constructed as Chineseness and Japanese, and only potentially embodied in the hypothetical form of ideologically absented Asian American classmates—was an inborn condition
and a collection of personal attributes lived in real life by people presumed to be categorically missing from U.S. classrooms and society at large.

Through the mimetic voices and bodies of (white) U.S. schoolchildren and for their own consumption, this physically “performed out” any idea that students of Asian heritage might be truly part of their music-making peers in the classroom, and by embodied metaphor it performed them out of the larger culture into which these activities were socializing young bodies and minds. Race-based Asian exclusion could be writ large, if in a disappearing hegemonic ink which faded from conscious view upon leaving its musical pen, in the small bodies and well-learned assumptions of children whose teachers used these resources. The effects of this practice probably were stronger than those of exclusionary, but nonparticipatory, illustrations in such children’s books as *The Jolly Chinee*, which included a story with a protagonist described as “a little yellow chinaman” who was “wonderfully proud” of “the great length of his fingernails,” “had almond shaped eyes, and wore his shiny black hair in a long, carefully combed pig tail.”

The persuasive force of participatory embodiment also raises the heavy question of what effects obligatory classroom participation in enacting these texts and practices may have had on the Asian American children who must have been present in some schools where these activities took place. While documentary sources are as lacking in this regard as they are for white students’ individual experiences, such grindingly frictional moments of pedagogical authority, peer pressure, ascribed authenticity, and performed

36. Cox (1903). Similar illustrations appeared in various editions of the Aladdin story, including some from the same Chicago publishing firm (e.g., Conkey Co. (n.d. [ca. 1900?], unpaginated), in certain children’s editions of *Gulliver’s Travels* (e.g., Swift 1888, 119, 126), and in many other contemporary books for young American readers.
stereotyping can only have been traumatic. This trauma, in turn, may
have taught those who felt it a lesson in Asian exclusion parallel to the
one conveyed in these and other less musical books, but experienced deeply
in embodied practices made all the more fraught by exposure to the eyes of
one’s classmates. While this scenario and its affective charge are necessarily
speculative, these classroom activities gave white participants who were so
inclined material and encouragement for extracurricular anti-Asian taunts on
playgrounds and public streets, and in some cases likely laid groundwork for
more adult genres of verbal and physical abuse. To point this out is not to say
that these texts’ authors and young performers should have known better in a
time of widespread acceptance of anti-Asian racism (although one could wish
as much), but to show how musical texts not only reflected but underpinned
certain kinds of social intolerance endemic to these historical contexts.

One of the rare exceptions to the presumed absence of Asian American
students from the classrooms for which these texts were destined is found in
a 1925 collection positioned in its foreword as a second-generation work in
a lineage that began with the “educational success” of the nation’s “first out-
put of Folk Dance material of two decades ago.” Noting that at the time of her
writing “Folk Dances both great and small fill an important place in the field
of Physical Training, as well as in Recreation,” the author felt that “A few
fundamental values will bear restatement”: “The racial joyousness of the
Folk Dances links them to the child expression of all times; the play life of
all peoples helped beat out their rhythms, their lilts and lyrics and jingled
rhymes; these also helped spell out the basic art forms of the world” (Hofer
1925, 2). Within the dances filling this racial array of foreign types were pieces
categorized as “Japanese” and “Chinese,” with the directions for the latter calling for such things as the raising of lanterns and “salaaming low” to the accompaniment of an “authentic dance tune” to “be played in even, pointed time” (10–13). This piece did not presuppose that students of Chinese heritage would be present, but instructions for the former activity situated Japanese American students as nativized informants by suggesting that in addition to the movements specified by the author, “Other activities may be suggested by Japanese children” (11). This unusual statement is an exception that points up, by contrast, the general rule that dance books of this sort almost always elided the presence of Asian American children in U.S. schoolrooms.

Beyond any poorly documented effects more common, exclusionary pedagogical materials had on interactions between students of Asian and European heritage, these texts offered many white Americans a kinesthetic childhood introduction to dominant notions of oriental musicality, giving them somatic and cognitive background for interpreting later encounters with Asian musics, orientalist popular songs, or performances of European or American music by musicians of real or imaginatively staged Asian heritage. In these ways, orientalist musical activities for children were a major source of interpretive frameworks many Americans later could use when making their own kinds of raciological meaning from music they heard as oriental.

Books of music for “national,” “folk,” or “character” dances preserve limited traces of mimetic activities which in less scripted ways were similar to those for which pantomimes gave specific instructions. Many books of this sort contained only piano notation without kinesthetic instructions. As were those of pantomimes, these were published for use by schoolteachers, who
in some cases may have used them to accompany movements suggested in pantomime books that did not provide musical notation. To note a few dance music collections can show that they worked with the same typologies, providing notation with perceptible correspondences to other publications’ movement instructions and tacitly reinforcing the validity of the human categories used in both. For example, *Music for Fifty Figure and Character Dances* included a piece called “Japanese Dance”; many earlier and later collections labeled other pieces with exactly the same generic title.37

Some dance-music books did offer movement instructions. *Dance Songs of the Nations* combined words, music, and dance directions representing ten nations. Japan was represented by a “Geisha Dance” seemingly meant for enactment by children or adults (Marzo et al. 1908, 94–102). A general note explained the performative latitude the authors foresaw (4):

Any of the numbers may be danced without the singing, any may be sung without the dancing or the national costume, the piano part is a complete solo; hence the singing and dancing may be used individually, together or they may be alternated, a few or all may be given in performance. The vocal numbers are published separately at prices indicated in the index, and the costume plates with dancing directions may be had at twenty-five cents each.

The piece representing Japan was composed for piano and two vocalists, who were to sing about “pretty maidens dancing” amid bamboo and lanterns. A lithograph of national clothing (as models for costume) faced the last page of notation and was followed by a page of dance instructions, illustrated at two points with stick figures (101–102).

These directions played to notions of Japaneseness embodied by moving “paper fans…with a jerky little motion,” running in circles “with tiny little

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steps,” and bowing. The piece ended with a sort of ritual prostration: “Rock forward suddenly throwing the body forward face down to the floor, and in that huddled position with both hands (palms down), both knees, and the forehead on the ground remain for the rest of the dance” (102).38 Instructions such as these inculcated a kinesthetic orientality broadly familiar from such entertainments as The Mikado, but resituated it in dances framed as accurate representations of a somatically knowable Japaneseness.39

As did the authors of pantomime books, European American writers on Asian dance and amateur mimesis for U.S. students exhibited a wide variety of views, and not all were so totalizing. In a 1915 article, Natalie Curtis narrated several poetic stories through what she termed Japanese “sword dances,” and then stepped back to end the piece by considering what a similar performance practice might offer to American students. Her musings took an unusually non-orientalizing tone:

38. Purposeful awkwardness like that seen in some of these movements was encouraged by writers on both sides of the Atlantic; its situated meanings probably differed. An English example is “Japanese Cherry Blossom,” an “Oriental Dance”: “Particular attention is drawn to the music, which suggests tomtoms, gongs and bells, and notice should be taken of the stiff, weird movements of both arms and legs of the little dancer” (Kimmins et al. 1919, 13).

39. Another example of this type of publication invoked a South Asian orient and was intended for young performers. Published for use in physical education classes, Oriental and Character Dances organized its instructions and notation into two sections. The first contained “Oriental Dances” based on observations in what was then British India; the second offered “Clog and Character Dances,” many of which sought to evoke a stereotyped version of African American life in the southern United States (Frost and Strickland 1930). The book’s “oriental dances” were illustrated with photographs of dancers in Asian countries, bolstering the authenticity claimed for dance steps with a sort of “we were there” ethnographic veracity. The piano accompaniments were by Lily Strickland; a prolific author of musical evocations as well as journalistic tales of her travels in Asia, she later wrote of Chinese dance: “The dancing of any country is more easily understood than its instrumental music or singing. All dances of the Orient seem motivated by the same emotional, spiritual or intellectual impulses” (Lily Teresa Strickland, “Music in the Old Dragon Empire,” Etude, October 1934, 588, 625). Here painfully explicit, this homogenizing sensibility generally underpinned her textual and musical representations of orientality for amateur mimesis.
The western world has already borrowed much from Japan, even as Japan has taken from us, and European arts and crafts bear striking testimony to the influence of Japanese culture. As one of our greatest educational problems in the United States is to train a heterogeneous foreign population to standards of American citizenship, could we not perhaps receive in this effort a helpful suggestion from the art of Japan which is so closely related to the life of the people? Would a simple American adaptation of the principles of the Japanese classic dance (noble, patriotic poetry inculcating national ideals, linked with music and pantomime) be an educational addition to the folk-dancing already taught in most of our public schools?40

This hypothetical call for a reconstructed Japanese dance—a new practice she imagined as being structured on traditional principles but filled with local U.S. content—as a means of fostering Americanization in schools is striking. Motivated neither by a desire to speed the assimilation of immigrants drawn to music from their homelands nor by an urge to build international goodwill through enacting practices seen as typical of other countries’ people, it spoke of a belief in the pragmatic merits of such performance as a locally applied instrument for building character through bodily instruction.

This comparatively abstract proposed adoption of Japanese-based bodily practices was less mimetic in its conception than virtually any other document examined in this chapter. While the writers of the instructions discussed above were intent on using amateur movement to represent some racial or national essence brought near, believed to be far, or newly known to be one’s own new self, Curtis proposed the benefits of a dance practice created after a Japanese model and made to index a local allegorical referent. She was not free of the ideological assumptions of her time,41 but the way in

41. In an article on music and dance at San Ildefonso Pueblo, for example, she used the era’s usual essentializing language: “The appeal of Indian music, like all Indian art, is through suggestion; and herein our West meets East and the Indian clasps hands with the Japanese” (Curtis, “A Plea for Our Native Art,” Musical Quarterly, April 1920, 175–78, this at 177–78).
which she bound together into an imagined packet of somatically experienced
U.S. nationalism ideas of social assimilation and instruction in movement
practices based on Asian models was unlike any other. By illustrating the
variety of ways in which white American writers could conceive of adapting
aspects of Asian dance traditions for U.S. educational use, this points up how
reifying were many more-mimetic instructions for schoolroom orientality.

To attend to these books’ embedding of racial ideology into instructed
performance and to the reciprocal embedding of these texts and practices
within more openly ideological social contexts is not to take their authors
ahistorically to task. Rather, this commingling of raciology and fun shows
how amateur performance could offer compelling experiences of orientality,
and how closely linked could be music, bodily mimesis, and the transmission
of racial ideology. The contrasts between common orientalizing moves and
Curtis’s scenario of an Americanizing practice based on her ideas about
Japanese dance help to clarify these activities’ differently hegemonic natures.

Both types of practice involved (or would have involved) mentored
forms of bodily mimesis, and these forms were directed towards the external
human referents they sought to represent through internalized means; but in
specific ways, they differed radically. Orientalist pantomimes and character
dances enacted qualities and conditions ascribed to a racial category known
to be not one’s own, but an imaginary space inhabited temporarily and “just
for fun,” with the reassuring knowledge that after an imaginative act of racial
habitation one would return to one’s normally embodied social positions. In
contrast to this performative construction of difference were the moves Curtis
envisioned. That practice was externally directed only in its initial stages,
which would have established a bodily connection to an imagined referent outside one’s self as a first step towards its performed internalization.

Curtis offered to a heterogeneous assortment of immigrant selves a self-transforming mimesis which would embody a national (not racial) essence, an Americanism to be brought within one’s self as a permanent resident. Newly naturalized within immigrant bodies through allegorical performance, this essence of national identity would be lodged in the bodies and minds of people whom it would enable to be more deeply internalized themselves as new human constituents of the United States’ social body—and all by means of a Japanese-derived, Americanized practice. While Americanizing aims were everyday components of much instructed folk dance, any such defining use of ideals or practices from Asian traditions was uncommon indeed.

The key ideological distinction which underlies this contrast between the imagined embodiment of racialized other and nationalized self-identity arises from the performative difference between playing what one knows one is not and never will be (for the entertainment of doing so, and with the after-effect of knowing more surely what one “really” is) and playing what one knows is not yet, but may become, one’s self (for the openly didactic purpose of learning what one could become and how one might become it, and with the ideological effect of becoming something new, in categorically social terms, through instructed practice). The first process offered the novel fun, and perhaps the mildly transgressive thrill, of pretending to be an exotic other. The second entailed what was even on its surface a serious project of corporeal conversion with lasting effects. While a similar seriousness of
different social meanings could arise from embodied play, any awareness of feeling more lasting change usually was buried beneath a thick veneer of fun.

Along with its primary significance here as a means of understanding how amateur orientalist mimesis functioned, this difference goes some way towards explaining the apparent absence of any practical implementation of Curtis’s ideas. Her imagined practice offered none of the exotic fun that many found so attractive in orientalist enactments, and her intentionally serious goal of the bodily Americanization of recently immigrated European kinds of difference was being served by other social projects. Already underway, those projects required none of the additional work that would have been needed to adapt Japanese movement practices as a performative means of assimilation. Such established alternatives included physical education classes and folk-dancing activities at Settlement Houses. With those sorts of processes for the assimilation of European (at least potentially “white”) immigrants in place and with Asian/Americans long constructed in most U.S. public discourse and legislation as unassimilable, it is no surprise that Japanese dance fit none too well into assimilative social projects. Related kinds of amateur mimesis were more easily enacted in domains of performance construed as zones of escapist enjoyment. Those fantasy-laden spaces were more amenable to such diversions as bodily play with exotic stereotypes. Their framing of such practices as unserious entertainments enabled them to reinscribe, in less visible but more subtly powerful ways, a dominant belief in the good sense of overtly serious forms of racialized exclusion in the openly political world.

42. On sponsored Americanization through dance, see Tomko (1999); see also Laušević (1998).
Embodying the Oriental for God & Country, Parents & Peers: Missionary Events, Civic Pageants, & Operettas for the Young

Amateur operettas constituted another category of published texts which included instructions for embodied orientalist mimesis infused with a spirit of intentionally light-hearted fun, an affective stance which no doubt set the tone for most people’s engagement with these pieces. The genre of operetta connects back to mail-order catalogs which sold makeup, costumes, and scripts. In performance it could overlap with instructional books of other types, and it continued to do so in later years; for example, a 1948 book of Dances for Your Program or Operetta included “Chinese Fantasy,” an “Oriental pattern dance”; it featured such movements as “small shuffling steps” (Lunt 1948, 83–88). As part of a larger genre which included musical plays for children and for adults, operettas for young people also provide a link to the next chapter, on amateur orientalist play for grown-ups. But at this transition from children’s pantomime to operetta, a glance at two other forms will help to frame both kinds of performance in other contexts of amateur acts by mimetically oriental, young (and often older) white American bodies. These performative domains were missionary events and municipal pageants.

Signifying modes of instructed movement similar to those in pantomime and operetta were enacted in missionary events. While sharing in this commonality, oriental embodiment in missionary contexts often assumed a heavier, more resolutely didactic tone than that in school pantomimes; but as shown above, insistence that pantomimic play was just for fun did not keep it from teaching serious lessons about essential human difference. In a sense, many authors of missionary skits and tableaux were simply more outspoken about their ideological content and aims than were the authors of pantomime
books, who tended (presumably due to hegemony working through them unawares) to mask the reifying content which now is so clear in their texts.

Two missionary documents exemplify that domain’s performed and visually portrayed orientalist mimesis. The relevant gist of the first is seen in a postcard image shown above (see fig. 3.1), one also printed on the cover of a Children’s Crusade pamphlet. Cited in Chapter 3 for the structural kinship of its array of national/racial types to schemas prevalent in vaudeville, the image’s embodied meaning has clear connections here as well. As part of missionizing discourse, its systematically displayed categorical types not only were roughly equivalent to those represented by melodies and lyrics in many children’s songbooks. The physically grounded meanings seen in its typical human forms arranged in two-dimensional space offer a visual analogy to temporally and spatially arranged performative representations of similar human types in musically constructed and demarcated time.

Whether they performed it in published sequence or in an order selected on the spot by their teacher (and whether these sequential embodiments of categorical types succeeded each other on a scale of minutes, days, or weeks), children practiced the pantomimic orientality discussed above both before and after having analogous fun playing other types. Neither these enactments of imagined essences nor the bodies represented visually on the missionary postcard and Children’s Crusade pamphlet existed in isolation. Each brought into view stereotyped identities that were structurally commensurate with others assigned to inhabitants of other nations. The visibility, and the somatic experience, of embodiments of the essences of which these songs sang gave them compelling social force.
The second trace of missionary discourse gave direct instructions for amateur performances of orientality. “Dramatic and Missionary Sketches on Japan” was distributed for use in “Church Schools of Missions,” “Mission Study Classes,” and “Program Meetings” (Fish and Earle 1923). It offered scripts for six didactic scenarios set in Japan. Its foreword professed a mix of pro-missionary enthusiasm and intercultural goodwill at home, ending with:

It is hoped that this group of Japanese episodes will not only increase our knowledge of Christian work in Japan, but will make for kindlier treatment of the Japanese in America. The use of dramatics adds both interest and enthusiasm to mission study. It also enlarges our understanding and sympathy for people of other races and color. (4)

This recognized the power of performance to shape people’s understandings of the social world. While its call for better treatment of Japanese Americans was needed at the time (and perhaps not coincidentally was uttered on the cusp of the passage of the 1924 act which effectively halted most Japanese immigration), its implicitly dismissive stance towards Japanese cultural practices and religious belief found fuller form in performance.

While each of the six sketches instructed performers to use their bodies in ways relevant here (the final piece centered on a Japanese piano student wishing to study in America), the first, “Winning Japan,” provides a sufficient example. It was to be enacted by a cast allegorically embodying the Japanese nation (here in the adult—and unsurprisingly female—form of a woman in kimono) and aspects of Shintō, Confucianist, Buddhist, and Christian religion. The drama’s opening conveys a sense of its personalized mimesis of the Japanese nation, beginning with directions for silent pantomime and moving to a scripted text to be spoken by embodied Japan:

At opening of pageant Japan is barely discernable [sic] in the dim light, standing with back to audience. She suggests indecision and loneliness. A Japanese gong is heard
calling to morning meditations. Japan joins palms, raises hands and bows over them. A spot-light reveals the rising sun on robe. Slowly the light is raised until the whole figure is seen. Japan turns and looks about.

JAPAN—Out of the depths of my bewilderment and need of some life-giving force I stand here today. I have never been a religious nation. A great striving after material things and a superficial cleverness has brought me to the front of Eastern nations. I see great power and influence ahead of me. I can lead the East. The Western world now recognizes my power both potential and actual. But I myself have come to feel a lack. There is no inner force that can control my power as it grows. I believe we need a great religion. Today I stand here searching for such a force.

(Piano plays “Japanese National Anthem” as Shinto Priest enters back right, comes slowly to front…. ) (5)

Here the gendered identity of the Japanese nation’s American surrogate, her bodily mimesis through practiced stance and gesture, and her statement of a deep spiritual lack combined in performance to construct a unitary Japanese people in aching need of Christian conversion by U.S. missionaries. The orientalizing resonance of the gong filled the room with an initial acoustic sign, one which sounded the imagined difference of a still-ancient Japan.

Following the spoken duration of mimetic Japan’s opening expression of abject religious need (one in which a rhetoric of uncontrolled power requiring containment by the redundantly invoked counter-“force” of Americanized religious belief seemed to betray a yellow-perilist fear of military technology in the hands of a non-Christian Asian state), the gong’s by-then decayed evocation of instrumental Japaneseness was answered by a half-westernized counterpart in the form of “Kimi ga Yo.” Played on the quintessentially European instrument of the piano from notation printed on the pamphlet’s last page, this anthem was arranged in four-part harmony—a sonic texture whose association with hymns came to the fore in this interpretive context. The end of the sketch played this affective resonance to the hilt. After “Japan”
exulted: “Oh Christianity, I feel no need to seek further. I recognize that you bring all that our nation needs to control its power, and give new life to every individual,” and “Christianity” replied with a biblical quotation accompanied by the direction “all kneel—Japanese on both knees,” the cast was to “burst into song” with the hymn “Crown Him with Many Crowns” (8).

In contrast to the diffuse aims of many pantomimes, missionary sketches often exhibited conscious intentionality and a precise agenda as motivational experiences for white Americans who might serve a structured program of strategically transformative action in the social world; but still, these sketches’ reliance on the power of mimesis to convey beliefs about human difference was not unlike that seen in schoolroom activities. Both adduced the amateur performing body as experiential evidence for the existence of human types.

As an ideological effect of somatic movement, this had the added force of an assertion felt within the bodies of those who played their parts through scripted stance and gesture. It is no wonder that along with pantomime authors’ less conscious transmission of dominant ideology by such means, writers of dramatic materials for potential missionaries could use them to more doggedly didactic ends. These sketches’ metaphorically performed U.S. containment of an orientalized Japaneseness was in some ways akin to that played out—in the figurative and embodied senses of the phrase—in other kinds of performance. Here amateur players enacted this containment in the physical allegory of a Christian religious “force” for which an obediently ventriloquized Japan—constructed as a political state, military-industrial formation, ancient oriental society, and forlorn aggregation of spiritually bereft individuals—confessed its utter need in order “to control its power.”
Although differing in its modes of musically mediated embodiment, this staged containment was not wholly disjunct from that which many white Americans heard and saw elsewhere—for example, in Miura’s performances as “Butterfly.” As we have seen, she was almost unremittingly engaged to sing that role throughout her U.S. career, and that performative containment was mirrored by the meanings many white Americans made from hearing her—ideas centered on a female Japanese essence contained in the body of a performer many heard as an authentic Butterfly. Despite huge differences in how these examples structured and expressed containment, in both instances dominant interpretations of a performer of orientality came back to ideas of both exclusion through containment and containment through exclusion.

Another major venue for amateur racial mimesis by children and adults deserves a glance here. While missionary events often included enactments of oriental types as representatives of potentially Christianizable human groups in Asia or Asian America, municipal pageants usually offered amateur participants and crowds of spectators a vision of a social self free of any Asianness, imaginary or real. Pageants often combined huge casts, a community-building participatory ethos, and a spectacular intent for the benefit of large audiences external and internal to a production. As David Glassberg has written, by its height in the teens “…historical pageantry had become not only a new medium for patriotic, moral, and aesthetic education envisioned by genteel intellectuals, but also an instrument for the reconstruction of American society and culture using progressive ideals” (1990, 67). While orientalist mimesis in other forms of performance offered escape to a fantasy of bounded duration through the embodiment of an
identity known not be one’s own, allegorical and historical pageants and tableaux encouraged people to enact their civic forebears in order to embody a communal self across time, in backwards- and forwards-looking ways. This was a process and a condition intended to leave in its participants a lingering trace of reimagined connection to a group past, one which might serve as a sort of civic adhesive with effects lasting long into the community’s future.

As often the playful embodiment of racialized difference, orientalist mimesis was much the opposite, although there was substantial overlap in the practices and underlying theories of pageants and other performance-centered projects such as “folk” and “aesthetic” dance movements, which did include orientalist acts (Glassberg 1990, 56–57, 84). But the oriental types which appeared in those other practices were absent from most civic pageants. Many such events represented European nationalities with people from local immigrant communities, included made-up Native Americans as representatives of vanquished prior local inhabitants (sometimes to music provided by such Indianist composers as MacDowell and Farwell), and showed blackface amateurs playing categorically happy slaves. Some organizers offered those last roles to local African Americans, who often declined to participate in these acts, which W. E. B. DuBois countered in his pageant *The Star of Ethiopia*; but Asian American parts were very few.

Occasionally, however, these events set out to represent Asian American communities. A book for producers quoted an article from the bulletin of the American Pageant Association on the use of folk dance in civic pageants:

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Of the realistic dances, the folk and national dances are most important. They come more often into the finale, to show the foreign element in the history of the town and to use the foreign born in the pageant itself. They may also come into an historical scene if there is sufficient material to represent the influx of the foreigner and something of the old-world culture which he brings. The dances are legion—Scotch, Irish, English, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Polish, Swedish, Danish, Armenian, Syrian, Persian, Japanese, Chinese—native rhythms from all countries of the world. As portrayed in the pageant, they may simply be naive representations of the little folk dances which children have learned in the schoolrooms; they may be the richly-colored, beautifully-costumed dances to which man and women have laughed in their native lands over the sea; or they may be the intricate, highly-dignified national dances, beautifully performed by gifted and practiced soloists. They all bring to the pageant dance an individuality of step, of style, of costume and music, which is indispensable. Meant for the sun and the soil, their color, noise, and vigor find happy place in the pageant. (Bates 1925, 83–84; no further source details cited)

This positioned Japanese and Chinese dances among other local forms of vigorously embodied “color” representing “the influx of the foreigner.”

The location of “Japanese” and “Chinese” at the end of the list hints at Asian Americans’ frequent invisibility in these civic self-representations. The not quite explicitly racialized undercurrent of this book’s secondary account of the danced embodiment of natively national types came to the fore in the author’s later comments on the utility of recorded music for these events:

Victrola records afford a gold mine of valuable material, sacred, patriotic, racial, and of every other variety. These records may sometimes be used for rehearsals, and for estimating time effects. With caution they may be used off stage for chimes, for bird calls, for distant music of organ, martial music of marching armies and other imitations. (Bates 1925, 110)

This cheerful recourse to the language of musically represented racial types seems to echo that with which the Victor company marketed their products to schools. This was followed by a further appeal to race: “There are also in the victrola records a great number of foreign language musical records for some twenty or so different races.” After this call for the civic use of mediated
traces of audible race, the chapter on musical aspects of pageantry ended with a blunt exhortation: “Finally: Use music to the utmost.”

A few specific examples will show how some community events did portray Asian subjects. A 1911 article on a “Pageant of Patriotism” enacted in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park by a cast of local children offered a final “tableau introducing all the characters, weaving in suggestions of all the dances and hints of all the music, …typifying the unity of all the forces which make up our great American life and history.”44 This capped off a production in which “boys, who ordinarily flout dancing as being suitable only for girls, entered with abandon into the weird posturings and chantings of the Indian dances, and especially rejoiced in their tomahawks and the war whoops” (661). Its organizers prided the ability of their amateur cast to represent the social world in a systematic way, including “even” Asian nations:

> The juvenile material which was available for this Brooklyn production was furnished by the social settlements. Every nation of Europe, and even Asia and Africa, were represented by some youthful actor. This was no picked lot of children, chosen from families of wealth, education, and training. It was the product of the conglomerate life of Brooklyn’s working people, yet the native intelligence and ability were marked and abundant. The beautiful slender little Italian girls made strikingly handsome Indian maidens, and well to the fore in histrionic talent were what Kipling has called “the great German-American-Anglo-Saxon Jew.” (662)

While it is not certain that this “Asia” was represented by white performers, this is likely based on countries of origin mentioned throughout the article.

Another of the comparatively few appearances of staged Asianness in a pageant occurred in Saint Louis in 1914. This event offers a link to more professionally enacted orientality; in the same year, one of its authors and

producers, Percy MacKaye, presented in New York his orientalist play *A Thousand Years Ago*, with its “barbaric martial music,” ritually prostrated courtiers and servitors, “bright Chinese lanterns,” “shrill...singing to the twang of stringed instruments,” low-voiced chanting, and massively audible exotic punctuation of its dramatic denouement with the direction “A great gong resounds” (MacKaye 1915, 7, 30, 54, 65, 83, 87, 99, 124). A dream scene relied on exotic sound and embodiment for otherworldly effects, calling for “strange music” to conjure up atmosphere as one performer was “imbued as by magic with motion and antique gesture” while others’ “shadow-forms gesticulate weirdly toward” her and “voices—shrill, bizarre, bell-toned, menacing, mysterious—echo the words: ‘Khan, Keedur Khan, Khan, Khan!’” from “obscuring mists, tinged with green lights and gules” (129).

MacKaye’s instructions for that fantastically embodied and envoiced orientality on the professional stage offer a counterpart to mimetic Asianness in his script for the Saint Louis event. The pageant’s “masque” included a personified Asia, but he specified the means of this enactment in far less detail. The role of Asia was one geographical peer in a group of “World Adventurers” who were “garbed in the native costumes of all nations”: “Preéminent among them, on horseback, ride five masked figures, symbolic of Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Ocean Islands.” These leaders were to “take their stands in various parts of the plaza, right, surrounded by their followers”; the resulting tableau showed that “Europe towers highest from amongst them” (MacKaye 1914, 56–57). While Europe spoke individual lines, the other continents (read races) stood silently as the masque’s chorus proclaimed a brief paean to a metaphorical “music vast, adventurous—
America!” (58, 57). Any mimetic details within this “multitude of men and women” (56) were left to the director and cast of this mutely categorical mass of walk-on humanity. After standing in silence, they were to enact a kind of half-assimilation of people(s) marked by national costumes: “Merging their ranks with the Pioneers, who welcome them in pantomime, the World Adventurers mass themselves about the central and lesser mound…” (57).

In contrast to MacKaye’s precise instructions for orientalist movement in the script for *A Thousand Years Ago*, this text seems purposefully imprecise in regard to such embodiment. Its less prescriptive quality may have been due to the production’s conjuncture of an amateur cast, an audience viewing the outdoor event at greater distances, and the focus of participatory civic self-representations on offering communities concretely human but allegorical spectacles of themselves. Yet even this voiceless and typological staging of MacKaye’s Asia, a racial space made distant despite its amateur embodiment in the American Midwest, took place in a performative domain set aside from the heart of the story this city told by, to, and about its own social self.

In the Saint Louis pageant a sort of performative compartmentalization was at work. The pageant proper offered a core representation of local history while MacKaye’s accompanying “masque” set out to relate symbolically this self-image of “local life to larger national and world life.”45 The masque offered a costumed enactment of immigrants from “Europe, Asia, Australia, Oceania, and Africa” arriving and pledging their “allegiance to St. Louis” (Glassberg 1990, 187). Locating the site of performance as the gravitational center and chronological present to which these supplicants came from afar

45. MacKaye (1914, xi); also quoted in Glassberg (1990, 184).
(and by implication, from long ago), this spatial distancing evoked the spurious temporal distancing of cultures noted in studies of much early anthropological writing’s “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1983).

Similar rhetorical moves are found in many staged dramatizations of orientalized Chinas relegated to an unshakably distant past. These dramas conspicuously include MacKaye’s own appropriately titled A Thousand Years Ago, which carried as an epigraph on its published script: “Here in China the world lies a-dream, like a thousand / Years ago, and the place of our dreams is eternal” (iii). The operative word was “like,” which located the lines’ imaginary orientalized time of theatrical fantasy as also a space even then not coexistent with its writer and contemporary readers, one where people still and always would inhabit an implicitly racialized present-made-forever-past—a time recurrently embodied on early twentieth-century U.S. stages in venues professional and amateur, in and out of doors.

Occasional other pageants did include self-representative performances by people from local Asian American communities. The participants in a six-day festival of historical pageants that same year in Santa Cruz, California included: “…the German Arion singers, who will produce the ‘Lorelei,’ besides native groups of Japanese, Chinese and Dalmatian singers and dancers, fifty Spanish dancers…”—along with such offerings as a version of Aladdin in a local theater that would feature “elaborate pyrotechnic effects, including the burning of Peking.”46 But in most cases, even typified images of Asian Americans were excluded from these acts of civic self-mimesis. While no doubt due in part to the smaller numbers of people of Chinese or Japanese

heritage than of other heritage communities in much of the United States, this can only have buttressed more broadly political modes of exclusion by naturalizing such an absence from publicly enacted events. As with most cultural practices, there were exceptions to this tendency. Thomas Chinn mentions a counter-example in San Francisco’s 1909 Portola Parade; while not strictly a pageant, it still set out to represent the city to itself, and it did include a major Chinese American presence complete with “orchestra cars” carrying players of “huge gongs, large cymbals, three kinds of drums, and various flutes, horns, and fiddles” (Chinn 1989, 9, 15–18).

After a late-teens wartime period of more nationally than locally focused events, much pageantry returned to municipal themes, and these events sometimes represented local immigrant populations. By the early 1920s, “National recreation experts recommended that playground workers allocate time and space in pageant finales for each local ethnic group to assert its contributions and loyalty to the community as a whole” (Glassberg 1990, 251). Even those performances seem seldom to have included Asian Americans. For the most part, any kind of orientality or Asianness apparently was too alien, located too far outside the ideological space of the communal home, to appear as a centrally embodied part of these participatory representations.

Over the 1920s, pageants and other enactments of social place by local people came to serve spectatorship by amateur participants’ municipal neighbors and by touristic audiences of viewers visiting from further afield:

The restored village and annual historical festival offered a view of past communities as separate worlds far removed from the complexities of life in the present. Whereas visitors to the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 could visit exotic locales such as the “Streets of Cairo,” visitors to the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition in 1926 could visit Colonial High Street—remote in time if not in place. (Glassberg 1990, 269)
While differently traveled interpretive paths across performative venues (even just world’s fairs) could supply counterexamples to this trend as a categorical assertion, the general sense of the argument is well taken. As Glassberg shows, pageantry focused on an often “anti-modern” mode of imaginary travel back in time. Despite the potential convergence of this idea with the conflation of geographical distance and historical depth found so often in popular U.S. discourse on “old Japan” and “ancient China,” most of the local pasts represented in pageants were quarantined from orientalized times sometimes believed to travel to America along with Asian immigrants.

Before leaving pageantry at an unrealistically schematic exclusionary pass, however, two slightly later examples show how the broad type of local Asian American participation seen in Santa Cruz in 1914 continued to be part of certain amateur enactments of municipalities’ social selves and could be enlisted in more market-driven events as well. One example returns us to Missouri. In April of 1934, the International Institute and the Naturalized Voters League of Saint Louis presented a “Festival of Nations.” While not the type of massive, outdoor enactment of a historical narrative which constituted the genre of historical pageantry, this one-night show at a new municipal auditorium evinced related ways of framing a community’s citizens and representing heritage groups to themselves and each other. Its performers represented their own communities—a practice not always true of historical pageants, which often presented entirely mimetic human types. Among its presentations, the festival offered Chinese music with this description:

Centuries before Confucius the Chinese originated a five-note musical scale; and many of the Chinese instruments of today are believed to have been in use for over a thousand years.
The Chinese Merchant Society, under the direction of Joe Lin and Charles Quin, sponsors this group of Chinese musicians.

Chu Wah, Director. Chu Pond, Alfred Chu, Chu Quon Nam, Leong Chon Fonk, Sied Wing, Hall Chon, Hall Young, Leong Sing, Chu Yuen

The program which listed these Chinese Missourian performers—by name, it is important to note, as it did performers from Irish, German, and other traditions—framed them all with the event’s introductory subtitle, which makes clear its commonality with the larger, more narrativized events typical of Progressive-era historical pageantry. It read: “A swift-moving pageant of nations, which suggests the colorful and composite nature of our citizenship, while typifying the loyalty and enterprise of the many foreign groups, whose contribution to culture and progress looms large in the annals of a greater St. Louis.” Here narratives of social progress, nested levels of community cohesion, celebrated heritage, and civic Americanization found specific and shared form in a succession of nationally-identified amateur performances. While this event played mainly to notions of authentic typicality rather than mimesis, it offers a glimpse of pageant-like ideas in an allied frame.

Similar rhetorics of international representation by local Americans framed more commercially motivated events. In 1927, the Pacific Trade and Travel Exposition announced that “approximately 1000 beautiful young girls, representative of more than 40 different nationalities and all residents of this city,” would represent “the countries of their parents.” One notice promised that among “the groups that will be seen and heard in songs, dances and tableaux in the native costumes of their mother countries are several Oriental nationalities” and those “of the Far East.” As if for propriety’s sake, a

47. The International Institute, “Festival of Nations: An International Folk Festival” [program], St. Louis: Municipal Auditorium of St. Louis, 18 April 1934.
pretended clarification of the announcement’s emphasis on the beauty of its all-female cast quoted the event’s director general as assuring readers that it had been assembled for the “educational entertainment of visitors.”

All of these events played to a belief that the public display of large numbers of costumed performers could represent human groups for which they stood, or marched, or danced, or sang. This belief in the power of category systems and their ability to be represented in these ways was foundational to the credibility of pageants and other types of events examined here. As if to repay the favor of these systems’ supportive testimony, the performances whose typicality they made seem credible spoke in tautological confirmation of these categories’ underlying good sense.

A San Francisco event offers a liminal example of a production which had common ground with pageantry and operettas. Mentioned in Chapter 4, *Princess Fan Tan* offered categorical embodiment by children in a musical fantasy. As were many pageants of all sorts, it was promoted in part based on the large size of its cast. A 1904 advertisement trumpeted its “300 Clever Juveniles” and “Gorgeous Scenery and Costumes”; one for its 1905 run promised that the “800 PERFORMERS” in “Princess Fan Tan” offered “A BIG SHOW BY LITTLE PEOPLE!”—one complemented by attractions including a “Plump Lady” and infants in incubators. An announcement for its premiere invoked elegant orientality and the charms of childhood mimesis:

48. “Girls from 40 Nations in Pageant,” *San Francisco Bulletin*, 11 November 1927. Costumed spectacles served projects in later years as well; in 1945 a New York clothing-drive rally in Times Square presented “women wearing native costumes of the countries that will receive the apparel now being gathered,” as Uncle Sam watched from atop a pair of stilts (“Pageant Spurs Clothing Drive as 5,000 in Times Square Look On,” *New York Times*, 13 April 1945).

The programme at the Grand Opera House...will consist of Bothwell Browne’s new musical extravaganza, “Princess Fan Tan,” in which three hundred clever juveniles will take part. The piece has its origin in an ancient Japanese legend and will be magnificently mounted. Rich and gorgeous oriental scenery, costumes and effects have been specially prepared for the occasion. The performance will be plentifully interspersed with new songs, dances, marches, etc. Among the most interesting and enjoyable incidents will be the “Rainbow Butterfly” dance and the ballets, “The Feast of Chrysanthemums,” “Love in the Clouds,” and “Early Days of California.” Popular prices, 15c, 25c and 50 cents will prevail, and there will be the usual Saturday matinee.50

Several days later a review cut the cast to 150, perhaps reflecting cost-cutting moves or accuracy-minded editorial intervention; that piece attended to visual spectacle by noting that “the little people are beautifully costumed.”51

By the time of its 1905 run (and perhaps before), Princess Fan Tan—by then said to feature a cast of “nearly 200”—had acquired acts ranging from a dance in the character of Martha Washington to “Chinese Dances”; a press photograph portrayed its young star with an iconic fan in hand.52 By what was announced as the last of the three weeks of this July run, it was again said to present “nearly 300 talented children.”53 Performed “by the PUPILS OF THE BOTHWELL BROWNE SCHOOL OF DANCING AND STAGE CULTURE,” the racial types in this “musical extravaganza” included “California Indians,” “Mexican Cowboys and Their Senoritas,” and “The Immigrant [sic] Chinamen and Women.” Unsurprising in light of San Francisco’s Chinese community, the inclusion of mimetic Chinese immigrants—even along with non-Asian stereotypes—seems to bespeak slippage towards more general racialization in this “Japanese Fairy Tale.” This was evident in the cast of characters, which gave its Japanese Princess a “Mogul” for a father, as well as evoking Japanese

50. “Will Be Seen in New Play …,” San Francisco Evening Post, 8 September 1904.
52. “Eunice Gilman, Who Will Play the Title Role in ‘Princess Fan Tan’ at the Chutes Tomorrow Afternoon” [photograph], San Francisco Evening Post, 8 July 1905.
words, place names, and conventions of personal address ("Kuro,"
"Nakasaki," "Omaya"), drawing on Mikado-esque quasi-Japanese wordplay
("Hilo," "Kibosh"), and borrowing names from other musical productions or
compositions of recent years ("San Toy," "Sen Sen"). This raciological play
was clearest in the description of "Ping Pong Murphy, an Irish chink."54

In its embodiments of racialized national types by a mostly amateur cast,
Princess Fan Tan had much in common with participatory acts noted above. In
its performed succession of music and dance numbers on theatrical stages,
it had something in common with operettas (while its presentation of this
varied fare to general admission-fee paying audiences linked it to vaudeville).
With the sometimes fuzzy boundaries between these genres in mind, a look at
operetta scripts will illustrate techniques those texts transmitted to amateurs
who wished to learn how to enact orientality in those musical settings.

Amateur theater offered young people plentiful chances to embody
orientality on stage.55 Amateur operettas were especially popular for school
and theater-club productions. Brief scripts for children’s operettas appeared
in such magazines as The Musician. Two examples are "A Japanese Recital for
Spring" and "A Japanese Musical." Published and mailed to music teachers
across the country, these miniature scripts called for bowing and fan-play.
The former called for its young cast to execute such moves on a stage set with
lanterns and other iconic decor; clad in Japanese costume, these girls and boys

54. "Princess Fan Tan: A Japanese Fairy Tale" [playbill], San Francisco: The Chutes and Zoo,
eight days beginning 25 November 1905. Browne himself toured as a mimetic performer of
human types; one vaudeville house billed him as “America’s Most Marvellous [sic] Character
Impersonator” with “A wealth of beautiful costumes, elaborate effects, entrancing dances”
55. For a photograph of an amateur cast in costume for a Philadelphia club’s production of
were to be described with pan-Asian slippage by such “Japanese names” as “Ahh Lee—Chee Hoo, Peach Boy, Lotus Blossom, Cherry Blossom, Loo Fang, Ah San, Ah Loo, etc.”

Contemporary with these diminutive and probably evanescent works were similar dramatic texts sold separately. Many scripts on Chinese or Japanese narrative themes explained how to produce orientalism through uses of the body, staging, costuming, and musical means. These instructions were nationally available through mail-order catalogs of the sorts discussed above, many of which also sold the greasepaint, wigs, and costumes necessary to enclose amateurs’ mimetically oriental bodies in fitting visible surfaces. Listed in the Paine catalog, the operetta Miss Cherryblossom or A Maid of Tokyo illustrates this parallel means of distribution. As did many scripts, that for Miss Cherryblossom offered directions and hints to help its inexperienced performers embody orientality in recognizable ways. Such instructions for mimetic embodiment in operettas are the focus of the rest of this chapter.

The Paine catalog recommended Miss Cherryblossom for use in high schools. The play’s suggested costumes made a typological distinction between Japanese and American characters with a military metaphor:

Cherry, Kokemo, Togo and the Geisha Girls wear Japanese kimonos all through the piece.

All the rest of the cast wear civilian dress.

Its movement instructions for Japanese characters were marked by gesturing fans and coy peeking. One kinesthetic moment linked a kimono, the trope of

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skin color as a sign of inner nature, and the racial identity of the protagonist. This daughter of white Americans had been “brought up as a Japanese maiden” (3). One of her lines to her white love interest was: “I think you nice man. *(Pulls up kimono sleeve)* See I’m white too” (40).

Another moment had an American character “spat” his hands as “the Japanese way of calling the servants” (31), performing nested mimesis within the narrative. And in a moment of slippage from bowing to non-Japanese practices, one line directed: “CHERRY and GEISHAS”: *(Salaaming)* Leave it to us, most noble Kokemo” (23). That tea-house proprietor later addressed an American man in a similar way: “Ten thousand blessings on your Noble ancestors. I salute you ten thousand times *(Salaams profusely)*” (32). This vision of orientality offered by bowing and fan-play was echoed in a cover image of a kimono wearer holding a huge parasol and peeking over her fan.58

An “operetta for small children” fostered more child-centered mimesis. *A Box of Dolls* was to be performed by “six girls, or twelve girls, or by six girls and six boys” playing the parts of dolls in a box shipped from Japan to the United States.59 Its movement directions were closely akin to those of some pantomimes, consisting in large part of fan-work and bowing. The score consisted of six short songs. Its brief lyrics played to tropes of an essential Japaneseness bound up within accompanying movements. “See Our Fans” elicited spectatorship of those movements’ gestural orientality:

See our fans go to and fro,
To and fro, to and fro;
While we nod our heads just so—
Nod our heads just so.

When we walk we trot you see.
When we talk we jabberree.

See our fans go to and fro,
To and fro, to and fro;
While we nod our heads just so—
Nod our heads just so. (8–9)

The “jabberree” line offered a playfully dismissive reference to linguistic incomprehension, here displaced from uncomprehending listeners by being cast as causal incomprehensibility onto dolls as proxies for Japanese speakers.

This found fuller form in the final song’s mimetic devolution into plaintively nonhuman utterances; these were suggestive of stunningly diminutive figures of orientalized cuteness—pathetic creatures shrunk so small and nearly soundless as to have become inarticulate near-mice:

As our frolic time is o’er,
We must sing and dance no more.
In the future we’ll be meek,
Never talk but only squeak.
squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak.

Now we bid you all good-bye,
And this is the reason why—
There’s no more to sing or speak,
So we’ll end with just this squeak.
squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak. (12–13)

While the figurative silencing of Asian voices by metaphorical means was common in other lyrics, this is one of the more striking such moments, and its performance by small children must have given it a surface charm in the ears
of many listeners. Similar moves figured in *Paper Prayers or A Song of Old Japan*, by the same composer and a different lyricist.\(^{60}\)

An earlier operetta offered older, but still young, performers a more fantastically romanticized tale of a royal girl’s adventures in difficult love with a Prince So-tru and his rival Prince So-sli. *Princess Chrysanthemum* specified simply “Japanese costumes” and typical instructions for movement:

> Girls must remember always to take very short running steps (a la Japanese). Let the chorus turn to each other in singing, and keep up plenty of movement on the stage. Fans, bright flowers, flags, banners, umbrellas, etc., should be used in profusion in order to give plenty of color and life to the stage.\(^{61}\)

The first of the operetta’s three dances consisted of using an “ordinary Polka Step” while “manipulating fans to 1st and 3rd beats”; the directions stated that movement instructions from the “Action fan songs would be useful to refer to,” offering a glimpse of the sorts of intertextuality that may have been a part of many young people’s instructed performances of orientality (v).

For a “Sprites’ Dance,” the text assured directors that “any grotesque step or movement is suitable.” Kinesthetic directions throughout the script called for bowing (13, 23) and prostration (26, 32). A 1920 program showed many of its players without makeup or costume, offering a sense of how temporary was their orientality, and how disjunct were their onstage appearance and behavior from those they presented in daily life.\(^{62}\)

The Japanese settings of these operettas raise the question of whether their actions represented orientalized Japaneseness or a less culturally specific

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orientality. Performative tropes such as bowing appeared in directions for operettas representing typified essences of Chineseness and Japanese-ness, while some movements which appeared in both were more frequent signs of one or the other (e.g., fan activities of Japan). My Maid on the Bamboo Screen, a “Chinese Fantasy” for high school students or adults with a few child roles, shows how these tropes enacted a broadly oriental essence. The costumes were to be “Chinese” and one set was an apartment “as Oriental in design as possible,” with “Chinese decorations, pillows, etc. in utter profusion.”

Most characters had trisyllabic pseudo-Chinese names (“Te To Tu,” “Fo Fe Fah”). Punctuated by the sonorous strokes of a “Gong Bearer,” the players sang and spoke of dreamy, illustrious, and eerie things amid occasional bowing (e.g., 32, 51) and kneeling with heads bowed (e.g., 46).

Acting in these plays could be a significant and memorable experience for amateur performers, even those in minor roles. This is seen in personal annotations to some copies of scores, which document individual histories of use. A case in point is one copy of a 1929 operetta, The Tea House of Sing Lo. The title page of this score, which once belonged to a girl in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is inscribed in her hand with her name and “I was in the ‘Chorus’ in this Operetta at Nitchmann Junior High School (9th Grade)”;

64. A sense of what a similarly staged but apparently non-musical production looked like at one high school may be gained from two photographs of The Chinese Lantern in Saint Louis. Along with offering a midwestern example of the nationwide practice of staging orientalist drama in schools, that review illustrates how amateur shows also could commingle various kinds of orientality and other racial types, including what it called “two Chinese comedy Jews.” See “The Chinese Lantern at the Central High School, St. Louis,” Theatre Magazine, September 1919, 174; for the play’s script as published in book form, see Housman (1916).
written in pencil by their parts were the names of ninth-graders who played its main characters (including the male role “No Fan”). Set in a Shanghai tea garden represented in part with a pagoda backdrop and burning incense on the corners of the stage, the operetta’s cast in “Chinese costume” drank tea, danced, drank more tea, romanced, drank more tea, and so on. As a further trace of amateurs’ personal engagement with the text, this copy of *The Tea House of Sing Lo* preserves a sheet of binder paper with the opening choral number’s lyrics written in pencil. In its painstaking cursive reinscription of the lyrics “We are happy as can be, Gaily gossiping drinking tea…,” it seems to speak of the time and energy which myriad young singers invested into mastering such pieces. Its opening “We” echoes the first-person processes by which these texts fostered amateurs’ internalized experiences of orientality.

One more example offers a further trace of how young people actually used orientalist operettas. A copy of the score for *Lantern Land*, published in 1932 in a series of “practical pieces for stage performance in the grades, junior and senior high school, college and amateur groups,” has penciled names of performers next to the cast of characters for its tale of Americans’ romantic and financial travails in Japan. What seems at first a normatively fluffy accretion of lanterns and bamboo gains the interracial twist of “Blossom,” “a typical southern mammy” (33) who prepares the way for an ode to the “Land of Old Black Joe” by scorning “dem Japanese things—rice and fish and tea and bamboo sprouts and pickled walnuts” (56).

Another handwritten document left by a former owner is tucked into the pages bearing this score’s directions to “pantomime drinking tea” (79), sing

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songs of ersatz geisha, and all join in at the end for a rousing *Maestoso* tribute to the U.S. flag. Suggesting (as did the handwritten lyrics) its provenance by the binder paper upon which it was written, this sheet preserves a gridded array listing the names of the amateur participants—a class, a drama club, those who made the cut into a school play?—crossed by three columns headed “sandals,” “kimona,” and “sash.” Each cell in this neatly drawn table is filled in with the words “needed,” “not needed,” “needed,” “needed,” and so on down the page in a succession of (mostly needed) orientalizing items. These wrapped the young bodies of the cast in material goods meant to align their visible surfaces with the bodily practices they were learning to perform.

As a document more personal than are printed media, this does more than show one aspect of how an operetta was performed by one cast. The list of hand-penned names also bears a trace of a more poignant aura, one which summons up a diffuse and distanced sense of not only the organizational work but the enthusiasm and the sheer bodily and emotional energy that its school-age performers threw into it. It suggests the fun they may have had, each in individual ways at some moments in its performed duration, by virtue of dressing and enacting and singing what in all likelihood were to them nothing more troubled than amusing, exotic, and at times satisfyingly challenging-to-learn parts. This image of happy group recreation based on a musical text saturated with vocal and bodily representations of orientalist ideology offers a useful, performance-centered way to end this chapter.

In its reminder that considered at face value in contemporary contexts of reception these operettas really were just for fun, it shows that unpacking their ideological meanings need not imply that people who enjoyed them
should have known better, or that those participants may be anachronistically judged at fault for having the musical fun they had. In showing this disjuncture between the ideological loads borne by these young amateurs’ mimetic orientality and the lighter spirit with which most people who performed or heard these events made conscious meanings from them, this offers another example of musically mediated and embodied hegemony.
Being the Mimetic Body

Amateur Yellowface Play for Adults

As the voice is capable of expressing every phase of love, hatred, passion, pain and despair, so the various movements of the body can be made to express the changing emotions of the mind. Primitive man skipped and jumped, twirled and grovelled to express his feelings, and though he could not sing, he doubtless used his voice in some fashion by cries and screams, for the dance must be accompanied by some sort of rhythmic sound, some beat, even though only some series of cries or the knocking of two bones together. —Brander de Rennes, “The Furor for Dancing”

Some venues and texts for amateur yellowface welcomed performers young and old, as seen in civic pageants. Following on the previous chapter’s focus on embodied mimesis by children in closely managed settings, this chapter considers more usually adult domains of amateur yellowface. Because of their wide availability to people of all ages, operettas and musical comedies offer a bridge to adult practice. This generational nexus will lead to such other public opportunities for mimesis as masquerade balls and novelty dances, which enabled grown-up participants to enjoy embodied play in oriental makeup or costume, as well as to practices that did not entail surface transformations but were acted out in more private, kinesthetic mimesis of imagined Asian ideals.

The Yellow Peril—The Musical: Operettas for Adult Amateurs

The Yellow Peril (fig. 7.1), a 1906 operetta, offers a transitional example.

Written for and first produced by a college literary society, it was performed

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by white Americans at the brink of adulthood. The Yellow Peril shows how
white teenagers and adults could internalize orientality, perform it, and make
it visible to spectators. Relying upon gendered ideas about the “yellow peril”
for narrative momentum and a comic turnabout, it demonstrates the mutually
reinforcing relationship between such plays and politically charged orientalist
presuppositions. Those beliefs supplied an assumed framework for dramatic
reversal, and they were the paradoxical beneficiary of assertions about
gendered racial types which the play reinscribed, despite their playful
dramatic transformation. In its authors’ apparent intentions and its
performers’ and audiences’ likely states of mind (but not its ideological
content), the play managed to seem just a matter of fun.

Subtitled “A Solution of This Most Vexing Problem,” The Yellow Peril
was a three-act comic operetta. Mail-order catalogues made it available to a
national market. It was advertised for many years, appearing for example in
1915 in a list of offerings on the inside front cover of The Yellow Fan: A Japanese
Fantasy. The inside cover of The Yellow Peril itself warned professionals that
they had to pay a royalty to its publisher were they to use it; its dedication
made clear the amateur status of its first—and probably future—performers.

The play was dedicated to a literary society at the “Stonewall Jackson
Institute, Abingdon, Virginia, for whom it was written and by whom it was
first given.” There an amateur cast played scenes set in Japan, Russia, and

3. This was not the only such piece; for a 1909 “comedy opera” set in China and composed
and played by students, see “Oolong: A Chinese Comedy Opera in Two Acts” as performed
by the Cornell Masque (Charles Previn, G. S. Hayden, R. K. Blanchard, H. F. Welch, G. C.
4. See “Descriptive Catalogue of Plays, Number 17,” Jersey City, NJ: Trademore Co., [1906?].
5. Harvey Worthington Loomis and Edith Palmer Putnam, The Yellow Fan: Japanese Fantasy:
Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War.\textsuperscript{6} The cast of characters—perhaps played entirely by women?—comprised the Czar of Russia, the Japanese General who commanded the siege of Port Arthur, four “American War Correspondents stranded in Japan,” two “Japanese Ladies whose mother married an American,” and minor parts including Japanese characters, “Cossack Officers,” and “Manchurian Rabble.”

The stage directions called for decorations signifying the oriental threat promised by the operetta’s cover: “Stage should be decorated with Japanese lanterns. A large yellow dragon with black scales and fire darting from eye, nose, and mouth, should be central piece in background. The yellow dragon should be kept before minds of audience; for, until last scene, dragon is supposed to be the ‘Yellow Peril.’” Properties to be arranged before and within this framing backdrop created sets including a severely dignified Japanese military milieu, a minimalist Japanese street scene, an ostentatious Russian palace room, a Manchurian forest, and a Japanese domestic space with an iconic tea-table and screen tempered by “several European chairs.”

An index of rehearsal cues gives a sense of the historical moments and character traits enacted in these settings. An abridged smattering includes “Back to Japan (Song),” “Coquetry, Mood of,” “Fall of Port Arthur (Song),” “Fear, Mood of,” “Hats off to the Little Japs (Quickstep),” “Indignation, Mood

\textsuperscript{6} The Institute was “founded in 1869 and closed in 1932,” according to an online text from the University of Virginia’s American Studies Program at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/VAGuide/tour05.html. In 1878, a local newspaper described that Presbyterian institution’s buildings as “large, handsome and well arranged” and its grounds as “extensive enough for usefulness and pleasure and...handsomely embellished,” per a text made available by New River Notes at http://www.ls.net/~newriver/ww/ww10.htm. Amateur public performance would be a long tradition at the school; in 1924 the entertainment for a men’s club event nearby “was furnished by ladies from Stonewall Jackson Institute.” Historical records of the Marion, Virginia Kiwanis club, online at http://www.runet.edu/~jfox/kiwanis/history/clubs/marion.html.
of,” “Japanese Soldiers about to Leave for War,” “Manchurian Rabble Song,”
“Pathos, Mood of,” “Sarcasm, Mood of,” “Soldiers’ Farewell to Japan (Song),”
“Tsune and Hisako, Home of,” “War Correspondents’ Song,” and “Yellow
Peril Song.” The script and synopsis wove together such musical moments,
orientality, and other strands. Some of these invoked a savage Russian taste
for human taxidermy, called for the layered mimesis of multiple identities, or
located journalistic interpreters of Asian politics as white men who could be
safely invisible or dangerously exposed. Because no secondary source found
to date summarizes this now obscure play, it will be useful to look at some
narrative aspects of its closing scene after reproducing its synopsis:

ACT I

SCENE 1.—Japan.—Eve of General Nogi’s departure to Port Arthur.—
General Nogi addresses his officers.—After having dedicated their lives
to Japan and the Mikado, they drink from a bowl of cold water as pledge
of the purity of their purpose.—SONG: “Soldiers’ Farewell to Japan.”

SCENE 2.—Japan.—Passing of the War Correspondent.—SONG: “Time Was
upon a Pinnacle We Sat.”—War Correspondents bewail the ill fortune
that dooms them to while away their time in Japan.—Two War
Correspondents decide to study the “Yellow Peril” problem, and the
others decide to devote their leisure to the Ladies.—Ladies enter weeping
because they cannot go to war.—War Correspondents conceal
themselves.—Ladies finally decide to run away to war, attired as Chinese
mandarins.—SONG: “Were We Just a Little Bigger,” etc. (Ladies.)—Ladies
leave to carry out scheme—War Correspondents emerge from hiding-
place.—War Correspondents decide to follow and protect Ladies.

ACT II

SCENE 1.—Russia.—Audience Hall in Czar’s Palace.—Czar gives orders to
Cossack officers before they start to field of war.—Cossacks are to make
peace in Tokio, to humiliate the Mikado, and to bring back the “Yellow
Peril” stuffed and mounted for the Czarina’s footstool.—SONG: “O We’ll
Lick the Little Japs—Little Japs.” (Cossacks.)

SCENE 2.—Manchuria.—Rendezvous of Manchurian Rabble.—Rabble meet
to divide booty.—Rabble fight over it.—Chief enters, threatens them with
“Yellow Peril,” whereat they fall on their faces in terror.—Chief makes a
speech in which he tells of stragglers from Japanese army lost in forest
and whom he means to attack and plunder.—SONG: “O We’re the Manchurian Rabble.”—Chief drills them for their pillaging expedition.—“Banditti Drill.”

ACT III

SCENE 1.—Manchuria.—Ladies, disguised as Chinese mandarins, are lost in woods.—War Correspondents are attacked by Ladies and forced to surrender.—War Correspondents plead for their lives, but Ladies are obdurate, and are about to behead prisoners when Rabble rush in.—Ladies are frightened; some faint, others take refuge behind War Correspondents, who defend them and put Rabble to flight.—SONG: “O Take Me Back to Dear Japan.” (Ladies.)

SCENE 2.—Russia.—Czar’s Palace.—MALE QUARTET: “Port Arthur is fallen, is fallen!”—Czar enters after singers retire.—Czar laments fall of Port Arthur and fate of his armies.—Czar’s remorse for his treatment of people.—Czar foresees his doom.—Soft, weird music behind scene.—At pauses in Czar’s soliloquy the chorus, “Fallen, Fallen,” is sung softly behind scene.

SCENE 3.—Japan.—Solution of “Yellow Peril” problem.—Stuart, Fitzgerald, Tsune, and Hisako discover what the “Yellow Peril” is.—Love scene.—SONG: “Yellow Peril Song.”

With the narrative sketched above, here we may examine the end of the play.

The four leads’ discovery in the final scene was that the “yellow peril” threatening the two newspapermen was not a masculine military threat but the romanticized sexual attraction they felt for Hisako and Tsune, sisters born to a Japanese mother and a white American father—and thus narrativized (as in so much fiction and so many later films) as Asian enough to be exotic objects of romantic interest but white enough not to be hazardous foreigners.

In the first act, the latently smitten correspondents told of this liminal status in reply to their two colleagues, who were interested in pursuing tales of a nightmarishly “awe-inspiring” and “power acquiring” organization called the “Pan-Mongolian Club.” In the words of one of the latter two characters:

All the nations long to know
What this “Yellow Peril” be.
Is’t a military scarecrow,
Or commercial rivalry?
Is’t an immigration landslide,
That threats to ‘whelm the world?
Or dragon fierce, with fire inside,
And forkéd tail unfurled? (17)

The other journalist so inclined then voiced his agreement with this project, setting the stage for their more amatory or libidinous colleagues.

The male romantic leads replied with tropes of a powerlessly diminutive and nativized—but blonde or nearly blonde—female orientality that almost cowered in contrast to energetically masculinized Americanness. That manly clump of qualities was cast in the mold of an all-but-named Teddy Roosevelt:

STUART. Not thus shall we our time employ,
No yellow phantom shall we pursue.

PITMAN. For fairer prey we shall decoy
Within this matrimonial Zoo.

STUART. We’ve spied two saucy maidens fair,
With almond eyes and golden hair,
Whose rosy smiles and witching ways
Ensnare the heart and hold the gaze.

PITMAN. ’Tis said their little toy mamma
A Yankee wedded from Greater Ne’ Yark.
He carried a big stick, this strenuous papa,
And she walked softly as a wounded lark.

STUART. But their two daughters with American wit
Combine their mother’s native grace.

STUART AND PITMAN. With Yankee cunning, spirit, and grit,
We mean at once to give them chase.

This thickly metaphorical language of a heterosexual hunt—“pursue,” “decoy,” and “chase,” with the reversal of agency suggested by “ensnare” serving more as a fleeting rhetorical device than a real displacement of subjectivity onto female figures—located male and female Asian characters as objects of different modes of aggression by white Americans. While invested
with different valences within a system mapping violence onto Asian men and sexuality onto (partly white-Americanized) Asian women, both variants located narrative, political, and romantic agency in white male figures.

After scenes in which, among other goings-on, the already mimetically Amerasian female leads dressed up in a second, Chinese layer of disguise “as mandarins” wearing “short skirts, short kimonos, Chinese shoes and mandarin caps, with queues,” and ventured forth “fully armed, and very much afraid of their weapons,” the redefinitional narrative torsion of the phrase “The Yellow Peril” ended the drama. The play’s final section brings us to a scenario in which performance bound together mutually corroborative ideologies through physical action, speech, and music. The scene took place in the home of Hisako and Tsune, and began with the direction: “Tea-table in the middle of room. Hisako and Tsune seated behind it. Fitzgerald and Stuart near them, trying to sit in Japanese fashion” (28). Soon after this the women jumped up fearfully as the men began to explain their reconception of the yellow peril (“She binds us with her yellow coils, And burns our hearts for fuel”), and the “War Correspondents place chairs for Ladies.”

This means of relocating mimetically orientalized female bodies on European-style structures made a double message visible through upward mobility enabled by white men’s romantically assimilative intervention. This moment literally raised these women above a floor-level domain of Japanese sociality. In the same instant, it recontextualized them as having become—by mentored uplift through a racial hierarchy of bodily elevation—dependent on European American products for support in their changed surroundings.
As the correspondents offered chairs to the female leads, the men explained more of their predicament, beginning in spoken unison:

WAR C’s [soothingly]. Oh, calm yourselves, beloved ladies, Charming ladies, coy, entrancing ladies!

STUART: Fear not this yellow mystery: For only man of her afraid is.

FITZGERALD: Proof against her charms each lovely maid is, and blind to all her witchery.

BOTH: We haste to make a proclamation, And our views in public frame, ’Thout the least equivocation, “The Yellow Peril’s” a lovely dame. (28–29)

Soon one of the men came clean, announcing to the women that “…you are the Peril to heads like these!” Indignant at this, one of them protested: “We— yellow creatures / With ugly features?”; but outrage then cooled to sarcasm: “HISAKO: Doubtless we’re rough, / TSUNE: With complexions buff.” The men kneeled and replied: “Most divine and lovely creatures, / Sure you do us wrong; / Your sprightly, expressive features / We’ll celebrate in song. / But alas! your sunny coils / Our worthless lives imperil. / Entangled in these golden toils, / We’re prisoners to the ‘Yellow Peril!’” (29).

More dialogue led to parallel marriage proposals and one last song, with lyrics sung by the female leads:

We’re the peril that all men fear, Dragons of large dimensions! With yellow scales and murd’rous leer, Of fevered brains the wild inventions.

CHORUS. I’m a merry little dragon, From out on the Yellow Sea, My prowess I can brag on, For all men worship me!
What the yellow peril could be,
Set the nations madly guessing!
But reporters all agree
The Yellow Peril’s a yellow blessing.

(Chorus)
Yes, we’re that yellow problem
That puzzles the nations, I ween;
But whether we’ll bless or gobble ’em—
Well, that remains to be seen.

(Chorus)

Even as this moved the local peril into a domain of female sexuality
(foreshadowing Dragon Lady versions of female orientality), it recalled the
masculinized Asian threats that were mostly elided towards the play’s end.

By evoking more murderous yellow perils in order to discount them, the
lyrics returned those fitful dreamings to listeners’ minds as racial dangers in
the real world, one that lay close beyond the drama’s evanescent boundaries.
The operetta’s world attended by only slightly circumspect means—even in
its antipolitical scene of romantic closure—to U.S. discourses on racialized
Asianness, international politics, immigration, and Asian America. At first it
invoked those contexts only to dismiss them; but they were so powerful that
they returned almost inevitably, as if to demand inclusion by the restatement
paradoxically needed to confirm their exclusion in the closing vocal number.
A final Quickstep echoed its happy mood tinged by a foreboding sense of
Asian militarism; “Hats off to the Little Japs” was a congratulatory piece akin
to many U.S. works that celebrated Japan’s military victory over Russia.7

7. E.g., John W. Bratton and Paul West, “Happy Jappy Soldier Man: Japanese War Song,”
New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1904; A. E. Wade, “The Jap Behind the Gun: March & Two
Step,” Hoquiam, WA: Wade Music Co., 1904; S. Nirella, “Japanese Brigade: March and Two-
Most of the play’s music made scant reference to orientality, although some used standard means of doing so; pentatonic phrases in the final piece offer one example. The most interesting aspects of this operetta lie in its language about the body and directions for mimesis within its intersecting narrative frames of male and female yellow perils. Racialized uses of the body were powerful signifiers in moments set into motion by brief instructions, as seen above in white American men’s struggle to sit on the floor and Japanese women’s enjoyment of the altitudinal and social elevation they gained by occupying chairs. Other moments included bouts of submissive prostration; directions to queue-coiffed, nestedly mimetic “Chinese” women to behave as if scared of their own weapons; and flirtation enacted in female fan-play.

Along with these moments, instructions for a dance by the Manchurian “Banditti” distilled raciological embodiment into sustained and focused form. The “Banditti Drill” (23) built on orientalist tropes of comic spectacle, despotic cruelty, incorrigible thievery among associates, and slippage both between U.S. signs of Chineseness and Japaneseness (e.g., pan-Asianized kimono) and from human to animal domains. These moves were performed by actors portraying “People of all sizes and ages” (“tall, short, fat, lean, old, young”), all of whom “should be heavily armed with knives, swords, pikes, pitchforks, or anything that can be used for a weapon.” The performers of this comedic vision of ragtag oriental danger were to carry “plunder…attached to their persons in such a way as to produce [the] most comical appearance possible,” and they were to “be able to cut ridiculous capers and to make droll faces.”

Without recounting the entire drill, some of its instructions for often literally dehumanizing embodiment included the following passages:
...Second time round Banditti steal from partners or from those in front. Those who do not secure things deftly receive a blow from Chief’s sword.

...One of each couple stoops over and hops along on tiptoe, holding out cap for pennies, bowing and wagging head like a monkey, while the other acts as master, holds string attached to monkey’s shoulder and pretends to be an organ-grinder, turning an imaginary organ.

...Banditti march forward by fours. Those who formerly acted as monkeys now drop on hands and knees, take caps in mouths like dogs, and lead masters, who have slipped bandages over their eyes and now use crutches for canes, tapping them along the ground as blind men do. The dogs present caps to audience, and growl and whine because they get no pennies.

...The wounded hold up hands and beg piteously for their lives; but rabble give no quarter. They slay and rob all.

...Banditti spring up and begin to march around him, putting plunder on him and piling around him until he has it all. Then they begin to steal it from him in their march. If he catches one he points his sword at the culprit’s throat and the others drag him to back of stage and hang him...

The resonance here with certain pantomimes shows how mimetic acts of orientality could amuse young and old alike. Its slapstick admixture of subhumanity, brutality, and cowardice gave amateurs and their audiences a “fun” version of traits widely ascribed to Chinese and Japanese figures.8

As an enactment of semantic load-shifting meant to move the ideological burden of the “yellow peril” from masculine fighters to feminine brides, the operetta played out a process of gendered reallocation of racial meaning. This rearranged for comic effect the points of attachment of stock characters to the “yellow peril” as an anti-Asian political term, but it did not undermine the credibility of those characters—it did the opposite. Presenting for amateur players and audiences familiar types inhabiting an imaginary musical world,

8 A later instance, one more directly sinister in its outright call for violence, was seen in World War II rhetoric which urged the extermination of Japanese enemies depicted as vermin—a wartime practice not limited to U.S. portrayals of Japaneseness, but one which found especially apposite form in that racialized discourse (e.g., see Dower 1986). Also worth noting in the “drill” is the double infusion of markers of Italian ethnicity in the performers’ labeling as “Banditti” and in the presence of an organ-grinder in the forests of Manchuria.
the operetta provided kinesthetic and spectatorial opportunities for inscribing racial ideology on political events ten thousand miles away. In this way, it offered an intersection of tropes of inner traits, visibly racialized bodies, anti-Asian rhetoric, and gender roles, all acted out through amateur embodiment.

These portrayals gained ideological and entertaining force from the figures of white American newspapermen. Invested with the credibility of their real-world counterparts, these make-believe War Correspondents in Japan were proxies for America’s most-read representers of military Asianness. This authoritative role of the journalist who was thought to “know Asia” (a common two-word locution) and its threats subsisted with tension between the parts’ narrative relation to man-to-man battlefield observation, as well as to a gendered relation of a different sort to orientalized femininity.

The centrality of this gender division was clear from the opening scene, which enacted the four reporters’ division of representational labor between two who would pursue the story of the rumored “pan-Mongolian Club” and their more fun-loving colleagues. The latter two men were more interested in finding female companionship than in news of a nefarious plot which might lead them to journalistic accomplishments; yet all four male figures sought to uncover hidden aspects of differently gendered but equally racialized human objects of knowledge. As dramatic characters, the correspondents constituted a narrative fulcrum, one rendered immobile by solid footings of (male white American) normality. Bolted to that base by their congruence with widely recognized social roles, they offered a place from which performers and local audiences could lever the affective load of the “yellow peril” over onto an aestheticized female resting place. Performance heightened these male
figures’ narrative efficacy. Their normality was made visible by the absence of scripted mannerisms signifying any trace of difference from dominant U.S. uses of the body. Kinesthetically marked by not being marked, this contrasted with exoticizing movements scripted for many of the play’s Japanese roles.

The latter repertoire of practices was shared by many orientalist plays for adult amateurs (as well as for young performers). A few examples will suggest how widespread were these practices and how much they had in common with certain kinds of professional mimesis. The English musical plays *The Mikado* and *The Geisha* enjoyed wide popularity not only among professional companies and their audiences but also as vehicles for amateur use. Massive U.S. affection for *The Mikado* as a spectacle, a participatory event, and a lode of imagery, gesture, and text for reuse in mediated domains (e.g., advertisements) erased any defining line which could have situated the play as a text supporting exclusively professional or amateur yellowface.

Many musical plays for amateurs trafficked in embodied moves shared with the *Mikado*. The stage manager’s booklet for *The Feast of Little Lanterns* specified that each member of the chorus was to carry “a fan in the right hand, to be used continually, throughout the play. The chorus must smile, smile, smile.”

In its exuberant stress on fan-play and its sternly cheerful injunction to smile, this inculcated a forced but weightless glee projected by female yellowface performers in many plays. Its scene-by-scene instructions called for much “fanning,” the taking of “short, grotesque steps,” “bowing low,” and the performance of a “Chinese dance” in which “care must be

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9. Paul Bliss, “The Feast of Little Lanterns: Stage Manager’s Copy,” Cincinnati, OH: Willis Music Co., 1921; emphasis in original. The booklet also directed that “The usual make-up is worn, adding a little slant to the eyes,” a cosmetic counterpart to these kinesthetic practices.
taken to...make the first part oriental in pose and gesture,” with “the repeat to the first part...oriental and wild and free...” (4–7). The title page for this “Chinese Operetta” noted that notation and instructions for “Two Japanese dances, to be used between the acts may be purchased from the publishers.” Its music deployed pentatonic vocal melodies and open fifths in the piano, invested at times with the exotic timbres of a “Gong and Tom-toms,” and drums playing the stock figure of four sixteenth and two eighth notes (24). The lyrics used such language as: “Bow we low to the little lanterns! So! So! Very low to the little lanterns! Low, Low! Ah-ee! Ah-ee!” (17–18).

Broadly similar movement instructions, stage directions, and musical signs were embedded into many works. First copyrighted in 1899, The Japanese Girl, a two-act operetta for women’s voices, remained in print until at least 1912 and was issued in at least 22 editions. Its spoken lines often used grandiloquent or stilted speech, its kinesthetic instructions called for bowing and so on, and its music featured such pieces as a patter song with verses including: “My new Kimona’s torn, for I caught it on a thorn, My hair’s a sight, I’ll look a fright, It really can’t be borne, These garlands must be hung, These lanterns must be swung, There’s bird’s-nest stew and tea to brew, Whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever shall I do?” (30–31). This was sung to a melody traveling at first within a D-E-G-A tetrachord implying a G major pentatonic scale. At the mildly frantic repetition of “whatever,” it jumped up and out to a repeated C-B-A figure. This supplied an emotive charge difficult to signify by pentatonic means in this U.S. context, one more expressible by means of plaintive motion from the fourth to third degrees of a diatonic scale.

The operetta’s other acts included bowing before “a portrait of the Mikado” while singing the anthem “Kimi ga Yo” (62).\footnote{11}

Shorter and more simply staged pieces called for similar kinds of embodiment. A 1922 “Scene for Women’s Voices,” \textit{The Last Tea of Tsuki}, was dedicated “To the Girls Glee Club of Grinnell College…”\footnote{12} This piece was less elaborate than most operettas; its stage directions called for a moonlit “Japanese garden” evoked by “a few Japanese screens and paper lanterns.” Its singers were to wear “merely the ordinary kimonos which are found in all feminine wardrobes.” The assumed presence of kimono in the wardrobes of American women who belonged or aspired to a certain station also linked such plays to private, self-orientalizing uses of imported goods. Costumed in this way, they were to enact the serving of tea, “vibrate their fans,” “kneel in groups” while “listening meditatively,” and “sway their heads in rhythm.”\footnote{13}

Considered with \textit{Miss Cherryblossom} (see Chapter 6), another work by the same team illustrates such instructions’ consistency across operettas with Chinese or Japanese characters. \textit{Miss Cherryblossom} was set in Japan, The

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{11. Another lantern-framed work was \textit{Yanki San}, set in Japan and said to be “a suitable entertainment for high schools, colleges, or professional performances,” in any of which “All parts may be taken by women performers” if so desired. Six Japanese “maids” were to hold cherry-blossom wreaths “above their heads” and “Then bending forward with short running steps advance to front of stage” (9). A more prolonged sequence of wreath-bearing bowing, whirling, and kneeling (16), comparable bouts of synchronized aesthetic exercise with parasols (52) and fans (53), and other movements in this vein inscribed a familiar “old Japan” (41) in amateurs’ bodies and the spectatorial vision of their audiences (V. M. Spaulding, C. R. Spaulding, and M. L. Harding, “Yanki San,” Cincinnati, OH: Willis Music Co., 1919).
\footnote{12. Elias Blum and J. G. Walleser, “The Last Tea of Tsuki: Scene for Women’s Voices with the Accompaniment of Strings, Flutes, Horns and Piano,” Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., 1922.}
\footnote{13. For general background on fashion and costume of this period in the United States as well as England, see such surveys as Ewing (1992). Practices of embodiment such as these outlived the period on which this study focuses. A better-known vocal piece from 1924, Rudolf Friml’s choral composition titled \textit{Po Ling and Ming Toy: A Chinese Suite}, was reprinted in 1953 with movement instructions which emphasized rice-sowing, lute-playing, and bowing (“Po Ling and Ming Toy: A Chinese Suite,” Boston: Boston Music Co., 1924; “Po Ling and Ming Toy: Chinese Love Story (A Choral Suite),” Boston: Boston Music Co., 1953).}\
\end{footnotesize}
Crimson Eyebrows in China. Both gave their casts belabored lines and tropes of gaily oriental femininity. This audible condition of race and gender was sung in the latter piece as: “Happy little Chinese maidens, 'Neath the almond tree, Fair as any lotus blossom, In the Kingdom we; Graceful as a floating cloud-drift, in the Heavens up above. Dreaming of a Princely lover, Who will claim our love.”14 Such verbal images, and their embodied counterparts, served as signs and contexts for performing Chineseness and Japaneseness. Another example of this conflation in amateur acts is a single composer’s pair of operettas, Yokohama Maid of 1916 and The China Shop of 1922.15 Those pieces had much in common all the way from the pointy-fingered female figures on their covers through to lyrical and musical traits. Composers’ production of such related works may in part have arisen from a desire to cash in on earlier works’ popularity by offering spinoffs in later years. Many operettas also supported amateur enactment long after their initial publication, as seen in a production (probably in 1925) of Miss Cherryblossom by a church guild in Port Huron, Michigan.16 An illustration in the book Music in Industry suggests also how people used these works in settings framed not just as recreation but as recreation undertaken for the sake of industrial efficiency. Depicting the cast of one production, it gave prominent place to fans in the hands of members of the Pillsbury company’s girls’ glee club (Clark 1929, facing 96).

The conventions of embodiment which these texts taught amateurs were allied with professional techniques and with printed depictions of poses and gestures from yellowface productions. Because it blurs issues of causality, the word “allied” is apt here. Mimetic embodiments of orientality—professional and amateur, “live” and mediated, somatically felt and optically perceived—were part of a jumbled stew of beliefs, practices, and products. Professional acts could serve as models for amateur players and for domestic commodity consumption; the latter is seen in a 1905 cosmetic advertisement.17 The terms of this discourse were widely familiar, and the popularity of its best-loved exponents easily was transposed into a merchandising register.

Many adult amateurs’ practices of orientalist embodiment, however, were not specifically beholden to precursors on the professional stage. The gist and many of the details of yellowface belonged solely to neither domain. Most of these practices constituted a pool of techniques for imaginary acts of orientality in many settings. While scripted moments in amateur operettas display evident connections to professional acts, other contexts framed other modes of amateur self-transformation. Remembering Martha Banta’s tale of her mother’s domestic kimono-play and considering the long popularity of shows presenting such stock characters as highbrow Butterflies, middle-class Mikados, and yellowface acts on vaudeville bills, we might wonder: with so many diverse venues for professional yellowface, was there an analogously wide range of contexts for amateur embodiments of orientality by white American adults? The answer is “yes”; and to explore certain grounds for this assertion, we may step back momentarily from musical and scripted acts.

Embodying Japanese Fighting Techniques in (White) American Homes

Along with amateur modes of raciological embodiment enacted by children, adults, or both in such activities as pantomimes, character dances, missionary dramatizations, civic pageants, and operettas, other contexts offered different opportunities for bodily self-orientalization—that is, for white Americans to engage in bodily practices not just based on some Asian model but also believed to result in one’s own somatic and visible linkage to orientality. With the emphasis in many operettas’ stage directions on inculcating into female participants orientalizing movements, it might seem obvious to ask (only half tongue-in-cheek) what the men were up to while these women were busily and happily honing their amateur mimetic skills in all of their rehearsals.

One answer to this is that participation in theatrical recreations was epiphenomenal to a general, but far from absolute, gender-based division of many American households’ activity. This division split some men’s and women’s practices into broadly homosocial domains of bread-winning male activity and domestically aestheticized (and often musical) female practices amenable to orientalist decoration and bodily practices—while the children, if any, were off at school, occasionally learning how to feel orientality in their own bodies. But this scenario is too schematic and totalizing. As ever, human practice was too complex and varied to be represented by a binary or ternary system based on categorical social positions of gender, class, and so on. Many white American men and women enacted oriental types by various means. Some of these avenues for the somatic experience of difference led to practices learned from fairly formalized instructional texts.
Under a rubric of physical hygiene and the contemporaneous but not so often collocated ideological sign of U.S. public interest in the prowess of the Japanese military, two American books (among others) by a prolific writer on Japanese uses of the body for self-defense brought together these strains of discourse. In the beginning of the first chapter of one of them, the author sketched out this conjuncture in the racially comparative language of the day:

THERE are in vogue to-day many systems of physical training—most of them excellent. At first thought there would seem to be no need of a new volume on the subject.

But the author wishes to present the system that from personal experience he believes to be the most wonderful of all in building up the perfect, healthy body—a body that is capable of undergoing a strain that would seem incredible to a Caucasian. Certainly there is no hardier race in the world than the Japanese. Throughout the campaign of the Allies in China, in 1900, the Japanese repeatedly proved their ability to outmarch our troops by fifty per cent.—and this despite the fact that our American soldiers ranked second in point of endurance.

What enabled the little men from Dai Nippon to outstrip so easily the big, sturdy fellows of the American regiments? Even newly appointed graduates of West Point—where the physical training is so superb—marvelled enviously at the endurance of the little brown men. (Hancock 1904a, 2)

A closer look at textual and visual aspects of this and its partner volume will show how these aims led to opportunities for domestic mimesis of racialized Japaneseness—the supposed underpinnings of martial successes in Asia happily brought home for self-improving processes of textually mediated somatic emulation—by a self-selecting distribution of American men.

H. Irving Hancock’s Japanese Physical Training and Jiu-Jitsu Combat Tricks enabled U.S. readers to try to embody this form of Japaneseness at home (1904a, 1904b). Having trained for seven years with “Japanese friends in this country,” in Nagasaki with “Inouye San, instructor of jiu-jitsu in the police department of that city,” and “under native teachers” in Yokohama and Tokyo, Hancock drew on a base of personal knowledge that probably was
akin in some ways to the embodied training of other white Americans who did not write books. For example, a later moment in the long availability of martial arts instruction by Japanese or Japanese American teachers in the United States is illustrated by a 1927 series of classified advertisements that F. A. Matsuyama ran in the *San Francisco Examiner*, where that newspaper’s readers could entertain his offer of instruction in jiu-jitsu.18

Hancock gave these books subtitles that conveyed his overlapping aims (alongside the unspoken one of advancing his authorial career) in producing them (1904a, vi). The first promised an understanding of “The System of Exercise, Diet, and General Mode of Living that has made the Mikado’s People the Healthiest, Strongest, and Happiest Man and Women in the World.” The second offered more precisely targeted bodily knowledge of “Japanese Feats of Attack and Defence in Personal Encounter.” Seen in the superlatives “Healthiest, Strongest, and Happiest,” the comparative bent of the first subtitle marked a thread woven through both books. Hancock explicitly positioned Japanese men as categorically fit not just for admiration but also for energetically embodied emulation because of their fighting skills. However, this in no way situated them outside of equally reductive but less favorable stereotypical characterizations of orientalized masculinity.

In *Jiu-Jitsu Combat Tricks*, Hancock juxtaposed two fighting traditions in terms which evoked a familiar scale of comparative civilization in its imputed degree and assumed rate of change: “Evidently strangling was as popular among the primitive Japanese as it has been in other parts of the world, for the jiu-jitsu adepts of ancient Japan have handed down to us the results of so

much thought both as to the taking of strangle holds and the quick and efficient breaking of them.” He set this off against a northern European (white) lineage of less-developed skill at hand-to-hand strangulation: “In Anglo-Saxon countries few men will be found who have progressed far in throat attack” (1904b, 12). In one sense a plain comparison of regional combat styles, this also played obviously—despite Hancock’s careful attention elsewhere to the traditional stress on deploying such techniques only in defense—to tropes of a constitutional bloodthirstiness which many white Americans mapped onto the primitive and the oriental.

In similar fashion, he referred in a later chapter to one aspect of tripping technique as “an application of a well-known fact that is worthy of the wily Oriental” (32–33). A tongue-in-cheek attempt at a certain kind of praise but one conceived in terms which reinscribed anti-Asian rhetoric, this revealing moment of damning affirmation helps to situate Hancock’s works in their broader political contexts. These enfolded and expressed the strivings (diligent or dilatory as they may have been) of his books’ readers to embody a martially male version of orientality at home.

Although these books may have appealed to a comparatively small market of serious kinesthetic users, they found enough interested buyers that the first went through five printings in four months. Presumably this reflected the heated public interest which also encouraged many publishers to offer piano works linked to Japanese military topics in 1904. That year, Hancock’s first publication of Jiu-Jitsu Combat Tricks seems to have been a response to that surge of interest, and—because the same publisher brought it out so soon after his earlier book—to evidently successful sales of the previous work.
While the specific copy of this later book consulted here is from its first issue and does not indicate whether it went through later printings, this one copy was of sufficiently durable interest to a succession of readers that one of its owners inscribed it with his name and a 1921 date. Hancock illustrated both books with photographs of Japanese (American?) men demonstrating techniques he described. Both credited their photographers by name, but left the pictures’ models of racialized competence in categorical anonymity.

The latter of the two books corroborates the sense that his intended readership was largely men by drawing on examples of contests between Japanese and European American or English male opponents to illustrate the superiority of the former combatants’ methods. One anecdote of an encounter in prestigious U.S. surroundings conveys the flavor and point of all of them (as with the photographic credits, note who is named and who is not):

Last spring, in the Harvard gymnasium, there was an interesting encounter between Tyng, the strong man of that University, and a diminutive Japanese, a fellow student. Tyng tried his best foot-ball tackle, and threw his smaller opponent. But, after that, the Japanese eluded each effort to seize him. After the sport of dodging had continued for some time the Japanese darted in, took a lightning hold, and put Mr. Tyng upon the floor. (1904b, 51)

Along with the fact that Hancock produced a separate book specifically for female readers, these converging visual and textual practices suggest that his intended and actual readership for these two works was mostly male.

This androcentric conclusion is supported as well by his gratuitous insertion of a leering account of sexualized spectatorship. This stood out in a text otherwise almost unwavering in its attention to embodied Japaneseness as an essential condition to be emulated locally through indigenized U.S. practice rather than enjoyed as an object of textually mediated looking. Similarly gendered ways of seeing and telling of seeing were common over
decades in voyeuristic anecdotes and illustrations in many other white male Americans’ tales of travels in Japan. Hancock segued into this trope via hygienic concerns; but he soon abandoned these to veer off into more disturbing language that functioned as much through rhetoric as content:

The people of Japan are not in the least ashamed to have it known that they bathe frequently. The Caucasian passer-by on the street often glances into a back yard in time to see one of the daughters of the house leave the dwelling and cross over to where the barrel of hot water awaits her. The young Japanese woman wears, at such a time, no clothing at all, but if she espies the stranger she smiles, bows, and offers the prettily spoken greeting “Ohayo,” her equivalent for “Good morning.” Then she steps into the hot water, sinks down until it reaches her throat, and goes through the bath with the utmost unconcern. This bath is apt to be a protracted one, but if the visiting foreigner cares to linger he is privileged to see the same smiling, demure maiden trip back into the house. (1904a, 72–73)

Recast in an only superficially self-distancing third-person voice, Hancock’s almost clinically detailed tale of enjoying optically invasive pleasures further locates his text as one written for an audience he presumed to be primarily male and heterosexual. (While we can only surmise that in Hancock’s Japan, bathing was practiced exclusively by people who were female and young.) His possibly willful misreading of his protagonists’ polite (but presumably no less deep) discomfort at his stares as a form of encouragement was a textually self-legitimating tactic common in other such stories. Also common was the trope of the long duration of baths during which bathers were likely trying to outwait their rudely watching, and often eventually victorious, audiences.

This disturbing passage also links Hancock’s materials for mimesis of Japanese agency by white American men to other contemporary, more often musical U.S. discourses focused on visual enjoyment of female orientality. This connection otherwise might only have been surmised as a silent

19. E.g., Greenbie (1920, 292); Street (1921, facing 54 and 262); Phillips (1932, facing 278).
ideological counterpart to his stress on male agency. Such a guess could be
based on the absence of almost any female referents from texts centered on
bodily practices gendered as male. However, Hancock’s voyeuristic reference
to the feminized objects of his ostensibly passing—but in fact, at times
patiently laying visual siege and at others actively patrolling—spectatorship
located his masculinist work relative to its feminized complement within a
gendered system of raciological experience. That schema also encompassed
many of the musical practices, events, and texts examined in this study.

Hancock later returned to a medicalizing discourse in which he
recounted the testimony of “a woman doctor” who spoke of Japanese men
and women as the most “perfect anatomical specimens of manhood or
womanhood” she had ever seen, but he still did so based on spectatorship at
public baths and with different languages of the body in regard to women
and men. These linguistic practices framed women with aestheticizing
language of the “well-rounded” and as (despite being “slight” and shorter
“than our Western women”) having “furnished splendid nude models of
proportion and grace,” but men as being physiologically equipped for action
with “swelling muscles, bulging chests, and slim waist-lines” (75). In a deeply
gendered way, these moments located the books’ orientalized referents either
as instantiations of a female Japaneseness best suited for the immobility of the
pedestal in an artist’s studio or as exemplars of its conceptually opposed male
counterpart, an ideal primed for exertion as a model for white American men.

A curious point arises, though, from an advertisement in the book for
Hancock’s Physical Training for Women According to Japanese Methods, for which
the text included: “In Japan the women are no weaker than the men, and in
this country they have no right to be” (157). He produced that book for an audience of potential female martial-arts students at a time when women’s involvement in such activities was becoming fashionable, in response both to popular explanations for the success of the Japanese military at Port Arthur and to feminist discourses of liberation through combative sports. By doing so, he offered a nearly simultaneous and differently gendered alternative to the two androcentric texts examined here.20 His publications and promotional materials document a complicated, at times internally contradictory, meeting of dominant assumptions about race and gender with a heterogeneous mix of locally situated and targeted marketing maneuvers and mimetic practices.

In that time of contingent but growing freedom for certain women to enjoy new physical power in recreational settings (rather than only those of, say, the domestic, industrial, or agricultural labor in which so many women of less than upper-class status worked seven days a week), other books also told of the benefits of Japanese physical training for women who had enough leisure time to try it. One was The Art of Dancing (Clendenen 1919). Its section on “Japanese Dances and Health Exercises” offered statements that, even as they inscribed an orientalist mix of exotic gleanings, categorized Japanese women as models of physical strength worthy of American emulation:

Japanese dancing, like that of the Greeks and Egyptians, is made up of pantomimic movements. Each gesture has a symbolic meaning.
The feet are not made as prominent in Japanese dancing as in, most nations but their technique is superior to many other nations.
The “Odori” are the most ancient of all Japanese exercises.
The “Mike,” “darling of the Gods,” today perform the minor dance.
... Japan has many systems of physical training, all considered good.
Their aim is to give each person a perfectly built body.

20. For seemingly well-grounded online resources which help to locate Hancock’s book for women in some of its social and historical contexts, see Svinth (1999, 2000).
Pivoting on this point, here the topic shifted away from dance as such.

Making a discursive connection that had earlier analogs in performance and visual culture, the book moved on from dance to sportive combat:

A few years ago we were privileged to witness a demonstration by trained Japanese women. Their wonderfully surprising strength and quickness surpassed any performance we ever witnessed.

They believe “weakness to be a crime.”

The lack of strength is a freak.

Their course of training requires about 4 years. We Americans expect to become perfect in a week or a month, for this reason we have found their system unpopular with our pupils.

We will describe the first 10 lessons given us from a 2-year course. These exercises must be daily practiced, as these are the muscular foundation of physical training and healthy body.

The Japanese are without doubt the hardiest race in the world. Their system of training is called Jiu-Jitsu, or muscle breaking. They consider our system of boxing as brutal. Their boxing contests are usually done with the bare hand and that open.

Read against such accounts, Hancock’s stance towards Japanese and white American women as practitioners of Japanese fighting techniques was not wholly idiosyncratic (nor was his unconcerned embedding of these views within the era’s more self-satisfied and objectifying ways of perceiving women of any culture, although this other writer did not let loose any volleys of spectatorial delight comparable to Hancock’s voyeuristic recitations).

Further framing Hancock’s racialized presentation of strongly embodied Japanese national characteristics was the stark contrast he drew between Japanese and Filipino national characteristics. He located these as good and bad cousins of a sort:

One who has seen and has compared the Tagalogs of the Philippine Islands with the purely-bred Japanese realizes at once that both peoples came from the same parent stock. Yet there is all the difference in the world between them. The Filipino does not exercise, does not obey any of the rules of hygiene, and is nervous and irritable. The average Filipino is treacherous, and, while he will

22. From an unpaginated online text at the Library of Congress’s American Memory web site; locatable by searching the Dance Instruction Manuals collection via http://memory.loc.gov.
fight when there seems a good chance of victory, he is easily discouraged. The Japanese, born of the same racial mother of antiquity, has developed, through the jiu-jitsu training that is devoted to the cultivation of good nature, a calmness that makes him all but a phenomenal man. (1904a, 57)

This was of a piece with contemporary U.S. discourse about the nation’s new imperial subjects in this more southerly Pacific archipelago (a place where Hancock had been during wartime—a circumstance which seems to have determined many of his opinions about supposedly Filipino character traits).

Asserting that Japanese and Filipino people had positioned themselves at opposite poles of the same racial heritage by means of their bodily practices, this evoked national contrasts being made in other cultural and political domains. Most obvious here is the parallel distinction between the exhibits of an autonomous but still orientalized Japaneseness and the colonized and disempowering imperial displays of Filipino people in pseudo-villages that were on view that same year at the St. Louis Exposition. These contexts helped to lend Hancock’s assertions credibility by appealing to common, even if clearly flawed, dominant U.S. notions about human types widely displayed at the time in both living and mediated forms.

Hancock’s books offer rich grounds for further analysis of intersecting ideologies of race, gender, and national character played out in ways which at times collapse “the differences between the sexes” in Japan and at others reify them, as well as of his mapping of contemporary American concerns about diet, sleep, exercise, body weight, immigration, public health, and public demeanor in crowds onto the essentialized figures of Japanese bodies; but further attention to these issues would be out of proportion here. Suffice it to say that, curiously positioned vis-à-vis dominant representations of Japanese and Chinese immigrants as polluting threats to a white American social body,
his books offered a contingently countervailing but still essentializing version of Japanese physicality as a model for practical emulation. Yet in doing this, they tacitly offered up a vision of the powerful results of such healthy bodily practices as having led to a nation of Japanese bodies best remaining in situ.

Aside from his brief mention of his first teacher, Hancock begged the question of whether Japanese American individuals or communities might exercise comparably admirable or perilous physical—or by extension, political—power in the United States. These books’ visual contents are striking when considered in a historical context ringing with shrill recitations of the dangers posed by people of Japanese heritage within the borders of the republic. Their photographs portrayed Japanese men in bodily contestation with each other for visible forms of physical dominance, in one and probably two instances overpowering white opponents (e.g., fig. 7.2). These images show Asian men wearing Japanese or European clothing (in one instance complete with bowler hats to signify an imagined outdoor scenario of streetside fighting) and consistently demonstrating—at least on the part of each scene’s winner—prodigious bodily skills openly coded as masculine, tough, and smart (likely read by many white Americans as wily or cunning).

These idealizations of powerful male Asianness offered an avowedly celebratory vision, yet one which still must have conveyed a not-so-hidden threat to many of the white Americans who saw them in an era of rampantly yellow-perilist anti-Asian imaginings and all too frequently consequent anti-Asian American violence. And even as these strengthened phantasms arose in the raciologically imperiled minds of some readers, others—or perhaps some of the same, now worried ones—must have risen up from their armchairs.
(and perhaps headed out to back yards or down to basements, or kept a close eye on parlor furniture put at risk) to try out manly kinesthetic techniques by following Hancock’s typeset instructions and moving their own bodies in exploratory emulation of the Japanese men portrayed in the photographs.

This conjures up an image of white American men living undocumented private moments of bodily identification with mediated Japanese models of physical strength and combative skill. In these moments, they engaged in processes of self-transformation by adopting stances and movements consciously based on orientalized models. Engaging in those acts gave experientially knowable form to these men’s imaginary identification with an Asian masculine essence. This complicates any misapprehension that white Americans’ private moments of orientalist bodily mimesis may have been limited to female participants more often associated with domestic leisure and a taste for exoticized sentimentality, and to the comparatively few men who were inclined towards more placid modes of orientalist enactment.

**Orientalist Play & Mutual Spectatorship in Society Events**

_The California Club rooms will be open to the public to-morrow, when an Oriental Symposium will be given. There will be a Chinese tea room, Philippine room, Japanese room and Oriental lecture room. Dr. Yamei Kin will lecture on ‘Glimpses of the Orient,’ and a Chinese original play, ‘The Widow Chang,’ will be given. The Chinese fortune telling booth will be presided over by Miss T. Semple._

_Tea and refreshments will be served without charge by the following ladies in Chinese costumes…. Among those who have loaned Oriental exhibits for this occasion are: Douglass Young, Mrs. John R. Jewett, Dr. Yamei Kin, Mrs. Katherine Ball, Mr. Newell, Mr. Marsh, Lyman Lowrey, Sing Fat, ex-Chief of Police Crowley, Mrs. Albertine R. Whelan and Mrs. Gleason._ — _San Francisco Evening Post, 1902_23

Just as martial arts books offer a window into mimesis of a masculinized Asianness, other small groups of sources provide glimpses into other scenes

of amateur performance under racial rubrics. We have seen how Hancock’s texts supported what was mostly a male mode of private mimesis, one that stood in some ways as a differently gendered counterpart to more feminized practices. With this in mind, we may move on to more widely documented venues for public amateur enactments of orientality. The first consisted of society happenings such as costume balls, some of which were planned and attended as orientalist events. After examining these often upper-crust venues for exoticist fun in costume, this chapter shifts its focus to less class-bound and more kinesthetically enacted, but sometimes situationally overlapping, practices of orientalist social dance. Along the way, a look at contexts of newspaper coverage of these events and practices shows how that medium’s discursive overlaps could frame its tales of performative moments.

Society balls and related events offered upper-class white Americans (and sometimes less elite participants) recreationally structured spaces for the mutual display of self-decorative taste and ingenuity. Along with the fun of it all, these practices could mark one’s class position. In this sense, orientalist costuming at such events was akin to French modes of consumption which Pierre Bourdieu examined in *Distinction* (1984). Taking as acknowledged fact his point that acts of consumerism and social performance can claim and demonstrate one’s social standing, some U.S. practices will show how that principle found specific forms in white Americans’ orientalized self-display.

Sinclair Lewis’s 1922 novel *Babbitt* presented a relevant scenario in one episode of its upwardly-striving protagonist’s tale. In a passage reminiscent of histories of the dominant U.S. reception of Asian/American performance, earlier literary orientalisms, and the slam-bang succession of vaudeville acts
framed as oriental and by other racial identities, Lewis wrote: “…the golden doors of the ballroom opened with a blatting of trumpets, and a circus parade rolled in. It was composed of the Zenith brokers, dressed as cowpunchers, bareback riders, Japanese jugglers. At the head was big Warren Whitby, in the bear-skin and gold-and-crimson coat of a drum major. Behind him, as a clown, beating a bass drum, extraordinarily happy and noisy, was Babbitt” (1922, 167–68). The make-believe “Japanese jugglers” in this surfeit of display were signs of a sort embodied in real social events. A wide range of fiction popular in the United States mentioned mimesis in such settings; another example is seen a passage from a Sax Rohmer mystery, The Yellow Claw:

“Vernon!” cried the girl, her eyes lighting up at sound of the name. “Mrs. Vernon! it is! it is! She was pointed out to me at the last Arts Ball—where she appeared in a most monstrous Chinese costume—”

“Chinese?” inquired Dunbar, producing the bulky notebook. “Yes. Oh! poor, poor soul!” (Rohmer 1915, 47)

In many fictional narratives, social acts of white orientalist mimesis assumed tones sinister or frolicsome—but more often the latter.

The costumes in which amateurs enacted orientality on stage and at social events overlapped. As noted in Chapter 6, catalogs made it easy to buy costumes by mail. Crafts handbooks also enabled amateurs to make their own. Published in 1915 and reprinted through the 1920s, one such book showed costumes for events ranging from “plays, festivals, and operettas” to “a festival of nations or Japanese pantomime”; a female Japanese costume was deemed suitable for characters from “Any imaginary period up to the present” (C. Mackay 1915, 180). It advised that kimono textiles could “be imitated by wearing Japanese furniture cretonne, or adapting any pretty kimona that is in the wardrobe of the amateur,” and it referred by
manufacturer’s number to a pattern. This theatrically intended book demonstrates the easy movement back and forth from stage costume to home furnishings, the presumed contents of amateurs’ closets at home, and the ready availability of 15-cent kimono patterns. Similar assumptions informed a book noting that “Japanese kimonos are readily procured” and showing an illustration of an amateur cast so attired (M. Russell 1923, 95, facing 129).

Some publications, such as Masquerades, Tableaux and Drills, offered instructions for children and adults. Along with a girls’ “fan drill” and illustrations of costumes for a “Japanese Fan Dancer” and “Chinese Princess,” it provided other guidance for domestic orientalist performances (Butterick Publishing Company 1906, 112, 20, 18). Its painstaking directions for “Japanese Parties” document the attention to detail that could underlie such private, and probably seldom documented, mimetic play:

In giving a Japanese party, which may take the form of a five-o’ clock tea, or a card party in the evening, or a party in which music, readings and recitations are the main features of the social part of the entertainment, the only imperative requirement relates to the matter of costumes. These must be Japanese for the ladies; and a greater zest may also be given when the gentlemen are habited as far as possible like those of Japan. This, however, is a matter for personal decision; and it is also argued that the neat though sombre customary evening dress for men affords an effective contrast for the bright and picturesque Japanese costumes worn by ladies at such parties. At afternoon teas it is not only allowable but advisable that gentlemen attend in street costume or frock coats, since it is not correct form to don evening attire except for evening occasions. As a complement to the hostess and other ladies in Japanese dress, gentlemen in ordinary evening toilette wear Japanese decorations or bits of Japanese silk in their buttonholes instead of boutonnières.

Ladies’ Japanese costumes—kimonos, as they are called—may be made up of China silks, Oriental stuffs, or even of sateen, if the latter is of an Oriental pattern. Velvet, silk and satin, and gilt and silver trimmings are occasionally intermingled in Japanese costumes, though as a rule the edges of the garments are plainly finished.

Much individuality is permitted the wearer of the kimono at the present time, but it is best, where at all convenient, to array oneself as nearly like a true Japanese as possible. The hair should be built high, with any number of small fans or Japanese ornaments thrust in various directions, or flowers may be effectively arranged. As the obi is not becoming in every instance it may be
dispensed with, if preferred, but when worn quite broad in front with a huge bow at the back, it is decidedly attractive.

As regards the room in which the entertainment is held, it should be decorated with Japanese lanterns, parasols or any fancied Oriental decorative hangings or articles that can be obtained. If tea is served it should be offered in Japanese cups and saucers, and the refreshments, if possible, may be Japanese delicacies offered upon lacquered trays or spread upon an Orientally arranged table. Tiny perfumed pastilles may be burned before the receiving hour; and an odor of sandal-wood, that perfume so popular with the inhabitants of the Orient, may add its fragrance to the atmosphere producing a Japanese tone and still further intensify the effect of the illusion.

If tableaux form a part of the entertainment, they should be founded on Japanese life, and can readily be arranged from Japanese engravings or from books of Japanese history or travels. Translations from literature or Japanese tales may be read. (Butterick Publishing Company 1906, 11)

Mimesis in such events was located in costuming and coiffure more than in movement. This privileging of external wrapping over internal embodiment underlay much orientalist social activity. Compared to more internalized mimesis, these practices no doubt gained in popularity because they did not require learning movement techniques (unlike, for example, social dances).

Publications such as this gave complete guidance to Americans attracted to do-it-yourself embodiments of orientality with their friends. Orientally dressed participants in more elevated events had no need to make their own costumes, although some still did so or had them custom-made. People of means could buy exotic outfits from costume shops, import retailers, or some upscale clothiers. Advertisements for orientalist clothing not intended for the stage will suggest the costuming possibilities accessible to some partygoers.

The most prominent dealer in such goods was a New York emporium called Vantine’s, “The Oriental Store” or “The House of the Orient.” Its range of prices enabled some people to buy distinction while still satisfying less well-funded shoppers. Offering products ranging from kimono to exotic household decorations, the company published mail-order catalogs and
advertised in national magazines and New York newspapers. As noted in Chapter 1, one of Vantine’s counterparts on the West Coast was Gump’s, a more upscale San Francisco merchant that promised shoppers that they could exhibit their “distinctiveness” by wearing “Chinese opera coats.”

Mari Yoshihara has examined Vantine’s as a site for consuming orientalized commodities in gendered historical contexts (2003, 31–36). Here we may just note that, as did costume suppliers and one’s own—or one’s servant’s—labor with readily bought fabrics and patterns, such firms offered a means by which Americans, especially but not only women, could acquire clothing for orientalist social events. With this material base in mind, we may look at some performative contexts in which these people wore the products of exotic purchasing expeditions or sometimes-delegated stitchery at home.

One such event was an “Arabian Nights Pageant and Spectacle” at San Francisco’s Islam Temple (an organization commonly known as the Shriners), which offered Chinese-related pieces among quasi-Islamic orientalia. That 1923 pageant began with the songs “China Boy” and “Chinaland.” After a “Dance of Aladdin” and “Dance of Genii,” it returned to an imaginary China for a “Mandarin Dance”; most later pieces evoked more western orients. Its characters included “China Boys” (played by 40 presumably non-Chinese women). Many society events included similar acts by adult amateurs, and they took place across the country through the teens and twenties.

Imagining Asia in Connecticut: The Hartford Oriental Ball of 1914

One such function was the Hartford Oriental Ball of 1914, which garnered substantial press coverage over the month preceding it and in its aftermath. These accounts illuminate the social trajectory of this forum for mass costuming. As an event in a medium-sized city, this also shows that such venues for amateur mimesis were not limited to large metropolitan areas.

The Hartford Courant began covering preparations for the ball a month before it took place. Evincing the centrality of “national costumes” to such events, one article presented five images of suggested outfits. These offered a curious mix of artists’ renderings and studio shots of orientally costumed women, along with a photograph apparently of a Manchurian woman. Captions reinforced this sense of disjunct place and adduced authenticity. Those for the four images mentioned first were “AN ORIENTAL COSMOPOLITE,” “SUGGESTING A WHIRLING DERVISH,” “QUITE TURKISH,” and “AN INDIAN EFFECT,” each of which marked distance from the model towards which it gestured. The other image was captioned “FROM MANCHURIA.” This invoked both bodily authenticity and travel; implicitly, it evoked ethnographic photography, human display at world’s fairs, and immigration. In these contexts, the image offered a metaphorical window into linkages between mimetic social play and its historical frames.27

This front-page piece for the Sunday paper’s society section announced other aspects of the ball. These afford a sense of its linkages to local society and to wider networks of social mimesis. For the price of a ticket costing three dollars for an individual or five “for a couple, lady and gentleman,”

one could attend this “novel and interesting” benefit for the Visiting Nurse Association: “The sale will in no way be restricted, but will be open to the general public, so as to make the affair a public city function for anyone who wishes to contribute to the association in its work.” This quasi-open outreach still was restricted by thresholds of economic means and leisure time. Linking this New England event to entertainments to the west and suggesting the spatial distribution of these orients, “Mrs. Richard Bissell has succeeded in procuring the same scenery that was used at the Moorish ball in Chicago last year and this will be used in the large dancing room.”

In this exotic setting a succession of events would represent Hartford’s civic elite and foster the participatory mimesis of orientality. This conjuncture of local and global references is reminiscent of community pageants of this period, but those served more as self-representations of civic identity than as venues for entertaining embodiments of racial difference. One early sign of the event’s grounding of these acts in bodily surfaces rather than kinesthetic practice is the ease with which the plan equated fabric color and nationality:

Mayor Louis R. Cheney will open the ball with a short reception at 9 o’clock. This reception will be in the form of a pageant in which the patronesses will participate. Groups will formed representing some special country or color scheme, and these will advance in the line in groups. General dancing will follow the reception and last until 3 o’clock in the morning. A supper will be served at midnight…in some unique continental style and the dining-room is being renovated for this purpose.

A diversified unity of visual effect was to be assured by requiring that “Only those wearing Oriental costumes will be permitted to take part in the dancing and pageant, but the guests who intend to remain in the boxes or gallery will be admitted in evening dress.” The evening’s success would rest on embodied participation in mutually performative and spectatorial orientalist pleasures.
The article offered suggestions for acquiring the material grounds necessary for these acts of imaginary being and looking:

The committee, in order to assist those who will find it a bit difficult to choose their costumes, has arranged with the department stores for a window display of such costumes as can be very inexpensively and easily made, and they wish it to be made known that such costumes are preferred. Costumes may be rented at these stores or in Springfield at the well-known costumers. No doubt elaborate costumes will not be lacking, for many already have such.

Here the fun of mimetic embodiment, the rewards of socially beneficial acts, the joys of window-shopping, the frugal satisfactions of domestic handicraft after commodified models (or the ease of renting wearable commodities for a small sum), and the self-elevating reassurance of displaying one’s own distinctive taste converged in a way which begins to illustrate why and how the multiple pleasures of orientalist society functions could be so attractive.

The following Sunday’s paper continued this emphasis on costuming with two models for home-made outfits. A society-column item stressed the ease of costumed participation: “It will not be at all difficult for those who do not care to have special costumes made to rent something quite satisfactory, for several of the leading stores in the city are in communication with New York costumers....”28 There was such demand that a Massachusetts costume dealer had done sufficient business to make it worth his while to extend his visit to the city.29 As did the translocal lending of decorations by Chicago to Connecticut socialites, these commercial processes linked this event to networks of orientalist material production, dissemination, and social use.

As the ball drew closer, a director of the Visiting Nurse Association detailed the ways in which poor residents of Hartford relied on VNA

services. The association and the Courant worried that “the real object of the affair may be forgotten” amidst “the gaiety and excitement of preparing costumes…” This did not quench exuberant anticipation of such display; the next day, an interior headline drew attention to more such photographs. Tropes of national costume which earlier had been anonymously embodied now decorated the bodies of society women. By assuming these guises in advance for the camera, these women parlayed the status effects of attending the ball into a more sustained public display of taste and fiscal means.

The article’s text was saturated with an urge towards distinctive taste. Several passages convey the mounting excitement of being able to go public in wearable signs of exotic refinement. Laden with references to conspicuous consumption through orientalized excess, the article told of the displays of happy surplus certain groups would offer. Among more riotous ensembles that would dress as Indian, Moorish, Persian, and other types was this one:

The Chinese group, which has been composed by Mrs. Ansel G. Cook, will also offer an array of beautiful costumes. Mrs. Cook, herself, will wear a magnificent prayer robe which was presented to Mrs. John Coogan by the late Dowager Empress of China, just after the close of the Boxer Rebellion. This group also offers an opportunity for the men to wear handsome embroidered costumes. Winchell Smith of Farmington, the well known dramatist, has been of great aid in finishing the details of this group, which will enter to the sound of Chinese music and with banner and lighted lanterns.

This contains a dense precipitate of signs and histories that swirled around in these happenings: self-display of economic position, international flows of commodities, tropes of China as a site of missionary and commercial activity as well as anti-foreigner violence, and gendered aspects of public behavior. The last are seen in the women’s naming as “Mrs. Ansel G. Cook” and “Mrs.

John Coogan” as well as in their central place in these events, where men “also” would enjoy—or would face up to—opportunities for dressing up.32

The significance of the history of Cook’s costume was reasserted the next day, when the paper reprinted the photograph with a caption retelling the tale of its imperial bestowal upon an expatriate American after a time of deathly hazard for some such foreign people in China.33 In part this was a redundant display of Mrs. Cook’s social stature; it demonstrated the social position of the robe’s owner and wearer by means of its elegance and rarity, and it bestowed make-believe imperial status on her through its provenance and her visible commonality with mimetic Chinese empresses in such theatrical productions as The Daughter of Heaven (see Chapter 4).

Hammering home the history of this wearable sign of survival in a realm of oriental danger and of an eminent Asian woman’s fond feelings or practical gratitude towards an American abroad, these images not only marked status but also may have conveyed broader political assertions. In its bodily use by a white American woman for a Connecticut ball, people could read these larger tales from the garment first in printed images and then in actuality. Read against U.S. missionary and commercial activity in China, the robe assumed meanings distinct from those of other national dress put on for society events. In undocumented but plausible ways, its use as a costume in New England was open to interpretation as a sign of the rightness of U.S. incursions into Asian nations; the gratitude those nations would or should (from some perspectives) feel in response; and the tangible traces of such

32. On some other broadly related instances of white American women as central players in U.S. representations of Asia, see Yoshihara (2003).
33. “Mrs. Ansel G. Cook” [photograph], Hartford Courant, 15 February 1914.
adventures and vindications. While the translocated extravagance of this garment allowed its wearer to embody these things, it also could suggest that Chineseness was located in a Chinese nation both practically and ideally far away, a nation and a people best kept that way through immigration law and located as such in performance by signs of an exotically imperial China.

The resonance here with other venues for displaying human types is clear. As also seen in such contexts as world’s fairs or in vaudeville, here the organizers’ concern with the oriental did not keep them from evoking other exotics. For instance, one room was to be decorated as a French village.34 Over the village would be an illuminated constellation of Japanese lanterns, steering the scene towards Francophile japonisme in a New England building:

When the guests enter the armory they will find it completely transformed. Raised about a foot above the floor all around the ball, and with the doorways and windows seemingly those of the cafes and marts and tiny houses of a little French town, will be the boxes, all of which have been sold for some time past. In the center of the ball will be the bandstand, with Edward Wittstein, the well known orchestra leader of New Haven, with a band of thirty-five men, all clad in Arabian costume. Hundreds of electric lights shaded by Japanese lanterns will be suspended from the smilax covered roof.35

The event’s synchronized maneuvers were complicated enough to require a rehearsal. An item encouraging people to attend it reminded them that “any persons planning to attend the ball who desired to go in costume which was not Oriental would be welcome, though these, of course, will not take part in an Oriental pageant.”36 This almost endless cheerleading for the necessity of a completely transformed core mass of participants reinforces the sense that what was at stake was bodily practice vested equally in somatic and spectatorial experience. This was to be a fundamentally participatory

event, although parts of it would shift towards a performer-audience split; a high-school sophomore was to “be seen in the Indian Butterfly dance…and also other character dances.” But participatory costuming was most central, and those who engaged in it could supplement memories of doing so with the evidence of images to be made by a photographer equipped with flash gear.

With all this preparation, how did the Oriental Ball turn out? In the eyes of many, it was a huge success. One article described it as “Gorgeous in every detail, perfectly conceived and artistically carried out,” and a long recitation chronicled the bash nearly minute by minute. A few highlights from this account convey the party’s mood and some specific practices enacted in it. The ball “had turned every one into Orientals, from Egypt to Japan, whose costumes imported by every incoming P & O steamship, smacked of the incense and idols of those far-away lands”:

The military orchestra…gathered early in their pagoda and played concert numbers while the people assembled. At 8:30 o’clock the airs changed to the swinging cadences of the dance, and soon the plaza was covered with dancing couples in evening dress.

…

**Geisha Girls and Coolies**

There was a princess, too, in the Japanese group, and she was Mrs. Francis T. Fenn, in a splendid garment of old Japan. She was accompanied by Mr. Fenn, who assumed the role of the Daimio of Satsuma, and that they might travel in safety and comfort through the wilds of barbarian Europe, they were accompanied by Robert Frisbie as Sanjiro, an official guide. Then came geisha girls and coolies, followed by William Rowland, the reverend Matsuda, master of the art of cha-no-yu, or ceremonial tea drinking. He was followed by half a dozen pupils, after whom came a bevy of dancing girls. This group was arranged by Mrs. Fenn.

…”

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Of Manchu Dynasties

A new outburst of music drowned the rest of the tale, but attention was diverted to the archway, from which issued an illustrious group of sons and daughters of the Moon, royal princes and princesses of the Manchu dynasty, of the dragon. The group, under the leadership of Mrs. Ansel G. Cook was one of the most effective of the entire twelve.

... The Butterfly Dance

When this train of maskers, in their gay costumes had wound twice around the plaza, a signal was given, and they sat on the dance floor. Then to weird and strangely beautiful Indian music, speaking of gorgeous butterflies sailing airily through the sunlight and shade splotched tropical jungle, through the cafe doors came Mlle. Serina Plasikowsky, in butterfly attire, flitting through the sitting groups on the crowded plaza like the butterfly which she emulated. The Indian Butterfly dance in which she fluttered around the hall, making the circuit of the musicians, was as airy and charming a bit of art as has been seen here—well, since the “Quarreling Trio” were at the Parsons.

In this context, tropes of geisha, coolies, and so on were not just images of difference but also racial categories enacted in bodily form. This made them knowable internally through each person’s own kinesthetic practice as well as externally in their costumed surfaces. This mixture of somatic and spectatorial experience was central to such events. A few entries from the article’s list of participants suggest what those imagined identities could be; among them were: “Miss Fayoline Sedgwick, ‘Maiko girl,’ blue silk kimono with cerise obi-sash” and “Winchell Smith, ‘Hsien Feng,’—‘a regular Chink gent.’

The Oriental Ball was embedded historically and discursively in diverse settings of other events and texts. These gave participants contexts for making meaning from their acts of self-orientalization. Among these were overtly political events and newspaper articles, theatrical presentations, cinematic portrayals of Asian characters, and other social affairs known by firsthand attendance or society-page accounts. One recent event was a lecture by Sidney Gulick (author of Evolution of the Japanese, 1905), who spoke that
January on “America’s Oriental Race Question.” At a time when some residents were preparing to dress in Japanese garb for the Oriental Ball, he was to discuss the “Japanese question upon the Pacific Coast” as an issue needing to be “solved on a just basis” in order to avoid a situation in which “the so-called Yellow Peril” would “become an actuality.”

The ball’s other interpretive contexts are too many to detail, but a few examples suggest their diversity. Recent newspaper articles in Hartford and Middletown had reported on Red Cross flood relief in China, policy struggles over Asian immigration, and a Hindu temple in the Litchfield Hills:

A Hindu temple in Connecticut?
Yes.
Where?
Not in populous New Haven with nearly all the religions of the world; nor in wicked Bridgeport, which needs any kind of religion and needs it bad. But in an out of the way hill town; yes, in Cornwall, which is about the last place in which you might expect to find an exotic importation from the other side of the world.

As the ball’s attendees drank their morning coffee and planned their costumes (or relived memories of traipsing happily about in them), they could read up on debates about Asian immigration, its legal control, and its raciological implications for American society. Without asserting conscious linkages of this sort, it seems likely that people subconsciously could relate stories about race-based national exclusion and their own enactments of Asian characters as fantasized signs of a (safely) distant and exotic orient.


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As did print media, local events offered backdrops for interpreting the ball. In the weeks before it, one Hartford theater had presented the Asahi Troupe of “Japanese Wonder Workers”; another had shown a cinematic vision of Japanese life, O Mimi San, “the scenes of which were laid in Japan and Jap actors were cast for the leading parts.”42 A society column told of another nearby environment into which white participant-spectators’ bodies would move. This was a Yale prom, well covered in the Hartford press:

Invitations to this dance are probably the most coveted of any among the debutantes of the country. There has word gone forth that the tango is absolutely forbidden at this affair, and we wait with curiosity to hear what dances will take its place. The plans for the decorations of the Second Regiment Armory, where the Junior Promenade will be held, are even more elaborate than usual. It was hinted a few days ago that a Japanese scheme was to be carried out, and the prospects are that the armory will never have looked more beautiful. Passing through the main entrance one emerges apparently into the open air, as one great expanse of blue sky meets the eye. An avenue of giant Japanese cherry trees in bloom will extend along each side, the branches arching toward the center and meeting at the sides, where they support wistaria vines, also in luxurious bloom. Below these a terra cotta road will be illuminated to the boxes, which will be brightly lighted by electric bulbs hanging from the eaves. The walls under the terra cotta will be hung with silk and hand colored floral Japanese panels. Added to this will be garlands of electric lights and illuminated Japanese lanterns. Kakemone with Japanese inscriptions and a brilliantly illuminated Japanese sun will hang between the trees, adding to the color effect of the whole. The music stands on either side of the hall and [sic] will be elevated on a stone wall with paneled bamboo rails. The boxes are to be decorated in chrysanthemum colors, while partly opened Japanese umbrellas will enclose the arc lights, thus subduing their ghastly glare.43

The ideas and practices which underlay the Hartford ball were far from unique. Rather, its organizers drew on a repertoire of conventional means for enabling white Americans to embody orientality. Each person who attended the ball may have drawn on memories of a unique subset of these practices, as well as specific texts and other performances, as tools for making meaning

42. “Poli’s” [advertisement], Hartford Courant, 1 February 1914; “Jubilee Week at Poli’s...,” Hartford Courant, 1 February 1914; “Entertainments,” Hartford Courant, 5 February 1914.
from their own social acts. Participants could relate their experiences to
diverse kinds of practice and discourse. Suggesting both the varied meanings
available to these people and some salient interpretive possibilities, this offers
another instance of the flexible but ideologically fraught processes by which
embodiment can offer diverse but compelling support for raciological ideas.

A specific example of this may lie in some white Americans’ enactment
of Indianness and Japaneseness for exotic amusement at a time when raging
debates soon would virtually halt Indian immigration, the “Gentlemen’s
Agreement” had restricted emigration from Japan to the United States, and
Japanese performers were presented as exotic figures on the vaudeville stage
and silent screen. Those embodied, printed, and projected representations
constructed Asianness as being not part of U.S. society, but as a racial essence
in need of quarantine (cf. Shah 2001). This socially hygenic form of an urge
towards Asian exclusion and containment—both of which sought to maintain
an imagined social body free of racial contamination—could take different
but ideologically congruent forms. Among them were geographical exclusion
through immigration bans, local containment within theater proscenia, and
temporal containment within recreationally orientalized bodies known to
be restorable to their real-world status as signs of (white) U.S. citizenship.

Events broadly like the Hartford Oriental Ball were common, as a few
examples may suggest. They included holiday parties responding to a 1915
surge of elite interest in “Hindu Mysticism” and a 1918 ball on the theme of
the play *Chu Chin Chow.*

44 Some events involved Asian American workers in

44. “Society Turns to Things Pagan for Entertainment:...,” *New York Times,* 19 December 1915;
“Just to Make a Pretty Picture ...” [cartoon], *New York World,* 3 March 1918.
ways that mingled mimesis and ideas of authenticity; a 1905 article on San Francisco’s May Festivals ended with an account of the “Japanese Booth”:

A noteworthy feature of the festivals is the concession booth, where beneath a canopy of gay Japanese lanterns guests may enjoy a cozy cup of tea, an ice or a delicious plate of oysters. Mrs. Mary Prag and Mrs. K. Spedding have charge of the popular retreat, and a number of Oriental maidens clad in bright kimonos glide noiselessly among the tables feeding the hungry and quenching the thirst of the thirsty in a truly refreshing manner.45

The “Oriental” servers at this society event made a performative connection between such functions and a gendered trope of oriental labor; working physically beneath iconic lanterns, these young women labored rhetorically under the rubric of authentic and silent female orientality. This constructed them as both a pleasing spectacle and a source of uncomplaining service.

The kinds of mimesis reported by the press did not wholly encompass this period’s amateur embodiments of orientality; some domestic practices almost certainly went undocumented. One example is the use of masks. People could seek these out in costume stores, order them by mail, or acquire them by unanticipated means. A 1904 issue of the Boston Globe included a free mask titled “Look Like a Jap” (fig. 7.3); this portrayed the wearable visage of a Japanese sailor as part of a “False Face Series.”46 Appearing unbidden in subscribers’ homes, the mask offered a mimetic middle ground between costuming and makeup. Not literally transforming the skin, it remade white faces in a way that could be reversed even more swiftly than one could remove a costume. The unknowable tales of these masks’ uses entailed evanescent moments of private amusement. These acts must have elicited bodily and vocal mimesis from many participants in greater Boston and

45. “‘Americana’ at May Festivals...,” San Francisco Evening Post, 3 May 1905.
perhaps other cities (if the national distribution of musical supplements offers a comparative model for the dissemination of this art supplement). Another such mask (long detached from its framing sheet) originally produced in the same general period portrayed the face of a Japanese woman (fig. 7.4).

These and related commodities offered material grounds for orientalist mimesis in situations less structured than oriental balls. Having wandered outside the boundaries of such organized events to note less formal practices, we now may examine strands of performance which were less structured than society functions but often took place in situations better documented than Sundays at home. Because many publication contexts for tales of society events also offered interpretive frames for accounts of these other practices, a contextual interlude will help to ground the rest of this chapter and to clarify how these varied kinds of representation were enacted or apprehended against some of the same backdrops of social history and public discourse.

**Interpretive Contexts for Orientalist Balls & Dances, Then & Now**

Oriental balls’ participatory modes of mimetic embodiment and their mutual spectatorial relationships lead to related but less class-bound adult activities, practices which were more broadly accessible because participation required less organized effort. Chiefly comprising social dance steps, these activities only required a public place with a band and a floor, or media such as sheet music or recordings for enjoyment at home with a dancing partner, piano, and pianist—or a player piano or phonograph. These activities generally were brief; people usually engaged in such a dance as one among many pieces during an evening. Both types of mimesis did, however, overlap in moments at social events where attendees happened to be in orientalist costume.
Mediated knowledge of these moments also converged in textual ways. This is seen in press coverage of the Hartford ball and moralistic debates about the tango. In the early February weeks during which the Hartford Courant offered advice on orientalist costumes, it also printed a steady stream of articles and notices centered on public anxieties about the tango. The front page that carried news about the Red Cross in China and legislative moves for “Asiatic” exclusion also ran three items invoking that dance. This moment was one of huge debate over the dangers of such practices.

The magnitude of feeling about this performative moment is clear from a statement from London that was published in a U.S. magazine several years earlier, just as the early-teens surge in new dances was picking up speed:

THE world has gone dancing mad. On the stage everywhere dancers of both sexes and all nationalities are whirling feverishly to the rhythm of sensuous music. Never were there before the public so many remarkable exponents of the terpsichorean art. And what perhaps imparts most interest to this sudden revival is the fact that the dances are as new as the dancers. They are weird, bizarre, voluptuous, beautiful. All are fascinating; some are extraordinarily graceful.

Never was so much attention given to the study of the dance. The furor for dancing seems ever to increase, for the dance is something that holds the spectator spellbound, whether he be of a high or low degree of intelligence. It is never beyond the comprehension of the lowest grade of man, and has a charm that even music has not.47

This conveys the enthusiasm and incipient worries often wrapped around the dancing bodies of millions of Americans and Europeans through that decade.

A later passage invoked more openly the potential threat ascribed to some new dances, here one called the Apache. It situated both that and the tango as dangerous and enticingly attractive to the article’s U.S. readers:

To show how widely different are the dancers now attracting the public, one has only to mention that at one time in London last season there were on the

stage, besides the lovely Wiesenthal sisters, the grotesque and awful Apache
dance; a band of Oulid Nail girls dancing their wild, seductive desert dances;
the great Russian dancers, Pavlowa and Mordkin, and a weird, wild pagan of
a Japanese dancer who made one feel as if he were watching something from
another world.

The Apache dance was invented in Paris, and its brutal passion, its wild
voluptuousness and abandon, its fierce, callous cruelty, took the boulevardiers
by storm. It is the dance of the Parisian hooligan, the degenerate creature who
seems to be the product of twentieth-century life. The dance depicts the life, the
love and the bitter hatred of this class of desperado. Accompanied by the most
haunting music, it is extraordinarily effective on the stage. This dance is really
legitimate, for it expresses something. (94–95)

The characterization of a Japanese dancer as unearthly, and of the Apache
dance as expressing a cruel underbelly of modernity, foreshadowed some
major themes in ensuing years. Entrancement by and distrust of modernity,
transposed into the key of the culturally (nationally, racially) exotic, underlay
much arguing and agonizing over recreations enacted on public dance floors.

What seemed to some to be certain dances’ brutal edge enticed other
people to happy states of kinesthetic abandon. That heterosocial joy could
seem a reckless kind of fun with dire social consequences, and some people
sought compromises in less worrisome but still exotic practices. For them, a
dance that evoked orientality by embodying a fantasized Chinese essence
could offer new ways of moving while evoking an idealized pre-modern
condition. Framed as fashionably new and not so proper as to be boring, such
a creation could be just the ticket to excitingly novel yet morally upright fun.

This conflicted stance exposes a small corner of the foundations for the
U.S. introduction in 1914 of a social dance defined by mimetic Chineseness.
Called the “Ta-Tao,” this micro-genre positioned the exoticized attractions of
East Asia as an alternative to dances which many moral guardians perceived
as deeply threatening. Its presentation played the anxieties many Americans
felt about uncontrolled modernity off against the idea of a timeless China. But
this story will make more sense if situated in some surrounding territory. One key context was discourse about the tango. As Marta Savigliano has shown, some moments in that dance’s history outside Argentina played to ideas of the body that were related to orientalist cultural practices (Savigliano 1995, 73–136). Involving notions of exotic authenticity, these linked the tango’s performance and reception to other participatory practices, professional acts by such dancers as Ruth St. Denis, and human display at world’s fairs. A few contemporary examples will show how the tango’s U.S. press provided one context for interpreting both Oriental Balls and dances such as the Ta-Tao.

The three tango articles noted above illustrate some domains in which these acts and words were expressed. One told of Boston’s prohibition of “tango teas,” opportunities for women and men to interact in ways some people deemed dangerous: “‘The dansant,’ or afternoon tea, which has been a popular society pastime at fashionable hotels recently, was banned today by the license committee.” A legal guise enabled this action: “The order was issued because the hotels had exceeded the provisions of their licenses in charging admission to the dances. The fact that the tango was danced did not enter into the action of the commissioners, it was explained.”48 A report from Atlantic City told of a woman torn between the sensuous charms of an exotic dance and the more spiritual but less enticing rewards of religious singing:

The tango has cost Mrs. Lillian B. Albers, soloist at St. Paul’s M. E. Church, her job.

Rev. W. H. Bromley of Lexington, Ky., an evangelist, who has been conducting an old-fashioned revival at St. Paul’s Church, said: “Quit tangoing or the choir.”

“But I don’t dance the tango,” Mrs. Albers warmly protested.

“What do you do then?” the evangelist demanded.

“I teach it,” the soloist answered. Her resignation followed.49

The page’s third invocation of the tango was in another article about the Yale prom mentioned above for its Japanese decorations; it related rumors and concerns about whether the tango might turn up to spoil the event. A follow-up report told of its enactment during an unofficial part of the prom:

The Junior Promenade...was held in the Second Regiment Armory tonight and, as in former years, was a brilliant and successful affair. The big hall was beautifully decorated, with bunting, flags and flowers, and comfortably housed the large assemblage. Many of the guests came from distant parts of the country, one young woman coming from Honolulu.

Although there was no tango dancing at the junior promenade during the evening part of the dance, those guests who remained after midnight started to tango and were reported later to be tangoing to their heart’s content.50

All of these accounts were concerned with perils ascribed to dances which many believed to encourage improper social and physical contact between young women and men, in contexts charged with exoticized sexual energy.

Each centered on the institutional construction and enforcement of a boundary between venues for performances categorized as respectable or scandalous. This policing took place through governmental determinations of licensed domains for dancing in Boston, a pastor’s separation of church and dance hall in Atlantic City, and the temporal boundary between sanctioned and disreputable phases of a prom in New Haven. This conjuncture of tango tales from the northeastern United States hints at how these pervasive issues could offer a context for interpreting orientalist practices of movement.

A similarly convergent moment is seen in one day’s New York Herald, which ran a piece about a Long Island benefit like the one which Hartford’s socialites would present a few weeks later. It told of Vernon and Irene Castle

dancing the maxixe and of other attendees in an “array of Oriental costumes,” and it linked the tango to high-society orientality in its title: “Women at Oriental Ball Appear in Tango Trousers.”51 Three other articles on the same page invoked the dance. One told of the Yale prom, quoting a dean’s comment on the tango’s absence from the party’s official dance card: “‘The boys won’t dance it anyway. There will be too many men of good breeding there.’” The writer doubted this: “Those more familiar with dances and dance music than the dean are sure, however, the promenade will not be tangoless.”52 Readers also could learn of a German (American) ball that had featured such pieces as Strauss waltzes but now included the one-step, hesitation waltz, and “modified tango,” and of the Castles’ creation of the “Innovation Gavotte” as an alternative to the tango in response to a society woman’s request.53 These varied moments of enactment, reception, and mediated retelling on a single page suggest how the tango was as strongly desirable to many people as it was worrisome to others.

An example of convergent press coverage from a small-town newspaper will be useful before considering tango anxieties and the attractions of orientalist dance as opposable terms. As did big-city papers, the Middletown Sun juxtaposed accounts of different ways of excluding people and practices deemed threatening to social order. In the issue that carried “Test Planned to


Providing a further sense of simultaneity of diverse performances of embodied difference, the next page bore a review of a Metropolitan Opera production of Madame Butterfly sung with “subtlety” and “dramatic force” by Geraldine Farrar, who in the course of her curtain calls was given “instead of flowers, a Japanese doll”: “When the audience saw the appropriate, artistic little gift there was a lot of laughter” (“Japanese Doll for Miss Farrar When She Sings in ‘Butterfly’: It Takes Place of Floral Gift…,” New York Herald, 23 January 1914).
Keep Out Hindus: Asiatics Are Expected to Swarm to the United States If Not Kept Out” (cited above), an article told of the Hartford Bishop’s opposition to the tango and followed up on a dean’s views on the Yale prom, reporting that although he hadn’t forbidden the dance he was confident that it would not be performed. The day before, the Sun had nestled together pieces titled “Yale Dean Bars Tango at Prom” and “Japanese Exclusion Hearings Held Up.”

Tango coverage was framed by news of such culturally differentiated practices as those recounted in “State Religion for China: Worship of Heaven and Confucius Ordered by President of Republic.” To infer intentional links from the close appearance of these tales of difference would be foolish; but their accessibility to readers of a small-town paper shows that distance from urban centers did not equate to provincial disinterest in newly encountered practices, whether constructed as exotic goings-on in a distant Asia or as participatory events near one’s own uncosmopolitan American surroundings.

This is seen in performative as well as discursive ways. For example, one day in 1914 the Sun published the “Clause Adopted to Bar Asiatics” article mentioned above with the Oriental Ball. A string of theatrical notices in the paper that week kept reminding Middletown-area readers that the Asahi troupe was appearing at Poli’s vaudeville theater in Hartford, less than 20 miles away. Already familiar on its own terms (see Chapter 3), here this

54. “Test Planned to Keep Out Hindus...,” Middletown Sun, 24 January 1914; “Bishop Nilan Is Against Tango: Isn’t an Order, but Just His Views...,” Middletown Sun, 24 January 1914.
55. “Yale Dean Bars Tango at Prom.: Jones Sure Students Won’t Dance It Anyway...,” Middletown Sun, 23 January 1914; “Japanese Exclusion Hearings Held Up...,” Middletown Sun, 23 January 1914. Several days later, the paper brought its public up to date with an article headed “‘Tango Cop’ to Be at Yale Prom.: Will Enforce Ideas of Terpsichorean Propriety There — Feters Not Disturbed...” (Middletown Sun, 27 January 1914).
56. “State Religion for China...,” Middletown Sun, 30 January 1914.
57. “At the Theatre: Poli’s Theatre,” Middletown Sun, 30 January 1914; “Entertainments: Poli’s Theatre,” Middletown Sun, 31 January 1914.
appeal to audiences’ spectatorial attraction to performers marked as Japanese played out a thirst for exotic novelty that had much in common with many people’s engagement with participatory mimetic acts. Other Sun pieces told local readers of such political events as Empress Haruko’s death in Japan.\(^{58}\)

The next day’s paper praised her as an agent of westernizing processes:

> She has done much for the women of Japan and the freedom now they’s [sic] is largely due to her. She struggled long to free them from the old customs and laws by which they had been almost slaves. This came about through studying the civilization of Europe and America, which she took up with the emperor. She was responsible for many foreign customs introduced into the life of the court.\(^{59}\)

Read together over minutes or weeks, all of these sorts of articles gave non-urban Americans plenty of ways to contextualize their own acts of mimesis.

Many practices and discourses constructed orientality and other racial essences as authentic or mimetic, visible or audible, embodied or printed, and political or entertaining. Having suggested how some strands of performance worked their way through these frames, we may look at another practice in which musically supported recreation located orientality in the bodies of its amateur participants. Building on the tango contexts noted above, these practices were linked to public contests over morality, sex, and gender.

*Moving One’s Mimetic Self Chinesely in the “Ta-Tao”*

Chief among the short-lived but interpretively rich moments of participatory orientalist social dance was the briefly popular ta-tao. Printed and recorded traces of its musical underpinnings, certain contexts within which those media were distributed, and related professional practices may illustrate

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certain social uses of participatory orientalist mimesis. Intersecting with the
tango, the interpretive backdrops sketched below concern other dance music,
visual depictions of dancing couples, and journalism that raised issues of
race, gender, the body, and social propriety. Each of these helped to ground
the meanings most available to Americans who encountered the dance—or
even just tales of it—in the year it appeared on U.S. social dance scenes.

Known also as the tao-tao, ta tao, tatao, taotao, tatoo, tattoo, and
tattoo, the ta-tao surfaced in dominant U.S. media in 1914. Newspaper stories
described it as a Chinese dance with more proximate origins in France early
that year. American newspaper reports told of its introduction at the Paris
Academy of Dancing Masters, couching it in such terms as a “real successor
to the tango.”60 By April, residents of Cleveland were practicing it in
anticipation of a June conference of Dancing Masters in that city.61 The
conference itself received national press coverage, much of which noted the
dance.62 Brought there by D. G. MacLennan of Edinburgh, the ta-tao was
promoted as a dance that could replace the tango’s improprieties with more
reputable ways of moving the body.63 Its visibility in the press quickly faded
away after the conference, but certain dance schools continued to advertise
lessons in it, and occasional articles late that year told of local performances.64

60. “Dance 4,300 Years Old. ‘Tatao,’ a Chinese Measure, to Be Introduced in Place of the
61. E.g., “Ta-Tao Dance Promises to Put Tango to Rout,” Cleveland Press, 3 April 1914;
“Masters of Dance Open War on ‘Dips’ in Convention Here,” Cleveland Leader, 9 June 1914.
62. E.g., “‘Tatao’ and ‘Twinkle,’ Newest Dance Fads, Make Their Debut,” San Francisco Call &
Post, 9 June 1914.
63. E.g., “Tango Is Doomed, Experts Contend…,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, 10 June 1914; “Plan
Wake for the Tango: Funeral Set for This Fall, Say Dancing Teachers. — But the Maxixe, Kiss
Waltz, Tatoo, Half and Half and a Few Others Will Take Its Place…,” Los Angeles Times, 10
June 1914.
More lasting than its journalistic presence was the availability of sheet music and records of pieces composed as accompaniment for it, as noted below.

Several French treatises from the nineteenth century include dances with this or similar names, suggesting that some habitués of French dancing circles knew of the ta-tao as an exotic dance long before its journey to America.65 A 1907 English treatise also read in the United States, however, provides more useful discursive background here. Lilly Grove’s *Dancing* devoted a chapter to “Dances of the East,” writing that “…the East unrolls before us a glitter and glamour so strange that it seems to be the creation of brain and eyes shaped

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64. E.g., “Another Brand New Dance, Ta-Tao Comes from China — Edna Neil, Formerly with Pavlowa, Shows You How to Trip through Mazes of this Curious Chinese Dance,” *San Francisco Daily News*, 23 December 1914.
65. E.g., in an 1854 treatise F. Fertiault wrote: “Les Orientaux, quoique très-enclins au plaisir, sont peu danseurs. Leur tempérament s’oppose à cet exercice, que leur religion et leur paresse ne secondent pas davantage. Ils ont des danseuses, qui leur donnent le spectacle de la Danse; mais ils en restent spectateurs.” (The Orientals, although strongly inclined towards pleasure, are dancers only in a small way. Their temperament is opposed to this exercise, to which their religion and their laziness give no further support. They do have dancers, who provide them with the spectacle of the dance; but they themselves remain as spectators.) Having situated “Orientals” as lazily hedonistic male spectators, Fertiault mentioned female Indian and Japanese dancers, the bayadères so common in French orientalist literature and painting, ronguing (ronggeng?) as a form known not just in Java but Ceylon, and dervish practices. He categorized Chinese dance into “petites” and “anciennes, ou grandes” dances; the first comprised types such as the “Hoang, la danse du Phénix,” and the second included the “Ta-Tao, la Cadencée, une des plus gracieuses de l’antiquité” (Fertiault 1854, 95–99).

The authors of a French book of 45 years later seem to have followed Fertiault’s classificatory system. Raoul Charbonnel and Berthe Bernay’s *La Danse* treated the same “petites danses” as did Fertiault, with minor changes in some names (e.g., “Foang-Hoang” for “Hoang”). They did not use the term “Ta-Tao”; but most of their pieces’ correspondence to those of Fertiault and the commonality of the description of one to the earlier writer’s gloss on the “Ta-Tao” leave little doubt that it was the same dance: “La Cadencée, l’une des plus gracieuses, exécutée dans les sacrifices aux quatre sortes d’astres.” (“The Cadence, one of the most gracious, performed during the sacrifices to four kinds of heavenly bodies.”) They asserted that “Les philosophes chinois font de ces danses le plus grand éloge, surtout en parlant de la Cadencée, qui paraît avoir été le plus en vogue.” (“The Chinese philosophers give these dances the highest praise, above all when speaking of the Cadence, which appears to have been the most in vogue.”) (Charbonnel and Bernay 1899, 5; Fertiault 1854, 98).

differently from our own.” She warned that in her examples from India, Persia, China, and Japan, “We must not expect to find in Asia what we are accustomed to see in the West; we must almost be prepared to find the order of things reversed” (Grove 1907, 344). Grove’s section on China began by summoning up typified Chinese figures engaging in European dances. Recalling such figures in U.S. and English visual culture, we can imagine what images sprang into the minds’ eyes of many readers:

Who can imagine a mandarin dancing a polka or a cotillion? Who can picture to himself a woman waltzing in the land of mutilated feet? But must dancing necessarily be performed according to our Western ideas? Why cannot the Chinaman have dances of his own? Must a Highlander dance the fandango, or a Frenchman dance a jig? (351)

Building on this convergence of a sort of cultural relativism with tropes of geographically rooted character, the text slid from a totalized “Asia” to China: “In all Asiatic dances agility and liveliness are seldom attempted: they would be looked upon as unbecoming and undignified.” Grove saw Chinese dance as meeting her definition of the word: “Dancing in its real form—e.g. symmetric movements and swayings to the accompaniment of drum and music—has existed in China from prehistoric times up to this very day.”

Linking together this ascribed antiquity, a narrative of unilineal social evolution, a hierarchy of spatially distributed “nations” or “races,” and a metaphor of artistic infancy, Grove bound these ideas to the biologistic idea that cultural change mirrors the development of individual organisms. She poured this melange of assertions into the vessel of Chinese dance:

In countries where art is still in its infancy, music and dance are inseparable, and more or less dependent on one another. The arts of music and dancing separated when each grew more perfect, for it became impossible for one individual satisfactorily to execute both. In a land like China, where art is only progressing at a snail’s pace, music and dancing are still intimately connected. The dancer is accompanied by voice or instrument; for the same reason in
China the music-master is also dancing-master—no sinecure—for the art of gesture, the science of posture, are included in the term dance. It is not a mere gyration but a pantomime, a mimic representation of feelings, grave or amorous. The most ancient dances of China were representations of the scenes of daily life: the field labour, the harvesting pleasures, the toils of war, the enjoyment of peace. (351–52)

Her description of the main topics of “the most ancient dances of China” is an almost strict translation from Charbonnel and Bernay, who wrote that these “anciennes danses chinoises” represented “Les travaux du labourage; Les joies de la moisson; Les fatigues de la guerre; Les plaisirs de la paix.”

Although no pre-1914 American dance treatises found to date mention the ta-tao (by any name), the practices of some U.S. dance teachers and writers laid what would become discursive groundwork for the dance. A Full Description of Modern Dances listed a “Chinese Comique” among the danceable types in a note on “NATIONAL CHARACTERISTIC DANCES.” A less instructionally oriented text was The Dance: Ancient and Modern, translated by Arabella E. Moore from a French source (seemingly Charbonnel and Bernay’s treatise, based on many similarities and presuming the translation was a very free one). While this book made no mention of Chinese dance, it told of Japanese women who chose not to engage in European dress and ballroom dancing as showing “a superb impertinence in the avowal of their ignorance of our dances and customs” (A. Moore 1900, 20). Where Grove was content

66. Charbonnel and Bernay (1899). That proximate source, in turn, made heavy use of certain other parts of Fertiault’s treatment of Chinese dance in his treatise, which in turn invoked Pére Amiot’s work in its concluding comment (Fertiault 1854, 100; cf. Amiot 1780, not seen). This chain of links appealing to the authority of prior cultural interpreters or simply reusing their work is a common feature of orientalist (and many other kinds of) writing. To note its presence in these texts is useful here insofar it offers a discursive analogue and precursor to similar processes at work in later U.S. performative domains of embodied orientalist practice.

67. The author prefaced this list with a statement encouraging readers to seek him out as a teacher: “In addition to the dances already explained in the preceding pages, private instruction in the following Fancy Dances may be obtained at the rate of $10 for five lessons, of one hours’ [sic] duration each time” (Rivers 1885).
to allow Asian cultural practices the leisure of “progressing at a snail’s pace”
towards the European models she privileged, Moore had no patience for
what she saw as the maddeningly slow advance of westernization.

Moore’s concern with styles of movement and clothing moving between
cultures figured in more categorical ways. In her views on Asian and North
African performance practices, she positioned dance as a prime domain for
constructing difference between the national characters of people of European
heritage and those belonging to an orient spanning from the Sudan to Japan:

> On the whole, all these Oriental dances are not the dance as we consider it: an
> extremely graceful exercise, as charming as beneficial, an amusement for the
> use of both sexes. The Orientals who dance, accomplish a duty and fulfil a rôle;
> they can find no shadow of a charm in this diversion which is so dear to us,
> because it responds to the many needs of our different nature. The difference
> which exists between our dance and that of the Orientals is striking; it shows
> entirely opposite customs. Among us the lady and gentleman dance together;
> there the sexes are separated in the dance as in the social life. The Oriental
dance serves as a pleasure for the man. Here, the man shares the pleasure
with the woman, so as to increase it. (20)

This made dance a global terrain within which the orient was a space of racial
difference bound up with sexualized gender relations in which men enjoyed
watching women across a separate-and-unequal divide—another backdrop
against which white Americans could situate the ta-tao. This could locate that
dance not only as an exotic practice with proper separation between male and
female partners, but also as a link to sexual undercurrents that its promoters
proclaimed to be absent from its movements (in strictly kinesthetic terms).

These treatises’ “Chinese Dances” helped to circulate the idea that dance
offered internalized ways of knowing racial difference, but they probably had
little direct bearing on specific meanings Americans made from the ta-tao.
With these backdrops in place, we may move on to media documents of the
dance’s music and sketch some U.S. contexts that framed it as a practice.
THE TA-TAO IN MUSICAL MEDIA CONTEXTS

Records and sheet music provide an aural and visual sense of the ta-tao’s sound and iconography. An Edison record (rec. 7.1) documents a 1914 performance of William H. Penn’s “Ta-Tao” (fig. 7.5),68 and a Victor record (rec. 7.2) offers a trace of another such piece, “Lotus d’Or.” Companies including Columbia and Pathé also released records of such pieces.

The band orchestration documented on the Edison record stressed the pentatonic gestures seen in Penn’s notation (fig. 7.6). As directed in print, many of these were played with staccato da-da-dah rhythms. The arranger leveraged these composed markers of orientality by adding invariant eighth-note drumming to some sections. Popping in and out in episodic ways, the same steady rhythm executed on woodblocks offered a timbral sign of Chineseness. A clear sign of oriental novelty in this context, this probably gave dancers little lifts of enthusiasm as they moved from figure to figure.

“Lotus d’Or” deployed similar melodic, rhythmic, and timbral practices, but did so in ways leaning more towards light orchestral music than the fairly steady-state band sensibility heard on the Edison disk. Both recordings used similar ensembles of wind and percussion instruments, aside from the gong on “Lotus d’Or”; but the latter performance’s sparser and more frequently changing orchestration lent it a more refined air. In its apparent reading as less excitable and more dignified, its slower tempo reinforced this impression.

The covers for three pieces of ta-tao sheet music had consistent visual traits. Each displayed a photograph of a professional dancing couple within

68. Edison also released a phonograph cylinder of the same version of the piece: National Promenade Band, “Ta Tao One-Step: Chinese Dance (For Dancing)” (Penn), Edison Blue Amberol cylinder 2503, 1914.
a drawn bamboo frame; the remainder of each depicted dancers with such stock attributes of Chineseness as queues, slanted eyes, and Chinese costume, and had text hand-drawn in pseudo-brush-stroke or bamboo lettering. One of these pieces is Penn’s “Ta-Tao,” with its individual dancing and bowing figures. The other two are Berény’s “Otaki Ta-Tao or Chinese One Step” and Onivas’s “Tsin Tsin Ta Tao: New Chinese One Step” (fig. 7.7). In a marketing move common to dance pieces, the “Otaki” cover claimed primacy as “THE ORIGINAL TA-TAO AS USED BY THE LEADING DANCING MASTERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD”; the first page of “Tsin Tsin” marked its position as “The New Society Dance.”69 These covers (both by Starmer) used variants of the same Chinese dancers; consumers could read these figures by comparison with dancers on non-orientalist music covers, and are considered below in that light. The musical notation for these pieces deployed pentatonic and diatonic-minor melodies cast in the 2/4 time suited to the one-step.

Popular works often were published in instrumental and vocal versions and with photographs of various performers inserted into their cover images. Another edition of Berény’s piece offers a ta-tao example (fig. 7.8). Its cover presented an image of different dancers, and its notation carried these lyrics:

In picturesque Pekin
Lived with her Mandarin Me Me Tu, Me Me Tu,
Mister Otaki came one day, and he say,
Far away in place they call a cabaret
They dance all day!
He say I’d like to teach
Sweet little chinese peach
Me Me Tu,
Me Me Tu;
But when they ask old Mister Wu
“He say won’t do!”

Chorus two times:

Too much talky talky, too much walky, walky,
Too much soft tender glancey,
No take a chancey,
In any dancey;
Too much slippy slidy,
Too much dippy glidey
Too much flirt on the sidey
Me know Ta Tao too.

Big august Mandarin
Say dancing is a sin can’t allow, can’t allow
But when the great man Mister Wu left his sweet Me Me Tu,
Straight to Otaki’s arms she flew
They danced, it’s true!
Where was the harm in this
And if he stole a kiss
Who’s to blame?
Life’s a game!
Old Mister Wu when he was young
Did just the same.

Chorus again two times to end70

Along with presenting such floating signifiers as “Mister Wu” and pseudodialect, the lyrics played with the idea of westernization as sexually liberating in risky and enjoyable ways. This appeal to heterosocial pleasures of the musically entrained body shows how such sentiments found their way into dances that supposedly fostered certain (undermined) notions of propriety.

Especially relevant to mimetic embodiment is the text on the back of Penn’s “Ta-Tao.” This offered “Directions for correctly dancing the latest London and Paris Success” in a “Description by Mr. D. G. MacLennan, of Edinburgh, London and New York.” MacLennan was one of many dance masters who developed and taught “proper” versions of various pieces.71 Lending his directions an air of linguistic authority, MacLennan gave five

of the dance’s six figures the double titles of “Tatao (Cadence),” “Hoang (Phoenix),” “Ta-ou-Hien-Tche (Wave),” “Ta-Hyen (Ensemble),” and “Ta-Knen (Grand Turn).” The sixth he called “(Fascination),” with the English word in parentheses as if to reference a phantom Chinese precursor.72

Aside from their recurrent evocations of bowing, many of the steps seem not to have been specifically orientalist. But as movements made in contexts overdetermined by musical, visual, and linguistic markers of orientality, these practices must have acquired orientalist meaning. Taught as the moves of a Chinese one-step (a phrase which itself suggested a safe infusion of exotic fun into U.S. performance genres) and printed with stereotyped illustrations of Chinese figures, these directions offered a means of moving one’s own white American body through musically marked time and space while fantasizing an imaginary Chineseness within one’s self—and of doing so under safely contained entertaining auspices. The idea of safety—seen here as recreational action embodied in morally upright ways—returns us to moral panic about the tango, and what that might tell us about the U.S. meanings of the ta-tao.

Cover art for sheet music for other dances offers one means of entry into such an interpretation. People saw the illustrations for ta-tao pieces in long-term and immediate contexts supplied by innumerable other compositions. We may categorize these in nested levels of relevance based on how apposite each piece’s points of reference were to the ta-tao’s version of Chineseness.

72. The mention of Chinese precursors raises the question of ultimate sources for these names and movements, which probably had lineages leading back through French dance treatises to actual Chinese dances by similar titles; here the point is not to trace that genealogy, but to understand what these practices meant in the dominant U.S. social contexts at issue (where these dances’ ancestors’ original meanings in Chinese settings had virtually no bearing).
Most closely related were other covers with images of Chinese dancers. One example is “Chin-Chin Fox-Trot” (see fig. 4.7), also drawn by Starmer, published in 1914, and portraying Chinese men dancing together but alone.\textsuperscript{73} In reception-side ways, this linked ta-tao covers’ images of Chineseness to such professional yellowface productions as Chin-Chin. It also suggests how the dance may have fostered spontaneous reenactments of gestures from, and imagined forms of playful identification with, orientalist acts seen on stage.

A short step beyond illustrations of mimetic Chineseness were those evoking an often-overlapping Japaneseness. One popular piece was “That Tango Tokio” (1912).\textsuperscript{74} Also by Starmer, its cover (fig. 7.9) portrayed a Japanese woman and man dancing amid signs of orientality. The song’s lyrics illustrate a key relationship between orientality and other kinds of difference. This positioned orientalized dance not as a morally superior alternative to the tango (a location often assigned to the ta-tao) but as a source of novel amusement through a kind of semi-fused juxtaposition:

\begin{verbatim}
Way out West, all over the golden gate,
They’ve a tango, gee, but it’s simply great!
Oh! oh! oh! oh! it’s the nicest tune, I know,
It is called the Japanese glide away;
You should see those Japanese slide away,
When they play it, ev’rybody starts to sway it:

Chorus two times:

Oh, oh, you Jap, little Jap, little Jap, little Japanese!
Oh, oh, you cute little yap, little yap, little yapanese!
How we love to see you prance,
When they play that tango dance;
It just puts us in a trance
Oh, pinky panky poo, pinky panky poo!
Oh, oh, you sly little, sly little, sly little Japanese!
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{73} Ivan Caryll, “Chin-Chin Fox-Trot,” New York: Chappell & Co., 1914.
You are a fly little, fly little, fly little Japanese!
Tho’ you sometimes make us mad,
If you want to make us glad,
Do that teasing Tango Tokio.

When you hear that Tokio Tango tune,
You’ll go dip, dip, dippy and pretty soon
You’ll start swaying, just like this and just like that;
You’ll imagine you are in Tokio,
You will go clean clean off your kokio,
If you knew it, all day long you’d want to do it:

Chorus again two times to end

In part a recitation of tropes of diminutive orientality and exclusionary glee at the double entendre of seeing “those Japanese slide away,” these lyrics also did more specific work. Their imaginary fusion of the tango with dancing Japanese figures, and their references to dipping, swaying, and so on, made this piece less a tale of an imaginary proper alternative and more a novelty attempt to ride directly on their success. Reinforced by a rhetorical turn to direct second-person address, the song imaginatively transported its dancing listeners to a touristically imagined Japan that happily embraced the tango.

“That Tango Tokio” and other songs could enjoy public performance for many years; they were not always as evanescent as one might imagine. This piece figured a decade later in an upstate New York show sponsored by the Elmira Kiwanis Club and presented by an apparently amateur cast leavened with a guest star or two. Jappyland featured a visiting soprano and many local performers; its “Chorus of Geisha Maids” alone enabled 38 women to take the stage in kimono. The program listed a long chain of episodic acts. A section called “Some Oriental Specialties” included “Modern Japanese” and “Chinese Love Dance.” One of the show’s musical pieces was “That Tango Tokio”—by that time ten years old and maybe long in the tooth, but still deemed worthy.
of having the words to its chorus printed with other lyrical highlights on the program’s (singalong?) page of “Vocal Gems from the Opera.”

The reference in “That Tango Tokio” to a “Japanese glide” connects it to another piece from 1912. “That Japanee Glide” offered a similarly cheerful scenario of exotic—but beneath it all, American—social dance:

In the far away East, in the land of Japan, where ev’rybody’s happy and free,
You can see all the coolies in the fields of Rattan
And the almond-eyed maidens serving tea.
Now ev’ry evening ‘neath the Eastern moon,
You’ll see the lovers dancing side by side,
With a tune that’s new, it thrills you through, and through,
And they call it the Japanee glide.

    Chorus two times:
    Oh, oh, that Japanee glide!
    Oh, oh, that Tokio slide!
    Way down in the country where the poppies grow,
    There’s a maid with almon’d eyes that I love so!
    Oh, oh, that opium stride,
    Makes you dream you’ve got your baby by your side.
    Get a little Rhoda who owns a pagoda
    When you do that Japanee glide.

Now you’ve heard other glides, with their old raggy strides,
But there’s not a tune that can compare
With that Japanee strain that makes you feel young again,
And helps to drive away old Mister Care.
Now when you’re strolling through thro’ old Tokio,
Just glide into a tea house with a stride;
And you’ll see at a glance
That loving dreamy dance,
It’s that Oriental Japanee glide.

    Chorus again two times to end

These examples show how such songs could lay groundwork for the ta-tao by locating American—in their none too distant origins, often African American—dance steps in an East Asian orient. While such earlier pieces as

“In Tokio” paired images of Japanese or Chinese dance with music for social dancing, lyrical intersections of U.S. dances and oriental scenarios seem to have been more common in the early-teens era of the tango and the ta-tao.77

Dance music invoking China or Japan was situated in an extensive field of works evoking other kinds of difference. The covers of such pieces offer a useful backdrop for viewing ta-tao iconography.78 A sense of these contexts may be seen in cover images of dancing exemplars of human difference (often in intersection with established U.S. dances) in such locales as Egypt, Hawai‘i, Mexico, France, and Spain, as well as in domestic sites of difference marked as Native American, by religion, or by overlapping ideas of the rustic, the southern, or the African American.79 The large number of such imagined meetings of U.S. dances and occupants of social locations seldom associated with them responded at once to a widespread taste for dancing fads, novelty

77. S. Nirella, “In Tokio: Characteristic March and Two-Step,” Cleveland, OH: H. N. White, 1904. These pieces also had common ground with child-oriented dance instructions discussed above. The “Geisha Dance” in Dance Songs of the Nations seems to have been as suitable for adults as for children (Marzo et al. 1908, 94–102). Collections similar in organization, but apparently meant for adults and offering no movement directions, framed pieces with similar rubrics. For example, Original Dances of All Nations included “Japan: Geisha Dance” (G. Martaine, Original Dances of All Nations: Vol. II, Academic Music Co., 1909).
78. For reproductions of more examples from these decades, see Short (1998a, 144–62).
more generally, and sheet music as a popular medium. Opening outwards from such pieces was the huge number of less exoticist works with covers which portrayed dancing couples relatively unmarked by ethnicizing signs.\(^{80}\)

Without laying undue stress on authorship (or trying to untangle the composite agency of artists and the publishers who hired them), comparing the images on three ta-tao covers to those produced by the same artists for other pieces may help to contextualize these U.S. “Chinese dance” artifacts. André de Takacs executed the illustrations for Penn’s “Ta-Tao” as well as two others cited here. The figures on the ta-tao cover moved alone, the men dancing actively and the women standing and bowing, with each of the five subsisting in no discernible relationship to any other.\(^{81}\)

This isolation differs from the two other illustrations. “She’s Dancing Her Heart Away,” also from 1914, portrayed a dancing couple whose female partner was lost in dreamy reverie in a fairly close embrace with her male companion. In contrast to the small, graphically separate individuals on the ta-tao cover, the corners of this cover located the central couple among four small red hearts, each framing a silhouette of a dancing woman and man whose outlines fused together in a romantically melded composite shape.


\(^{81}\) Their diminutive size also could be significant, but may more likely be an artifact of their use to frame a large central photograph.
Also unlike the uncoupled singularity of the ta-tao’s Chinese figures were those in de Takacs’ s art for “Down in Honky Tonk Town.” Before a background of musically mediated heterosociality was a couple whose male partner strutted with musically entrained, half-lidded eyes and a knee provocatively upraised alongside his companion’s thigh. She studied him with wide-eyed, perhaps surprised fondness, contracting her shoulders away from him even while arching her back and leaning her torso into his. This presented a scene of daring, clearly sexualized interaction on a dance floor where male agency may have been the most apparent but was met with an only initially flustered female response that was no less active. Stepping back from the hand-rendered components of the illustration for the “Ta-Tao” to consider the publisher’s choice of imagery for the cover as a whole, the airspace which so clearly separated the bodies of Carlos Sebastian and Dorothy Bentley in the central photograph seems in this light to have been more strategic than accidental—or at least to have been fortuitous. Amateur dancers and musicians could choose to buy pieces which offered images that promised imagined meldings of their and their partners’ bodies, or others which depicted potential acts of performance with fewer sexual overtones.

The prolific cover artists who signed their work as “Starmer” designed the other two ta-tao covers shown here, as well as numerous other works.82 Although the Stern company’s covers for the “Otaki Ta-Tao” and “Tsin-Tsin Ta Tao” offered generic publicity photographs of professional dancers in

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82. Taken as a sign of authorship, the “Starmer” signature may conflate two brothers, William Austin Starmer and Fredrick W. Starmer. Both were illustrators who may have signed their work identically with their last name; but regardless of their individual or shared attribution, the covers at issue here came from closely related origins and, more important in this analytical context, circulated in the same system of musical commodity production and consumption (on the Starmers, see Short 1998a, 113).
poses unrelated to the ta-tao, these covers’ specifically drawn images allowed strategic glimpses of background between dancing figures who held each other in ways bearing no taint of a racy clutch. Similarly safe degrees of separation buffered the figures in contemporary Starmer covers for two other orientalist pieces above, “That Tango Tokio” and “Chin-Chin Fox Trot.”

With the exception of a solitary woman shown in sinuous and oddly disjointed form on the cover of “Castellano Waltzes,” the Starmer images illustrating other pieces cited above depicted partners more closely engaged with each other in the physicality of dance. This was signaled by hand placements and intense gazes, closer and more extended bodily contact, and torso position and facial expression. Although there was no absolute opposition between covers for ta-taos and other dance pieces, practices consistently visible in the former helped them promise a desexualized propriety between the couples who might dance its still-exotic moves.

Just as the practice and presentation of the ta-tao took place in multiple contexts of public discourse, the iconography of these pieces was situated in multiple contexts. Some of these are familiar from earlier chapters, but a few such areas of cultural production have not yet surfaced in this study. One is the use of images of Chinese or Japanese dancers on containers and in advertising for cosmetics and other products for care of the body. A 1914 container for Corylopsis powder portrayed Japanese dancers as signs of a

83. For “That Mexican Twist,” “Won’t You Waltz ‘Home Sweet Home’ with Me for Old Times Sake?,” and “At the High Brown Babies’ Ball.”
84. For “At the Ball That’s All” and “At the Mississippi Cabaret.”
85. For “That Tinkling Tango Tune,” with bodies interacting like those de Takacs drew for “Down in Honky Tonk Town.”
86. E.g., phonograph marketing, as seen in Columbia Graphophone Company, “Pavlona, and You Too, Dance Best to the Music of a Columbia Grafonola playing Columbia Dance Records,” Theatre Magazine, August 1914, back cover.
marketable purity of both female essence and the tin’s contents for bodily
care.87 Magazine advertisements for this product played to similar attractions.
One promised that the powder was “As mystifyingly sweet in fragrance as a
breeze-blown scent from some distant oriental garden.” Another marketed
this “Perfume of ‘Personality’” as “An indescribable, sense-enchanting
fragrance that envelops milady in an aura of fascination,” describing
“Babcock’s Corylopsis of Japan Talc Powder” as “A mystical, Far East
perfume, compounded with an Oriental cunning that has baffled the analysis
of imitators. A talcum whose silken smoothness and caressing lightness of
texture have made it an indispensable accessory of the sensitively refined
woman....”88 Images of dancers figured in advertisements not just for these
products but also for travel to Asia, dancing schools, and diverse other goods
and services. Ta-tao cover iconography gained meaning from these contexts.

This construction of danced East Asian orientality as an embodied
zone of exotic fun was reinforced in geographically dispersed moments of
participatory action as well. One such stream of performance was the use
of orientalist music for uninstructed dancing at social events of many sorts.
An example of this is seen in a dance card from a South Dakota high school’s
1917 commencement dance, which listed a one-step to the strains of “Hong
Kong” (rec. 7.3).89 The presence of a one-step set in an imagined China on a

88. All by the A. P. Babcock Company, these are: “A Dominant Note in the Art of Feminine
Magazine, September 1917, 157; see also “The Exquisite Finale of Milady’s Art de Toilette,”
Theatre Magazine, July 1917, 45. As seen in this language and its publication in Theatre
Magazine, notions of elite status often figured in these sorts of marketing materials.
89. “Yankton College-High-School Commencement Dance” [dance card], Yankton [SD], for
event at Odd Fellows Hall, 4 June 1917. Hans Von Holstein, Alma M. Sanders, and R. W.
Pascoe, “Hong Kong,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1917 [1916]; a band arrangement of “Hong
Kong” as a “jazz one-step” may have been used in such settings (New York: Leo. Feist, 1917).
dance card for a small-town function in the interior American Northwest reminds us that although such exotica often was composed and published in New York, it circulated in national systems of distribution and use. The card’s notice that the “Manhattan Orchestra” would supply the event’s music documents a reciprocal urge towards big-city musical cosmopolitanism.

**Explicit Alternatives to the Tango**

Along with evening-long benefits such as Oriental Balls, the briefer presence of Chinese- and Japanese-themed dance pieces in less upscale events also contributed to a diffuse social atmosphere that preceded and outlived the ta-tao in non-causal ways. Each of these moments instantiated an urge towards occasional participation in orientalized social dancing. Most of these acts of movement were not explicitly set off against a more threatening genre, but offered new kinds of fun alongside other acceptable ones. This was not the case with the ta-tao, which often was treated as a potential replacement for the tango. As such, it was one of many high-minded would-be successors.

The routine density of published references to proposed alternatives to the tango is illustrated by the page of the January *New York Herald* cited above regarding the dance’s popularity (with articles on “tango trousers,” a ball’s neglect of Strauss waltzes, and the Yale prom).90 The page’s article on the commissioning of the “Innovation Gavotte” shows how that act of patronage and its mediated representation responded to the same concerns. The article’s title invoked a need for bodily separation akin to that seen in ta-tao covers; it included “…Terpsichorean Novelty Requires Poise and Grace and Dancers

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Keep Apart as They Go Through Intricate Steps....” The text discussed the tango, moralistic opposition to it, and a proposed replacement illustrated by photographs of “The Old Way” and “The New Way”—with the former looking passionate, the latter stilted and faintly ridiculous.91

This dance spurred upright citizens of many nations to offer candidates for its displacement. Other pieces in New York newspapers just of that week and the next offered as contending anti-tango curatives the minuet, the furlana (the pope’s choice), and Irish and Scottish steps preferred by an instructor at the West Side Y.M.C.A.92 The last article conveys the tenor of much anti-tango discourse in its missionizing and social-evolutionist claims and the medicinal language of its title, which told of “Antidotes for the Tango: Y. M. C. A. Director Has Prescribed Sailor’s Hornpipe Successfully”:

The sailor’s hornpipe and the Irish lilt now are taught at the West Side Y. M. C. A., Eighth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street, and have won dozens of young men away from the tango, according to the Physical Director, Dr. Louis R. Welzmiller. Old folk dances have been popular in the men’s department throughout the Winter. The Highland Fling, it is asserted, has made several converts from the tango.

“Men of character are glad to quit the tango,” said Dr. Welzmiller, “for a substitute that gives them the enjoyment of music, and muscular exercise. The tango leads to reversion to type and savagery. It is the human race returning to the barbaric revels of our half wild ancestors. It is the law of evolution turned back upon itself.”

91. “Mrs. Fish Has Dance Evolved to Take Place of Criticised Tango: ‘Innovation Gavotte,’ Described as ‘One Part Tango and Three Parts Tact,’ Introduced for First Time to Friends in Her Home — Terpsichorean Novelty Requires Poise and Grace and Dancers Keep Apart....,” *New York Herald*, 23 January 1914. The day before, an article had quoted a 30-year veteran of the British army (with “ten as the commander of the Sikh regiment in India”). When “asked what he thought of the New York cabaret shows,” he replied: “Well, I’ve spent many a year in India, which is a hot place, but I think the cabaret shows and the tango are hotter yet” (“Tango ‘Hotter’ Than India: So Declares Colonel Percival Holland, of England, Who Spent Ten Years in Torrid Empire,” *New York Herald*, 22 January 1914).

This language of conversion, pathology, and decline illustrates three major streams of discourse about the tango as a threat to public health as well as to moral and religious uprightness, framed by ideas of the proper civilizing course of social evolution. Its appeal to hygienic anxieties played to concern about physical intrusions of difference, as seen in fears that epidemic urban contamination from lower-class (often immigrant) dwellings would pollute both the nation’s social body and the biological bodies of its citizens.93

Themes of physical and moral danger were played out in other moments of moralistic opposition to newly popular dances. Ann Wagner (1997) has charted the long curve of American anti-dance tenets and movements, and Linda J. Tomko’s (1999) work on dance and early-twentieth-century U.S. gender ideology, social projects, and class positions has shown how ideas of dancing bodies were enmeshed with definitions of proper Americanism. Many moral panics over dance were allied with fears about modernity in such cultural domains as motion pictures, burlesque, and Broadway theater.94 But within those broader histories, the positioning of instructed embodiment of orientality as a less threatening alternative to a sexualized genre seems to have happened first in this time of fear about the tango.

This may have been enabled in part by the rising importance of audio media in the teens and by recordings’ ability to convey to an ever-widening public exoticizing sonic gestures that were not easily conveyed in musical notation, but these years’ massive social changes would make any ascription of primary causality to these media insupportable. Nonetheless, although the

93. E.g., on exhibitions designed as educational means of countering this threat, see John Walker Harrington, “A New Art in Health Exhibits,” World’s Work, July 1913, 286–91.
94. On some of these moments, see A. Friedman (2000, 1–122); on moral panics more generally, see K. Thompson (1998).
phonograph may not have driven the U.S. taste for such pieces, it made them more accessible. Along with records, sheet music and the later-1920s rise of radio offered the pleasures of orientality to dance-floor habitués from a wide range of socioeconomic positions. As Wagner has noted in regard to U.S. social dance more generally, technological changes often were bound up in these decades with issues of class, sexuality, and perceived danger.95

Susan Cook has spoken on these issues in regard to ragtime dance.96 Her conference paper “‘Where Is Your Daughter This Afternoon?: Ragtime Dance and the Contradictions of Female Sexuality,” offered a synthesis of work on anti-dance fears in the teens and her own insights into gender dynamics. Many people saw ragtime dance as dangerously heterosocial and uncontrolled in contrast to folk, interpretive, and aesthetic dance (fig. 7.10 shows these concerns intersecting in a “self-governing” social dance), as well as being associated with African American culture. Into this potential breach of propriety danced Vernon and Irene Castle, bearers of refined versions of popular dances.97 As Cook observes, at least when moving to ragtime they did so with music as a still “destabilizing” force, one audible as such by means of its links to African American culture; the Castles offered cleaned-up versions of tainted dances, but still they moved at times to a dangerous beat.

As gentrifying agents of once déclassé dances, the Castles were the most conspicuous force for heterosocial musical movements made proper. In the

95. Wagner (1997, 266–67); see also Bryant (2002).
96. Worth viewing as visual background to this discussion are video clips of some ragtime dances, available online in connection with the Library of Congress’s American Memory project; a useful point of entry is http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diessay7.html.
97. Presented at the 2000 meeting of the American Studies Association, the paper is paraphrased here with Cook’s permission; related aspects of the research and findings on which it reported are discussed in Cook (1998).
same year when the ta-tao made its U.S. début, their book *Modern Dancing* was published (Castle and Castle 1914). In it, they set forth their views on morally and aesthetically correct dancing, offered instructions for their versions of popular steps, and included photographs of themselves—generally with a reassuring sliver of background visible through a no-fly zone strategically separating their married but carefully distinct bodies. They cast an appeal for this space in terms which vested all agency in men: “Both good manners and good dancing require a man to stand far enough from his partner to allow freedom of movement; he should not hug or clutch her during the dance” (135). This concrete advice was framed by more general assertions which located the authors midway between people they saw as too uncritically embracing or wholly disparaging of all new movement styles.

Instruction by experts such as the Castles was the solution to this dilemma; “dancing, properly executed, is neither vulgar nor immodest, but, on the contrary, the personification of refinement, grace, and modesty”:

> Our aim is to uplift dancing, purify it, and place it before the public in its proper light. When this has been done, we feel convinced that no objection can possibly be urged against it on the grounds of impropriety, but rather that social reformers will join with the medical profession in the view that dancing is not only a rejuvenator of good health and spirits, but a means of preserving youth, prolonging life, and acquiring grace, elegance, and beauty. (1914, 17)

As purveyors of these charms and virtues, Irene and Vernon Castle located themselves as fellow professionals with experts in social, medical, and moral hygiene—as dance teachers who served not only these seemingly coextensive forms of self-betterment but offered as well an entrée into the pleasures of musically mediated, heterosocial, and always respectable bodily fun.

98. E.g., “The Tango of To-Day” (Castle and Castle 1914, 36); Victor Talking Machine Company, “Some Victor Dance Records Used by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle for Teaching Modern Dances in the Castle House, New York City” [record sleeve advertisement], [1915?].
Although no sources found to date suggest that the Castles performed orientalist dances, other performers and presenters borrowed their surname’s high-class aura to market acts billed in exotic terms. In 1917, for instance, a San Francisco vaudeville theater promoted Joe Chong Haw and Rosie Yuen Moey as “The Chinese Castles.”99 This way of promoting Chinese American performers played to the Castles’ reputation as icons of physical grace.

While the ta-tao’s advocates positioned it as an alternative to the tango, its presentation also was a coattails move insofar as the U.S. proponents of both dances situated their origins in exoticized locales. Similar relationships of ideological pushing-away and marketing hanging-on would be seen in contrasts between some “jazz”-inflected and orientalist popular songs.

AUTHORIAL CLAIMS, GENRE, AND FATE: LEAVING THE TA-TAO

The ta-tao raises many questions, but here we may address just three: How did contending claims to local authorship of the dance subsist in tension with its ascribed origins in a once and still ancient China? How much variance in practice was there between versions of the dance—to what degree was it really a micro-genre (in terms of movement as well as the existence of multiple musical works under its generic heading) as opposed to a discrete piece? And what became of it at the Cleveland convention of the Dancing Masters? After addressing these issues, quick takes on two other “Chinese” dances show how some aspects of the ta-tao were shared with later pieces.

In January, April, June, and December of 1914, various people made mutually irreconcilable claims to precedence as introducers of the ta-tao to U.S. society. Even as it corresponds metaphorically with appropriations of natural “raw materials” from places outside of the United States and Europe, this was consistent with similarly contending assertions of authorship through which many performers claimed other (more) popular dances. This rhetoric could approach the absurd when paired with assertions of the pre-modern respectability of a piece said to be thousands of years old and from a place presumed—despite warnings of revolutionary dangers in that year’s political reportage—not to have shed a still-ancient national character.

Ascribing its origins to an always old China, promoters of the ta-tao could adduce the dance both as eminently suitable material for anti-tango projects and as a novel import of their own interpretive invention. Spurious in some cases and questionable in others, these statements indicate more about the value many cultural producers and consumers placed on novelty and originality than about historical actualities. (Remember the enthusiastic claims to Tomijiro Asai’s primacy as the “first tenor of his race,” Tamaki Miura’s exclusivity as the “only Japanese prima donna,” and so on.) For example, an article in December 1914 reported the ta-tao had been “brought to America recently” by dancer Edna Neil; but this was published in a San Francisco newspaper a mere two weeks after Ruth St. Denis had danced, in that same city, a program including a piece called “Ta-Tao—A Chinese Minuet” (performed to “Modern Dance Music by Roth”).

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100. “Ruth St. Denis” [playbill], San Francisco: Alcazar Theater, 7 December 1914.
local conjuncture, the Neil article appeared at the end of a year in which any number of other people claimed to have introduced the dance.

The program listing for St. Denis’s staged version of the dance raises the question of how varied were the movements that various U.S. teachers and performers included under the rubric of the ta-tao. Useful here are two sets of step-by-step instructions: those MacLennan supplied for Penn’s 1914 sheet music, and those printed in the article on Edna Neil in December of that year. Presented below, a side-by-side concordance of these two ta-taos may bring out their commonalities and differences. Both called for bowing and for maintaining respectable space between male and female bodies, but their steps differed. Worth noting is Neil’s greater focus on the female partner’s moves, while MacLennan wrote to a male reader who would embody the physical agency and conceptual center of the dance. He stated in a note that it “is described for the man, the lady does the same steps with the opposite foot”; allowing some freedom for couples under male control, he added that “All the figures may be done without any order and are repeated as desired.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donald G. MacLennan:</th>
<th>Edna Neil:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Figure</strong> — Tatao (Cadence)</td>
<td>First Position—Lady and gentleman facing each other, hands as in illustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step forward with right foot (1), place heel of left foot into second position (2) repeat beginning with left. This step is done forward, backward, turning and in walking sideways (arms in 1st position).</td>
<td>Gentleman steps forward with the left foot, touching only the heel. Lady back with right foot, touching the heel. This is continued from side to side, the lady always going a little backwards, first with the right and then with the left.</td>
</tr>
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101. These directions for the arms refer to a first position with elbows near the body, hands interlaced, and the man’s forefinger optionally raised; a second with hands together, arms lowered and stretched laterally; and a third with one arm in each of the first two positions.
2nd Figure — Hoang (Phoenix)
Place right foot slightly behind and glide left to side (1), close in front (2); place the heel of the left foot to the left (3); rest (4). Then commence with left foot. The step is done forward, backward, on the spot and turning; (while turning extend the arm to the side of the heel position, i.e. the 3rd arm position, alternating from one side to the other []).

3rd Figure — Ta-ou-Hien-Tche (Wave)
Being in front position, right arm held laterally, left arm folded, cross right foot behind the left while bending firmly, facing right side (2 beats), the weight of the body being wholly on the right leg, beat left heel on floor, rest one beat, straighten R. leg while stepping on left toe and whole foot and turn, facing partner (2 beats). Step on R. foot past L. (2 beats). On these two last beats extend the left arm and fold right upwards; same step starting with left foot and facing left side.

4th Figure — Ta-Hyen (Ensemble)
Same as in 2nd Figure: first four beats; then extend the left foot well behind the right, toes only touching the floor, leaning the body forward and putting the arms at the same time into 2nd position (1st and second beats), stand upright again, putting arms in 1st position, and placing left heel to left side (3rd and 4th beats). Repeat with left foot crossing behind the right.

Second Step—Pas de hourrie [sic].
Gentleman back with right foot, step left, cross the right and point with left, going to the left in this figure.

Now continue the same figure to the right, the gentleman putting his left foot back, step with right and point with left. As the lady is facing the gentleman she puts the left foot back when the gentleman puts the right foot back, always using the opposite foot to the gentleman.

Third Step—Gentleman back with right foot, hold the balance on right foot and make a tiny kick with left. Gentleman then steps with the left forward, turn, put the right foot back, left foot back and, holding the weight on left, kick the right.

This is repeated, first turning to the left and then to the right. That is first looking over the gentleman’s right arm and then his left arm as he stands in dance position, both lady and gentleman facing each other.

Fourth Step—A pas de bourrie [sic] as in the second step to the gentleman’s left, after the point with the heel, a Chinese salaam.
That is, both bend forward, gentleman’s left foot extended straight to the back, lady’s right foot extended to the back. Then both bring the extended foot forward, leaning away from each other, the gentleman’s left foot and the lady’s right foot together in front.
**5th Figure** — Ta-Knen (Grand Turn)  
Arms in low 2nd position. Cross the right foot in front of the left, facing left (1), place the toe of the left to the left side and pivot at the same time on both feet (toes), facing round to the right (2); cross the left foot over the right and bend (3), straighten on 4th beat. Place the right foot to the right (5), advance the left crossing it over the right (6), glide right foot (7), cross the left over the right (heel only) (8). Repeat with left. Finish by turning lady to face outward. [slipping towards solely male agency as heading into 6:]

**6th Figure** (Fascination)  
This step is done by the man alone, who crosses the right foot behind the left (1), glides the left to the left (2), crosses again right foot over left (3), places the heel of the left forward. Repeat to other side. These four steps are done while the arm is extended to the side to which the man moves.\(^{103}\)

The finish of the dance is very unique.

The lady bends with her feet crossed, making a bow. The gentleman stands above her as in the photograph.\(^{102}\)

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Considered along with the publication of sheet music and marketing of recordings of several composers’ pieces under the generic term of “Ta-Tao,” this comparison of instructions for its embodiment shows that there was enough kinesthetic variance among versions of the ta-tao to enable us to consider it a micro-genre of music and dance.\(^{104}\) In overlapping domains

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103. William H. Penn, “Ta-Tao Novelty Chinese Dance or One-Step (The International Dance Sensation),” New York: Penn Music Co., 1914, back cover.

104. As an example of this in media marketing, Victor catalogs from November 1914 through November 1916 listed the firm’s “Lotus d’Or” record in a subsection headed “TA TAO” under “DANCE RECORDS”; structurally parallel to sections of “ONE-STEPS,” “TANGOS,” and so on, this subcategory contained only the one such record this company issued.
of cultural production, pedagogy, movement, spectatorship, reception, and textual representation, the ta-tao supported a range of practices framed by an underlying set of conventions, expectations, and interpretive frames.

With due caution about the problems of bumping concepts from one discipline into another, there is some connection between such U.S. orientalist performance genres as the ta-tao and what Mikhail M. Bakhtin termed “secondary (complex) speech genres” in his analysis of language and speech communication. Bakhtin was concerned with spoken utterances and written language rather than music, dance, and the texts which support those types of performance, but the idea that certain genres which “arise in…complex…and organized cultural communication” often “lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others” is apposite (Bakhtin 1986, 62). Metaphorically locating each composed or danced ta-tao as if it were such a secondary utterance offers a useful way to think about how the ta-tao as a genre could convey reasonably consistent ideological meanings about the orientalized Chineseness its practitioners enacted, even as each of these white Americans—or, in MacLennan’s case, a transnational Scot based in “Edinburgh, London and New York,” according to the sheet music—could see themselves as creators of their own expressions within this received form.

Crucial here is what Bakhtin calls “addressivity”: an utterance’s “quality of being directed to someone” such as “a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries,” or “an indefinite, unconcretized other,” among many more specific possibilities (95). Taking metaphorical liberties, we may relate this to the cultural politics of the moved and sounded utterances which constituted the ta-tao—turning the lens of addressivity onto its assumptions
about who was addressing whom, and about who was presumed to be absent from these musical dialogues. Seen in this way it is clear that embedded in each of this genre’s instantiations was an assumption that these moments’ Chineseness was an attribute of sonic and embodied practices, but never of the real-world social identities of the actual people who were to experience them. This constructed Chineseness was assumed to come into temporary being in the minds and bodies of white dance teachers, composers, musicians, amateur dancers, and newspaper readers. Present in the individual acts and productions which together constituted the ta-tao, this assumption was one of the attributes which—along with a common repertoire of specific physically executed moves—constituted these practices together as a genre.

Here Chineseness was an attribute of referents, of something signified—some thing, not some person with subjective agency. People who actually lived their own Chinese or Chinese American identities were presumed to be outside the ta-tao’s loop of dialogue, which evoked Chineseness but did not address those who might have identified themselves with it in their daily lives. The interpersonal address by which the ta-tao communicated this imagined essence was nowhere articulated to people invested with real-world identities as Chinese, people whom this genre’s addressivity relegated to the originary space of an always ancient China. This helped to naturalize racial ideology and the exclusionary policies with which it was intertwined.

To make this concrete in another way, the conspicuous attention many newspaper writers and sponsors of dance instruction paid to teachers recently arrived from France—wherever the dances they taught were supposed to have originated—had no major counterpart in accounts of dance teachers
from China. In the dominant cultural climate of the time, it is hard to imagine that a Chinese dancing master just in from Beijing or Shanghai would have elicited the same excitement or commanded the same pedagogical authority as did many who were fresh off the boat from Paris. Certainly there were Asian teachers of dance active in mid-teens America, as shown by such texts as an advertisement that ran in a San Francisco newspaper in May and June of 1916. Classified under “Dancing Academies,” it announced: “JAPANESE dancing and music lessons given; will furnish entertainment for social party. HARUYAKKO, Airdale Hotel….” But Asian dance teachers never attained the public profile enjoyed by European dance masters such as MacLennan.

Positioning the micro-genre of the ta-tao as a body of cultural products and practices brought to market under the recognizable sign of a Chinese-derived name and bearing oriental gestures of body and sound, its purveyors constituted it as a U.S. genre (even if a small and fleeting one) within which cultural producers could tout their new creations and amateurs could choose to embody variant forms of one type of mimetic orientality. This reinforced the notion that this was a better way for Chineseness to be created, taught, and enjoyed in the United States than, for instance, actual immigration of Chinese people or demographic growth and cultural transmission within Asian American communities. Such assertions surely were not in the minds of those who taught or enjoyed this dance; but that lack of intent had no necessary bearing on the social power of these performative acts. This is hegemony again, and it linked these embodied practices to racial ideology.

As Tzvetan Todorov has written in regard to literary analysis: “Like any other institution, genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong.” In surveying the relevance of his own work to that of ethnologists and historians, Todorov noted that the genre systems of any one analytical domain can allow one to see synchronically “the categories that differentiate it from that of the neighboring peoples” and diachronically that “each epoch has its own system of genres, which stands in some relation to the dominant ideology…” (Todorov 1990, 19). Even remembering that we are reading across disciplines, the connection of this to unpacking historically situated meanings of the ta-tao still is clear. The ta-tao offers an example of how Todorov’s understandings of genre illuminate ways of making meaning not only from literary texts but also from performance and its reception.

A clear sense of the third lingering matter broached above, the practical one of what happened to this dance in June of 1914, is hard to pin down. Sources found to date provide no firm answer to the question of what became of the ta-tao at the Dancing Masters’ convention, but it is clear from the absence of any mention of the dance after a committee’s deliberations that the ta-tao didn’t make the cut into their final group of approved pieces. Given the dance’s freedom from any taint of impropriety, two factors may have contributed to its failure to make the grade. Despite their concerns about the dangers of too-sensual versions of the tango, the committee may have seen the fairly stilted steps of the ta-tao as being too excessively proper to attract students. That concern may have been made visible by an outsider in a cartoon (fig. 7.11) portraying what must have been a tiresome form of angular rigidity that embodied a seriousness at odds with the spirit of much social
dancing. The fact that the dance’s primary lobbyist was European while all of the approved dances apparently were proposed by American teachers also may have been in play; perhaps a nationalist institutional filter was in effect. Whatever were the reasons, the committee evidently ruled out the ta-tao as a contender for formal propagation under their auspices. But as seen in its subsequent resurfacings in U.S. media, the Dancing Masters’ decision—despite their urge to assume the role of seriously minded, controlling arbiters in the public eye—had no authoritative force beyond the fleeting appearance of their own announcements and the spatial boundaries of their own studios.

The dance’s main champion, Donald MacLennan, headed to New York after the Cleveland convention. As a result of his visit, by mediated means, or both, the ta-tao acquired and maintained sufficient popularity there to be listed in October advertisements for certain dance studios. One was that of G. Hepburn Wilson, a prominent figure affiliated with the Columbia record company. Wilson had founded his studio in 1913 to “do away with the crude and inartistic in the new dances” while affording his students a moral outlet for their weariness of “formality and Puritan self-repression.”

The ta-tao’s 1914 presence in New York left a lingering trace in a 1920 list of instructions for 380 dances offered for sale by the Chalif Normal School of Dancing on 57th Street. This exhaustive array of pieces from Louis H. Chalif consisted “of classical or folk music, carefully chosen and arranged,” each offered with “a particularly complete and clear description of the steps, arm movements and all of the dance.” It included this item: “Ta-Tao. Chinese, for

exhibition, 2.” But even well before the new decade, the ta-tao’s visibility had become so slight as to leave no doubt that it was a minor, residual form.

Returning to 1914, Wilson’s stress on finding unrepressed refinement indexes a conflicted desire close to the center of the ta-tao’s U.S. career. As seen in a “Masters Bar All Dances Savoring of the Orient” article—an exclusionary policy for which, based on its reference to “convolute and gyrate” movements, the “Orient” seems to have denoted practices along the lines of Salomé dances, not those of the far less risqué ta-tao—the society located its censorial power in processes of formal transmission rather than in uncontrolled domains of amateur practice outside its members’ studios. In those controlled environments, their urge towards standardization fit a value system that also was foundational to industrial production—but anathema to much social dancing. This affective convergence of codified dancing, social conformity, and standardization echoed economic ideas of manufacturing efficiency and aesthetic notions of proper movements that could be inculcated into formerly dangerous bodies. Such a transformation was none too enticing, however, to those who enjoyed a little danger on the dance floor, and who could ignore anyone who sought to protect them from it by preaching bodily restraint, orientalized or otherwise. And for many dance teachers who did not submit to the edicts of the National Association of Masters of Dancing, the ta-tao offered a means of trying to attract such people as students.

107. Chalif (1920, 178–182). The “for exhibition” note might seem to suggest that it had been found too difficult for widespread participation, but the numeral “2” marked it as a piece assessed as being only “of a little difficulty” and a mere one grade above dances judged to be “easy enough for little children” (178). For photographs of Chalif, see Chalif (1929 [1914]).
DANCING IMAGINED CHINESENESS AFTER THE TA-TAO

As we leave the ta-tao, a glance at two later moments of U.S. social dances also characterized as Chinese will set aside the possibility that this was a categorically unique moment. The media attention which this 1914 micro-genre garnered was in fact anomalous, probably spurred in part by the quantity of newspaper column-inches given over to dance topics of all sorts in that tango-panicked year; but the later teens and twenties afforded other chances to imagine one’s own dancing body to be made momentarily Chinese to musical accompaniment. One such array of opportunities arose from a “Chinese Fox Trot” record (rec. 7.4) that was prominently advertised.108

A trace of a more localized instance is preserved by an independently produced instructional recording from Chicago’s Sergei Marinoff School of Classic Dancing. Titled “Chinese Dance (Mohrentanz),”109 this apparently was part of a series of instructional recordings for the school’s students—perhaps for classroom use, to accompany individual practice at home between lessons, or to support embodied learning by mail-order. In the spirit of much early twentieth-century dance, the textually unidentified piece on its other side consisted of spoken instructions and piano accompaniment for a “Greek” nature dance (labeled simply “RECORD 3 — ACCOMPANIMENT 2”). This offered a categorical as well as physical flip side to the record’s “Chinese Dance” as, respectively, interpretative and characteristic pieces.

108. E.g., in “Miss Springtime” [program], Boston: Tremont Theatre, week beginning 19 February 1917, 15.
109. This record may be tentatively dated to the early 1920s; three other Marinoff citations located to date in WorldCat are for books published from 1922 to 1925 (Marinoff 1922, 1923, 1925, not seen). Its label bears no composer credit, but it carries a permission notice for an 1898 copyright owned by the Theodore Presser Company for the musical work as such.
The “Chinese” piece offered directions for movements and psychological conditions to be internalized and expressed together. These fostered students’ imaginary transport to an imaginatively racialized inner state, a condition that was to come about through a guided process of personal identification with qualities expressed by physical movement. Difficult to understand in the recorded example due to the poor condition of even the best (but still much-used) pressing located for this study, the narrator’s coaching for his Illinois students’ mimesis of female Chinese character went like this (rec. 7.5):

Dear People, as you prepare to enter for this dance, think a moment of the character of the Chinese girl you are portraying. The spirit of the dance is restrained joyousness—restrainer, because a Chinese maiden is very quiet and demure. It is with the poses and gestures of your shy little body that you tell your audience how happy you are. You take very small steps, and your movements are a trifle jerky. As this is a character dance, you may forget for the moment the strict rules of ballet technique. You need not worry about turning your legs out or avoiding angles. In fact, you try to make angles in many of the steps. Do not be afraid to exaggerate the amusing, whimsical poses and gestures of this dance. When the instructions say “Tilt your body,” I want you to tilt it so that every person in the audience can see just what you are doing. Express with your body what you understand this dance to mean. Get ready—enter when I say “Run!”

Run, jump, bow right, left; stay, stay, bow, bow; run, jump, bow right, left; stay, stay, bow, bow. Stay left, right left, right left, stop; point, point, point, turn; stay right, left right, left right, stop; point, point, point, turn. Run, turn, run, jump; jump right, jump left, jump left, jump left; jump front, jump back, jump two three; jump front, jump back, jump two three. Run, right, turn and jump; run, left, turn and jump; nod, right, nod, left. Point, point, point two three; point, point, point two three; ballonné, slide, ballonné, slide; hop, hop, hop. Point, point, point two three; point, point, point two three; ballonné, slide, ballonné, slide; hop, hop, hop. Pas de chat, relevé, pas de chat, relevé; pas de bourrée, pas de bourrée; pas de chat, relevé, pas de chat, relevé; pas de bourrée, stay. Stay, two, three, four; turn—, turn—; stay, two, three, four; turn—, turn—. Step, close, jump to left; stay left, right left, hop two three four; step, close, jump to right; stay right, left right, hop two three four. Kick—, kick—; spin—, spin—. Run, jump, fall right left; stay, stay, bow, bow; run, jump, fall right left; stay, stay, bow, bow. Bow, left, bow, right; run, hop, stay.110

110. Transcribed from “Chinese Dance (Mohrentanz),” Marinoff 301 (78 rpm record), n.d.
Although almost every teacher of performance has her or his own style of transmitting embodied knowledge, in the absence of pedagogical recordings of the ta-tao we may imagine that some aspects of this disk’s kinesthetic commands were not wholly unlike the directions teachers of the ta-tao gave. These directions also may suggest the general tone of those often spoken by instructors in classrooms where younger students enacted pantomimes and character dances, or the sound of directors’ exhortations to players in operettas calling for movements much like those of the dance narrated here.

Aside from these speculative extrapolations, these pieces’ continued—if occasional—presence shows that the ta-tao was not the only such dance available for white Americans’ recreational study in the teens and twenties, and that such activities did not disappear when this micro-genre faded away. Other documents show how instruction in embodied Chineseness intersected with stage orientality. A 1917 brochure promoting Evans Burrows-Fontaine invoked her affiliation with Ruth St. Denis in an introductory essay, which stated in part: “The Oriental countries all possess dancers, but the key note of what they do seems to be sensuousness of both the mind and body until the world has come to think of what is commonly called “Oriental Dancing” with amusement.” Against this devalued backdrop, Ruth St. Denis had “done much to uplift and beautify what the public called ‘Oriental Dancing’” as “the first to bring to notice the possible beauties of the dances of ancient India.”

Having asserted this lineage and the value of her instruction to all women, each of whom would benefit from gracefulness whether she used it “to dance or grace her home,” Burrows-Fontaine listed the pieces she taught. Among them were “Absolutely correct and authentic dances” from places
including China and Japan. The brochure based her ability to teach practices from many countries on her residence in two regions of a conflated orient: “She possesses a remarkable ability for imparting her knowledge of dancing to others, and is, therefore, considered one of the most capable teachers of all the dances in which she specializes, having spent several years in India and Egypt, her knowledge of all the fundamental characteristics which go to make the dances of the Orient fascinating is invaluable.”

Resituating Authenticity/Mimesis, Repositioning the Orientalized Body

Having discussed the ta-tao and a few other orientalist dance pieces, it will be useful in ending this chapter—as well as concluding the seven chapters of this study’s first two parts, with their focus on ideas about the performing body, authenticity, mimesis, and race—to return to Northern Californian society for an example that illustrates further connections among practices, histories, and media representations considered separately above. Some simultaneities of this sort have been noted, but these cultural moments could converge more concretely in fortuitously documented instances. One conjuncture brought together white Americans’ amateur mimesis through costuming and musical practice, an appearance by Tamaki Miura, and retail offerings of wearable orientalist commodities. Weaving together threads from this and earlier chapters, this suggests how seemingly discrete domains of representation could overlap and make some events into sites for multiple orientalities.

Some amateur costumed mimesis intersected in public or coincided temporally with musical displays of ostensibly authentic orientality. The

111. Evan-Burrows Fontaine, “Miss Evan-Burrows Fontaine: America’s Foremost Character Dance Artist” [promotional brochure], 1917.
Gump’s advertisement mentioned above appeared in the same month in which Miura made her San Francisco debut as Butterfly. It offered that city’s operagoers “Distinctiveness—At the Opera Or in Your Own Home” by means of “Our Superb Line if Chinese Opera Coats” as well as “Kimonos, Sacques and Scarfs” [sic], all of which would “Give the wearer a touch of elegance and individuality not otherwise possible.” With this text was an image of a woman seated in a pose simultaneously casual (her body leaning to one side), thoughtful (her right thumb and two fingers supporting her forehead and cheek), and self-assured (her chin ever so slightly elevated, her left forearm and hand draped insouciantly along the arm of her chair)—all in all, a sophisticated woman who not only loved but also understood the opera, and who displayed her status and distinction with wearable chinoiserie.112

Deemed to be suited to the private sphere of the home and the public one of the opera, this exotic fashion statement offered tempting possibilities for such happenings as the San Francisco Japan Society’s reception for Miura, announced on the following day. That well-publicized affair took place a week after Gump’s ran their advertisement—just in time for alterations to kimono and Chinese opera coats. The event was the site of a rich convergence of performed orientalities construed as authentic and mimetic, professional and amateur, spectatorial and participatory. The reception offered its 700 invitees and their escorts a receiving line featuring the “Japanese prima donna,” Anna Pavlowa, and society women, but also promised “Japanese impersonations and readings” by Mrs. Florence Lewis Giffin.113 The Chronicle

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112. Gump’s, “Distinctiveness…” [advertisement], San Francisco Call & Post, 10 March 1916.
113. “Hundreds to Honor Japanese Prima Donna,” San Francisco Call & Post, 11 March 1916. The last woman’s name appeared as “Giffin” in some pieces and “Griffin” in others; the former, less usual variant is used here because it appeared more often in this coverage.
stated that “the affair will be made further interesting by musical numbers, in which Mrs. Floye L. Giffin will render illustrations of Japanese music.”

This white woman’s enactment of Japanese music for a society audience had local precursors, but Giffin’s performance was juxtaposed here with Miura’s ascribed authenticity. A notice on the day of the event described Giffin as an “interpreter of Japanese drama and music” who would “contribute some selections from the music of Japan to the evening’s entertainment.” This was printed next to a review (quoted in Chapter 1) of the previous evening’s local premiere by Miura, whom the critic had seen as “a Nipponese woman in feature, form, gesture and all the quaint little mannerisms of the Orient,” but heard as a singer from whose “rounded throat issued the bell-like tones of an European soprano.” Read on a single page, these articles show how complex could be the interactions of ideas about musical orientality and its meanings. Here the transcultural idea of Miura as a true embodiment of eternal Japaneseness and as the most authentic singer of a bel canto Italian orientality (and thus as westernized but not westernized, assimilated in voice but not in body or racial essence) was butted up against a partially inverse move, one also executed in musical practice and mediated discourse. But the composite dynamic here was far from reciprocal.

Whether framed as authentic and professional or mimetic and amateur, both women’s performances (and the tales newspapers told about them to a wider public) indexed dominant U.S. constructions of Japaneseness—Miura

115. E.g., see a 1915 photograph of a young society woman posing with a koto (in “Society Flocks to the Brilliant Benefit…,” San Francisco Chronicle, 13 May 1915).
through her social construction and constriction within her composed role as a native Butterfly, Giffin as the author of her own mimetic impressions of Japanese music. In each, the object many heard and saw was a feminized and musically expressed Japanese essence, one constructed through European/American beliefs. This was brought to life for San Francisco society by the voice and body of a woman thought to be an expert performer of her own essence by a musical amateur emulating the same raciological referent.

What might seem to have been reciprocal enactments, however, actually offered mutually reinforcing versions of one dominant representation. The event offered no staged portrayals of white Californian society (beyond the less consciously performative aspects of any event in which members of a group enact their shared identity for mutually reaffirming spectatorship), whether by mimetically proficient Japanese actresses playing the part of white San Franciscans or self-referential European American daughters of the Golden State. The apparent absurdity of those hypothetical acts points up by contrast how naturalized were the practices that were in fact played out.

Miura and Giffin’s presence at the same reception foregrounds the ways in which less professionalized, openly mimetic musical orientality could tell amateur tales of difference that were basically congruent with those told with more polish by some professional musicians of Asian birth or heritage. These tales included the ideas that there are such things as (racial) national essences, that those defining attributes are visible in the faces and bodies and audible in the voices of all of the people ascribed to any such category, and that people of Asian heritage often may best be represented by orientalist tropes.
This should not suggest that all such performance was motivated by a desire to represent people in the real world, for to assert this would ignore the sheer fun of mimetic play. Martha Banta offers an example of this in her analysis of photographs of her mother, who appears in kimono with eight of her friends in one such image from about 1912 (1987, 268, her fig. 5.59). Banta touches on relationships between that Indiana moment of amateur mimesis, U.S. discourse about gender, and imperialist actions in the Pacific, reading it also as a sign of the popularity of Belasco’s and Puccini’s versions of *Madame Butterfly*.\(^{118}\) Banta’s well-taken point is that the smiling 20-year-old women in their orientalist getup probably were little concerned with anything beyond the great fun of dressing up and role-playing (cf. figs. 6.1–6.7 above).

This is a useful reminder of the need not to ascribe unknowable motives to participants in amateur yellowface acts; but intentions are not everything. As Banta certainly was aware but likely saw as a tangential issue in her study, participants’ reasons for having fun in such ways fall short of exhausting the meanings and effects of these practices. Regardless of the intent behind such masquerades, practices of bodily transformation towards essentialized types reinscribed belief in such categorical human essences. Pinned between converging axes of race and gender (and often less overtly in some contexts, class), these performed and ascribed identities were immobilized in locations made knowable through bodily attributes seen (kimono and fans) and heard (high-pitched and nasalized vocalization) in everyday tropes of race.

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The point here is not to impugn or even guess at the motives of any one act, but to attend to mimetic orientality as a constitutive part of ideas about human difference. Witnessing and taking part in categorical representations of gendered racial types could be fun while still contributing cumulatively to many Americans’ tendency to remap those types onto people of Asian heritage in the social world. Analyses of links between playful masquerade and social power need neither indict white Americans who were, as far as most of them knew, truly just having fun, nor must it absolve those practices themselves of complicity in historically consequential processes. These ways of playing racial others could be lighthearted in an immediate sense and more weighty in their indirect effects on many white Americans’ attitudes and behaviors towards—and in relation with—Asian and Asian American people.

This difference between serious engagement with the social effects of orientalist entertainments and condemnation of the inferred motivations of those who enjoyed them is intellectually crucial. It is equally important in practical ways insofar as such analyses implicitly critique modes of yellowface which continue to reinscribe deeply harmful stereotypes. This reinscription most often is enacted unwittingly by people who have not had cause to reflect on its damaging results. Criticism of these practices may more likely have some usefully corrosive or inhibiting effect if it is focused on behaviors rather than imputed intent, since accusations about the latter may provoke defensive stasis and further reinscriptive acts. This study’s minimal reliance on ascribed states of mind in its focus on practices as such is, I hope, both more rigorous in an evidentiary sense and potentially more efficacious in the social domains inhabited by any present-day readers who still find
yellowface amusing, but do not do so because of intentionally racist beliefs. The raciological ideas propagated in amateur orientalist acts were (and are) seldom a conscious part of the fun, but they suffused those kinds of play in unconscious ways. In its easy enlistment of so many bodies and voices in the superficially amusing portrayal of an imagined racial essence, yellowface was an exemplary means of performing hegemony.
Imagining the Mimetic Oriental Voice

Constructing Musical Orientality in Three Media

...America picked up the charleston, big bands, and ragtime jazz, and put to music the agony of our old men doomed here without women or hope of returning to China, and danced to it. The songs of the old forty-niners about “John John Chinaman” were updated and civilized in New York’s Tin Pan Alley to become “Little Chinky Butterfly,” “China Girl,” “Chinese Lullabye,” and a song that must have been sung a lot around the piano, for I’ve heard bits of it sung by Chinese Americans, mothers of grammar school friends who sang it in their school days in talent shows—I found the sheet music and remembered hearing it, a song featured by Fred Schmitt and his Rialto Orchestra called “Hong Kong Dream Girl”:

—Frank Chin (1998, 81)

China boy is very sad because he went away,
From his little China maiden,
China boy feel very sad and only yesterday
He wrote a note to hear her say:

[Chorus 2x:] 
[“]My little Hong Kong Dream Girl
In ev’ry dream you seem, girl,
Two almond eyes are smiling,
And my poor heart is whirling like a big sail round my pig-tail
I dream of you till dawning,
But early in the morning
Oriental dream is gone,
China boy is so forlorn,
Hong Kong Dream Girl goodbye.”

Here in fair America he sings a lonesome song,
While his little China maiden,
Waits for little China boy in far away Hong Kong
He cries and sighs “it won’t be long:

[Chorus again 2x to end]
—“Hong Kong Dream Girl”
(lyrics by George E. Springer, 1924)
American music is different from any other kind of music. It is the genuine product of the ideas of this nation and represents us as typically as the strange melodies of China and Hawaii represent those countries.
—Irving Berlin

Ching Chong, Oh Mister Ching Chong,
  You’re the king of Chinatown,
Ching Chong, I love your sing-song
When you have turned the lights all down;
Ching Chong, just let me swing ‘long
  Thru the realms of drowsyland,
Dreaming while stars are beaming
Oh Mister Ching Chong, sing-song man.
—chorus of “Ching Chong”

“The first time I remember being insulted was when I was little. . . .
In kindergarten, I believe. Oh, it was classic. A little blond kid pulled the edges of his eyes out, yelling, Ching chong chinaman! I, being new to this game, could only make a weak comeback. I’m not Chinese. . . . I’m KOREAN. I remember feeling a confused hurt, realizing that I looked different and not understanding why being different was bad. —Olivia Chung (2001a, 138–39)

Hearing & Sounding Yellowvoice

As we move from practices of yellowface to those of yellowvoice (see the Introduction on these terms), shift interpretive emphasis from raciological visibility to its audible counterpart, and narrow in from practices of the racially mimetic body in general to those specifically of the voice and its instrumental peers, we may lay some questioning groundwork about performance, race, and the body as their site of ideological connection. When white Americans made meaning from orientalist music, what happened to

the concern with authenticity often seen in their reception of Asian and Asian American singers? In the embodied acts treated in Part 2, mimetic appeals to authentic racial essences often still were central, with a shift from notions of inborn identity to those of imitative skill. But in singing orientalist songs, any concern with authenticity seemed to dissipate, blown away by a thirst for novelty and a lack of desire for apparent accuracy vis-à-vis the social world.

The performative use of songs underlies this look at sheet music, which focuses on how it supported singing rather than taking a more work-centered path. Yellowvoice practice offers another means of understanding how racial ideology and performative mimesis figured in musical acts. This may help to show how people sang and heard race in acts positioned as signs of essential (generally fantasized) identities. The ways in which we may hear these things are governed by the specific media that preserve traces of them. Underlying the division of sources and discussion between this chapter and the next, this interpretive constraint—and opportunity—needs brief contextualization.

During these decades, popular songs were disseminated through two major media—one established but destined for decline, the other entering its initial heyday. Hugely popular through the 1920s, sheet music supported professional and amateur singing. It was easily bought by mail order and in many kinds of stores. A trace of this is seen in stamps such as one from a

3. These interpretive ends and means differ from those of such analyses as Ellie Hisama’s astute reading of Ruth Crawford’s “Chinaman, Laundryman” in regard to its composer’s progressive politics, use of musical contour and register, and contemporary ideologies of gender, race, and labor (1996, 69–116). Many studies examine songs as ideological traces or historical sources, e.g. G. Tomlinson (1995), Alagoa (1968). Mark Slobin has written of sheet music from another U.S. context (that of Jewish immigrant culture) during roughly the same decades with which this study is concerned: “In terms of social history, sheet music texts are as valuable as other contemporary materials…in depicting shared values and aspirations. Indeed, since music directly reflects audience interest both in terms of marketability…and affective value, in some ways it may be even more significant…” (Slobin 1982, 119).
Michigan seller of books, stationery, sheet music, and other goods on one copy of “Lo-Ki” (1919, fig. 8.1). This chapter looks at sheet music as a medium that offered specific means of support to racial ideology; Chapter 9 considers how recordings supported related but distinct modes of musical experience.

Many studies survey mediated aspects of the U.S. music industry in these decades, discussing the business of music production, dissemination, and consumption. These contexts are widely known, so we may just note that there was a huge amount of composition, publication, and performative use of popular songs in national and local markets. While composers and publishers were based all over the country, one center of activity was New York City’s Tin Pan Alley. These cultural producers responded to a taste for familiar kinds of novelty to be performed in homes and vaudeville halls. A great deal of sheet music offered white Americans representations of racial difference and a means by which they could embody it through singing.


5. A colloquial term for a stretch of Manhattan’s 28th Street from Fifth Avenue to Broadway, where many publishers congregated in the century’s early decades, was Tin Pan Alley; that became a general term for the industry that made this body of song (Ewen 1964). Due to its focus on the workings of a musical discourse rather than on authors, works, publishers, or performers, this discussion foregoes biographical notes. Readers may find such information (along with analyses of Tin Pan Alley songs’ connections to blackface minstrelsy, nineteenth-century ballads, stage performance, and other cultural currents) in such books as Goldberg’s Tin Pan Alley, Ewen’s The Life and Death of Tin Pan Alley, and Jasen’s Tin Pan Alley, among others, as well as in more broadly scoped works including Hamm’s Yesterdays; Ewen’s and Jasen’s bibliographies cite many books contemporary with Tin Pan Alley’s greatest activity (I. Goldberg 1930; Ewen 1964; Jasen 1990 [1988], 2003; Hamm 1979, 284–390). On nineteenth-century relationships between blackface minstrelsy and popular song, cf. Finson (1994).

Forte’s American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era pairs capsule biographies of composers with analyses of their works, and such studies as Williams’s ’Twas Only an Irishman’s Dream offer historical accounts of how lyricists’ and other cultural producers’ social positions intersected with ethnic representations in their songs (Forte 1995; W. Williams 1996, especially 181–99).

Most to the point here are U.S. songs that invoke Chinese or Japanese points of reference in Asian or American narrative locales. Several scholars’ research on specific groups of such pieces offer analyses that in work-centered ways are more encompassing than this chapter, or attend to how specific authors responded to historical circumstances. Judy Tsou has shown how songs about Chinese figures tended to construct men as demasculinized, women as sexually available, and both as dehumanized exotic beings serving racist and anti-feminist ideologies. As Darren Brown noted in a TV news story on a 2003 exhibition, “Chinese” pieces were “always highlighting the differences” that positioned their protagonists as “un-American.” Krystyn Moon has shown how songs and vaudeville acts made Chineseness an exotic or alien quality, and how its forms reflected historical change (2002, especially 373–76). As this chapter will show, the exclusionary sense of those ethnically specific works infused pieces on Chinese and on Japanese topics. It did this in ways which, without belying Moon’s periodization, also built a sustained discourse linking music, race, and the performing body. Those studies and this one offer complementary views of overlapping sources and moments, showing how they were historically dynamic (more the focus of many works) while instantiating highly durable ideologies (the focus here). 

7. Those projects include Judy Tsou’s article on representations of Chineseness; Darren Brown’s similarly focused San Francisco State M.A. thesis (not seen) and exhibition catalog; Krystyn Moon’s dissertation on historical aspects of that topic; Anthony Sheppard’s work in progress on figurations of Japan; and Bruce Smith’s current project on 1890–1925 music on Japanese topics (Tsou 1997; D. Brown 2003; Moon 2002, especially 256–323). A very recent study centered on the trajectory of one song, “Chinatown, My Chinatown,” is Garrett (2004).  
8. The story aired on KRON, probably on 5 June 2003 (date unconfirmed).  
9. Concerned with related issues, but farther from this project’s foci, are compositionally centered works on elite musical production, as well as studies of other cultural moments or national scenes; e.g., Aline Scott-Maxwell’s (1997) article on orientalist Australian popular music of the 1920s, and “Exoticism in American Popular Entertainment,” an unpublished...
This chapter focuses on a musical discourse of orientality that suffused many works over many years rather than recounting how their seemingly positive or negative tones could address immediate historical contexts (e.g., the Russo-Japanese War or specific moments in immigration debates). This emphasis on how musical discourse supported certain kinds of use and belief leads to this study’s de-emphasis on composers. The focus here is on what these texts offered people who used them, not on how their authors crafted them. Most of these composers were American men of European heritage. Many were immigrants; most would have been considered “white,” even if ethnically so, in their time. Their works used standard stylistic moves to seek surface novelty in often market-driven ways. This leads back to musical paper by Carl Sturken (1977). Apposite work on more recent practices includes Ellie Hisama’s article on celebrations of white men’s sexual appropriation of disempowered female Asian figures in U.S. and English popular music (Hisama 1993; see also McClary 2000, 149–52).

10. One totalizing moment of that sort took place following 7 December 1941, when virtually every popular U.S. song referring to Japan did so with all the vitriol its authors could muster. In that and less ideologically united moments, shifts in valuation tracked larger formations of social opinion in language- and image-based ways similar to shifts in other media; extended attention to them chiefly would demonstrate the unremarkable fact that musical texts’ valutative charges share in encompassing processes of politicized cultural production. The point here is to understand how songs vested credence in an underlying belief in a racial essence many white Americans ascribed to people who appeared to them to be “oriental.” Founded in musical and non-musical experiences, that belief was a necessary condition for celebratory or pejorative moments that built upon it in response to local circumstances.

11. This mirrors the lack of long-term attention many consumers paid to songs’ composers. As Tawa writes regarding a period overlapping with this study’s first decade: “...however pleasing people might find a song, they rarely kept the author in mind for any period, if at all.” Even among one’s music-industry peers, fame could be fleeting: “Everybody in the song world might know about and discuss the composers of currently successful compositions, but after a few failures that same composer would be forgotten by people in the trade” (1990, 22). Publishers often reminded prospective purchasers of composers’ past hits on the covers of new pieces in this study’s decades, but that marketing tactic only makes sense as anticipating that consumers would have forgotten who composed a prior favorite; were they assumed to have remembered, its author’s name alone would have sufficed to spur another purchase.

12. A few such men became seriously wealthy and famous by means of their musical works. One was Irving Berlin, who has been much discussed, e.g. by Whitcomb (1987); Jasen (1990 [1988], 70–82); Tawa (1990, 205–206); and Hamm (1997). See also a “song profile” tracing the ethnicized and racialized meanings invested into Berlin’s “Blue Skies” (Magee 2000b).
discourses, consumers’ decisions to purchase or forego any given piece, and the meanings people made from acts of hearing and singing these songs.

**Backdrops & Contexts for Singing & Hearing Orientalist Song**

White Americans sang, heard, and made meaning from these songs against many backdrops. Vaudeville offered professional renditions of music one could buy for amateur use.13 “On the whole,” Nicholas Tawa has written of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century U.S. popular song, “if any large identifiable group could be pointed to as the principal audience for popular song, it would be the American working class, the occupiers of the seats in the gallery” (1990, 12). These songs found great numbers of public listeners in vaudeville halls. A 1916 article discussed those audiences as song buyers: “It’s interesting to follow the public’s whims. There’s a fashion in popular songs just as there is in clothes. One year they want sentimental songs—next year, possibly, they want eccentric songs, like “Casey Jones”—this year dance music seems to be the rage.”14 Some lyrics linked songs to other theatrical acts; “Chu-Chin-Chow” (sung in the 1917 Ziegfeld Follies), for example, invoked the yellowface lead in the widely known play of that name.15

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13. E.g., one program listed the act of singers Helen and Rosalie Mellette as including a solo piano rendition of “Buddha” by their accompanist, Lew Pollack, also the song’s composer; appealing to analogous taste in dining, an advertisement below that item promoted “The Old Dragon” restaurant’s chop suey and “Chinese Girls in Attendance” (“Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco, week beginning 29 September 1918; Lew Pollack (music) and Ed Rose (lyrics), “Buddha,” New York: McCarthy & Fisher, 1919).  
14. Orson Meriden, “The Ragtime Kings,” *Theatre Magazine*, January 1916, 26–28, 42, 45, this at 27. A photograph caption in the article described Irving Berlin as having been “Only a few years ago...a ragtime singer in a Chinatown cabaret” (26).  
15. Dave Stamper (music) and Gene Buck (lyrics), “Chu-Chin-Chow,” New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1917. As well as being associated with performance, Tin Pan Alley orientalist songs were created and heard within interpretive frames based on earlier U.S. compositional traditions and social histories. Various nineteenth-century genres included songs on Asian or Asian American topics; on U.S. popular music of that century, see Hamm (1979, 1983); Tawa (1984, 1990); Finson (1994). Well-known examples include songs
CONTEMPORARY STREAMS OF MUSICAL PUBLICATION & CLASS POSITIONING

Songs invoking China or Japan crosscut many popular song subgenres, of which Barbara Cohen-Stratyner has proposed ten types (1988, xvi–xxi). They were common in seven of these: “Ballads,” “Romances,” “Comic/Novelty Songs,” “Production Songs,” “Dance Songs,” and “Military Songs” (in Russo-Japanese War pieces); they also appeared as “Promotional Songs,” with only her categories of “Political Anthems” and “Religious Songs” largely unrepresented.16 Beyond situating them in these ways, people could relate orientalist popular songs to other streams of musical practice. Children’s songbooks, as well as classroom use of records of “Japanese” and “Chinese” pieces, offered related but more didactic experiences (see Chapter 6).17 Popular songs, however, framed singing not as an earnestly entertaining lesson but as a purely diverting recreation.

Elite publishers offered musical chinoiseries and japonismes by many composers. One example is Alice Barnett’s “Panels from a Chinese Screen,” which one reviewer found to have “much of a color and lilt that, through the

popular during the California Gold Rush; these included a setting of “The Heathen Chinee” and songs inspired by Denis Kearney’s anti-Chinese demagoguery (e.g., Lengyel 1939b, 75, 86, 121A, 130, 130A, 140, 143–45; for historical context, see Lengyel 1939a; D. Brown 2003). Other streams of commerce intersected with anti-Asian politics. Published by the Mrs. Mills Yeast Powder company in San Francisco probably in the late 1870s, “Mrs. Mills’ Selections: ‘Sweet By and By’ and ‘Light Cake Waltz’” promoted a Californian brand of yeast powder with an advertisement using vehemently anti-Chinese language of bodily pollution, hygiene, food, and domesticity (cf. Shah 2001). Chinese references appeared as well in blackface minstrels’ songs, where in some cases they foreshadowed fictive meetings of Asian and African American figures and cultural practices in twentieth-century sheet music.

16. Beyond these genre contexts in the realm of popular song, people sang and heard these works in relation to differently positioned kinds of pieces. Some offered strange echoes of other genres; “Chinaland” presented lyrical language evocative of hymn texts and cover art with cross imagery (Ick Ogden, “Chinaland,” Buffalo, NY: Eberle Music Co., 1919).

17. E.g., as listed in Victor’s publications for educators and general catalogs’ “Educational” sections. See also such publications as Victor Talking Machine Company (1923). Operettas gave both children and adults related opportunities to sing of orientality; see Chapter 7.
influence of the texts, may be said to be Chinese.”\textsuperscript{18} Many younger amateurs played orientalist music in works for piano students.\textsuperscript{19} Distinctions between highbrow and popular musical domains led some authors and publishers to assert the elite status of certain compositions. This was seen in the preface to Gertrude Ross’s 1917 “Art Songs of Japan (Yamata Shirabe),” which began:

My interest in the music of the Japanese was awakened when a little Japanese woman played for me on the samisen. … The unresolved melodies, without our cadence, gives a sense of something so foreign to our occidental ears, that it is indeed an awakening.

I wrote down these quaint airs, which, with some fragments culled from their ancient folk-lore, and music written for the Koto, form the foundations of the following sketches.

The Koto is the instrument of the upper classes, while the samisen belongs to the people.\textsuperscript{20}

Ross’s stress on intercultural hearing, class, and creative transformation is reminiscent of some yellowface actors’ tales. Introductory statements such as this differentiated some elite practice from popular song composition.

Concern with authenticity and artistic merit could support trickle-down models of influence flowing from higher to lower cultural elevations.\textsuperscript{21} Often these were simplistic, but some were on the mark regarding certain works.

\textsuperscript{18} Sydney Dalton, “Three Song Panels from a Chinese Screen,” \textit{Musical America}, 30 August 1924, 26. The works were published in New York by the Composers’ Music Corp., 1924.


\textsuperscript{20} Gertrude Ross (music) and Clara E. Walsh (lyrics translator), “Art Songs of Japan (Yamata Shirabe) Written upon Traditional Japanese Themes and Poems,” Boston: White-Smith, 1917; the lyrics were from Walsh (1914 [1910]).

“Song of India,” Sigmund Spaeth wrote, was “…a literal jazz transcription of the appealing oriental melody of Rimsky-Korsakoff” (Spaeth 1933 [1924], 35). He also addressed popular adaptations of elements from the opera:

For a time the aria, One Fine Day, from Puccini’s Madame Butterfly, influenced much of the popular music. Thinly disguised, it provided the basis of The Vamp, and it came out boldly in every detail as Cio-Cio-San, a frank and perhaps legitimate borrowing. The Hippodrome song, Poor Butterfly, took toll of the story, but not of Puccini’s melody.22 (39)

While some writers assumed a unidirectional flow of practices from higher- to lower-status musical forms, such processes often had little to do with the production, use, or social meanings of popular songs and recordings. More useful than tracing compositional lineages is asking how people heard and made meaning from music. A look at some of the main modes of everyday use of popular songs will help to situate those processes and questions.

PIANO-CENTRIC SCENES AT HOME, VAUDEVILLE PALACES BEYOND

These songs afforded room for locally contextualized interpretation of their ideological content; each listener or singer could make individual meaning from any one experience of any one song. Their preferred meanings and potential for variant interpretation both are important. Sensitive to more than sound itself, the meanings people make from music are framed by its contexts of use. Three major contexts for using these works involved domestic singing around pianos, participatory social dancing to professional accompaniment, and listening to performances in vaudeville and other theaters.

22. For a later writer’s tale of the song’s opera-to-popular-theater connections as having more to do with anticipated audience interest than musical materials, see Ewen (1964, 113).
Amateur musical recreation at the piano was massively popular.23 These practices often involved young people, domestic sociality, and popular songs: “During those years 1895 to 1914, and perhaps a little later, informal home gatherings of adolescents were most likely to cluster around the piano. Usually it was a girl who played; but both boys and girls sang lustily…” (Loesser 1954, 548). The cost of a piano and the need for a family member to have sufficient leisure time to learn to play it imposed financial thresholds, but these were not just elite recreations. They had numerous middle-class participants, for whom a piano could be a weighty indicator of attainment of a certain socioeconomic status; they also were accessible to some people in less financially secure conditions (e.g., in boarding houses with pianos).

As useful appliances and signs of economic means, pianos had some commonality with other domestic machines; but their uses enabled them to signify musically enacted identity in deeper ways. Reports of their presence in immigrants’ homes could signify cultural assimilation as well as economic attainment. A volume in the Americanization Series quoted The Japanese Problem in the United States to tell of a Japanese American immigrant’s farmhouse:

…the house is in good repair, and it and the premises are well kept. The floors are well carpeted and as a part of the furnishings of the living room are four leather-seated oak chairs and a few well-framed lithographic pictures—all American. In the back parlor is a piano, and among the conveniences in the kitchen is found a standard washing machine. The two daughters had just begun to take music lessons from an American teacher. One of the girls was in the eighth grade, the other in the sixth. Both are thoroughly American in every respect save that they are more gracious and more polite than the average native child. Their Americanism had extended even to insisting upon having American dolls with blond hair and blue eyes.24

Moving from furnishings to the body, this used the piano as a bridge from domestic space to social assimilation. Suggesting how pianos enabled everyday musical acts, many now-anonymous scenes of piano-centered sociality document such private moments (fig. 8.2).\textsuperscript{25}

Sheet music also supported public experiences, some involving bodily participation and others locating nonprofessionals as seated listeners. The former included such events as a 1923 show by the University of Nebraska’s Kosmet Klub, in which amateurs sang “Underneath the Chinese Moon.”\textsuperscript{26} More day-to-day—or night-to-night—events used these songs (amid others) to accompany fox trots and other social dances. Unlike the ta-tao, the use of orientalist songs not freighted with specific moves was less organized and longer-lived. That pointillistic universe of embodiment is documented by such ephemera as the program for a dinner-dance in Madison, Wisconsin, where participants could take a spin on the floor to the strains of “Poppies.”\textsuperscript{27}

Some spaces within which dancing took place were orientalized. A 1922 advertisement encouraged San Francisco vaudeville patrons to “Visit the CHINESE TEA GARDEN,” which offered a “Famous Chinese Orchestra”

\textsuperscript{25} Rhetorics of pianistic domesticity also could intersect with those of orientality; a 1900 piece titled “A Mandarin’s Courtship” advertised “A Japanese Serenade” by describing the works’ composer as being “perfectly at home when composing Oriental music” (William Loraine, “A Mandarin’s Courtship (A Chinese Serenade),” New York: F. A. Mills, 1900). A metaphorically analogous positioning of orientalist practice in the national home was seen in a comment that Ruth St. Denis had “done much to foster an American school of dancing” by means of exoticist practice and pedagogy, giving orientalist performance a primary place in the nationally domestic category of American dance (“Ruth St. Denis” [photograph], \textit{Musical America}, 16 August 1924, 1).

\textsuperscript{26} Cyril Coombs, \textit{The Yellow Lantern}, as produced by the Kosmet Klub of the University of Nebraska, 1923.

with “Dance and Music Every Evening”; it is a safe surmise that some of their repertoire offered exoticized sounds. Another example is a 1916 program’s advertisement for the “ONLY MODERN CHINESE AND AMERICAN RESTAURANT WITH ORCHESTRAL MUSIC IN BOSTON.”

Vaudeville was the premier site for popular enactments of racial difference, which often were comedic in their intent and their conscious reception. A Columbia promotional flyer invoked one such act, advertising:

THE introduction of the Watson Sisters to the record world! These song artists of vaudeville are already known to the stage world and make their Columbia bow with two clever bits of popular composition: “China, We Owe a Lot to You” and “If I Can’t Have You All the Time.” Our debts to China are quite original—as is the music as well.

The song began “When I woke up the other morn, / I found a new Republic had been born” and ended with “Tho’ you’re weak in song, / We all know your tea is strong.” The record offers a sense of the duo’s performance, possibly shortened due to the duration of 78 rpm disks (rec. 8.2). Audiences across the country could hear broadly similar renditions of many songs.

30. “Columbia Records for December,” New York: Columbia Graphophone Co., 1917, 9. Two images portrayed the singers and a Chinese man. Unidentified in the flyer, the man was Li Hung Chang, as seen in a stereo view from the same negative; judging from its “U&U” copyright, Columbia apparently licensed the image from Underwood & Underwood.
Singing Orientality from Sheet Music, First View: Cover Art

This chapter treats in succession the cover art, lyrics, and staff notation of examples drawn from a group of about 500 pieces of sheet music (360 songs and 140 piano solos) that date from 1900 through 1930 and refer to China, Japan, or Asian America. Some of these songs were popular in the sales as well as the stylistic sense of the word; others were obscure even in their own time. In order to adduce examples from fairly many pieces and attend to recurrent traits without offering a long string of beginning-to-end analyses, this study trades off the work-centered insights such an approach might offer in exchange for more discourse-centered knowledge. Here a whole group of pieces defines both the scope and the main unit of analysis: this repertoire

32. Because these numbers include such things as variant editions, the lyrically focused section below works chiefly with a core group of 244 unique works (nested within the rough total of 360 songs, which in turn sits within the overall corpus of 500). This presentation was informed by comparative looks at about 50 pieces published before 1900 and 100 after 1930, and more broadly by glances at about 1,000 pieces representing other racial, ethnic, or gender identities (e.g., 70 evoking India and many evoking orients mapped onto West Asia or North Africa). For reasons of space, very few comparisons to those contextual works appear here. Mirroring a common path of use, this study moves from covers (the first thing a person might see in a store), to lyrics (a likely second view), and then to notation. This is as arbitrary a course as any; many amateurs may have heard a song at a vaudeville theater, been taken by the music more than the words, and paid little attention to the cover upon finding it at a local store. Equally viable is the lyrics-covers-notation course of Tenement Songs, which provides the model reshuffled here. As Slobin writes, “a piece of sheet music must be seen as a complex cultural package of various expressive and commercial media” (1982, 164). 33. Severe methodological problems plague any attempt to assign songs from these years any kind of popularity ranking like that of later decades' “charts.” These include incomplete or inflated sales records, unavoidable present-day sampling bias, and the less commoditized nature of certain modes of musical distribution (broadly construed) in the century’s earlier than later decades, making it basically impossible to quantify a song’s popularity via the proxy indicator of unit sales. Because of this, general comments are offered below in regard to the popularity of certain songs, but precise ranks given in secondary sources are not. Some of these comments are based in a general way on studies that undertake to reconstruct the popularity of specific songs. Without going into the specific value found in such works and necessary cautions for using each, this chapter occasionally uses as a secondary indicator the fact that a song was so widely documented in its time that it later “made it” into one or more study such as Mattfeld (1971), Whitburn (1986), Cohen-Stratyner (1988), or Lissauer (1991).
and the markers by which its constituent works signified orientality. These are examined below in mostly qualitative rather than quantitative ways.34

THE ICONOGRAPHIC REPERTOIRE OF ORIENTALIST MUSIC COVERS

Just as matters of authorial biography, appropriation, or originality figure only tangentially here in regard to creators of musical and language-based texts, so too with images.35 While any one artist often reused certain favorite stylistic moves, when it came to illustrating songs on Japanese or Chinese (American) topics they tended to draw on the same iconographic elements. Seen in contexts of U.S. visual culture, these could tell a shopper at a glance that a song promised recreation associated with a Chinese/Japanese orient. In their initial exotic appeal, these images worked in ways seen also in other contexts; for instance, various advertisements for a 1928 production in San Francisco used lanterns, torii, Mount Fuji, and brush-stroke style letters.36

The visual survey below attends to iconographic elements used on covers for songs and piano pieces. It also provides a sense of how icons of

34. Along with its fit with local aims, this has practical motivations and methodological implications. Because a massive number of non-orientalist songs would be necessary as a control group for quantitative analysis of musical, linguistic, or iconographic devices' use in orientalist as opposed to other works, such claims are not made here. Due to the spotty preservation of these publications (often treated as ephemeral mass products, not documents worthy of preservation), the apparent precision of quantitative analysis even of just the total number of such songs published in certain years could suggest more accuracy than might be achieved. Aside from such broad phenomena as the burst of songs about the Russo-Japanese War and a few other periods of apparently prolific creation, smaller peaks and dips in song count from year to year likely would reflect artifacts of source preservation and sampling as much as anything historically significant. And with very few exceptions, the representational practices central to this chapter were routinely sung and heard throughout these decades.

35. Readers interested in what is known about the identities of prolific workers in this area may wish to consult such books as Marion Short's *Covers of Gold*, which offers accounts of the Starmers, Albert W. Barbelle, Edward H. Pfeiffer, Andre C. de Takacs, Frederick S. Manning, the “R. S.” who used a rose monogram, and other illustrators represented below (Short 1998a, 1998b). On the general history of music cover art, Slobin has offered a capsule account, and a Norton-Grove handbook offers more details (Slobin 1982, 164–65; Krummel and Sadie 1990).

Chineseness and Japaneseness often were not differentiated. Exceeding any notion of blurring or slippage, this demonstrates the mostly lumped nature of the pool from which these images’ creators drew their components, and in relation to which most viewers probably saw them. The exceptions to this—for example, the usual limitation of Mount Fuji to Japanesque scenes and of queues to Chinese figures—were fairly swamped by such things as free-floating kimono in imagined Chinas and Japans. The lists below traverse this visual repertoire in six arbitrary groups, with each iconographic element represented by one or two illustrative covers.37 After this, interpretive comments contextualize some aspects of these images; closer readings of a few selected covers then show how these elements operated together in individual works. The section’s closing comments discuss how these illustrations may have fostered specific kinds of meaning construction.

Natural (and one mythical) things represented in natural states

- Mount Fuji (figs. 8.3, 8.4)
- Cherry blossoms or bud-bearing branches (figs. 8.5, 8.6)
- Poppies (figs. 8.7, 8.8)
- Cranes (figs. 8.9, 8.10)

37. Since this organizing scheme is one of convenience—not a rigorous typology but a way to traverse these images, which evince a recombinant visual practice—these groups overlap in ways that could enable subcategories to appear in multiple places. The topographic feature known in English as Mount Fuji exists not just as a fact of geology but also as a national icon in Japanese art; any reuse of the image cannot help but reference cultural as well as natural things. Although these overlaps would cripple this system as a means of dividing these icons into exclusive categories, it serves as a practical way of working through these images. Nor should the use of a piece to illustrate one category of elements suggest that it could not be assigned to others; for example, racial caricature suffuses many images used to illustrate various elements. Some taken here as significant overlap with some to which semi-parallel studies (e.g., by Tsou, Brown, Moon, and Sheppard) of either Chinese- or Japanese-referential U.S. songs attend. Those categories are not unique to this dissertation, but they have arisen independently from work with an overlapping body of primary sources that suggests points of connection between generic racialization and more nationally specific orientalisms. A few discrepancies between titles seen on covers and given below reflect differences between titles on covers and those printed on the first pages of notation, with the latter taken as canonical.
• Dragons (fig. 8.11)
• Large moons (figs. 8.12, 8.13)

Natural things represented in humanly reworked states
• Bamboo in pictorial borders (fig. 8.14) or letter forms (fig. 8.15)
• Bonsai (figs. 8.16)
• Tea by means of teacups and teapots implying its presence (figs. 8.17, 8.18)
• Opium by means of pipes and smoke implying its presence (figs. 8.19, 8.20)

Humanly made things (overlapping with the above)
• Temples, pagodas, similarly roofed structures (figs. 8.21, 8.22)
• Arched footbridges (fig. 8.23)
• Stone lanterns (fig. 8.24)
• Paper lanterns (fig. 8.25)
• Interiors with tatami, shoji, or other exoticizing signs (fig. 8.26)
• Jinrikisha, palanquins, kago, other human-powered transport (fig. 8.27)
• Incense represented by means of smoke (fig. 8.28)
• Quasi-Buddhist or quasi-Confucian statuary (fig. 8.29)
• Torii (fig. 8.30)
• Firecrackers (fig. 8.31)
• Sampans, junks, other Pacific Asian watercraft (fig. 8.32)
• Chinese or Japanese writing evoked by brushy Roman letters (figs. 8.33, 8.34)
• Pseudo-Chinese characters or Japanese kanji, rarely real ones (fig. 8.35)
• Quasi-ukiyo-e (or far less often, sumi-e) stylistic rendering by means of flat modeling, fabric patterns over folds, hair representation, etc. (fig. 8.36)
• Photomechanical reproductions of Chinese or Japanese art (fig. 8.37)

Humanly made things held by or worn on the body
• Chinese jackets, robes, and other clothing (fig. 8.38)
• Chinese headbands (figs. 8.39, 8.40)
• Kimono (figs. 8.41, 8.42)
• Fans (figs. 8.43, 8.44)
• Parasols (fig. 8.45)
• Shamisen/sanxian- or yueqin-like chordophones (figs. 8.46, 8.47)
• Queues (fig. 8.48)
• Quasi-Japanese hairstyles (fig. 8.49)

Attributes ascribed to the racialized body itself
• Eyes as slanted, squinting, or almond-shaped (fig. 8.50)
• Hands with elongate and pointy-nailed fingers (figs. 8.51, 8.52)
• Other grossly distorted or caricatured physiognomy (fig. 8.53)
• Romantically exoticized facial or bodily beauty and/or typicality (fig. 8.54)

**Practices represented as typical uses of the racialized body**

• Men playing musical instruments (see also chordophones above), often while serenading women or accompanying female dancers (fig. 8.55)
• General romantic interactions between Asian figures (fig. 8.56)
• Dancing (figs. 8.57, 8.58)
• Women or men serving consumables, often obsequiously (fig. 8.59)
• Men laboring in laundries, on city streets, or in iconic isolation (fig. 8.60)
• Women in poses that could be interpreted in context as flirtatious (fig. 8.61)
• Figures holding own hands together at chest or in sleeves (figs. 8.62, 8.63)
• Being a female object of covert or overt white male attention (fig. 8.64)
• Women waving or waiting by the sea, or looking longingly across Pacific waters in Butterfly-like pining for lost American loves (figs. 8.65, 8.66)

Less recurrent icons included such natural things as wisteria, made objects including dolls and Japanese flags, Chinatown streets akin to images of other ethnic urban areas but often portraying depersonalized figures like others depicted in magazines,38 and such activities as picking cherry blossoms.

Based on the prevalence of their language-based equivalents, one might expect to see certain things which were in fact unusual. Textual references to Chinese and Japanese people’s skin as yellow (or brown) were common, but chromatic marking of this sort on covers was rare.39 The use of yellow not just for Chinese skin, but also for a tub, crate, column, spats, overalls, and package on “The Ragtime Laundry” (fig. 8.67) demonstrates the raciological use and practical limits of this practice. With few exceptions, printing costs limited covers to a range of hues offering few possibilities for literal yellowing only of orientalized skin, since most covers were printed in just two colors from two

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39. What may seem to be that kind of racial marking in the yellow quasi-Chinese figure on the covers of songs from the Hippodrome show “Cheer Up” may not to be, insofar as the lithographic stone inked in yellow also provided a fill color for the faces of (contextually) white figures in the foreground—e.g., Raymond Hubbell (music) and John L. Golden (lyrics), “Beautiful Queen of the Nile,” New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1917.
stones, and to have limited one of those colors to such a specific use would have severely restricted the rest of a design. Other signs common in language seem not to have provided visually interesting material; one example may be the recurrence of textual references to rice but its general absence from covers (where it only occasionally may be inferred in bowls beneath chopsticks).

**RELINKING COVER ICONOGRAPHY TO SOME OF ITS MEDIA CONTEXTS**

These covers’ iconography was related to that seen in other visual culture and in decorative practices at events, as well as to language-based accounts. A fresh glance at these elements’ presence in non-musical settings will situate these covers in broader contexts.\(^\text{40}\) Many icons seen above long had circulated in European art\(^\text{41}\) and in media images accessible to more Americans. Having seen the preceding figures, a glance back at those shown in the Introduction may offer a capsule sense of certain aspects of the latter visual context.\(^\text{42}\)

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\(^{40}\) See also A. Lee (2001). For cultural histories of such practices as lithographic magazine illustration, see works including Harris (1990 [1987]). In visually depicted or textually described form, some of these icons already were tiresome to certain writers in their own time. “The world has heard often enough of the delights of Japan,” wrote Francis T. Piggott before the turn of the century, citing as examples “the first view of Fuji from the sea” with “the island lying low down on the horizon...and the great snow-cone towering into the blue sky far above it,” “the Japanese maiden dressed in her best,” and “the plum-trees and cherry-trees, and the lotus and the iris” (“New Japan,” *Littell’s Living Age*, 5 November 1892, 352–60, this at 352; for his thoughts on Japanese and European visual-arts styles and techniques, see “Stray Notes on Artistic Japan,” *The Fortnightly Review*, February 1893, 184–96).

\(^{41}\) E.g., Jan van Rij notes the connections of operatic *japonisme* to its painterly French counterpart in an 1873 Girard work: “The standard ingredients one finds in many works of the period of Japonisme, including Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, are already in place in this painting: the kimono, lanterns, flowers, fans, a screen, a samisen, and so on” (Rij 2001, 40).

\(^{42}\) As well as appearing in wood engravings, stereo views, postcards, and other print media, some of these icons had broad currency in printer’s cuts in the later nineteenth century. Kept as stock images ready to be dropped into any number of jobs, those relief cuts appeared on all manner of printed objects. One such cut appeared on three otherwise unrelated documents (among many others): A Well-Known Missionary, “A Jinrikisha Ride In Tokyo” [missionary pamphlet], Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions / Beacon Press, 1889; “Graduation and Anniversary Exercises” [program], West Springfield, MA: West Springfield High School, 1883; and John P. Stockton, Jr. (music) and W.T. Washburn (lyrics), “No Day Ever Brings the Same Pleasure Again,” New York: Dodworth & Co., 1881.
an effect of the popularity of such things as paper lanterns, a few of these elements also diffused into images that did not refer to China or Japan.\textsuperscript{43}

As seen in Chapter 7, lanterns lit events in the social world. One took place in 1927 in San Francisco’s Chinatown. “Fah Dang Wui, Feast of the Lanterns” was to feature “ten thousand” lanterns as part of “strenuous efforts to eclipse in brilliancy” more mundane experiences.\textsuperscript{44} Promising a touristic experience almost like walking into some images on sheet music covers, such events could offer experiential similarities between visual aspects of domestic music-making and spectatorship in the streets of ethnic urban neighborhoods.

A 1916 New York society event offered a similar sense of immersion:

Mrs. Jokichi Takamine of 334 Riverside Drive gave a reception and dance last evening at the Cosmopolitan Club for her son, Eben Takamine and his bride, who was Miss Ethel Johnson…. There were nearly four hundred guests.

The interior of the Cosmopolitan Club was turned into a Japanese woodland scene by Japanese artists. It was lighted in moonlit effects, pine forest filled the corners, and a tiny lake with goldfish and aquatic plants reflected the artificial moonlight. Japanese lanterns in pale yellows and greens were suspended from the pine trees and stone lanterns on pedestals furnished the light. The buffet supper was served at a wayside tea house with cherry trees in full bloom outside.\textsuperscript{45}

That physically built space also was like some pictured on music covers. Such experiences could play off each other, gaining a semblance of authenticity.

Along with parties, Madison Square Garden’s “Japanese Village” of 1885, expositions, and so on, another such environment was a “Japanese

\textsuperscript{43} The widespread U.S. use of certain Asian decorative objects and design motifs probably had two chief bearings on how music covers signified orientality. The scale on which many white Americans embraced such things shows how deeply orientalist taste permeated more general exoticist senses of (in the case of lanterns) fun, prettiness, and so on. This may have lessened the orientalist significance of those things when seen in isolation. Because paper lanterns were so routinely used as festive decoration in many otherwise non-orientalist settings, their force as signs of orientality must have relied more on context.


Village” that appeared as a movable bit of Asia on America’s East Coast. At it, people strolled beneath and through the threshold of an electrically lit torii into a constructed scene and, in at least one venue, towards a painted Fuji; this may be read as a physical metaphor for musical acts of passing into exotic spaces sung from texts with performative entrances marked by cover art. In a private sphere, home decoration afforded a means of orientalizing one’s own domestic space. A 1915 article reported that “scores” of brides were choosing wallpaper that evoked China and Japan with such elements as “pagodas.”

Cover iconography also was related to textual representations. In both, for instance, queues could mark men’s premodernity; a 1911 article argued that “queue-cutting in China…is now being done on a sufficiently wide scale to indicate that China means to become a nation in the Western sense of the word.” Scene-setting equivalents of cover images were common in many kinds of texts. The novel *Stolen Idols* included this: “From a plastered house with a curving roof, two lanterns were hanging. A girl’s figure was dimly visible through the strings of thin bamboo, rustling musically together in the breeze. She was singing to a kind of guitar, an amazing melody, uncouth in its way, and unintelligible” (Oppenheim 1925, 13). Such imagistic atmosphere could carry sinister associations, as seen in advertisements for Fu Manchu books, and a few music covers directly echoed such popular literature.

49. McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, “Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery…” [advertisement], *Asia*, December 1922, 941; see also a related advertisement in *Asia*, March 1923, 229. The art for “Fu” depicted a caricatured male Chinese figure readable in context as sinister (George P. Howard, “Fu: Chinese One Step,” Cleveland, OH: Sam Fox, 1919).
Counterparts to cover art also were common in illustrated editions of fiction for women; many offered romanticized images. These novels painted verbal pictures more picturesque than sinister. Another such body of texts comprised tourism advertisements. One began: “JAPAN / A SILKEN FAN / comes to life”: “GAY geisha girls dance to the tinkle of strange sounds....” “It’s a dream come to life,” promised this cruise line: “the Orient stepping out of a delicate and fascinating fan!” Another used fragmentarily evocative un-verbed nouns to catalog the iconography of a “Lantern-Lit / JAPAN”:

BUDDHIST temples and Shinto shrines. Swinging lanterns ... incense rising to the stars ... sacred saké in a lacquered cup. It’s Japan! The mystic, inscrutable Orient ... all that you dreamed it to be! You fill your heart with the color and the life ... all the tiny spaces in your trunk with exquisite things bought for a song ... and with a smile. Porcelains and prints; kimonos and curios! Countless little scenes and episodes, too ... such pleasant memories to share with others.

This promised physical transport like that imagined in orientalist songs; and as copywriters summoned such images through language, illustrators offered them in pictorial form. Tropes such as women in kimono and incense smoke swirling upwards figured both in music covers and in travel marketing.

50. E.g., Little (1909). On wider contexts of images of women in U.S. visual culture, see such studies as Banta (1987), Kitch (2001). See also dust-jacket art, decorative bindings, and interior illustrations in such works as Watanna (1901, 1904), Fenollosa (1906), Miln (1923). A few orientalist novels embedded musical notation between their covers; The Way of Umé offered, along with its descriptions of music-making, a facsimile of a song by its author; the next page ended the book with a photograph of Mount Fuji (Sawyer 1928, facing 144, 145).
53. This also was evident in the Admiral Oriental Line’s offer of “A WHOLE new world of alien art—strange sights, crowded days of vivid changeful panorama!” and their urging to “Crystallize your dreams.” “If the East calls you now and you can go,” the firm commanded, “investigate American ships first” (Admiral Oriental Line, “To Japan via the Short Route from Seattle,” Asia, October 1923, 763; “Crystallize Your Dreams,” Asia, February 1924, 145; “To Japan via the Short Route from Seattle,” Asia, June 1924, 483).
Language-based texts often invoked these visual signs in connection with performance. The long reprinted Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs: A Practical Working Handbook taught its readers to use “huge Chinese vases,” faux-shoji walls, Japanese prints, cherry blossoms, Mount Fuji backdrops, paper lanterns, “stunted Japanese pines in pots,” and stone lanterns (C. Mackay 1915, 78–81). This figured in theatrical reception as well; a review of The Yellow Feather could have been describing a music cover: “Picturesque trees stamp their gnarled outlines on the sky; a bridge of yellow ochre arches the centre of the stage and over it patter the dancers in brilliant satin jackets and chiffon pajamas such as China never dreamed of.” Similar imagery on music covers may have led some amateur singers to enact orientalist gestures or vocal mannerisms based on practices heard or seen in theatrical settings.

READING ORIENTALIST MUSIC COVERS AS INTEGRATED WHOLES

A closer look at selected covers will show how these images made certain meanings readily available to people who saw them in stores or friends’ parlors, and often for long afterwards on their own pianos.

These readings may elucidate how elements noted above worked in specific images, beginning with what was probably the most prevalent central
component of these songs’ cover images: female figures marked as oriental. Most of these figures were accompanied by fans or other stock attributes. The preponderance of covers with such images of women, isolated or in designs alluding to narrative positioning, is a sign of how often femininity and orientality converged. This was reinforced by images in other media. These covers asserted that one key form of orientality was an exotic subtype of femaleness, one made into a picturesque focus of white spectatorship.

Sheet music images of this sort also took more specific forms. Many presented decontextualized imaginary women, as did the cover of “Karama” (fig. 8.68). Its central element was a young woman made Japanese by her clothing and accessories, one lit (in the artist’s mind, and perhaps in a studio if the image was drawn from life) by the low-angle, soft illumination of a lantern or candle implied out-of-frame below, from where it lent the scene an imaginary nighttime intimacy. Some covers centered on female protagonists set them in interiors that rendered them soothingly domestic. “The Japanese Sandman” integrated ideas about Asian femininity with notions of the home, and child-rearing activities it housed, as a private sphere of peaceable female agency. The cover showed a kimono-clad mother reclining on tatami with her child; cherry blossoms stood in a vase, while moonlit silhouettes of pine branches and a distant Mount Fuji were visible through curiously transparent shoji walls. With its central figure’s gaze downcast upon her infant in

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56. For broader background on stereotypical female iconography specifically in turn-of-the-century U.S. commercial print media, see Banta (1987, 593–631).
57. E.g., in such images of Tamaki Miura as one reproduced in fig. 1.7 from Alice Woodbrough Chapman, “A Japanese Butterfly,” The Musician, January 1916, 45.
seeming obliviousness to her viewers, it presented an image more internally focused than many. This located the spectator as an invisible, fly-on-the-wall witness made magically privy to faraway familial intimacies.

Certain images of women suggested more carnal than maternal intimacy, as seen in “Half Past Ten (Sop-Tim-Bom).” It is implausible to read that cover art (fig. 8.69) as anything but heavy-handedly sexualized. Standing at night in a field of lilies and facing a clock telling the title’s time, a starry sky with a hint of pagoda eaves behind her, an imagined woman held her hands together, head tilted down, eyes looking up from beneath heavily drawn lids, with the tip of one thumb placed between her lips; the figure’s stance, with her pelvis rocked slightly forward, accentuated its sexualization. Made blatant in a plausibly deniable way, the image’s point was reinforced by the song’s lyrics: “Ev’ry time the clock strikes half past ten, / All my tho’ts go rushing back again / To an oriental garden where the Yang-tse wends its way. / I can see a pretty China maid, not too bold and just a bit afraid / As she nestled to my heart so light and gay. / ‘If you likee me, I likee you, why not you never come to me before?’ / Sweet were the words she’d say / ‘If you go away, I go-ee too, maybe you never come to me no more….” These words worked with the cover as an elliptical paean to a fictive sexual encounter.

That degree of direct suggestiveness was uncommon. Most covers left more to the imagination when it came to sex, but less (metaphorically) explicit images were bound up with dominant beliefs about gender, race, romance, and power. Some offered visions of couples framed by such surroundings as that on the cover of “Tea Leaves.” By the artist who drew the “Japanese

Sandman” cover, it depicted a white man and a woman of liminal ethnicity. Both in Japanese-style clothing, they knelt on the floor as he looked at her downcast eyes. An atmosphere of quietude echoed the artist’s earlier cover, but here it framed a heterosocial adult situation made almost pan-orientalist by a quasi-mullah figure (and lyrical mention of a “mandarin” and a “lowly coolie”). Images such as this used orientalist backdrops for interactions not unlike those depicted on covers for many songs unrelated to Asian topics.

Many illustrations depicted heterosocial moments of unequal power. Some centered on voyeurism. The cover for “I’m Goin’ to Peek in, in Pekin” (fig. 8.64 above) was rendered from a vantage point behind the male figure’s shoulder, fostering complicit perspective by positioning its viewers as fellow peeping toms. Orientality and tropicality met in the cover of “Nagasaki,” which had a woman cast a sidelong glance at the man staring at her body (not her eyes), but left her body more exposed than his to him and to viewers.

Other covers carried gender-based attentiveness to the body beyond acts of looking to physical interaction. On “My Lu Lu San” (fig. 8.70), a white sailor interposed himself between a Japanese woman and her parasol, his weight actively poised on his forward leg as he leaned his body in towards the impersonalized female object of his attentions, his face pulled into a severe smile that stretched the boundary between happy enthusiasm and something more maniacal; his right hand was hidden who knew where.

63. Cover for “Nagasaki,” Harry Warren (music) and Mort Dixon (lyrics), New York: Remick Music Corp., 1928.
Catalyzing this male attention was a seemingly immobile woman—a figure with facial features reduced to sketchy signs of its categorical race and gender (in contrast to the overworked expressiveness of the man’s visage), one whose agency consisted of being there and holding a parasol while her masculine supplicant enacted his intrusively energetic moves.

While the basic dynamics of this scene derived from widespread beliefs about gender roles in courtship, the specific ways in which it vested agency in its male protagonist offer a trace of the workings of race. Draining the sailor’s female foil of social power and personal affect, it relegated that human-like form to the condition of a hollow shell marked on its surface with feminine orientality, but lacking any self. This split is evident even in such details as the figures’ left arms: his flexed and invested with muscular energy flowing from his bicep down to lively fingers and a thumb that raised a small fold of fabric as it brushed his chest, hers held straight at the elbow with an inexpressive rigidity matched by that of a hand suspended in the blank white space of her sleeve lining. These contrasts made the image seem to depict the inequitable pairing of a living (white) man and an inanimate (oriental) doll.65

The ways in which white consumers made meaning from these pictorial encounters may have come down in some part to each person’s gendered self-identity. Two likely interpretive stances may be hypothesized as semi-parallel modes of identificatory response by these pieces’ users, who for the most part were heterosexual and white. Literature, home decoration, clothing, and other cultural forms offered white women many avenues for identification with imagined Asian women.66 Read in context with such identificatory moments, the ways in which some women may have seen these covers may have involved imaginary inhabitation of the roles of orientalized women as dainty objects of white men’s desire. Many male viewers may have identified with figures these images portrayed as being gendered and complexioned like they were. With those protagonists as proxy figures marked (i.e., unmarked) in the same ways as white American men, many male consumers also probably saw these images in ways entailing imagined involvement. This is all the more likely regarding images in which perspective and other pictorial devices spatially situated viewers alongside the white male agents they saw.

Images of women outnumbered those of men.67 Still, many covers bore images of orientalized male figures, some as halves of romantic couples.68

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66. Mari Yoshihara recently has examined many such moments in more detail (2003).
67. This probably reflected the conjuncture of a tendency for covers of most types to depict women more often than men, as well as the widely noted under-representation of Asian and Asian American men in many U.S. representational domains (cf. Kashiwabara 1996).
68. A subgroup of such pairings consisted of those pieces among the ca. 1904–1905 spate of Russo-Japanese War covers that portrayed uniformed Japanese military men parting from their female partners. The many such images were related to more generically orientalized romantic covers by virtue of representing Asian men positioned in heterosexual couples in their home nation, but were distinguished by their male figures’ attire of European-derived military uniforms. These images tended to locate kimono-clad female figures as icons of a feminized native Japaneseess, and their uniformed male counterparts as signs of a delimited technological—thus masculinized—modernization and westernization as protégé “Yankees of the East.” Chiefly appearing for a few years rather than as a major ongoing part of the
An iconic activity of Chinese American male figures was homesick dreaming about China, for many Americans a dreamlike place. Images of these reveries often were marked as drug-induced by framing with smoke from long pipes. Distant homelands situated in this way were signified by everything from pagodas to displaced Japanese women (as for “Chee Wee,” fig. 8.71). Bodily aspects of these men ranged from idealized stereotype to grotesque caricature. Without using that gamut as an interpretive axis of seemingly sympathetic versus disparaging images, it is worth noting the frequency of the grotesque in portrayals of Chinese men, its lesser frequency in those of Asian women, and the likely relationships between this pattern and histories of immigration, labor, and commodity importation and use.

The broad outlines of certain covers’ association of Chinese origins, geographical relocation to the United States, labor, opium, urban ethnic enclaves, and peril of various sorts were central parts of U.S. discourse on exclusion. Many pieces invoked overlapping subsets of these associations in scenes of Chinatown streets inhabited by men anonymously typified by poses that hid their faces (e.g., on “Pipe Dream Blues”). Others implied this fictive backdrop of urban zones of drugs and dreams, sending oriental difference out visual discourse at issue here, these male figures also were related to images in magazine illustrations and book covers such as that for Russia and Japan (Unger and Morris 1904).

69. As the epigraph to the 1915 play A Thousand Years Ago had it (see Chapter 5), “Here in China the world lies a-dream, like a thousand / Years ago, and the place of our dreams is eternal” (MacKaye 1915, title page). On that author’s anti-modernist sensibilities, see Glassberg (1990, 167 ff., 239–45 ff.); on wider anti-modernist aspects of contemporary U.S. exoticist culture, see Lears (1981, 57, 175–77, 225–37, 271–73). On wider contexts of U.S. visual culture relevant to cover images of imagined Chinatowns, see A. Lee (2001).


into white America as a threatening force—one that menaced a peaceful smaller town in the illustration for “Chinky Chinee Bogie Man.”  

Spatial displacement underpinned different types of covers. Some may be read as expressions either of response to specific early twentieth-century transnationalities or of the exotic novelty that infused a great deal of touristic experience. On some covers, both stances coexisted in a kind of edgy stasis.

A willfully happy touristic mood filled some images of China or Japan as pleasant Asian locales for (white) American romantic escape. “Shanghai Honeymoon” showed newlyweds contentedly seated on a crescent moon surrounded by lanterns. The song’s lyrics suggested a honeymooners’ emotional world with a population of two, one set in a China made congenial to such a scenario by its lack of any Chinese inhabitants. Images depicting white Americans’ activities in orientalized U.S. spaces could adopt similar tones. Other covers warned of dangers awaiting white women in U.S. Chinatowns. “Rose of the Underworld” (fig. 8.72) alluded to a fall into prostitution tainted with racial pollution—while the song offered the fun of wallowing in the travails of a white rose lost in a Chinese American underworld, perhaps some day to be rescued and morally redeemed.

Various images focused on the popularity of Chinese or Japanese goods and cultural practices rather than on U.S. sites of Asian American presence.

74. Socialites on some covers had a fine time in Chinese restaurants, but how well their waiters enjoyed things was not so clear; see DY NY [?], cover for “Down in Chinatown,” J. Walter Leopold (music) and J. Caspar Nathan (lyrics), Chicago: F. J. A. Forster, 1914.
The cover of “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong” emphasized that Chinese game’s tiles along with an image of a woman rendered in quasi-ukiyo-e style. The fact that the song’s lyrics told of an Irish American husband who felt driven to racist murder by his wife’s taste for rice, chopsticks, “kimona,” and so on (and her consequent neglect of domestic chores) lent additional significance to this piece as a whole, discussed more below.

Covers played in other ways with identity and cultural displacement by juxtaposing signs of Asian and (white) U.S. essences. Some invoked a split between an old Asia and a modern European America. “Springtime in Chinatown” (fig. 8.73) depicted a Chinese (American?) man serenading a Chinese (American?) woman who stood and listened in a pagoda-roofed balcony. Electrical power lines were suspended overhead, with a streetlamp precluding any misreading of the wires as serving mere telegraphy. This made Chineseness in America into a pure, transplanted essence set down amid a progressive U.S. modernity, one to which embodied orientality always would remain alien. As if to bring this home, the singer was carefully put next to the streetlamp, and the lines that powered it were run right up behind the woman’s head. This placed both figures in immediate proximity to signs of an

77. That content makes it worth remembering that to attend to how these songs situated racial politics is not to charge authors with racist intent. Rather, to unpack these aspects of these songs is to show how they offered material for ideologically saturated kinds of fun that lent credibility to powerful ideas. The fact that a typically decorated cover for a musical text was wedded to a tale joking about race-based homicide may say more about the discursive field enabling such meetings of music and ideology than about the intent of any one author.
78. Cf. a British example that presented on its cover, and in its lyrics, the symbolic pairing of a “sing-song girl” and a radio as audible signs of (old) Asian musical tradition and (new) technological modernity; Ray, cover for “Sing-Song Girl of Old Shanghai,” Horatio Nicholls (music) and Edgar Leslie (lyrics), London: Lawrence Wright Music Co., 1928.
electrified world defined by (tacitly white) American brands of technological know-how and progress. In contrast to that new world, the figures’ exotically clothed bodies offered a pseudohistorical backdrop of an unchanging status often written onto America’s orients. In this way, they posited the corollary assertion that to be Asian in America was to carry inside and outside one’s self the unshakably unmodern condition of orientality—even if fully electrified Chinatown utilities were to light one’s exotic serenade.

THE REALITY EFFECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN LITHOGRAPHIC COVER ART

The last group of images considered here involved technology less as an object than a means of representation. Almost all covers from these decades were lithographically produced, and most used that technique to replicate drawn images; but photography figured prominently in many. This opened up representational possibilities. Most covers integrating images originally made by both of these means used them for production reasons, often to support the use of various performer images within a single drawn design (see Chapter 3); others brought these elements together in less demarcated ways, with varying expertise and technical success. These composite pictures offered visually disjunct conjunctures of images made by the lens and the hand, affecting the meanings viewers most easily could make from them.

Some covers placed photographically based images of Asian people within hand-drawn surrounds that were based on orientalist motifs and composed in ways that connected an image’s components together. Some surrounding imagery included frames drawn around photographs. In one sense, this set off inset images as distinct from their contexts; but in another, this conscious attention to drawing in relation to a photograph drew together
the two elements. The cover of “My Belle of To-Ki-O” (fig. 8.74) exemplifies this. Along with the use of only black ink in its photographically derived area, a bamboo frame called attention to it as a portrait on a wall or a view through a window into another world. An image such as this may be read as authenticating the music within its folio. Just as its visual composition offered a window into a semblance of Japanese reality, so might the musical work. This authentication drew on the representational authority invested into such media as stereo views and postcards, and it had a more direct analogue in the use of photographs to illustrate editions of orientalist novels that seemed to seek a similar sense of fictive veracity (e.g., E. Cooper 1917, facing 167).

Other covers evoked more local performative realities by embedding photographs of white performers in orientalist costume (and often makeup) into drawn surrounds. The cover of “My Japanee” (fig. 8.75) dropped a photograph of Loretta Convey in stage kimono into a drawn space along with a free-floating sort-of-bonsai and an image of a woman rendered in quasi-ukiyo-e style. That small figure seemed an icon of female Japaneseness, an imaginary mentor, and a validating sign in regard to Convey’s mimesis—an impression reinforced by resonances of the figures’ fans, sleeves, and hair ornaments. “Moon Eyes” (fig. 8.76) paired a photograph of two singers in yellowface with a silhouette drawing of a serenade scene; its figures seemed to stand as the duo’s wholly oriental shadow selves, role models, or both.

81. Cover for “My Japanee,” from The Isle of Spice, Louis L. Comstock, Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1908. The disjointed alignment of the photographic head and body suggest that they may have been assembled from two photographs, so the body may not even have been Convey’s.
82. Cover for “Moon Eyes: Chinese Serenade,” Howard A. Winburn (music) and George A. Norton (lyrics), New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1904. Along with covers depicting yellowface stage acts were some that seemed unaffiliated with live performance. The cover for “My
As noted, many designs left room to insert photographs of performers. The racial typology seen in vaudeville operated here as well. For example, covers for “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier” showed singers racialized as authentically oriental, Indian, or white with mimetic blackness. While white listeners could think they were hearing authentic orientality in Asian American vocalists, however, vaudeville offered few chances for participatory singing; and while domestic singing of orientalist songs seldom had such ostensibly authentic grounding, it enabled people to internalize orientality.

Orientalist Covers as an Aspect of Texts to Be Performed

This first-perspective look at sheet music will end by exploring the effects of these images’ printed conjuncture of musical context and orientalist imagery. What may have enabled these images to foster interpretations that were less effectively (or not at all) supported by visual documents that shared in only one of these intersecting terms? That is, which of their preferred meanings gained special credibility from dissemination in this specific medium?

The first part of this question about visual meaning specifically in sheet music goes to its multiple means of representation in images, language, and

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83. On the cultural history of the halftone process that enabled the insertion of photographic images into lithographs, see Harris (1990 [1979]); see also Saff and Sacilotto (1978).
84. See these and many other variants of covers for “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier,” Al. Plantadosi (music) and Alfred Bryan (lyrics), New York: Leo. Feist, 1915.

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musical notation, and to how people used these documents in performance. This linkage to embodied practice is crucial. Even considered strictly in relation to cover images and amateur performance, certain medium-specific interpretive effects seem likely. Seen on the covers of printed commodities used for domestic musical recreation, images of oriental bodies offered cues for undocumented moments of mimetic embodiment. Singing of characters pictured on covers they had just seen, amateurs had pictorial models for the protagonists of whom they sang, often in the first person. Offering temporally and spatially close connections between visual experience and performative enactment of these texts, this may have heightened the credibility or sense of escape some people felt in these moments, making these images’ content more persuasive by linking people’s acts of looking to their performative use of their own bodies. Necessarily hypothetical, this interpretation is plausible due to the tendency of embodiment to deepen acts of meaning construction.

The second part of the question centers on how some visual aspects of these covers were related to those of others, and how comparing them may help in understanding which aspects of orientalist sheet-music art offered especially strong arguments about race. Some kinds of imagery seem to have been relatively value-neutral signs of cultural and geographical location more than loaded markers of race. An example is representations of architecture. These generally marked locations within a system of categorically equivalent terms (pagodas meant East Asia, windmills meant the Netherlands), but often did not offer assertions about the people who lived in those locales (although in these images’ interpretation, associations of place and race could do so).
Other types of imagery had more overt racial valences. Primary in this regard were depictions of bodily attributes which had no direct equivalents in most images of European ethnic types. Two such signs of orientality were squinting, often slanted eyes and elongated, pointy fingers. Those signs had no direct counterparts in typical portrayals of European physicality, but were racially loaded in ways akin to such things as the engorged lips and fat fingers drawn by many white commercial artists in images of imagined African Americans. The comparative stylistic practices of covers’ depiction of such figures and those positioned as oriental show how the latter images located Asianness as a condition belonging outside the United States. Most stereotyped and degrading depictions of African Americans positioned such figures as an American racial group that was, despite its historical and cultural associations with Africa, a part of the United States as a nation. These figures usually bore bodily marks of white racism in how such features as lips and hands were drawn, and they generally were shown in clothing associated with U.S. cultural settings ranging from Southern field labor and rural poverty to fancy-dress ethnic social events. While some covers depicted such figures in scenes evoking Africa, more common were images that portrayed them in thoroughly American settings.

The iconography of these two broad types of images differentiated two kinds of positioning between racialized figures and homes within—or homelands outside of—North America. Most orientalist covers conflated Asian and Asian American figures by using the same signs of physiognomy

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85. As artifacts of a dominant white superculture, those portrayals consistently did write out the oppression of this and other minority groups; but the immediate comparative point has to do with the visual positioning of racialized ethnicities as belonging, with any hierarchical status high or low, anywhere at all within the nation.
and clothing. Even in supposedly Asian American scenes, most were drawn in robes, kimono, and other outfits that displayed an ascribed estrangement from U.S. settings. Along with presenting that strangeness—of such figures as neither fully belonging nor having belonged for long to where they “were”—in ways perceptible within their own immediate visual contexts, these images acquired further exclusionary meaning through intertextual interpretation.

Such broadly contextual acts of interpretation were made easy by the presence of images of oriental figures dressed in these ways on the covers of many more songs set in imagined Japanese or Chinese than U.S. sites. Viewed in that remembered context, the latter pieces’ depiction of Asian Americans as merely displaced orientals made those figures appear identical to inhabitants of imagined Asias. In its conjuncture of racialized physiognomy, exotic dress, and linkage to foreign locales that long had been made strange, this offered an assertion that was not so prevalent in some other cover images of ethnic types. This discursive effect tended to pull dominant U.S. ideas of people racialized as Asian back to an exotic Asia—and thus, in the minds of many of the white Americans who saw these images, to keep pushing people of Asian heritage in the United States out of the ideological category of the American.

Just as it would be a mistake to read the corpus of “far east” orientalist images as consisting of two bounded subtypes of Japan- and China-centered pieces, it would be foolish to swing the interpretive pendulum too far the other way by arguing that these subgroups’ permeability was so total that they made up a homogeneous visual discourse. A reasonable reading lies in between but not in the middle, swung more towards conflation but
suspended short of it in ways that arose from historical circumstance and wider contexts of picture-making and publication.

A concrete example may illustrate this. While female figures rendered in quasi-Japanese style could and did crop up in the opium-besotted dreams of stereotyped Chinese Americans or below the disruptive cataract of a fictive Irish American mother’s Mah Jong tiles, queue-wearing men were more firmly enlisted in the service of representing an imagined China. (Some portrayals of Chinese men did give them less canonical attributes, as seen in the art for “The Powerful Chinaman” in fig. 8.77; its quasi-samurai image also was used for one edition of a piece titled “Yokohama”). These tendencies probably derived from the visibility of such female figures in many kinds of printed images and other commodities, and from the different kinds of U.S. historical visibility of actual and mediated Chinese men with queues.

However this distinction arose, it also offered Americans who saw and bought these things, and took them home to sing and play and sometimes display on their pianos, the ideas that female orientality afar could be pretty and powerless, but that such exotic charms were lost in orientality relocated and regendered as male Asian American labor within the nation’s borders. It would be possible to read this as signifying a more favorable tone towards Japaneseness than Chineseness; but that would fall into the trap of parsing superficially friendly from unfriendly images within a discourse that dealt in representations that all were reductive, it would ignore the framing presence of depictions that undermined any song-specific differentiation of Asian

nationalities, and it would jump the gun in regard to these works’ musical notation—which (as we will see) seldom marked any difference between Chineseness and Japaneseness, and thus functioned as a kind of audible glue that made these pieces even less differentiable along national lines. It also would risk missing a locally crucial finding.

This immediately apposite point regarding these images is twofold. First, the degree to which exclusionary ideas were endemic to these covers becomes most evident on a discursive level rather than by examining any one cover or a group of covers associated with one Asian nation. Their ideological meaning operated on both single-text and intertextual levels. Some of their key political significance could sink most deeply into—or be constructed within—their users’ minds by experiencing these publications as framed in the moment or in memory by other musical works. Second, these images’ meanings also depended on close association with other aspects of the publications that carried them into American homes and musical amateurs’ consciousnesses. Even covers that deployed visual icons exclusively derived from one or another nationality of reference to mark songs associated with that nation often decorated musical works which drifted into evocations of a generic China/Japan. This microcontextual factor brings us to the second of this chapter’s three perspectives on sheet music: these pieces’ song texts.
Singing Orientality from Sheet Music, Second View: Lyrics

...a great lyric is as necessary to the success of a popular song as a great melody, but not more necessary. A lyric is a verse that conveys a great deal of emotion. Most popular songs have two verses and one chorus. A regular metre is rare; irregularity may even be a virtue. The regular occurrence of rhymes and precise rhymes are not necessary—but it is better to strive after regularity and precision. There are five lyrical measures common to all poetry, but you may break every rule if you only break a record. Rhythm—the swing—is the secret of successful songs. Every lyric must have one or more punch lines—which may occur at the end of each verse, but must be found in the last lines of the chorus. Contrast—either of idea, poetic measure or music—is one sure way of securing the punch. Love is the greatest single element that makes for success in a song idea. The one-word standard of popular song-writing is simplicity—music easy to sing, words easy to say, the idea simple and plain.

(Page 1915, 361–62)

INITIAL SEMI-QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Just as cover art for many songs tossed together items from a common pool of visual signs of orientality, some of their lyrics consisted of analogous textual conglomerations. “When It’s Cherry Time in Tokio” offers a sense of this; its chorus went in part: “When it’s Cherry time in Tokio, / I want to go to Tokio, / In a bamboo shack, across the sea, / A Geisha waits for me. / Where the lanterns sway, / I long to stray, / The way we used to do, / Ho! O-San, / On your little silken fan, / There’s a note from a lonely sailor man....” 87

The chorus of the 1919 song “Night Time in Old Japan” gave singers another such collection of words commingled with less-marked language:

Night-time is bright-time in old Japan
Where the lights are blinking and
Oriental lovers spoon ‘neath the moon
While they croon love’s story
Then I’ll meet someone who’ll understand when I say
I ching a high ching a lee I’m lonely
Sweet Japanese you’ll be my only
When the sun is shining thru’ the bamboo shade

Then for night I’m pining and my slant eyed maid
   So pretty
Wooing and cooing like no one can
When it’s night-time in old Japan.88

This recombination of tropes is more disjointed than many, but most of these texts relied on a handful of such signs. This recurrence moved these attributes beyond the world of any one piece into realms of genre and discourse, from which we may see each of these songs as more a reinstatiation of beliefs and tropes than an expression of new ideas. Some smoothly integrated texts could obscure this condition beneath surfaces more polished than that of the lyrics above, but in a word-by-word sense their content was much the same.

Content analysis of a word-counting sort has limited utility here due to its own limitations and this study’s aims.89 Still, a look at the frequencies of occurrence of some linguistic signs of orientality will supply a macro-level sense of how prevalent were certain terms and how their distributions could erase most distinctions between Chinese and Japanese points of reference.90 Despite its limits, this initial content analysis also may complement work by scholars including Judy Tsou and Anthony Sheppard on specifically Chinese or Japanese references.91 For example, Tsou has attended to the gendered

89. See Winston (1990) on such analysis. On wider horizons of raciological language in other contemporary texts, see supplements (not part of this dissertation) available from the author.
90. One thing it will not do is demarcate this corpus of texts from—or assimilate it to—other bodies of popular song, something which would require comparison with a control sample. Such a project would produce findings marginal to a study focused more on processes of representation and musically mediated discourse than on (sub-) genre differentiation.
91. In a conference paper, Sheppard has noted the lyrical language of “old” and “little” Japanese as well as historical change in many songs’ characterization of Japanese skin color, representations of which shifted from being more often “brown” early on to more consistently “yellow” by mid-century; that subject may be developed further in Sheppard (forthcoming). His unpublished paper, noted below at other specific points of connection to this chapter, was “Strains of Japonisme in Tin Pan Alley, 1900–1930,” given at a joint society meeting in 2000, Musical Intersections (Toronto); it is cited here with Sheppard’s permission.
valences of “almond eyes” as a demasculinizing attribute of many songs’ male Chinese characters (Tsou 1997, 36).

The verbal imagery and emotional tones of most of these texts relied on a mix of language encompassing orientalist terms (“almond-eyed”), more widespread ones (“dreamy”), and some located in between. “Little” and “old” were part of stock orientalist phrases, but “little”-ness also was a common attribute of female romantic objects in all sorts of songs, and many lyrics invested antimodern “old”-ness into non-Asian nostalgized locales. These shared words’ inclusion below reflects these songs’ nested locations.

The subcorpus used here comprises one edition each of works published as single songs from 1900 to 1930. Its 244 works consist of 147 which refer substantially to Chinese or Chinese American settings or figures and 106 to Japanese—or rarely Japanese American—ones (see Appendix 4). Nine present ambiguous scenarios of an orientalized East Asia or sustained invocations of China and Japan; the counts below treat them as pertaining to both. Because the weighting of Chinese-referential texts reflects a similar distribution in this chapter’s larger corpus, it enables the list below to reflect what seems to have

92. Despite its numerical surface, the analysis is based less visibly on a qualitative assessment of which songs and words are of interest, not on a rigorously logical or quantitative selection process. Along with its majority of run-of-the-mill works, it includes some theatrically (and a few cinematically) associated songs issued in separate form; several pieces found to date only as syndicated newspaper supplements, but probably licensed for that use from publishers of prior editions; and some topical songs on the Russo-Japanese War. (On one New York paper as a venue for popular songs, see Graziano 1991; for background on earlier music publishing in U.S. periodicals, see B. Miller 1995). It excludes works found to date only in complete playscripts; pieces with texts deeply embedded in specific dramatic contexts—for example, Belasco plays—which rendered their content and likely patterns of use distinct from the usual run of popular lyrics; art songs; teaching compositions; instrumentals; variants of works already represented; works not published in the United States; etc.

93. Reflecting this topic’s treatment as part of a study not primarily concerned with sheet music, the number of pieces examined here is smaller than that of such more tightly media-focused analyses as Judy Tsou’s “Gendering Race,” which encompasses over 300 songs referring to racialized Chineseness over a wider range of years (Tsou 1997).
been these pieces’ proportional makeup. It says nothing certain about their prevalence in day-to-day practice, which was driven not only by numbers of pieces but by each one’s amount of use—witness the near omnipresence of “Japanese Sandman” in its time versus the obscure careers of many works.

The list shows the number of songs within the subcorpus that presented each trope in their lyrics. It gives those counts as a total and as parenthetical “(Chinese/Japanese)” subcounts. For example, the “10 (6/4)” for “kimono(s), kimona(s)” indicates that ten of the songs’ lyrics included one of those terms, that six of those ten invoked in central ways Chinese points of reference such as China or Chinatown, and that four of the ten invoked Japanese referents in such defining ways as narrative settings. This avoids relying on the apparent specificity that we might reasonably but wrongly imagine the word “kimono” to have suggested, and thus does not obscure such phenomena as its slippage into lyrical Chinas—showing how these words could transcend national or cultural significance to mark a racialized East Asian orient.94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Count (C/J)</th>
<th>Total% (C%/J%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orient (as root of any word)</td>
<td>68 (47/24)</td>
<td>29 (32/23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orient (the exact word itself)</td>
<td>9 (8/1)</td>
<td>4 (5/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental</td>
<td>62 (41/24)</td>
<td>25 (28/23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientals</td>
<td>1 (1/0)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (as root of any word)</td>
<td>6 (3/3)</td>
<td>2 (2/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (the exact word itself)</td>
<td>5 (2/3)</td>
<td>2 (1/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asiatic</td>
<td>1 (1/0)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian(s)</td>
<td>0 (0/0)</td>
<td>0 (0/0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

94. After each raw count, findings appear as percentages rounded to whole numbers, with nonzero values below 0.5% indicated as “<1%” of the 244 total (or 147 “Chinese” or 106 “Japanese”) songs. Certain only apparent logical inconsistencies—for example, the “14% (15%/15%)” shown for “tea”—are artifacts of the nine overlapping pieces’ inclusion in both subcategories. A few terms with very low rates of occurrence (e.g., “Asian”) are listed because they might otherwise be thought to have been more common than they were.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>New (133/5)</th>
<th>Existing (90/5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China (as root of any word)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (the exact word itself)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinatown</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinee</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinaman, Chinamen</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch<em>nk, Ch</em>nky, etc.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (as root of any word)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (the exact word itself)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanee, Japanese, Japanes(e)y</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*p, *ppy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiny</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My little</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow, yella (in any usage)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almond (as adjective for eyes)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinky, winky (in any usage)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slanty, slanted, slant eyed /eyes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queue(s), cue(s)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigtail(s)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or both of the above two categories</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimono(s), kimona(s)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan (none has “fans”)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parasol(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopsticks (and variant terms)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry blossom(s), cherries, etc.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus (flowers, in names, etc.)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poppy, poppies</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ching (in names or vocables)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming Toy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Toy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The tendency for many of these words to recur in songs about Chineseness and Japaneseness suggests the notion of an orient encompassing Japan, China, and U.S. Chinatowns. The imprecision with which terms that were culturally specific in origin signified that imagined space is seen the slippage of kimono westward across the China Sea; a similar genericization of names is seen in the occasional Chinese “Yo San” or Japanese “Ming Toy.” A few terms’ more precise referentiality—e.g., of “queue,” as also seen in cover art—may be due to histories of actual social encounter in the United States (unlike most engagement with kimono as exotic imports from a faraway Far East).  

95. The matter of lyrics’ topical specificity raises the matter of temporal specificity, which figures little here. An analysis focused on explicating individual texts or showing how songwriters latched onto current events and shifting public tastes, rather than on how these pieces instantiated a persistent discourse, would do well to delve into such a corpus by using breakpoints to chart topical and rhetorical changes within annual or half-decade windows; but the chronological detail that would generate would obscure the questions at issue here.
A few interpretive comments on the numbers above will lead to more locally useful approaches. First is the unexceptional frequency of what in this context were synonyms for “Chinese” or “Japanese” but offered more pointed racial characterization. These could take superficially playful form, but even in recreational settings (and with or without participants’ awareness) they evoked histories of racist invective and violence. This illustrates the power of raciological discourse to infect musical practice without authors, singers, or audiences having decided to perform or enjoy racist utterances—which were a naturalized part (and thus an often unnoted one) of much social practice and belief, and became more so each time someone sang one of these songs.

The occurrence of words such as “dreamy” and “far” bespeaks both general escapism and specific distancing of orientality. The prevalence of “old” is especially noticeable in “Old Japan.” Occurring in almost half of the songs on Japanese subjects, it marks how strongly their Japan tended not to be a contemporary nation (or a state with geopolitical agency, except in songs on the Russo-Japanese War) but a land continually reimagined and sung as its own fictively spatialized past. The recurrence of “little” in both subtypes, and of “my little” especially in songs referring to Japan, reminds us that the most canonical inhabitants of such spaces were romantically appropriable women. Nearly half of the songs set in Japan and a fifth of those with Chinese figures contained expressions of waiting, longing, yearning, or pining (and because it is based on literal appearances of certain terms, this count leaves out similar tales crafted with different words). While also heard in other lyrics, these
sentiments’ recurrence here reflects the meeting of a prevalent strain of U.S. sentiment and the popularity of quasi-Butterfly narratives in these works.96

SITUATING LYRICAL ORIENTALITY IN GENRE-BOUND STRUCTURES

These lyrics’ status as texts to be performed, and their routine moves from third-person storytelling to “quotation” of characters’ utterances, require more context-sensitive and qualitative interpretation than the counting of fragmentary words if we are to understand more of what they meant. In the millions of moments during which people made meaning from them, they were guided by pervasive discourse about orientality and by more intrinsic contexts for these words’ performative use. A book that taught would-be songwriters how to write lyrics may offer a sense of that local framing.

Various texts offered such guidance, and most agreed on many things—first among them, the importance of the chorus. The most common musical form in this tradition consisted of a first verse, a repeated chorus or refrain, a second verse, and the chorus sung twice more. Overlain on an ABBABB form of notation, this ABBCCBB textual structure led those who sang these works to sing each of a song’s verses just once, but its chorus four times. Along with this repetitive force, a chorus had the added weight of ending a piece, and so sounding as a fresh post-performance memory in the minds’ ears of listeners.

In a 1915 volume from The Home Correspondence School, Writing for Vaudeville, Brett Page instructed his readers in these matters.97 His injunctions

96. On a related point which also goes to methodology, the recurrence of such first-person forms as “I wait” could seem to have implications regarding narrative agency; but applying these counts’ decontextualizing approach to a genre in which shifts of grammatical voice were common renders isolated pronouns and verbal forms unreliable in those regards.
may have had scant effect on professional songwriters, but they offer a précis of the wider genre within which people wrote, sang, and heard orientalist song texts. Page discussed a dozen “Qualities of the Popular Song Lyric”:

1. Most Popular Songs have Two Verses and One Chorus …
2. A Regular Metre is Rare …
3. Irregularity of Meter May Even Be a Virtue …
4. Regularity and Precision of Rhymes Are Not Necessary …
5. Strive for Regular and Precise Rhyming—if Fitting …
6. Hints on Lyric Measures …
7. Simple Lyrics and Simple Music Are Necessary …
8. Rhythm the Secret of Successful Songs …
9. Where the “Punch” in the Lyric is Placed …
10. Contrast an Element of the “Punch” …
11. Love the Greatest Single Element …
12. The Title

The most apposite of these relate to the chorus and the idea of “punch”:

You will find that while there may be punch lines at the end of the verses there are nearly always punch lines at [or near] the end of the chorus. There must be a reason for this similarity in all these popular songs. And the reason is this: The emphatic parts of a sentence are the beginning and end. The emphatic part of a paragraph is the end. If you have a number of paragraphs, the last must be the most emphatic. This is a common rule of composition founded on the law of attention—we remember best what is said last. The same thing is true of songs. And song-writers are compelled by vaudeville performers to put a punch near the end of their choruses because the performer must reap applause. Thus commerce keeps the song-writer true to the laws of good art. Therefore remember:

The most attractive lines of a popular song must be the last lines, or next to last lines, of the chorus.

This holds true whether the song is a “sob” ballad or a humorous number. And—strictly adhering to this rule—put a punch, if you can, at the end of each verse. But whether you put a punch at the end of a verse or not, always put a punch close to the end of your chorus. (358–59; emphasis in source; bracketed “or near” added to reflect the sense of surrounding text)

This weighting of text based on its location in a song is a key point here.

As noted above, much of this issue went to memorability; but Page laid out more concretely the ways in which many songs achieved, leveraged, or played with this effect beyond the baseline afforded it by plain repetition:

98. Collapsed from his subheadings, with explanations excised (Page 1915, 348–61).
The popular song is only as good as its chorus. For whistling purposes there might as well be no verses at all. But of course you must have a first verse to set your scene and lead up to your chorus, and a second verse to finish your effect and give you the opportunity to pound your chorus home. Therefore begin to write your chorus around your big idea. (370)

Narrative is what you must strive to forget in a chorus—in your chorus you must convey emotion swiftly—that is, with a punch. (371)

His example of how to “convey emotion by broad strokes” in a chorus is telling in this regard:

When a man rushes through the corridors of a doomed liner he does not stop to say, “the ship has struck an iceberg—or has been torpedoed—and is sinking, you’d better get dressed quickly and get on deck and jump into the boats.” He hasn’t time. He cries, “The ship’s sinking! To the boats!”

This is precisely the way the song-writer conveys his effect. He not only cuts out the “thes” and the “ands” and the “ofs” and “its” and “perhapses”—he shaves his very thoughts down…until even logic of construction seems engulfed by the flood of emotion. Pare down your sentences until you convey the dramatic meaning of your deep emotion, not by a logical sequence of sentences, but by revealing flashes. (371–72)

As a distillation of what Page had discerned in large numbers of songs and in comments by many of their authors, the finer points of these instructions converged with certain common attributes of language in orientalist texts.

In many lyrics which used loaded terms noted above, their placement in choruses added to their performed weight. In that of “Chinky Butterfly,” the title’s first word underwent the obsessive reiteration of nine instances in printed form—which, in a chorus, amounted to 36 utterances. Grammarical shifts at transitions into choruses could give the same content new meaning.

The first verse of “Ching Chong” led into the chorus (see chapter epigraph)

with lines including “they sing,” locating it as external to the people who sang and heard it; the second used “you sing,” repositioning the same—but not the same—chorus as being sung by everyone within earshot. A common rhetorical device in songs of many sorts, this shift of narrative position took on added meaning when applied to choruses in orientalist lyrics, where it encouraged people to sing raciological tropes in ways that vested them with progressively deeper credence through vocally fantasized identification.100

In many songs the chorus and the title bore particular relationships that Page discussed. As a means by which consumers identified a song in the marketplace, a title had to be memorable and easily associated with it. This was no secret to songwriters and publishers.101 Orientalist titles could recall personal memories of musical experience or mediated knowledge of related histories and performances.102 They concisely positioned songs as musical commodities readily understood as belonging to certain cultural categories and offering known (but novel) pleasures to those who might buy them.

100. Other aspects of choruses’ framing had different effects. In “Jazzy Jazz in Chinatown” (or per its cover, “Jazzy Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown,” creating a pair of titles that made Chinatown and China into one space), a mid-sentence transition to the chorus suggested alternative hearings with and without that pickup. Sung as an intact utterance crossing over the transition, it added up to “When we get back to China, what could be finer, than our jazz band.” But since each verse ended with “When we” and the chorus proper began with a capitalized “Get back to China,” the latter phrase could appear to voice not just first-person enthusiasm for a trip home but perhaps also an exclusionary demand in the second-person imperative. Louis F. Borromeo and Al. Heather (music) and Herman Bush (lyrics), “Jazzie Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy Jazz Sound in All Chinatown),” New York: Fred Fisher, 1920.
101. As Irving Berlin and others noted, it also led to the “planting” of titles—of circulating them to people who might never purchase, sing, or even hear a song itself, but who could be led to help increase its title’s familiarity among those who might go out and buy the piece (Irving Berlin, “Irving Berlin on the Writing of Popular Songs,” Melody, January 1921, 4–5).
102. Examples of this include songs with titles invoking such stage roles as Yo San (see Chapter 5). These aspects of titles vis-à-vis memory and markets could operate in ways akin to advertising practices discussed in media studies with a spatial metaphor of “positioning,” the broad sense of which is reasonably clear from the term itself (Bonney and Wilson 1990).
In the Orient a Mandarin far away in Canton town;
    Loved a little maiden named Yo San,
with roguish smile and eyes of brown.
    He vow’d he’d win a fortune for his love,
To foreign lands he sail’d away:
    Ev’ry day he wrote a tender little note.
And this is what he’d say.

[Chorus two times:]
    “Oh! Yo San, little China maid, I’ll wait for you,
    Yo San, do not be afraid, I will be true
    Tho’ I’m many miles away in Yankeeland.
    Yo San, I will come for you, down underneath the Canton moon!”

From the West one day a sail she spied, far out on the yellow sea;
    Yo San fill’d with joy and softly cried:
    “He has come at last for me.”
    In a Chinese garden ‘neath the stars,
    They dream’d about their wedding day:
    For him the East was West,
    For her the West was best,
    Because she heard him say.

[Chorus again two times to end]^{103}

With these aspects of orientalist songs’ parent genre in mind, we may read
some of their lyrics. Most told well-worn tales, so to offer close readings
of individual narratives would rehash extant analyses of other orientalist
fictions’ stock figures and means of emplotment; but in this genre, these
narratives operated in contextualized ways that are worth noting.\textsuperscript{104}

Conventional character types gained imagined reality and affective
charges in musical tales. Shadowy Chinatown denizens and quasi-Butterflies
pining for long-gone white men populated these lyrics in ways that bolstered
ideas about spine-chilling oriental dangers lurking in male form in Chinese
American neighborhoods, or of orientality made differently appealing as a

\textsuperscript{103} Jean Hazard (music) and May Tully (lyrics), “Yo San,” New York: Huntzinger &
Dilworth, 1920.

\textsuperscript{104} Earlier versions of this section offered appreciably more examples, many of which have
been cut for the sake of length; a less abridged version may reappear in some future form.
safely distant and small female object of imaginary identification or desire.\footnote{As singable stereotypes of Asianness made strange, these and other figures’ attributes and meanings sometimes followed historically shifting tendencies to represent characters ascribed to certain nationalities in seemingly “favorable” or “unfavorable” ways. But as ever, to privilege distinctions among the surface tones of these representations could tend to obscure commonalities of cultural practice and social power on a discursive level.}

Often highly gendered, these figures could at once bear national inflections and trade in culturally non-specific marks of difference. This may be seen in pairs of works set in each locale by the same lyricist (e.g., “My Little Hong Kong Baby” and “Happy Jappy Soldier Man”) and in songs with Chinese and Japanese characters, as well as in more discursively diffused ways.\footnote{John W. Bratton (music) and Paul West (lyrics), “My Little Hong Kong Baby,” New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1902; John W. Bratton (music) and Paul West (lyrics), “Happy Jappy Soldier Man,” New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1904; L. Wolfe Gilbert and Dan Caslar, “Shantung: Chino-Japo Novelty Ballad,” New York: Gilbert & Friedland, 1919.}

Gender figured centrally here. A majority of Asian protagonists in the romantic songs that made up much of this material were women. In these singable worlds, Asian men were fewer, and their roles often centered on relationships to Asian women. Among the exceptions to this were certain tales set in U.S. Chinatowns; while many dealt in romantic separation, some male figures were centered more on laundry work or other typified roles.

Taking such stock characters as background, the focus below is on these narratives’ locations and functions within the fairly stable (but not static or homogeneous) discourse of which they were a part.\footnote{Many songs did respond to shifts in the general visibility in U.S. society of certain Asian locales, cultural products, and political events, and tracking those connections could support a different study. One might correlate the publication of many songs with “Shanghai” in their titles (the selected list in Appendix 4 includes eleven dating from 1917 through 1929) with its journalistic invocation in the teens and twenties; a 1925 article offers a sense of that city’s visibility in U.S. media: “The foreign settlement of Shanghai has been the central point of the agitation from which excitement has spread to other parts of the country” (G. Nye Steiger, “China Declares Independence,” The Independent, 4 July 1925, 9–11). Specific Asian places or events could appear in songs in ways that reflected other media attention, but that flux of place names flickered on the surface of a discourse made up of glacially changing tropes.} Having situated these
lyrics as part of a single discourse, a key question is how totally it conflated Chineseness and Japaneseness. The answer is multilayered. Many topics bridged Chinese and Japanese references, as seen in songs involving a desire to know or shape the future through mystical entreaties.\textsuperscript{108} Lyrics commonly evoked an East Asian orient as a single space that was exoticized, feminized, and disempowered; but this was not always the case.\textsuperscript{109} And these traits also figured in other sentimental or novelty songs; a paternalizing fondness for “little” female objects of affection was not reserved for oriental characters.

Nonetheless, many songs used stock scenarios with interchangeably Chinese or Japanese referents.\textsuperscript{110} Quasi-Butterfly lyrics were set in either country, as seen in a “butterfly” in “My Pretty Little China Maid” as well as in such Japan-set pieces as “Sya Nara.”\textsuperscript{111} Other characters slid from country to country; “Goodbye Shanghai” took in a “Nanki-poo” and “pretty little yum yum” seemingly on the lam from \textit{The Mikado}.\textsuperscript{112} As these examples suggest, a steady partner to such lyrics’ gendered content was racial—often


\textsuperscript{109} Some also slipped into such areas as the “Asia Minor” in which one put China; Peter De Rose (music) and Ivan Reid (lyrics), “Chinwah: Song,” New York: F. B. Haviland, 1919.

\textsuperscript{110} In a way this was comparable to how actors such as Walker Whiteside employed much the same yellowface practices for performing Japaneseness or Chineseness (see Chapter 5).


more than specifically ethnic—essentialism. The imagined traits of Chinese and Japanese “butterflies” were functionally, and often literally, identical.

By far the largest number of these songs focused on heterosexual romance, often focused sentimentally on separation and longing. These narratives included intra-Asian scenarios, others involving Asian American figures, and tales of interracial romance. Other common, and frequently intersecting, themes included confluences of time, space, and racial character in “old” Asias; oriental figures’ consumption of U.S. culture; spectatorship of oriental bodies; a taste for Asian imports and practices as an amusing but potentially dangerous kind of contingent Asianization; and explicit irruptions of anti-Asian violence into lyrics where it only may have seemed out of place.

Lyrics centered on romance were, unsurprisingly, infused by gendered power relations. In a few, Asian places served as exotic sites for racially unmarked romance by (white) American couples escaping from local cares; but the majority of them involved at least one orientalized Asian figure.113 Many offered tales of Asian protagonists within their homelands, longing for partners of the same nationality or enjoying happily requited love.114 Some offered laments for Chinese or Japanese women abandoned by men of their own country; stories of separation and reunion; placid tales of lovers soon to wed; compressed accounts of those who courted, yearned, and were happily married by tale’s end; less teleological tales of romantic happiness in the

moment; open-ended scenes of longing for lovers who might yet return; or narratives of the final loss of a beloved to death.115 Others sang of Japanese-Chinese romances as interethic, international, or both.116 Transnational narratives of male Chinese immigrants in America longing for women in China or for that nation itself were common, and a few songs told tales of Japanese men overseas; but many placed all of their characters in Asia.117

Lyrics about intra-ethnic Asian romance not uncommonly situated the male half of a heterosexual couple in the United States, usually as a Chinese immigrant thinking of a beloved in China. Many such scenarios were left unresolved; certain ones suggested the possibility of a financially successful

sojourner’s return to Asia.\textsuperscript{118} Others sang of looking forward to returning home to long-missed sweethearts.\textsuperscript{119} Imagined acts of return could mix a volitional pull towards romantic reunion with an implicit push consistent with exclusion. That was vested in phrases which expressed homesickness or longing, but which meant more than that in contexts of U.S. immigration debates. This subtext is seen in the chorus of “Hong Kong,” sung in the voice of a “boy” who had come from there to a U.S. Chinatown—a place where opium-besotted dreams led him to sing this song “the whole night long”:

Hong Kong, Hong Kong, there’s no other place like Hong Kong,
Where oriental lights are gleaming
And the little chinee girls are dreaming
So long, so long, I’ll go back where I belong
In that land of rice and tea,
Soon upon my honeymoon I’ll be,
I’ll obey my heart and start for Hong Kong[.]\textsuperscript{120}

While the surface of this text celebrated voluntary return, “I’ll go back where I belong” echoed the raciological command to “go back where you belong.” Rewriting that demand into happy, first-person acceptance, it cast exclusion as if it would fulfill a desire of those it would keep out of the nation. This transformation of incommensurability into an embrace of belonging far away was reinforced by acts of singing its imagined unmaking of Asian Americans.

Many lyrics described Asian musics. One chorus made Chinese music alienating to (a white) America but an object of Chinese American nostalgia:

Pekin I want to see Pekin
for my heart is seekin’ the land of chow mein
Pekin where tom-toms are creakin’

Weird fiddles are shriekin’ a funny refrain
I just want to journey back again and peek in to Pekin
Hear a little chinee lady say to me, “Where have you been”
Pekin if my heart don’t weaken
some day I’ll come sneakin’ to Pekin and you.

Making music central to moves that combined exclusionary urges, romantic longing, and orientality into one sentimental thing, this led towards a happy inevitability: “In the far off land of rice and tea, / I can see joy for me.…”121 Related structures of racialized spatial desire were sung in other songs’ lyrics such as “…when he takes me away / I’m going back there to stay in dear old China with my China-man.”122 Without specifying that these figures’ place of removal from their original home was America, a context of public discourse about Chineseness in the United States made that assumption quite clear.

The specific kinds of happiness such texts vested in their protagonists were bound up with assumptions about the undesirability of such a thing as (what later would be called) Asian America, or the relegation of the people who constituted it to certain social roles. “Ching Foo” started with assertions about the limits of who could travel where, and whom they might woo there:

In China far away there lived a pigtail man,
He heard about the pretty girls in Yankee Land,
He longed to come here to the shores of Uncle Sam,
Then he would win a Yankee maiden[s] hand
One bright day he sailed away and much to his surprise
The girls all jollied him then ran away
When he met a Chinese maid he rolled his almond eyes
As he pleaded love she heard him say:

[Chorus two times:]
“Ching Foo loves you, yes indeed he do!
If you love too, he will marry you!
Don’t sigh, he’ll buy nice things bye and bye

Eat Chop Suey,
Then Ching Foo, will take you to Shanghai.”

She listened to his plea then laughed with all her might,
He danced with joy because he won her heart all right.
She said she’d marry him then he cried with delight,
“A Chinese honey moon we’ll have tonight
In a flat all furnished out in Oriental style,
A little Ching Foo creeping on the floor”
In his laundry he’ll be happy singing all the while
Then with joy he shouted out once more:

[Chorus again two times to end]123

The song’s double sense of romantic incommensurability and socioeconomic containment was not unique. The moral of “Say-Yoh” was that Chinese men in America should go back to China to find partners, a claim argued in part by the repeatedly sung line “Lillee galee nevee mallee Chinky Chinaman.”124

Presented and understood by many white Americans as comedic, these lyrics lead to songs of interracial romance, usually with orientalized female and white male figures. In many, appropriation and longing represented differential power. Lyrics often cheered romantic appropriation in ways such as this: “In Japan lives a dainty oriental lady with a fan Cho-San / And she sings the live long day / In a most entrancing way / About a man a man / Who has in his heart a plan / To take Cho-San to America land / And make of her his little wifey grand Cho-San from the land of Japan.”125 Some told specifically of rivalry and sentimental kidnapping.126 Gendered abduction scenarios also could be implicit, as in: “Her parents dear, did sorely fear,

126. E.g., George Evans (music) and Ren Shields (lyrics), “My Lady from Japan,” New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1903.
that some day I would fly / And take with me to foreign lands, my sweet Ki Yi.”¹²⁷ Many songs did not use verbs of taking, but told of a romantic hunt such as one planned “Way out in China, / Where the lotus blossom grows”: “I’m goin’ to find a / Sweet little china pearl, / You know the kind o’ girl, / With dreamy almond eyes that sigh, cry for just a little lovin’…”¹²⁸

Romantic abductions in Asia had, in a way, successor scenes in America. In the voice of a fictive marine, “My Little Rose of Tokio” imagined life back home. Exulting that “I’d give a lot to own her, / All wrapped up in a silk kimona,” the protagonist foresaw that “She’d make a hit if she lit around the neighborhood of Broadway, on pay day, / That little Jap’s full of snap in her own odd way and say! / There’s something about her that always hits you, / Maybe it’s the way she does Ju-Jitsu; / My little rose of To-ki-o-ky-o-ky-o.”¹²⁹ Some lyrics did vest agency in female figures moving from Asia to America.

These could buttress received ideas about just which men were desirable:

Sing Song girl from China far away,  
Loved an American lad;  
Sing Song girl come to ’merica, gay,  
Her heart feeling sad;  
Soon she meet her Yankee beau;  
Yankee learns to love her so,  
From him he would not let her go,  
It make her heart so glad.

[Chorus two times:]  
Poor Ming Toy,  
She love her Yankee Boy;  
And Yankee Chappy,  
Make her so happy,  
To him she sings her lullaby out in the moonlight,  
Sing Song girl each day,  
For Yankee man she pray;

China maiden don’t want lots of gold,
Just her Yankee in her arms to hold;
Ming Toy Sing Song girl.

Yankee boy loved China maiden true,
For her he gladly would die;
Chinaman loved this pretty maid, too,
But she cast him by;
Chinaman soon went away;
Making Sing Song girl so gay,
Yankee and Ming Toy wed one day,
As Cherry time drew nigh.

[Chorus again two times to end]130

The appearance and dismissal of a Chinese man in three short lines illustrates how these tales frequently wrote out Asian men as they wrote in white ones.

Many songs dealt in both appropriation and longing, a predominant theme. Although certain songs of interracial romance in exotic settings were untroubled by separation, most centered on it.131 Some told in the third person of Asian women waiting for first-person white men who had wooed them and planned to return.132 But regardless of their plots, virtually all exoticist songs of longing personalized social linkages of distance, race, and desirability, linking geographical location to gender difference. Within this field of yearning, orientalist songs had clear social valences. Often positioned in ways meant to be sympathetic, their lyrics’ faraway female objects of white males’ longing contrasted with sinister or rivalrous male Asian American characters in some songs. The reiteration of singable tales of good, distant Asian women voiced a white-nativist assertion of Asians’ (read also Asian Americans’) assigned place far from North America. In many songs’ worlds,

the only good Asian (American) was a woman made to pine away across the Pacific for a personified United States she could seldom or never have.

Lyrics involving orientalized women and tacitly white men put them in a range of narrative positions. While some foretold of their reunion in such definite forms as “then as sweethearts we will wander,” “I’ll be coming after you,” or “I’m returning to make you mine,” others used subjunctive moods to leave distance unbridged. One told of a Japanese woman who “will forever patiently” wait for a (white) American man; but their actions together in a “far off” and “old Japan” were couched in the language of “would” and “might” and “can almost,” making all of their interactions imaginary, even within the song’s narrative world. Certain songs conjured up an oriental femininity too far removed from an American home ever to be reached in waking life. “China Dreams” framed one such picture with a diegetically real-life visit to a Chinatown opium den, where the protagonist enjoyed a smokily fantasized faraway rendezvous with the “fascinating China doll” who in the song’s real world had lit his “dream-pipe” and smiled—“but that is all.”

Others told of cads who simply would not return and thus made convenient foils for Asian women’s ineffectual grieving, or of sentimentalized desire unfulfilled in such ways as the return of men to transpacific scenes where long-remembered lovers had “vanished like the morning dew.”


With this framing, a look at some specific relationships to the “Madame Butterfly” story is in order. A huge number of lyrical settings and events were derivatives, spinoffs, or repositionings of that prototypical tale, the master narrative most prevalent in orientalist songs. “Singapore” distilled its core trope as “He leaves she grieves.”137 Some songs were plain retellings of the tale, as were “When He Comes Back to Me” and “Poor Butterfly.”138 Along with those that retold the tale as such, a huge number evoked its story in less explicitly narrativized scenes. One of several songs titled “Rose of Japan” illustrates what these epidemic quasi-Butterfly scenarios were like:

Temple bells are calling me
To a land across the sea
To a little dark eyed Japanee
Waiting there for me by the sea:
Back there I’ll be going soon
’Cause I promised her in June
We would surely have a honeymoon.
There among the blossoms I’ll be crooning:

[Chorus two times:]
Rose of Japan, behind your fan
Almond eyes that shine so bright
Twinkle in the pale moonlight
Like the stars that peep at night
Into your shady bower, my flower
Rose of Japan.

Time in Old Japan,” Chicago: F. J. A. Forster, 1915. Susan Stewart’s writings on longing in regard to nostalgia and ideas of the miniature and the souvenir are apposite to the many such lyrics that wedded together those concepts in tales of “little” Asian women romantically lost in vividly recollected pasts on the distant shores of “old” Japans or Chinas (cf. Stewart 1984). 137. That song’s lyrics emphasized a common point of subjective view in these narratives by beginning both verses with “he” followed by a comma (and musical space) for weight: “He, of the sea, met a wee little Asian maid”; “He, made his plea, to his wee little Asian maid.” L. Wolfe Gilbert and Anatol Friedland, “Singapore,” New York: Gilbert & Friedland, 1918.

138. Dave Stamper (music) and Gene Buck (lyrics), “When He Comes Back to Me (Japanese Song),” New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1916; Raymond Hubbell (music) and John L. Golden (lyrics), “Poor Butterfly,” from The Big Show at the New York Hippodrome, New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1916. The origins of the latter piece, as a song written with the idea that Tamaki Miura would sing it at the Hippodrome, have been widely told. Its unusually concrete textual linkage may be manifest in language such as “I just mus’ die,” which used a dropped “t” that was ubiquitous in John Luther Long’s versions of Japanese utterances but not so common in popular songs’ orientally marked speech.
When love began
There where cherry blossoms were blooming,
Love’s sweet song to you I was crooning,
Rose of Japan.

Shadows slowly round me creep
As I wander off to sleep,
Dreaming of the one that I adore
On that far off shore o’er and o’er:
I am waiting for the day
That will take me far away
To that dreamy land where poppies sway
She’ll be there to listen while I’m saying

[Chorus again two times to end]139

Other songs rewrote the Butterfly trope, redefining while redisseminating it.
The gist of “Happy Butterfly” was that most “Japanee” women were not
pinning butterflies but had lovers at their sides; “Mister Butterfly” told of a
geisha who declined a sailor’s kiss out of aversion to playing the character.140

“Old Japan” and quasi-Butterflies had a long run as an imagined space
and its stock inhabitants. A common site of both interracial and intra-national
liaisons, that space accommodated most Japan-related lyrics.141 “Old Japan”
did not necessarily imply historical distance. Lyrics routinely used it as a site
for events in contemporary time, a space with attributes stated in the future or

140. Joe Meyer (music) and Bobbie Tremaine (lyrics), “Happy Butterfly,” Detroit: Jerome
H. Remick & Co., 1920; Leo Edwards (music) and Ballard MacDonald (lyrics), “Mister
Butterfly,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1917. As Anthony Sheppard has noted,
“Mister Butterfly” and other such songs responded to the popularity of Madame Butterfly
by using stock attributes of sentimental laments and orientalist conventions for white men’s
and Asian women’s narrative roles and for invoking spatial distance (Sheppard 2000).
141. E.g., Charles L. Johnson (music) and J. Stanley Royce (lyrics), “Where the Lanterns
Glow,” Chicago: Forster, 1919. “There’s a land far off, / That’s called quaint old Japan,”
began another song’s typical scene-setting move; Austin Huntley (music) and Dorothy
Terriss (lyrics), “Japanese Moon: A Quaint Song of Old Japan in Fox Trot Rhythm,” New
York: Leo. Feist, 1922. Practices explored in other chapters represented the same space, as
seen in a review of The Willow Tree (a dramatic “Japanese fantasy” with a cast including
Fay Bainter): “As the old image carver George C. Wilson brings long experience, finished
elocution and innate dignity to the composition of a breathing, living reality of old Japan”
(“Mr. Hornblow Goes to the Play,” Theatre Magazine, April 1917, 213–16, 248, this at 248).
present tense. “Fan Tan” exulted that “Wedding bells will ring in old Japan in June,” and a “Yo-San” lamented that “the course of love runs rough at times in old Japan.”

Making old Japan a spatial rather than a temporal construct, but relating it to the Japanese nation, this enabled white Americans to sing an imagined Asia entertainingly into the past. Many other songs constructed a static China in an aesthetically spatialized time outside U.S. modernity. In the present tense, one began: “In the land of far Cathay, / Hundred years are as a day, / Time’s not measured, so they say, / In the land of far Cathay.”

Safely distanced across time and space, these old Asias breathed a timeless atmosphere in which romantic longing and much else was made eternal.

Quasi-Butterfly narratives could implicitly equate female figures and Asian nations. Some told of an Asian hunger for Americanness, seeming to ventriloquize invitations to political or economic submission. One included:


143. Within this study’s scope the most codified and often-repeated phrase expressing this referred to old Japan, but related rhetorical moves were common in songs set elsewhere. These included “old” Bombays, Manilas, Londons, and American home towns, along with a thousand other momentarily nostalgized locales. However, the long practice of situating an East Asian orient as a space made ancient and unchanging invested specific meaning into such references to old Japans and Chinas. See Melville Morris (music) and Edward Madden (lyrics), “On the Bay of Old Bombay,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1915; Mary Earl [pseudonym of Robert A. King], “In Old Manila,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1920; Gustav Luders (music) [and Mathews & Bulger, lyrics?], “In Dear Old London,” New York Journal & Advertiser, 9 April 1899, 9–12; Walter Donaldson (music) and Howard Johnson (lyrics), “You’d Never Know That Old Home-Town of Mine,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1915.

144. The phrase “old China” had great currency in print media. One instance of this was the title of Old China and Young America (Conger 1913). Titles of certain instrumental works also suggest the phrase’s conventionality; see Charles Coote, Jr., “Old China Polka,” New York: New York Musical Echo Co., 1895; Floy Adele Rossman, “Bells of Old China,” New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1913. Not many lyrics used that precise term; hearkening back to word counts, a mere 5% of that section’s Chinese-referential lyrics mentioned “old China,” while 47% of its Japanese-related ones invoked “old Japan.” Contextualized readings show that this difference was more apparent than substantive in regard to underlying structures of belief.

“Yankee since you go away,
Nankee, sit all day and pray,
Pray you please leave ’Melican shore,
Yankee, Come back for I no can walk. I no can talk, I no can even sing,
All night I weep, I no can sleep, I no can anyt’ing,
If you say no come back to me,
Then I go fly to my Yankee!”
“Yankee since you go away,
Nankee, sit all day and pray,
Pray you please leave ’Melican shore,
Yankee, Come back for I Sop-kow-tow-see-mon-go-lay and multiply by three,
Which makes it clear, while you’re not here I’m sad as I can be,
If Yankee no come back to me,
Then I go fly to my Yankee!”

This ascription of desire to a female proxy for a nation was not unusual.146

Some lyrics told of related kinds of Asian embrace of U.S. cultural practices as other transformations of the transpacific longing written into Butterflies. “China Dragon Blues” seemed to remap the role of a waiting Asian woman onto a Chinese nation, and to recast her longing for a white man as a hunger for “syncopated melody” and dance steps associated with a United States in which their African American sources were written out:

Buddha land by the Yellow Sea,
They have written me that you
Have a dance craze that is new
And nothing finer
Has come to China
In the East
Last but not the least
You have waited for our syncopated melody
And now that you
Have got it too,
I hear that this is what you do:

[Refrain two times:]
First Yankee Poo takes Lankee Soo

146. George Gershwin (music) and Irving Caesar (lyrics), “Yan-Kee,” New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1920. Less common was these lyrics’ metaphorical reading as almost a threat that unrequited yearning could spur Japanese immigration to the United States. This song also exhibited the mobility of stock utterances between fictive Chinas and Japans; “tow-see-mon-go-lay” echoed the title of Grahame Jones’s “Towsee Mongalay (Good Luck, Good Bye): Chinese Love Song,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1915.
By the cue [sic] and starts to do a merry twirl
Then ev’ry oriental beau swings to and fro ’way down low
Those pigtail men who spend a yen
Now and then to entertain a Chinee miss
Will winkee eye and think he try to steal a kiss just like this
If you listen you will hear them crying to Sing Lee
We are dry so bring tea.
Mandarins then begin, they play Chinee mandolins.
When tom-toms sound from all around,
Then I think there’s not a chink who could refuse
To start a raggin’ to those China Dragon Blues (Those dragon blues).\(^{147}\)

Such lyrics cast an Asian thirst for U.S. practices as natural and irresistible.

A complement to such representations occurred through their partial inversion in narratives of (white) American desire for Asian things and practices. Given human form as protagonists of romantic narratives, these urges also were played out in tales of spectatorial appropriation of the body, implicitly linked to histories of racialized display.\(^{148}\) Using such language as “Resting in the cooling shade, / By some dusky Cathay maid, / Watch the dancers in the glade, / In the land of far Cathay,” many were set in Asia.\(^{149}\)

One example is “The Japanese Sandman,” an immensely popular song which began with an invitation to travel afar. Matching the lyrics’ peaceful mood, this was cast in less imperative language than that of some songs:

Won’t you stretch imagination for the moment and come with me
Let us hasten to a nation lying over the western sea
Hide behind the cherry blossoms here’s a sight that will please your eyes
There’s a baby with a lady of Japan singing lullabies
Night winds breath her sighs

After a chorus couched as a Japanese lullaby, the second verse went:

\(^{148}\) These had long been common in such settings as world’s fairs, venues evoked in songs; see Albert Von Tilzer (music) and Lew Brown (lyrics), “Oh Gee! Say Gee! You Ought to See My Gee Gee from the Fiji Isle,” New York: Broadway Music Corp., 1920.
\(^{149}\) J. Arndt Morris (music) and Mary Wood (lyrics), “In the Land of Far Cathay,” Chicago: Chicago American, 1903.
Just as silent as we came we’ll leave the land of the painted fan
Wander lightly or you’ll wake the little people of old Japan
May repose and pleasant dreaming be their share while the hours are small
Like an echo of the song I hear the Japanese Sandman call
New days near for all

Within a frame of unidirectional spectatorship and covert listening, this tale of transport to a sedate Japan brought together domestic quasi-pastoralism and a raciological world view. It fondly positioned “the little people of old Japan” as, in an atmospheric way but to clear effect, sleeping infants regardless of age. A similar air pervaded other lyrics as well.

Other lyrics verged on tourism-industry language, characterizing Japan or China as an ideal site for enjoying generic oriental scenery. “On a Chinese Honeymoon” was a long invitation to drift away to a “…China land where the lanterns glow, / while the mystic sun is sinking low.” Its chorus blended stock sentiment and an oriental picturesque: “On a Chinese Honeymoon / In the merry month of June, / To the dreamy land of myst’ry / Where the lotus flowers bloom, / Beneath a Chinese moon, / We’ll croon love’s old sweet tune / Together we will wander / On a Chinese Honey moon.”

“I’m Goin’ to Peek in, in Pekin” dwelt at more length on racialized and gendered looking. Its lyrics got straight to the point and stood there staring:

Now, I’ve packed my little grip.
And I’m ready to sail;
To that far off land of China
And there I’ll get my mail:

[Chorus one time:]
I’m goin’ to peek in, in Pekin,
To see what I can see;
For there are Oriental girls
Out there sipping tea;
I’m goin’ to take a good long look
And pick one that’s not thin,
Then with a Chinese wife,
I’ll lead a Chinese life,
When I get my peek in Pekin.

Now, I can’t wait ‘till I go.
For I wish I was there;
In that land of Chinese girlies
Then I will never care:

[Chorus again one time to end]153

Other songs offered such more broadly touristic visions as this:

We’re seeing sights in old Japan that may perhaps shock you
We love to slumming go
On East Side Tokio
We watch with open eyes what all the giddy Geisha do
And that this Jappy flirting is diverting is too true
We sip the nation’s beverage of Saké made with rice
We laugh and say how nice
And never sip it twice
In fact if there is anything that we have failed to see
It must have been too good and true for trav’lers such as we!154

Many lyrics used spatial terms to position Asia and Asian America
as spectatorial domains. As noted, China and Japan often were “far” off and
frequently were leveraged further away by being “old.” While this language
imagined nations into a non-contemporary past, songs about Asian American
spaces—which basically is to say Chinatowns—usually located them as places
one went “down” to visit. This word’s recurrence in lines about life “down in

153. As discussed above, the cover art reproduced in fig. 8.64 reinforced this stance. Frank
Pepe (music) and Murray B. Tannenholz (lyrics), “I’m Goin’ to Peek in, in Pekin,” Coney
Island, NY: Harmony House, 1917. These views of the body foreshadowed later twentieth-
century lyrics; on some such songs popular in recent decades, see Hisama (1993).
154. William Frederick Peters (music) and Robert L. Beecher (lyrics), “We’re a Scientific
Chinatown” was more than a rhyming device; it situated oriental figures in subordinate positions within spatialized racial hierarchies. Many songs made Chinatown (with the singular form marking its status as a unified conceptual space) fundamentally nocturnal. Some characterized it as also a largely subterranean space, one where “down” not only referred to New York Chinatown’s location in lower Manhattan or to social hierarchies, but also evoked notions of murky opium dens hidden below ground.

Lyrics about Chinatown spectatorship were related to practices that sought excitement in many exoticized urban settings, and to songs that told of such experiences. Some referred to contemporary or past U.S. performance framed as authentically oriental. Many used such language as “See that dreamy Chinaman,” “See that girl” and “hear her sigh,” or “Follow the crowd

157. For example, the back cover of “In a Tent” carried a long narrative that was set in a Prohibition-era orientalist nightclub and invoked the Ganges and a Moorish palace; see Larry Conley (music) and Mickey Kippel (lyrics), “In a Tent,” Saint Louis: Song Service Studio, 1927. As often-urban goings-on that offered mimetic and reciprocally spectatorial attractions, such activities as “oriental balls” and the ta-tao provided wide interpretive contexts for songs of Chinatown slumming. On related moments, see Bramen (2000a, 2000b), Cocks (2001).
158. Such gestures located accounts of unstaged encounters with Asian America as a part of a larger set of processes of racial construction by means of performance; the representational nexus of Ching Ling Foo offers a case in point. Along with the long career of that performer’s troupe in vaudeville and the appearance of singers who were part of it in photographs on music covers, the name itself circulated in lyrics. These included “From Here to Shanghai,” “Allee Samee,” and “Chinky Charleston.” See “Gifted Ching Ling Foo — How the Chinese Magician Can Swallow Fire and Emit Fragrant Smoke,” New York Times, 24 September 1899; “Hammerstein’s Roof Garden” [program], New York: Hammerstein’s Roof Garden, week beginning 14 July 1913; “Hammerstein’s” [advertisement], New York Times, 15 November 1914; “Ching Fooling ’Round,” Variety, 2 October 1914, 7; Irving Berlin, “From Here to Shanghai,” New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co., 1917; Peter De Rose (music) and Sam Coslow (lyrics), “Allee Samee,” New York: F. B. Haviland, 1919. Contexts of these sorts could locate lyrics about Chinatown spectatorship in remembered landscapes of acts and images.
and see Queer Oriental mysteries.”159 Metaphorically, and perhaps in causal loops, such lyrical commands echoed the imperative speech of tourist guides. A long-lived song of this ilk is “Chinatown, My Chinatown,” recorded over and over again through the near-century since its initial publication.160 The first lines of the chorus still are heard occasionally:

Chinatown, my Chinatown,  
Where the lights are low,  
Hearts that know no other land,  
Drifting to and fro,  
Dreamy, dreamy Chinatown,  
Almond eyes of brown,  
Hearts seems [sic] light and life seems bright  
In dreamy Chinatown.

The second verse invoked racialized spectatorship with “Strangers taking in the sights, / Pigtais flying here and there,” and then it situated Chinatown as a place where fallen millionaires sought solace in opium. Similar atmospheres of touristic intrigue and fallen elites infused various songs, while Chinatown-bound trajectories of fallen women figured more centrally in others.161


160. More than 20 recordings of it have been gathered in connection with this study (with some 15 more known to exist), and Tsou notes that at least 25 were issued in the years 1928–1941 alone (Tsou 1997, 29). It may be no coincidence that its recent recordings generally are instrumental versions, since its lyrics fondly mull over a dense package of intensely racialized tropes posed as spectatorial attractions. The first of its verses, nowadays largely unsung and unremembered, went: “When the town is fast asleep, / And it’s midnight in the sky, / That’s the time the festive Chink / Starts to wink his other eye, / Starts to wink his dreamy eye, / Lazily you’ll hear him sigh.” Jean Schwartz (music) and William Jerome (lyrics), “Chinatown, My Chinatown,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1910. For a recent—and excellent—article using this song as a means of traversing many topics relevant here, see Garrett (2004).

Lyrics about white visitors’ intercultural consumption also could center on embodied acts. Food references were common in lyrics set in Chinatowns, where meals of unfamiliar things long had been *de rigeur*, and eating itself was reframed as a performance of difference in such lines as “Oriental diners eat their ‘chop’.” And while ta-taos supported specific movements, many more songs offered general urging to enact imagined oriental moves:

Down in Chinatown they’ve got a new dance,  
And if you love dancing you’ll take a chance.  
Chinaman named “Hop-In,”  
Brought it from old Pekin,  
Ev’ry-night you’ll see Hop-a-Long-Sing-Lee,  
And his dancing kin.  

*[Chorus two times:]*

Hop, Hop, Hop, Hop, Hop, Hopping around,  
While the music plays,  
Ev’rybody sways,  
Just see the Chinaman.  
Jump, jump, jump, jump, jump, jumping around,  
You feel like singing a Chink song,  
Hop-a-Long-Ting-Tong,  
You can’t go wrong.  
Creep, creep, creep, creep, creeping around,  
While the Chinee band,  
play some music grand.  
And you will wish that you were always living in China,  
When you hop that Hoptown Chinatown Hop!  

162. These tropes were embedded in countless printed tales of strange foods one might find there. References to food as an exotic object for white people’s consumption also appeared in many songs set in China, but aside from generic “rice” references it did so less often in regard to Japan (presumably due to most white Americans’ unfamiliarity with Japanese food, and thus ultimately to histories of immigration and the U.S. ethnic restaurant trade). The lyrics of one song included: “...China. / I am leaving you; / Chop-sticks and Chow-chow, / Chop-suey Dope and all. / Oh the oriental world with its rice and its mice and its vice and all.” Harry Lee Miller, “China,” Seattle, WA: Harry Lee Miller, 1922. Cf. Heldke (2003).  
An effusion of local fantasy rather than a reworked appropriation from an Asian exemplar, this coached dancers to perform a fictive Chineseness.

Other practices were related to the flow of tangible imports.165 Two games illustrate this meeting of acts and things. A few songs responded to mid-teens enthusiasm for fan tan, a Chinese gambling game. Some invoked it in names of Chinese or Japanese romantic protagonists.166 Others located the game itself in Chinatown scenarios; one sang of its attractive dangers: “Fan-tan, / Fan-tan, / Play’d by the Orients of Fan-land, / As the cards they’re dealing, / O’er you comes a stealing, / Sort of creepy feeling, / that you’d like to try it, / Then you can’t deny it / Dreaming, / Scheme-ing, / as ev’ry card they play / Castles in the air they plan, / In their Oriental land….”167 Other lyrics invoked the widely adopted game of mah jong.168 In one striking—and now often commented-upon—song, it figured as the chorus’s and title’s icon of some white Americans’ engagement with Asian cultural products and practices. Its lyrics positioned that taste as a cause of domestic

165. This linked mimetic performance to histories of commodity consumption, which figured in less practice-centered ways in other songs noted above. Litanies of Chinese products recounted in some songs echoed a long line of texts; e.g., Milton Ager (music) and Howard Johnson (lyrics), “China, We Owe a Lot to You,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1917; cf. “Early Inventions of the Chinese,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, November 1869, 909–12.
168. By the early 1920s, it was so popular among white Americans that an optical company’s advertisement pitched (probably tongue-in-cheek, but still significantly) eyeglasses promised to correct “the eye strain and headaches due to the unusual concentration necessary while playing” “that ancient and fascinating Chinese game ‘Mah Jongg’” (in “San Carlo Opera Co.” [program], San Francisco, 2 March 1923). For two songs, see Lester Stevens (music) and Stuart B. Dunbar (lyrics), “Mah Jongg Blues,” San Francisco: J. M. Tees, 1922; C. A. Brodeur (music) and Neal H. Barker (lyrics), “The Mah-Jongg Nightmare,” Boston: Barker-Brodeur, 1924.
discord—and, by metaphor to the nation as home, of larger social threats. The song mentioned only “Chinese” origins of Asian practices and things; but its reference to a “kimona,” and the raciological discourse of which it was a part, gave it the force of a general statement on recreational orientality. This was, of course, ironic in a song that offered precisely those sorts of musical pleasures.

In what now seems staggeringly inapt comic form, “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong” linked consumer taste for orientalist commodities and practices to anti-Asian violence. Even heard as a fantasy concocted and delivered for sheer amusement, its easy movement from exoticist consumerism to hate-crime homicide (and its framing as humorous) is stunning. Because its lyrics make this clear, and they have been positioned in similar ways by Judy Tsou and Darren Brown, a close reading here is unnecessary.\textsuperscript{169} The song itself may be left to sound in our minds’ ears (and in recs. 8.3–8.5) as a reminder that raciological comedy and murder may never be so far apart as they seem.

I’ve got a wonderful mother,  
But of late she’s not the same  
Things were O.K. until the day  
Ma learned a new Chinese game.  
China you’re poison to me,  
You broke up my whole family:

[Refrain two times:]  
[refrain text 1:]  
Since Ma is playing Mah Jong,  
Pa wants all the “Chinks” hung.  
We get rice chop suey each night,  
Chinese cooking you should see how Pa is looking.  
Ma wears a kimona  
She yells “Pung” and “Chow.”  
Ma left dishes in the sink  
Pa went out and killed a “chink”  
Ma plays Mah Jong now.  
[refrain text 2:]  

Since Ma is playing Mah Jong,
Pa wants all the “Chinks” hung.
Though Pa drives a swell limousine,
We’re not braggin’, mamma drives a laundry wagon.
Ma is using chop-sticks
Forks she won’t allow.
Papa scratches till he’s red,
She put rice in Papa’s bed,
Ma plays Mah Jong now.

Mamma makes papa use chop sticks,
All the knives and forks are “canned”
Poor papa frets, each meal he gets,
Splinters all over his hand.
Her finger nails were like tacks
So Pa clipped them off with an axe:

[Refrain again two times with patter in between:]
[refrain text 3:]
Since Ma is playing Mah Jong,
Pa wants all the “Chinks” hung.
Father’s name is Lewis Fitzroy,
Things are “bloo-ey,” mamma calls him “One-Lung Louie.”
Gen’ral Stonewall Jackson
Learned this game somehow,
“He who touches yon grey head,
Dies like a dog, Mah Jong,” he said,
Ma plays Mah Jong now.

[Patter:]
If you want play the game I’ll tell you what to do,
Buy a silk kimona and begin to raise a queue;
Get yourself a book of rules and study till it’s clear,
And you’ll know the game when you’ve got whiskers down to here.
After that you buy a set and oh how you get stung,
Then you start in guessing which is Chow and which is Pung;
And when you’re exhausted and you’re shaky in the knees,
Then you’ll know people say, “Darn clever, these Chinese.”

[refrain text 1 again to end]

ASIAN WORDS & DIDACTIC NOTES IN ORIENTALIST SONGS

While this entire discussion is concerned with printed language, certain
raciological aspects of these songs operated through such things as the
linguistic positioning of non-English words, the ways in which some text was
represented with nonstandard spellings, and the means by which some utterances were grammatically located in the voices of certain characters.

Picking up on the thread of intercultural flows of things and practices that “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong” invoked in particularly nasty form, we may note a different kind of intercultural movement in some songs: the authenticating move of embedding non-English words in lyrics and accompanying them with footnoted (and sometimes spurious) translations or explanations. “That Shanghai Melody” glossed “Lo-ki” as “‘Sweetheart’”; the page-one title of a “Sayonara” (one of several) bore the note: “Pronounced ‘CY-O-NAR-A’ Literal Translation ‘SINCE IT MUST BE SO.’”170 A note on one cover offered an almost ethnographic exegesis that began: “Inari is one of the good-luck goddesses of Japan. She presides over rice and is served by the wily fox who is frequently used to symbolize her.” Such lyrics as “Some cute fox is in your breast / And he’s directing all your wiles” would have made little sense to most Americans without the note, which rendered the song comprehensible as well as lending it an air of representational authority.171 Other lyrics carried notes explaining English terms, and some offered internal glosses of pseudo-pidgin representations.172 Situating Chinese characters’

171. Vivian Burnett, “Inari: Japanese Song — Fox Trot,” New York: McKinley, 1917. The obvious conjuncture between the song’s topic and its dance-genre positioning as a fox trot may have been purely coincidental, or it may have offered an implicit kind of wordplay. 172. One marked “go-between” with an asterisk that led to a dictionary-like note, “Go-between”—one who officiates at a wedding ceremony,” offering a lesson that may have confused such ceremonies with prospective marriage partners’ o-niai meetings. Harley Rosso, “I See the Cherry Blossoms Bending Low My Little Nippon Bride),” Sidney: Ohio Publishers, 1917. Internal lyrical glossing is seen in Grahame Jones, “Towsee Mongalay (Good Luck, Good Bye): Chinese Love Song,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1915.
English as a language in need of translation, the latter practice also offered
instruction in yellowvoice technique by means of transformative examples.

Contextualized by these typeset moves, the practice of rendering titles
and other Roman-alphabet text in brushy letters in cover art may be seen as
related not just to visual culture but also to language linking English text (as
text) and orientality. And in amateur acts of writing that resonate with those
of singing these lyrics, some people made their own attempts at orientalist
lettering. The copy of “Down in Midnight Town” used for this study bears
a hand-inked inscription in an amateur’s quasi-brushy letters forming her or
his indecipherable name and “11/5/21.” That physical emulation of iconic
lettering suggests how some consumers used sheet music iconography as a
starting point for their own acts. The parallels it suggests to ways of singing
these songs’ lyrics leads to a consideration of how they represented oriental
voices, and how yellowvoice representations suggested racial meaning.

SINGING OF THE ORIENTAL BODY & VOICE AS GRAMMATICAL OTHER:
SECOND- AND THIRD-PERSON LYRICAL IMAGININGS OF DIFFERENCE

Depending upon whether a song constructed a first-person oriental “I” or
a second- or third-person oriental “you” or “she” or “he” uttering its lines,
these lyrics fostered singing as or singing of orientality. This section listens
to second- and third-person invocations of racialized bodies and voices.174

173. Harry Von Tilzer (music) and Andrew B. Sterling and Edward P. Moran (lyrics), “Down
in Midnight Town,” New York: Harry Von Tilzer, 1921, hand annotation on one impression.
174. People sang these tales of orientality in contexts shared with other racial types; broad
racialization within a single song is evident in “Little Japanesee Baby.” Its lyrics compared
the singer’s “Japanesee baby” to “all kinds of Pickaninnies”: “I will tell you of a Japanesee
baby, Japanesee little baby, / You have seen all kinds of Pickaninnies may be, Pickaninnies,
yes that may be, / But in all the world there’s none that can compare with / This little baby, /
My little baby; / All joys in life, / I’d like to share with little Japanesee babe,” the song began,
locating infantile Japaneseness within that category (Gustav Luders, “Little Japanesee Baby,”
musical supplement to the [San Francisco] Sunday Examiner, n.d. [ca. 1900].
Lyrics routinely described oriental bodies’ static attributes. Smallness figured in many; an inhabitant of one song’s Japan was “a tiny Japanee. Cute was she and most discreet.” Attention to women’s tiny feet was common, especially regarding such Chinese figures as one whose “hair is dark, her feet quite small; Some say they seem no feet at all...” Having been addressed above, the trope of skin color merely needs noting. A few songs invoked it as a sign of interracial heritage: “From English sire descended / Her blood with China blended, / Eyes of Saxon blue, skin of yellow hue; / At the call of war’s command, / Her heart turned to her Motherland....” Many more sang of women’s eyes as “black,” “dark,” or “almond”-shaped. These ways of racializing female bodies figured widely. One song supported its narrative of

175. Along with the racializing language treated here, more generally poetic language of the body and voice was common. One “Yo-San” piece praised its title character in lines such as “Dainty cushioned feet and eyes that sing a song, / Words like rippling waters sweetly charm all day long” and “Someone else may see those eyes, those lips, that hair, / Leagues may separate us but my heart is right there,” and the first-person narrator of “Yokohama Love” rhymed that the figure named in the title had “charmed me, disarmed me with your big baby eyes.” W. C. Polla (music) and Jean Lefavre (lyrics), “Yo-San,” Hartford: C. C. Church & Co., 1919; William [Billy] Alexander (music) and Harry D. Kerr (lyrics), “Yokohama Love,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1919.


179. Charles K. Harris, “When the Lotus Flowers Bloom in Chinaland,” New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1919; Moe Thompson and Norman Herbert, “Rose of Japan,” New York: Joe Morris Music Co., 1919. As shown in a decontextualized way by word counts, the last term was especially frequent; in context, it may be seen to have figured often in proximity to general characterizations of the body. “Rose of China” rhapsodized over a “pretty little Chinese maiden,” who had “Almond eyes so brown and tender, / Graceful is her form and slender” Paul Biese and Charles Tyler (music) and Rex Lardner (lyrics), “Rose of China,” Chicago: Riviera, 1920.
Broadway-bound romantic possession by invoking “almond eyes that drive you nutty”: “Johnny Jones said ‘oh! me, oh! my, but talk about your vamps, / My Japanesey can wink her eye, and give all the boys love cramps....’”

Many lyrics mentioned queues. As seen above and discussed by Tsou, their presence in cover art made their wearers into signs of a racial category (Tsou 1997, 50–55). A few lyrics obsessed about queues in especially sustained ways, as in “Oh Sing-a-Loo, Whad’Ya Do with Your Que?” In the voice of a female Chinese character chiding her sweetheart, its chorus complained:

Oh! Sing-a-Loo, whad’ya do with your que that you wore in Chinatown
I loved it when it hung down
It was such a big tail, what a lovely pig-tail,
Sing-a-Loo I’m so blue thru’ and thru’,
When I see you I just frown
You were once a slinky, chinky
Now you’re on the blink, blink, blinky,
Sing-a Loo if I knew what I do,
I’d have stopped you long ago
I thought you’d let it grow
I used to love it so,
I know that you don’t care the same for chop sticks and chow mein
But a \[repeat ad lib, four measures with three alternate texts:\]

chink without a que, is like a cow without a moo,
A cat without a meow, a dog without a bow-wow
chink without a que, is like a ship without a crew,
A chickee, chickee, chick, with no cock-a-doodle-doo-doo
chink without a que, is like a rose without the dew,
A band without an umpa, a mule without a hee-haw

Sing-a Loo whad’ya do with your que that you wore in Chinatown.181

More than just a sign of lyricists seriously short of ideas, this song brought into intensely repeated singing the idea that queues and male Chineseness

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were inseparable. Its catalog of similes may have assuaged white anxieties about a Chinese American population by then less marked in some ways—a change readable as Americanization, with the worries that implied to some.

Other hairstyles also signified race, in some lyrics presenting different gendered contrasts between Asianness and Americanness. “Chen, My China Girl” gave a specific twist to a rhetorical move whereby narratives positioned orientalized female figures as being less susceptible than were (white) American women to newfangled tastes. Embedded into its lyrics about a male laundry worker in the United States were an ascribed urge to return to China and a new reason for it: “I’ve been thinking all day long, / ’Bout my gal in old Hong-kong, / China is the land that’s beckoning me, / Oriental maidens there never yet have bobbed their hair, / Never will in my country.”182 This invoked the usually tacit contrasting term to female orientality: American women who were increasingly—and to some men, maddeningly—“modern.”

This language of voluntary changes to bodily appearance and of social agency leads to the body’s active attributes. Some lyrics told of these in metaphorically geopolitical ways: “When I first saw fair Nakito she was toddling down the street,” one verse began; “toddling” sang into its subject an infantile cuteness, immaturity, and instability.183 Many songs vested orientality into such bodily sounds as the “patter” of Chinese or Japanese footfall.184 Nearly silent footsteps as a sign of sneakiness were endemic to

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yellow perilist fiction. In similar ways, lyrics could set a scene of an ominous soundscape and insert into it a figure made all the more scary by its silence:

Wind is howling, moon is scowling,
Shadows jumpin’ up and down the wall;
Rafters creaking, sqeeking [sic] overhead,
Footsteps stalking underneath the bed,
Pigtails shiver, pale lips quiver,
Mystery is lurking all about;
Chinee Bogie Man, no doubt,
Get you if you don’t watch out!

[Chorus begins:]
Here he comes a-creepin’, terrible to see,
Chinky Chinee Bogie Man,
Better be a-sleepin’, take a tip from me,
He will catch you if he can
Lights begin to blinkee,
When he’s in the house,
Workin’ out his sneaky plan
Quicker than a winkee, quiet as a mouse...\textsuperscript{185}

This trope also evoked nostalgic loss by lamenting Chinatowns’ dissimilarity to ideal past ones. “Lights that lured drifting souls to Chinatown are gone forever more; / Slipper’d feet no longer sneak their way around….”\textsuperscript{186}

Figurations of the meaningfully sounding body lead to those of Japanese or Chinese voices. Lyrics commonly told of singing. Some evoked it as a broadly romantic practice, leaving the work of racialization more to the language of visible than audible orientality.\textsuperscript{187} Many, however, framed voices

\textsuperscript{186} Vincent C. Plunkett (music) and Earl Comyns (lyrics), “Dear Old Chinatown,” Los Angeles: Angelus, 1923.
\textsuperscript{187} Raymond DeLano and Leon DeLano, “China,” Chicago: Knox Publishing Co., 1923. Figurations of race are the topic here, but some lyrics did describe Asian voices in non-racialized language. “Japanese Sailor” led into its chorus with a matter-of-fact: “He would gaze afar, and would softly sing this roundelay”; Thomas Hughes (music) and C. P. McDonald (lyrics), “Japanese Sailor,” Williamsport, PA: Vandersloot, 1922. Another suitor’s voice also had conventional traits: “like some night bird singing, / Came this song in a voice, soft yet strong, to her listening ear”; and “Karama still is dreaming, / Of a voice, soft and strong, and a song she will never more hear”; Vivian Grey [pseudonym of Mabel McKinley], “Karama: A Japanese Romance,” New York: Leo Feist, 1904. Women’s voices, too, could be
as oriental with adjectives or narrative context. Chinatown songs, for instance, could use male voices as signs of true selves connected to distant homes. In one, a man sang every night: “Washie, washie washie all day long. / Night time always sings a pretty little song. / Of that land far away where the lights are shining / To be there, I declare that his heart is pining. / He dreams of a little face behind a fan, / I know Hi-lo. / That funny, little Chinaman.”

Many songs described pining women’s voices in ways that mirrored their narrativized psychological states. A “Suki San” hummed “a lonesome lovesick tune,” and a Myo San sang “her plaintive tune, ‘Come back to me, my love.’” This language of the voice positioned women as resigned to conditions of other people’s making. A common move invested gentleness and orientality into a female voice to signify an essential inner self. In one chorus, the adjectival line “sweet and gentle, oriental” functioned as a pivot phrase that started out by seeming to describe a “sentimental tune” but came to characterize the singer, whose name (“Sing Song”) followed the phrase:

Sing Song, Sing Song
Japanese melodies
Fill the breezes when I’m
Dreaming all night long,
I hear you croon such a sentimental tune

given gendered qualities not unique to oriental characters; one song offered a gently pastoral scene of vocal typicality in such lines as “Little O Sen Ko is singing softly to the moon,” “all the way she’s gently humming,” and “She’s a sweet voiced starling wild / She’s bewitching when she laughs behind her fan”; a sense of audible restraint was reinforced by the sound of her feet “As her tiny lacquered sandals / Patter o’er the shining floor”; Christine Wood Bullwinkle, “In a Tea Garden: A Chinese Ballad,” unidentified newspaper, 7 July 1901, 5–6.

Sweet and gentle, oriental,
Sing Song I long
For the land across the world
Oh! my little Sing Song nightingale,
Won’t be very long before I sail
And I’ll bring a ring along my little Sing Song girl.\(^{190}\)

This assigned the lyrics’ imagined music and their musician as belonging to a space defined by aestheticized difference and a lack of social agency.

Third-person voices also figured in lyrics that played up the idea of musical difference as an exotic attraction imported in immigrants’ voices or heard from afar. “Across the broad Pacific, where the little poppies grow, Came a tune from old Shanghai,” began one song that worked around to “That strain keeps haunting me, I can’t get it off my mind.” One of many pieces that sought popularity by the unsubtle means of inducing people to sing about musical strains stuck in their minds, this also illustrates how lyrics could invoke Asian musicality itself as a marketable kind of novelty.\(^{191}\) Some Chinatown lyrics invoked residents’ voices and other such songs as signs of orientality. “All Aboard for Chinatown” included “When a squeeky, sneaky voice cries: / ‘Come along with me,’ / Soon he takes you by the hand, / Off to Oriental land,” as well as: “Funny, funny Chinaman, / Playing, playing


\(^{191}\) J. Russel Robinson (music) and Al. M. Kendall (lyrics), “That Shanghai Melody,” New York: Joe Morris, 1919. Many songs located exotic sounds in Chinatowns: “Along the street you’ll meet each pretty little winky blinky chinky / down in Midnight Town / if you see faces beaming don’t you make a noise because they’re dreaming. / Hear the tom-tom sound / ‘Neath lanterns gleaming all around / See those eyes, / See that stare! / Makes you shaky, quakey when you see their snakey glare.” Harry Von Tilzer (music) and Andrew B. Sterling and Edward P. Moran (lyrics), “Down in Midnight Town,” New York: Harry Von Tilzer, 1921.
music grand, / Hear that familiar tune, / It’s ‘Chinatown, my Chinatown,’ / So all aboard for fascinating, dreamy Chinatown.”

Some songs promised soothing female voices. One told of seeking cheer in a blithely multinational Chinatown by wandering “down where maidens gentle, / Sing an oriental song, the whole night long”: “Sentimental melodies drive away each frown, / Ming Tong all the way from Yokohama, / Sings songs in a pretty silk kimona, / Down in queer old Chinkotown.” Lyrics also could tell of music as an abstract metaphor for oriental character, or as a broadly exotic backdrop. But as a transition from singable tales of other people’s voices to first-person words framed as oriental utterances, we may note that some language cast in white figures’ voices drifted into pseudo-dialect. This could fill the mouths of fictive white men with the sound of yellowvoice, a raciological vocal layering made thicker in these songs’ singing around pianos in the homes of (mostly white) Americans.

192. Win Brookhouse (music) and Frank Davis (lyrics), “All Aboard for Chinatown,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1916 [1915]. This rendered some well-known songs both vehicles for their own content and themselves second-order signs of racialized spaces they indexed. In this case, the later piece’s invocation of “Chinatown, My Chinatown” half a decade into that song’s career played to its popularity in a kind of intertextual shorthand. 193. These singers were constructed as typical, with voices and bodies which promised the solace of escape: “…troubles there you’ll find are soon forgotten / China girls so slender, / Dressed in all their splendor wait / They wait where hearts will know no sorrow, / No thought of tomorrow’s dawn, just drifting on.” Elmer Olson, George Getsey and Moe Thompson, “Queer Old Chinkotown,” Saint Paul, MN: W. J. Dyer & Bro., 1922. Considering many white Americans’ association of Chinese women with prostitution (cf. Tsou’s work as cited above), it is likely that some interpreted the pleasures of forgetfulness connoted here to encompass more than those only of the voice and the eye. 194. E.g., Vincent Rose and Richard A. Whiting (music) and Raymond B. Egan (lyrics), “Song of Shanghai,” New York: Irving Berlin, 1926; Ick Ogden, “Chinaland,” Buffalo, NY: Eberle, 1919; Lloyd, “Japanese Lullaby: Oriental Fox Trot,” Cincinnati, OH: Circle, 1923; Isham Jones (music) and Gus Kahn (lyrics), “Shanghai Lullaby,” New York: Irving Berlin, 1923. 195. This could evoke exotic settings or enact self-indigenizing strategies within a narrative world. E.g., Max Hoffmann, “My Little Japanesee,” Chicago: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1903.
SINGING IN FIRST-PERSON YELLOWVOICE

This last view of lyrics focuses on the fact that millions of white Americans used their own bodies to bring the language of these texts into sung sound. This means of use was crucial. In performance, first-person passages enabled amateur singers to embody race through vocal mimesis. Here singing was both a form of musical amusement and an audible act of social construction.

Interpretive Frames for Performing and Hearing First-Person Yellowvoice

Amateurs singing first-person yellowvoice could draw on mimetic practices familiar from the stage, which accompanied song with specific movements. For example, some lines in the 1904 musical Fantana mirrored its kinesthetic embodiments of orientality. Similarities between individual orientalist songs and the musical stage’s more fully scripted practice could enable the latter indirectly to guide aspects of performance at home. Those acts and their meanings also were framed by other bodily conventions. Many traditions of embodied signification could offer allusive contexts for interpreting songs.

One song told of a Japanese woman pining for her “handsome sailor boy.” Shifting into the first person, its chorus began: “Hurry back to my lonely little bamboo shack, / Where your lonely little geisha so patiently waits for you; / Tho’ my heart is grieving, / I’m still believing, / That all the things that you said were true.” Adopting the voice of a woman “sadly [gazing] toward the sea” as she murmured “thro’ her tears,” singers of these sentiments presumably had seen the song’s cover image of a figure clutching

her hands to her chest in a pose of dramatic longing (fig. 8.78).\(^{197}\) That image offered a model for women singers’ (the gendered self-selection at work here is evident) emulation as they sang of imagined oriental grief and supplication.

This brought together lyrics and the body in a gesture that had long resonance in U.S. oratorical delivery. As seen in a text from several decades earlier, that tradition included a similar codified move (fig. 8.79) in which:

The hands are raised to the horizontal oblique, the palms facing each other, brought together and clasped, then drawn up to the chest, from which they are projected outward—descending, horizontal, or ascending—as occasion may require. In following this direction there need be no appearance of measured exactness; a fault which facility of execution must exclude from all gesture. (Bacon 1872, 141)

This was to “indicate strong emotion” and was “appropriate in Supplication and Earnest Entreaty. Also the language of Distress.” The singers of the song were not at all likely to have read this manual; but as a trace of meaningful bodily practices enacted through decades of oratory in a widely church-going and speechifying nation, the meanings it mapped onto such gestures were almost certainly known to many Americans who attended such goings-on. The relevance of this lies not in any demonstrable link between oratorical practice and this specific song, but in the fact that lyrics could gain suasive force from performative acts that their covers tacitly proposed. These texts’ amateur use gave them powers less readily invested in similar accounts not used in performance. Actual mimesis in domestic practice could draw on poses that were shown on music covers, were given emotional weight by resonance with close analogs in familiar contexts of compelling faith, and were perfectly suited to individual embodiment in orientalist acts.

Mimetic singing linked first-person lyrics to orientalist vocality in other contexts that may have guided how people sang, heard, and made meaning from yellowvoice lyrics. Three of these contexts involved linguistic thresholds for Americanness, stage “dialect,” and ethnicized utterances in other songs.198

In this local context, racially marked speech consisted of utterances with attributes signifying that the characters voicing it differed from U.S. norms. Both language and social belonging were at stake when first-person words were racially marked. Following the arguments of Robert Lee, Anthony Chan has noted that by “mocking the spoken English of others,” white Americans could “set the linguistic standard for participation in citizenship.”199 These ideas seeped into virtually all orientalist speech, the attributes and techniques of which were shared among lyrics and such other texts as scripts and stage-dialect books—openly prescriptive counterparts to the supposedly more descriptive versions of Asian people’s English in journalism and fiction.

An English play republished in Chicago shows how marked speech could slide between racialized domains. *The Chinese Lantern* used pseudo-dialect for Chinese speech. Like many songs, it blurred stock representations of Asian and African American figures’ English.200 An excerpt illustrates this:

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198. The word “dialect” is troubling here because it can effect a covert metonymy between its denotation of actual human groups’ normative ways of speaking and its distinct usage to denote stock attributes of racialized language used in printed texts or stage acts to represent fictively homogeneous group essences. Because semantic slippage subtly enables references to concocted “dialect” of the latter sort to seem to map that raciological language’s invented referents onto real people implicated in the word’s first sense, “pseudo-dialect” is used here. 199. A. Chan (2001, 167–68); see also R. G. Lee (1999); for examples from nineteenth-century U.S. melodrama, see Hyde (1955). With caution regarding ideas of intentionality that might lump together the aims of diverse writers, politicians, and consumers, the point here is well taken in a fuzzier domain—one in which people uttering pseudo-pidgin may have meant to offer a political argument, amusement, or almost anything else, but in which these practices’ social effects nonetheless could be similar. For a sense of another context, see G. Jones (1999). 200. Cf. Anthony Sheppard’s attention to “My Cherry Blossom” as a “dialect parody” evincing slippage from supposedly Japanese to African American English (Sheppard 2000).
MEE. What for you want to spend money? You talk, you walk, you run about and you play, you sing and you dance. Dat evelly’t’ing to make you happy—in de worl’.

LIL. How can one sing if one has nothing to sing about?

MEE. You sing about yo’self. All de worl’ sing about itself: how nice to be oneself. Dat not true? I sing—I show you! [She prepares centre of stage for dance and song.] Dis goin’ to be vell’y veautifull, but it cost not’ing! Dere’s a river; dere’s a lily; an’ dis is me—and dere is you all looking like ducks on de water. Yes . . . Now! [Takes guitar and sings.]

‘Will you have a sing-song, a lill’-song, a long-song?’
Cly de ducks aquacking on de Ying-Kai banks.
Any song dat you sing—sho’ to be de wrong song?
‘S’all I no sing you any song?’—No, t’anks!

Lill’ golden lily, dat is lying in de water,
Golden lily willy-nilly holding to de banks;
Lift up yo’ head an’ see de Chi’man’s daughter…
(Housman 1916, 23–24)

“What for you want,” “Cly,” and so on marked orientality with tortured syntax and swapping of “l”s for “r”s, while broader practices situated these figures’ racial condition within a wide domain of non-whiteness. The shifting of voiced dental fricatives in “that” and “this” to voiced stops as “dat” and dis,” as well as the dropping of final “r”s (with secondary elisions) to make “sho’” and “yo’,” resonated with stock means of signifying African American speech. These raciological transformations were a means of marking, and fostering amateurs’ singing of, orientality as categorically non-white.201

201. Pedagogical books on acting technique invoked similar practices. One instructed its readers about a split that universalized all aspects of embodied communicative practice other than linguistically semantic ones. As a 1934 revision of a 1913 text, it suggests the long currency of its assertions. The ways in which words were pronounced carried for its writers social valences that bore down on the nation’s tongue and identity: “Foreigners carry into their own pronunciation of English many sounds of their own languages and also their own mechanics of articulation. In the larger cities of this country where the foreign population is numerous, some of their habits of speech have spread rather alarmingly to groups of native born citizens. For instance, the substitution of lip action for action of the tongue in conjunction with teeth results, in such words as this, that, these, etc., in producing dis, dat, dese—now frequently heard from illiterate Americans as well as foreigners” (F. F. Mackay et al. 1934, 38; see also the book’s statements on “natural” and “artificial” language, 4).
Vocal practices that struck many white Americans as unfortunate when heard in daily life could seem attractive when reframed as exotic novelties. The vocal mimesis of orientality could sound charming to theatergoers, for example. “Fay Bainter is a pretty and pleasant little actress, and it looks as though she is to be permanently labeled with an accent,” wrote one reviewer. “She made a hit as a Japanese girl in ‘The Willow Tree,’ and has repeated the experience as a Chinese girl in ‘East Is West,’ both rôles being played with an Oriental costume and an Oriental accent” (see figs. 4.8, 4.9 above).

Another context consisted of other song lyrics. Along with those cast in the voices of other ethnicized or racialized figures, these included nineteenth-century orientalist songs associated with minstrelsy. As Robert G. Lee has shown, their “collapsing of linguistic difference between pidgin and nonsense dislocated language and collapsed meaning,” and this both “diminished the status of Canton English as an important commercial language and infantilized its speakers” (1999, 37). Both Lee and John Kuo Wei Tchen have attended to blackface minstrels’ yellowface acts and related bodies of song, finding in them traces of the raciological construction of an America built also on ideologies of labor, gender, etc. (e.g., Tchen 1999, 218–24, 270–73). These later lyrics’ uses and meanings also were enmeshed in their social contexts.

202. Performative distancing that situated difference as a safe curiosity could be a counterpart to printed accounts of English abroad. One article began: “Japanese English has a quaint and curious quality entirely its own, though it is not half so quaint or curious as English Japanese must sound” (“English in Japanese Schools, Living Age, 8 November 1924, 353).

203. Harold Seton, “The Charm of an Accent: Players Who Have Won Popularity on Our Stage Despite Unfamiliarity with the Language,” Theatre Magazine, May 1919, 288. For an earlier article commenting in related ways on some typified European vocalities enacted on the English stage, see “Stage Foreigners,” The Academy, 27 August 1910, 210–11. Orientalist operettas for amateur performance also dealt in awkward locutions, ungrammatical verbal atomization, reiterations of orientalizing words, and gratuitous pseudo-dialect substitutions of the sorts central to these examples; e.g., many lines in V. M. Spaulding and C. R. Spaulding (music) and M. L. Harding (lyrics), Yanki San, Cincinnati, OH: Willis Music Co., 1919.
Further performative framing arose from each singer’s lived gender vis-à-vis that of the protagonist whose imagined first-person voice “sang” some lines. For instance, the cover of “Towsee Mongalay” noted that it was “As Sung by Pauline Frederick.” Within what interpretive frames might audiences have made meaning from its male-subjective lyrics sung in a female voice? Performed intersections of fictive role, grammatical voice, and lived identities could render singing mimetic across lines of race and gender.

With these things in mind, we may listen to first-person expressions of orientality in certain songs, and to how their singers’ yellowvoice acts may have constructed racial difference in their bodies. We can think about these lyrics in terms of three semi-distinguishable sets of attributes and methods: how a repertoire of linguistic devices made up their means of representation, how the structural locations of that language in songs situated its meanings and modes of performance, and how such passages’ narrative positioning linked these acts of singing to ideas about race in the real social world.

**Point-to-Point Means of Marking First-Person Yellowvoice**

Language guided yellowvoice with three broad types of directions: those that steered vocal interpretations by means of text outside lyrics themselves, lyrics’ internal adjectival descriptions of voices (sung as part of songs but external to oriental utterances as such), and directly sung instructions for racially coded vocality on the levels of grammar and pronunciation.

First, directions outside lyrics instructed singers to mark racialized first-person positions. These guided singing in timbral or other ways not notatable.

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in lyrics or staff notation. An example is the marking “Slow with unaffected simplicity” as one song shifted into the voice of a romantically debilitated Japanese female figure singing sad entreaties to a departed Yankee man.205

Second, and actually sung but not in the first person, were internally adjectival descriptions of oriental voices as segues to first-person utterances. One song set up a first-person chorus at the end of its first verse as a Chinese protagonist’s “plaintive song” and at the end of its second as “loving words you’ll hear him moan.”206 Other adjectives evoked vocal register, inflection, and nasality associated with such terms as “sing-song” and the “high” voices written into many Chinese male figures.207 Although embedded in lyrics, this method of orientalizing first-person song still was located diegetically outside characters’ voices. Like setups for passages that remained in the third person, it often used adjectives (e.g., “plaintive”) that were widely associated with oriental vocality. Some songs used these terms in third-person lyrics that prepared the way for choruses sung in the first person. The first verse of one led into the chorus with “In their sing song tones and quaint old way, / Just listen and you’ll hear them say”; the second made the point more strongly:

Neath a yellow chinese moon,
They drift for hours and spoon.
Crooning softly love’s old melody all the night.
In their queer old boats swaying to and fro,

207. The latter demasculinizing move was sung in songs including “Chong” and “Jazzy Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown),” with its “singee way up high in a funny little way,” as Judy Tsou has noted (1997, 33). Harold Weeks, “Chong (He Come from Hong Kong),” New York: Leo. Feist, 1919; Louis F. Borromeo and Al. Heather (music) and Herman Bush (lyrics), “Jazzy Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown),” New York: Fred Fisher, 1920. Some lyrics also orientalized instrumental performance; “Chong” began: “Little Allee Fo Chong played all day in an oriental way, / In a swell Chinese Café.”
You can hear them cooing in the pale moonlight,  
In their sing song tones and quaint old way,  
You can just imagine what they say:

The language of the chorus was unmarked by racializing signs; but prepared as they were to do so, many people probably sang it in full yellowvoice.208

The third set of devices consisted of literally sung instructions marked through pseudo-dialect on the two levels of grammar and pronunciation. Grammatical marking could indicate oriental characters’ mental difference, coded as a deficient ability to form English sentences. This needs no special illustration. How first-person singing intersected with nonstandard spelling and racialized pronunciation bears closer attention. Operating within words more than through their fanciful arrangement, nonstandard spellings or vocables led singers to use their bodies to signify race in sound itself. People who sang these lyrics could feel difference in their own mouths and tongues, and everyone within earshot could hear the musically embodied results. The strength with which these devices en masse and over many years marked orientality is suggested by the sheer number of songs that bore them.209

Some songs populated by orientalized characters were set throughout in an imagined pidgin English that combined “l” for “r” swaps, “-ee” suffixes, and more idiosyncratic marks of difference. One of these was “Chee Wee,” with such lines as “I’d like very (velly) much call her mine, / Allie same

209. It also may be seen in such kinds of representational surfeit as nonstandard spellings of words already ending in a long “ee” sound. One such case is a superfluous “countree” (for “country”), with the double “e” investing oriental surplus into a song already replete with such exclamations as “Ki yi! Ching-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling!”; Maribel Seymore, “A China Heart,” musical supplement to the New York Journal & Advertiser, 21 July 1901, 5–8.
change her name me.” Syntax, grammar, and pronunciation tips could situate entire narratives as tales told of and by radically othered characters. Many songs circulated the same semantic references and the same practices for singing orientality; the language of “Ching-a-Ling-a-Loo” was like that of “Chee Wee” in many specific ways, as suggested by its lines “She likee me / And I likee she / And velly soon we both get mally.” Each aspect of their striking commonality was seen as well in many other pieces. Using these devices in Asian or Asian American settings, lyrics could situate all figures—and by proxy all people—of Asian heritage as audibly foreign or alien.

While many pieces lapsed into such language for general effect (without regard to whose voice supposedly was singing), some set off nearly their entire texts by framing them as the utterances of oriental characters. Others

212. E.g., Max Hoffmann, “Ching a Ling a Loo,” Chicago: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1901. Another such piece, set wholly in China and published in 1919 as a “Chinese Novelty Song,” was titled “Allee Samee.” Its first-person chorus went in part: “If you likee me like I likee you, / Plitty soon the wedding bells begin to ring Ching-ling-ling / You’re my rose of China, / Nothing could be finer, / Then your winky, blinky, chinky eyes of blue / Even if you won’t be true, listen to Ching Ling Foo…”; in the same year, “Night Time in Old Japan” included the lines “I ching a high ching a lee I’m lonely / Sweet Japanee you’ll be my only” in an apparent conjuncture of this more often Chinese-referential phrase and the similar “I sing a-high sing a-lee sing a-low” of “I Want to Go to Tokio.” Peter De Rose (music) and Sam Coslow (lyrics), “Allee Samee (Can You Blame Me for Loving You?): Chinese Novelty Song,” New York: F. B. Haviland, 1919; Joe Solman, Bernard Eyges, and Maurice Solman, “Night Time in Old Japan,” Boston: Lang, 1919; Fred Fischer (music) and Joe McCarthy (lyrics), “I Want to Go to Tokio,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1914.
213. “In China” did this in its first seven words, after which the rest of its lyrics were cast in the voice of a Ching Ling who sang such things as “Me left sweetheart wish boat would start / Please captain melican man / Sail China boy fast as you can / To his lady lotus bud in China.” Otto Motzan (music) and A.J. Stasny (lyrics), “In China,” New York: A. J. Stasny, 1919.
embedded bits of marked pronunciation into otherwise unmarked English.\[214\] Some first-person choruses mixed U.S. slang and orientalized language. In “Sing Song Girl,” the former predominated and the latter lent raciological flavor. In the voice of a protagonist who “sings in high Chinese / His song of love,” the chorus included such lines as “Altho I know you’d fool a fella” and “I come catch-um up maybe.”\[215\] Others mixed marked English with real or fake Chinese or Japanese; one used lines such as “So he sing a lily chinee tune” before a refrain beginning “Tsong Fow, / Tow-see-mon-go lay-oo / Yip lik foo long tong.”\[216\] This meeting of pseudo-dialect with what passed for romanized Chinese located all language linked to orientality as being just on the near or the far side of a divide between language and nonsense.\[217\]
**Structural Positionings of First-Person Lyrical Yellowvoice**

As the enabling tools of yellowvoice, these linguistic devices functioned in ways affected by their structural locations within lyrics. This steered their performative use, and probably many of their interpretations, in certain ways.

Due to its parenthetical occurrence in many songs, one such location could go unnoticed; but it offered especially inclusive opportunities for brief bits of yellowvoice. These textual fragments consisted of second-vocalist interjections, scripted moments of ready-made spontaneity that interpolated snippets of enthusiasm into some pieces’ main lyrics. One refrain began:

My Sing Song girl (Pletty Pletty song likee Sing Song)
My Hong Kong Pearl (Pletty girl Pletty pearl likee Hong Kong)
You know how much I admire you,
I’ll show how much I desire you
Won’t you belong to me (Pletty name pletty game likee Ping-Pong)
My brain’s awhirl (Allee same muchee glame likee Hop-sticks)
My heart I hurl (Pletty soon honeymoon likee Chopstick)  

This enabled the song’s main singer to remain in the voice of a non-oriental figure framed by a vocal context marked by other voices’ mimetic orientality. These interjections created performative space for pianists, family members, and other participants to chime in with imagined yellowvoice utterances, and thus to become active participants in constructing orientality even if they were not comfortable assuming the role of an amateur singer *per se*.

Similarly condensed marking was common in the structurally distinct space of “patter” sections. Six of the lyrics central to this analysis offered such sections. All were published from 1921 to 1924, and all invoked Chineseness in Asia or America. Focusing attention on language rather than melody,

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orientalist patter tended to use long runs of repeated or alternating pitches, and often began with steady quarter notes sung to a repeated 1-1-5-5 contour (with the “5”s taken low). This could evoked notated elements—pentatonicism, open fifths, etc.—treated later in this chapter. Paired with such musical materials, patter texts frequently used the imperative, as did that in “Sing a Little Low Down Tune.” It commanded all present to “Wink your blinky almond eyes, Ah__ Make ’em learn to harmonize.” As this also suggests, certain lines of some patter sections used unmarked English.

More common in patter, however, was language heavily marked with orientalist devices (as, in fact, was most of that in “Sing a Little Low Down Tune”). “Good-Bye Shanghai!” offers a typical example:

If you hit the pipe, law catch you quick,
Smokee opium no more,
Melican policeman swing big stick, hop-head, drop-dead;
Wear no more Kimonos made of silk, wear no more Pagoda hats,
Dress up like a dude in pinch back suit, wear a little cane and spats.

Another went: “Chinky-link a chink-chink, / Little chinky boy / Make-y up with chinee girl, / Fill ’em with joy; / Sing a chinee-song, song, / Happy all a-day / No more good-a-bye. say....” Sung for humor’s sake in moments during which language itself was the privileged object of attention, these

220. This was a 1933 song excluded from the main subcorpus of lyrics from 1900–1930, so not one of the six counted above. Charlie Tobias, Jack Scholl and Murray Mencher, “Sing a Little Low-Down Tune (Little Sing-A-Lee): Fox-Trot Song,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1933.
221. One song even lurched into the quasi-religious phraseology of “With the break of day / Sing Song journeys on his way / Rich poor even kings / Seek him for the joy he brings / Kind thoughts that he sows / Follow him where’er he goes / All wish him God speed / For he helps their ev’ry need / You too can share,” which by its end could have passed for a missionary-fund solicitation. Cliff Friend and Con Conrad, “Sing Song Man,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1922.
patters’ dense lexicons of gendered race, racialized musicality, and the voice itself gave those who sang or heard them grounds for belief in true alienness.

While few lyrics had patter sections, virtually all had choruses, and demarcated chunks of yellowvoice were common there. Remembering Page’s account of the chorus as the lyrical component that did the heaviest lifting to support a song’s emotional effects and memorability, this is significant. Along with structural—in performance, processual—moves seen above, the ways in which yellowvoice functioned in those contexts overlapped with narrative matters. The meanings people made from singing first-person yellowvoice gained credence from a kind of triangulation between structural form, story-centered content, and acts of performance that embodied raciological lyrics.

**Narrative Positionings of First-Person Lyrical Yellowvoice**

Encoded into printed type and located structurally in song forms, first-person yellowvoice also was situated within narratives that further enabled vocality to support ideas about race. Despite being constrained by the discourse these songs helped to make, the rhetoric that did this was varied; but a few moves most often linked first-person orientality and its narrative positions. These involved touristic scenes, nested mimesis within diegetic worlds, invocations of linguistic difference to signify romantic incompatibility or render white men’s language powerful, and brief mimetic moments offering local color.

Most lyrics that juxtaposed orientalized speech with unmarked English were based on romantic narratives, but not all were. In “From Here to Shanghai,” spoken language and the voice offered performative means of marking difference, metaphorical equivalents of racial essences, and subjects of rhetorical moves that sought comedy in codified practices offered as signs
of novelty. After a first verse establishing China as a site for more authentic versions of U.S. Chinatowns’ touristic pleasures, its chorus went:

I’ll soon be there,
In a bamboo chair,
For I’ve got my fare, from here to Shanghai.
Just picture me,
Sipping Oolong tea,
Served by a Chinaman, who speaks a-way up high.
(“Hock-a-my, Hock-a-my.”)
I’ll eat the way they do, with a pair of wooden sticks,
And I’ll have Ching Ling Foo,
Doing all his magic tricks.
I’ll get my mail
From a pale pigtail,
For I mean to sail,
From here to Shanghai.224

This repeatedly sung mix of consumption, spectatorship, hierarchy, and high-pitched vocality as a feminizing sign of race led to a verse locating Chinese speech as raw material for mimetic power plays: “I’ll have them teaching me / To speak their language, gee! / When I can talk Chinese, / I’ll come home on the run, / Then have a barr’ll of fun, / Calling people what I please.”

Interlinguistic intelligibility and its lack figured in other ways as well. Moving between oriental and (unmarked) white voices in romantic scenarios, some lyrics couched pronunciation and language-learning as means and signs of power relations. “China Moon” made both into central concerns:

(Man)
Dainty sweet China maid,
If I read your eyes you love me
Silv’ry moon o’er the glade
Lights your velvet cheek so softly
Here in my arms I’ll hold you closely,
To make you know that I love you dearly.
Dear Fan Toy,
I’ll teach you surely
To say “I love you, Mister American, only you.”

[Chorus two times:]
Down dreamy China way,
Far from the world cold and gray,
Take me, to remain all my days
In the East, with my dreams and Fan Toy!

(Woman)
Soft breeze whisper for me,
Tell love Joss Fan Toy is happy
Bad moon, wink naughty eye
Must not spy on grove so slyly
Big Yankee lover telling love lie.
You make my heart know I bime-by lose it.
Say to me,
"I’ll teach you surely
To know “I love you, my leetle Chinee girl, only you.”

[Chorus again two times to end]225

The sense of this education in strategic bits of nonstandard English is clear. Representing a white man imitating in advance what he presumed his words would sound like when parroted back at him in a Chinese woman’s voice, and that figure’s reciprocal instruction to him, its “quotations” show how the language of orientalized and non-orientalized voices could function.

Some songs of interracial encounter used language to mark difference and incomprehension. In “Pinky Panky Poo,” the (tacitly white male) lover of a “charming Chinee maidee” sang that “She don’t understand my talkin’, I don’t understand her walkin’” and “Tho’ my love’s as deep as oceans, we can only talk in motions.”226 The chorus began: “Pinky Panky Poo, I want to woo, woo, woo, woo, woo you, But when I ask her for her handee, She just says, ‘Me no understandee.’”227 Along with representing Asian women’s

226. Andy Lewis (music) and Aaron S. Hoffman (lyrics), “Pinky Panky Poo: Chinese Love Song,” Chicago: Sol Bloom, 1902. This was sufficiently attractive to U.S. audiences for “Pinky Panky Poo” to become “the hit song of the summer of 1902” (Cohen-Stratyner 1988, 292).
227. A few pieces played with differential language competence in ways unmarked by nonstandard spellings but similarly able to construct Asian figures’ lack of power to affect
voices as signs of powerless femininity, some lyrics presented (white) men’s voices in Asia as signs of masculinity. One told of a Chinese “maiden” who never looked at a man until “one day a Yankee bold / To Ling Foo his true love told / And with manly voice that night / Thus he sang to her delight”:

Ting a ling, Ting a ling, Ting a ling Foo!
You’re a fairy, I love you.
Come from ’neath that dainty fan
Cast your eyes upon a man!
Have a taste of earthly bliss!
Wing me, Ting y, one sweet kiss
Ting a ling, Ting a ling, Ting a ling Foo,
Love me as you ought to do.228

Lyrics such as this located white men’s vocality as a supposedly irresistible lure.229 In many, a departed white man’s voice sounded seemingly forever in the mind’s ear of an Asian woman, often as a lead-in to a chorus cast as his words. “Good-Bye Cherry Blossom” did this in verses ending with two parallel setups: “A lonely little maiden waits; / And a voice she longs to hear / Comes to her o’er the vale of years,” and “Her little heart with yearning aches; / And the one she longs to see / Seems to sing to her tenderly.” These narrative events. One had its title character, “Singapoo,” whisper in standard English to a man (with hair of gold and eyes “a foreign gray”) something that was basically an invitation to make out beneath “a big bamboo.” Only later in the text, as she lamented his leaving, did it become clear why he couldn’t know “she loved him so”: “He didn’t understand Chinese / When murmured on the evening breeze.” Neil Moret [pseudonym of Charles N. Daniels] (music) and Maude Fulton (lyrics), “Singapoo (Song of the East),” San Francisco: Daniels & Wilson, 1919. Less frequently, lyrics invoked written language to construct similar distance; in “The Girl I Know in Tokio,” an American protagonist sang: “And beneath a hat of grass she wears a pretty smile, / Yet she prays in mystic ways, in Oriental style, / When she writes she makes a sight I cannot understand, / The language of old old, Japan.” William J. Robertson, “The Girl I Know in Tokio,” Joliet, IL: William J. Robertson, 1926.

remembered sounds could be situated in diegetically real soundscapes, as heard in the same song’s “There in Japan you’re waiting, / I know your heart is breaking, / Temple bells are ringing, / Memories they’re bringing....”\textsuperscript{230}

Often sung after a first verse that framed them as present utterances and a second that recast them as remembered speech in the minds of women left behind, choruses of white men’s supposedly powerful words could be set off against second verses that cast third-person narrative in marked language flagging their male figures’ absence. The unmarked chorus of “Santu” framed this second verse: “Long time she sigh, and all night cry / She wait her ‘merican man / Tree’s [sic] all in bloom, note say he come soon, / Back to the flower land, / To her boy she say now we both be gay, / Yankee daddie coming back to you.”\textsuperscript{231} Even without first-person “quotation,” this language stood for the orientality of a female figure and a narrative setting from which whiteness had departed. In performance, the return of standard English in the final singing of the chorus reinforced the return of a (white male) hero.\textsuperscript{232}

Some songs juxtaposed white sailors’ entreaties and women’s taciturn replies, contrasting their expressive agency in different ways that bolstered unequal apportionments of subjectivity and power. One told of a woman who merely smiled in the first verse and listened to her suitor’s pleas in the chorus:

\textsuperscript{232} A related device followed the rise of radio. In “Chinky Butterfly,” the first verse set up the chorus as live first-person singing; the second repositioned it as an actual voice from across the Pacific, thanks to technology: “Far off where millions of lanterns glow; / Someone came bringing a radio. / Poor little heathen Chinee, / She tuned in over the sea, / Sweet and low out of the blue above. / She heard his song of love!” Lee David (music) and Billy Rose (lyrics), “Chinky Butterfly,” New York: Irving Berlin, 1925. This juxtaposed natively emplaced Chineseness and a new American technical wonder with potentially global reach.
Having heard this, “She just murmur’d ‘Hickey hoi’ and closed her Japanese fan / He just answer’d ‘Ship ahoy’ and grasp’d her little brown hand.” Her enjoyment of his voice set up the return to the chorus. “As the boat steam’d out of the bay / Coyly and joyly she smiled to hear him say” the refrain twice more, showing who was to do the talking in this musical romance.

Other parallels of structure and narrative evoked assimilation. The lyrics of the “Chinese Lullaby” from East Is West were divided into two parts, and a note stated that “Song (a) is in Ming Toy’s ‘Pigeon English’; Song (b) in the good English she learns later in the play. — It is first sung in pure Chinese”:

a)  
Sing song, sing song, so Hop Toy  
Allee same like China boy,  
But he sellee girl with joy:  
Pity poor Ming Toy!  
Sing song, sing song, so Hop Toy  
Allee same like China boy,  
But he sellee girl with joy;  
Pity poor Ming Toy!

b)  
A ripple I seem  
On life’s mystic stream,  
Tossed at the water’s will;  
So I dare dream I’ll be,  
Like the poor ripple, free;  
When the troubled waters grow still.234

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Setting off the two types of language as windows into oriental consciousness before and after its westernized remaking, this gave amateurs a means of envoicing a conversion not unlike those constructed in accounts of Japanese sopranos learning to free themselves through European musicality. Rather than just reading or even singing about such a process in the third person, white Americans could actually sing that sequence of racialized conditions.235

Certain songs’ first-person language used mostly standard English, but people may have sung them more thoroughly in yellowvoice than their lyrics suggest at first; a single bit of marked utterance could leverage a song-within-a-song into deep orientality. “Moon Eyes” led to its refrain with the lines “…the Chinese lad / No “chink-chink” had, / And the maiden’s door was closed to him. / So he sang this serenade, / ‘Neath the window of the maid”:

Moon-Eyes,
I love you dearly,
Moon-Eyes,
I speak sincerely,
Moon-Eyes,
That shine so clearly
Won’t you smile on me from above?
Me-no-care for fame and riches,
Just for you, in blouse and britches,
Lots of rice and heaps of kisses,
From my pretty little Moon-Eyed love.236

235. Some songs associated with stage productions but also distributed individually were written completely in yellowvoice, preserving a trace of a common performative linkage between vocal practices and professional yellowface acts. “The Chinaman’s Song” from Mecca is a case in point. Its lyrics started with “Me welly good old Chinaman / Me Wei-San-Wei / Me Samie old as Allah be, / Me Wei-San-Wei / Him never lie, / Him never die, / Like Wei-San-Wei. / Me Wei-San-Wei me never die, / Me fiont Pekin, me fullie sin / Me foolie men, me plenty yen, / Me buyie sell, me cheatie Hell!” and continued in the same fashion. Percy E. Fletcher (music) and Oscar Asche (lyrics), “The Chinaman’s Song,” New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter, 1920. Language this densely transformed also occurred in songs unassociated with the stage, but its use in this song (which seems to have been widely purchased and used, also based on its common survival nowadays) may have worked for its public due to its links with a popular show as well as to its sheer novelty value.

Like a droplet of yellow dye diffusing through a pitcher of water, just three syllables of marked English—“Me-no-care”—may have been enough to prompt the orientalized delivery of such a chorus in many performances.237

Some songs laden with orientalist vocabulary and narrative elements remained wholly unmarked by nonstandard spellings.238 This was true as well of some that included substantial “quoted” first-person dialogue.239 As in many domains of cultural production, these pieces’ authors drew from a

237. Not to overstate the case, we should note that some songs which shifted into orientalized first-person choruses did so in unmarked English; one was by Marian Lee Patterson, “The Maid in the Jappy Kimona,” Washington, DC: Sanders & Stayman Co., 1905. Another was “Ishki Choo” (coincidentally one of the few songs entirely in a Japanese American setting, in contrast to the many lyrics set in China, Japan, or U.S. Chinatowns). Sung as if in the voice of a Japanese San Franciscan suitor, it was cast in thoroughly unmarked U.S. spoken English (Chas. Bauer [music] and Edward C. McCormick [lyrics], “Ishki Choo,” Palestine, IL: Edward C. McCormick, 1921). Complications and variance of these sorts may help to undermine any interpretive reduction of first-person lyrics into a model more homogeneous than is justified.

Another example used the floating phrase “Ching-a-ling,” generic vocables that recurred in various pieces. Reduplicating them as “Ching-a-ling ling-a-ling-a-ling,” “My Pekin Moon” used the first person for its chorus but did so in unmarked language; the protagonist’s singing was heard across the sea as “a mystic murmur,” one he no longer uttered after being silenced by heartbreak. This used tropes of oriental difference and narrative structure but no racialized English as such. (Otto Frey [music] and Collin Davis [lyrics], “My Pekin Moon,” Chicago: Victor Kremer Co., 1910; see also John W. Bratton [music] and Paul West [lyrics], “My Little Hong Kong Baby,” New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1902.)

“My Japanee” had its protagonist listen nightly to a suitor’s song that clung to unmarked language until the bitter end: “Your lips are like the honey from the bee; / Your smile is bright on southern sea to me; / The love-light lies in your soft midnight eyes, / You ‘Darling of the Gods’ my Japanee.” As if it were simply too much to finish the chorus without a tiny bit of linguistic orientalism (and a better rhyme), its final word was marked by a lost “s”; S. Gibson Cooke (music) and Donald Smedt (lyrics), “My Japanee,” Boston: Walter Jacobs, 1904.


pool of representational practices in ways that afforded room for individual inflection even as they usually reinscribed the same ideas about orientality.

**The Social Lives of Orientalist Lyrics**

Connections between these lyrics and social contexts (see chapter epigraph) are evident in these texts’ fit with beliefs held to this day by many Americans. They may be seen in such routine acts as “ching chong” mockery still chanted in many schoolyards. Some songs themselves told of such public practices:

See him coming down the street,
Hear the patter of his feet,
Old John Chinaman, bundle under arm,
Old John Chinaman, never does you harm,
Cleaning up your collars,
Saving up your dollars,
Welly, welly good: (You sabby)

*Chorus two times:
Chin-chin-chin-chin-chin Chinaman,
Singing all the day,
Turns work into play,
Kids all follerin’,
Keep on hollerin’
“Chin-chin-chin-chin Oh! you Chinaman!”
He goes on his way,
Gets your little shirtee, cleans it when it’s dirty,
Brings it back next day;
His almond eyes
Are always full of Chinese josh,
But if you’re wise
You’ll bring your tickee for your wash,
He’ll tell you “Sing foo, Wing woo, Wassa malla you?”
That is all he’ll say
In his dinky, winky, blinky, chinky, Chin-chin Chinaman way.240

These lyrics invested casual streetside racism with a joviality that occluded its heavy social content. Language such as “dinky, winky, blinky” conjured up a lighthearted setting for its central figure’s stolid complacency. This cloaking

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240. First verse and chorus of “Chin-Chin Chinaman,” James F. Hanley (music) and Joe Goodwin and Ballard MacDonald (lyrics), New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1917.
of ideology within amusement brings us back out from focused engagement with lyrics to wider scenes of racial representation in vocal performance.241

In professional yellowvoice in the theater and in these songs, raciological vocality offered experiences of imaginary human types made audible. These often were infused with the perceived charms of difference safely contained in musically enacted novelty. A key difference between much of what went on in these acts, however, arose from the degrees of bodily participation they encouraged. While dramatic yellowvoice could lead audiences to hear race in bodies on stage (in acts mirrored in some ways by amateur practices), sheet music enabled—even expected—its consumers to engage in mimesis with their own voices. To do so was, in fact, the only means of realizing the full use value of the creative works and commercial products they had purchased.

This aspect of use gave orientalist lyrics further power to shape many white Americans’ ideas about race. By demanding, as it were, that one must sing a song in order to get one’s money’s worth (as well as by enabling the less monetarily leveraged pleasures of singing for its own entertaining sake), sheet music encouraged people to perform the words it carried. This gave the ideas that infused it the added weight of embodied use, while lending them the subtle hegemonic edge of performance enjoyed as “mere” recreation.

Singing Orientality from Sheet Music, Third View: Musical Notation

Now, to sum up all that has been said on the music of the popular song: While it is an advantage for one man to write both the words and music of a song, it is not absolutely essential; what is essential is that the words and music fit each other so perfectly that the thought of one is inseparable from the other. One octave is the range in which popular music should be written. Melodies should go up on open vowels in the lyrics. A “punch” should be put in music wherever possible. Punch is sometimes secured by the trick of repetition in the chorus, as well as at the beginning and end. The theme may be and usually is the punch, but in the variations there may be punches not suggested by the theme. Themes, semi-classical, or even operatic, or punches of old favorites may be used—but not those of other popular songs—and then it is best to use them frankly.

To state all this in one concise sentence permit me to hazard the following:

The music-magic of the popular song lies in a catchy theme stated at, or close to, the very beginning, led into clever variations that round back at least once and maybe twice into the original theme, and finishing with the theme—which was a punch of intrinsic merit, made stronger by a repetition that makes it positively haunting.

(Page 1915, 331–32)

Of the three aspects of sheet music semi-isolated here for analysis en masse, musical notation bears the fewest distinctive marks of orientality vis-à-vis other exoticist songs. With the exception of a very few iconic practices, or perhaps just one, these pieces’ staff notation may have done less as self-sufficient means of marking orientality than as performative vehicles. Shot through with broadly distancing sound, it often relied on images’ and words’ more specific references; but staff-notated aspects of many of these works still did signify orientality. This nested exoticist referentiality may be heard in, on the one hand, such sweeping signs as pentatonic melody or open fifths played in steady quarter-notes; and on the other, the more targeted rhythm of four short notes followed by four more of twice that duration, and then a longer one—the canonical “da-da-da-da dah-dah, dah-dah-daaah” of so many piano vamps that prepared the way into supposedly Chinese or Japanese terrain.

This notation shows how compositional orientalism was just one aspect of musical orientalism. Distinguishing the relationship between the two is
crucial to understanding how music and ideology work together through 
voices and bodies. The musical orientalism of the cultural moment of which 
these texts offer one kind of trace encompassed more than their printed notes, 
and it may be understood by relating them to performance. Not just written 
into them by composers and run off once and for all on lithographic presses, 
these notes’ meanings were made in millions of musical acts by which people 
brought them into sound, in the practices those acts instantiated, and in the 
ways in which people invested into those sounds ideas that were based on 
pervasive discourse or evoked by images and words printed with any one 
of these songs’ notation.

Performance was central to how staff notation did its ideological work, 
often more as a broadly exoticizing instrument than a precisely indicative 
one. Notated sound enabled singers to feel a divide between the musically 
unmarked status of normative (white) Americanness and social locations 
constructed outside it, to sing their way imaginatively across that boundary, 
and to experience deeply the meanings they made from more semantically 
adept words and images. “Music” in a narrow sense was crucial here. As did 
cover art and lyrics, it did the kinds of cultural work to which it was suited, 
exercising its efficacy through the performative use of these media packages.

**TYPOLOGIZING MUSICALLY NOTATED SIGNS OF RACE**

Focusing on the small number of notated signs that operated in these ways 
and on that lexicon’s overlap with other exoticist vocabularies, this section 
offers a synoptic trait list akin to certain others. Studies of compositional 
orientalism by scholars including Ralph Locke have examined stylistic
attributes of exoticist European concert music or orientalist rock.\textsuperscript{242}

Many sonic icons in those settings also circulated in these popular songs.

This overlap may be seen in Derek B. Scott’s “list of Orientalist devices, many of which can be applied indiscriminately as markers of cultural difference” in orchestral music; his list comprises:

- whole tones; Aeolian, Dorian, but especially the Phrygian mode; augmented seconds and fourths (especially with Lydian or Phrygian inflections);
- Arabesques and ornamented lines; elaborate ‘Ah!’ melismas for voice; sliding or sinuous chromaticism; trills, and dissonant grace notes; rapid scale passages…; a melody that suddenly shifts to notes of shorter value; abrupt juxtapositions of romantic, lyrical tunes and busy, energetic passages;
- repetitive rhythms, and repetitive small-compass melodies; ostinati; \textit{ad libitum} sections…; use of triplets in duple time; complex or irregular rhythms; parallel movement in fourths, fifths and octaves…; bare fifths; drones and pedal points; ‘Magic’ or ‘mystic’ chords…; harp arpeggios and \textit{glissandi}…; double reeds…;
- percussion (especially tambourine, triangle, cymbals and gong); emphatic rhythmic figures on pitched percussion (such as tom toms, tambourine and triangle). … Whether or not any of the musical devices and processes listed in this paragraph exist in any Eastern ethnic practices is almost irrelevant. As Said explains, “In a system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a \textit{topos}, a set of references.”\textsuperscript{243}

Although its instrumental details do not translate to popular sheet music for voice and piano, much of the list’s more musically abstract content does; and many of these audible signs of difference were even more widely shared.\textsuperscript{244}

The wide referential scope of such markers of non-whiteness (e.g., open fifths and “tom-tom” rhythm) may be seen in Michael Pisani’s summary of trans-genre connections he has found in “the most distinctively ‘exotic’ style

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[242.] A few of the many studies which present lists or similarly typological discussions of exoticist musical devices in diverse settings include Reck (1985); Locke (1991, 1993, 1998); Brett (1994); many essays in Bellman (1998b); essays in Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000).
\item[243.] D. Scott (1997, unpaginated online article, with notes to examples elided here); the final quotation is from Said (1978, 177).
\item[244.] This is clear from many works contemporary to songs treated here; it is suggested as well by present-day compositional practices in a great deal of music for film and television.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
characteristics” of certain white American composers’ “nineteenth-century
war dances.”245 Those pseudo-Indian works often were marked by:

1. “Rural” or “elemental” sustained fifths affecting a bagpipelike drone or
resonance in nature…

2. “Pastoral” or “rude peasant” rhythm (long-short-short)…

3. “Gypsy-Turkish” devices (labels from Jonathan Bellman’s “lexicon”): a
“thumping 2/4,” “harmonic stasis,” “ornaments and exaggerated dynamics
effects to imitate percussion,” repeating fourths and drone fifths as harmony,
melodic figures such as 1—#4—5 or 1—2—3—#4—5 to depict the total savage
abandon of the passions and intoxication of the senses

4. Folk idiom (not in the context of the National, or Self, but of the Exotic, or
Other): gapped scales, pentatonic suggestion accompanied by minor-key or
modal harmonies to create a sense of “far away” in a traditional Western
European context; this includes Scottish or “Celtic” melodies, many of which
were understood by continental Europeans to reflect an exotic land and culture

5. The “lurid”: slithering chromatic motion in the bass or inner voice; excessive
use of grace notes; use of the tambourine and other “noisy” percussion (also
“Turkish”); woodwind tremolos; abrupt, repetitious music gestures (the #4
resolving upward or downward was also used in this context)

6. “Oriental” devices: doubling of melodies at the fourth, fifth, or octave, and
usually with pedal points; the Oriental idiom also exaggerates the intervals of
the gapped scales, often 2—4 and 6—8

7. The three-note descending 3—2—1, usually given out in the rhythm two
sixteenths and an eighth or two eighths and a quarter (short-short-long):
this rhythm becomes an exotic feature…even when the three pitches vary…

These devices offered “a ready-made toolbox of exotica whenever…European
or European-trained American composers undertook Indian topics.”246

245. Selected findings from Pisani’s study of Indianist composition are useful here both as
a secondary distillation of points that could be made with primary materials only through
a far longer local excursus, and to avoid a long loop through other studies of exoticist works.
246. Pisani (1998, 229–30); on certain overlaps between markers of Indianness and Asianness,
see Pisani (1996, 348–49, 389–90). He also examines how some devices worked in specific
musical and social contexts to represent “Indians” as “war-mongering,” “sympathetic,” or
in other ways (1998, 230, 232). Without recounting the particulars of those analyses, we may
note that their purpose of understanding how music can signify race has an aim more parallel
to this dissertation’s than are those of typologies or genealogies of compositional practice.
Along with commonalities among such sets of exoticist stylistic moves were distinctions and more specifically nuanced tendencies.247 Useful here are projects focused on Chinese or on Japanese references in U.S. songs. “Much of the music” of those set in China or Chinatown, Judy Tsou has written, “has the same generic ‘Chinese sound’: repeated and parallel chords, open fifths, and whole-tone steps” (1997, 48). In a paper on songs invoking Japan, Anthony Sheppard (2000) reported that many use an iconic rhythm of four sixteenth notes to two eighth notes; “rhythmic juxtapositions”; “melodic grace notes”; “less pentatonicism than one might expect”; “Middle Eastern melodic clichés” with augmented seconds; “intervallelic” fourths and fifths; “awkward leaps”; and “extreme repetition.” Invoking processes often described as blurring or slippage, or less metaphorically as generalization, genericization, or homogenization, Sheppard framed his summary of signs as potentially misleading in light of many works’ “blurred representation.”248

Studies of other popular songs offer connections across temporal periods or national contexts,249 but here we may survey devices or attributes (from perspectives of composition or reception) that signified orientality in U.S. popular music of ca. 1900–1930. That such a list may offer early twenty-first-century readers no real news suggests how durable these practices have been.

247. Taking the first two items in Pisani’s list as examples, we might note that in Tin Pan Alley’s orientalist practice, open fifths were not so often sustained but more frequently were articulated in steady rhythm or parallel motion, and that a different iconic rhythm indexed not an idealized peasant life in the home countries of European American immigrants but the more radically othered spaces of an unknown Asia or a (far from pastoral) urban Chinatown. 248. As one such example, he cited Cliff Friend and Con Conrad, “Sing Song Man,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1922. 249. E.g., by leaping forward half a century to Ellie Hisama’s (1993) critique of certain songs’ racialized sexual politics, or across the Pacific to Scott-Maxwell’s (1997) work on Australian orientalist songs of the 1920s.
A LOCAL TYPOLOGY OF MUSICALLY NOTATED ORIENTALIST SOUND

Converging in part with models derived from other repertoires, a non-inclusive short-list of these songs’ musical signs of orientality would include these five (ordered by connections among them, not by their prevalence):

1. pentatonic melody, often including leaps of fourths or fifths
2. septatonic minor melody, often using quasi-pentatonic motives
3. open perfect-fifth ostinati, generally in a low register, often with:
4. steady quarter-note rhythm, sometimes marked “tom-tom”
5. “da-da-da-da dah-dah, dah-dah daah” and related rhythms

The first four of even these most canonical orientalist musical signs were widely used as well to mark non-oriental exotics (cf. Pisani’s list). The fifth one was the sole musical element that, to a pronounced but still not absolute degree, made white America’s East Asian orient most specifically audible.250

The utterly commonplace use of that most specific element to mark both Chineseness and Japaneseness suggests how undifferentiated were those two musical constructions. While some songs distinguished the two in lyrical or iconographic ways, their musical components seldom did. The few exceptions consisted mostly of songs that bore within them melodies from such Japanese sources as “Miya Sama” or “Sakura.” Some listeners may have heard those pieces’ music as nationally specific—but in contexts that could make any

250. Even without undertaking any large-scale quantitative comparison of China- and Japan-referential works vis-à-vis other songs, this is apparent from an informal, qualitative survey of the approximately 1,500 topically and contextually relevant pieces gathered for this study. Exotically inflected pentatonicism of several sorts, minor melodies, fifths and fourths, and “tom-tom” ostinati marked various kinds of racial difference; but with few exceptions, only works evoking East Asian cultural referents prominently deployed the stock “da-da-da-da dah-dah, dah-dah (daah)” rhythm and its variants.
pentatonic melody into a sign of generic pentatonicism, even recognizable “national melodies” could signify a racialized Chinese/Japanese orientality.

These songs’ “music” (in the narrowest sense) welded them together into a discourse that was at root about race more than anything culturally specific. Considered as vehicles for performance, their notated elements offered those who sang and heard them a nearly unavoidable sense that despite whatever images or language they offered, they all represented much the same orientality. This almost inescapable guidance towards certain meanings operated on one level among others. To attend to its musically conveyed power is not to deny meanings available from other aspects of these songs. It is, however, to argue that music (here but no further, still in its narrow usage) exerted particular kinds of hegemonic force. This efficacy was leveraged by these works’ massive replication, national dissemination, and use in uncountable amateur performances of their raciological strains.251

While many other generally exoticizing traits could be added to the five listed above, two more may most usefully be appended here:

6. augmented-second movement (a slippage from West to East Asia)
7. repetition of virtually any and all sorts

251. Probably related to this history of use, another U.S. marker of an orientalized East Asia is not mentioned here: parallel melodic lines at the perfect fifth or perfect fourth. Aside from its appearances in solo piano sections and its obscured embedding in accompaniment, that move is uncommon in these songs. Differing from its regular presence in instrumental genres, this may have served these pieces’ need to maintain easy singability and the tendency for their right-hand piano parts to double vocal melodies. A prominent instrumental voice tracking the vocal part at a perfect fourth or fifth may have risked drawing amateur singers’ ears to that parallel line and throwing them off of their own. If avoiding scenarios in which vocalists suddenly might find themselves singing in transposed keys did underlie the downplaying of this specific type of intervallic doubling, its infrequency is a trace of these songs’ targeting to amateurs more than highly trained singers—whom composers in elite genres could presume would be able to hold their own against the confusion such melodic shadowing might cause.
The last item shows how widely applicable such devices could be, and how they could rely on sheer difference from local norms. Repetition beyond that commonly heard in elite European traditions could signify any social location susceptible to rubrics of the folk, the primitive, or the oriental. As signs of what could be called a non-diatonic human condition, such attributes as pentatonicism also could construct difference in equally broad ways.\textsuperscript{252}

Infrequent enough not to be routine was the inclusion of one of the few Chinese or Japanese melodies recognizable as such in these contexts. A few songs quoted such sources in introductions; others offered easily perceptible transformations of them. To many Americans, the first vocal phrase of “Kimono” (fig. 8.80) was a generic bit of pentatonicism; but for some, it may have evoked the Meiji song “Miya Sama.”\textsuperscript{253} It spun this out in a retrograde that was precise in intervallic structure (C-C-C-D-F-F vis-à-vis the 1-1-1-6-5-5-5 of “Miya Sama”) and nearly so in rhythm—with its second measure’s half-note echoing in a structurally condensed location the sustained pitch in the fourth measure of its Japanese precursor. However, such appropriations were less common than were the more categorical devices mapped out below.

\textsuperscript{252} Other contextually noticeable musical elements recurred to lesser degrees in these songs. E.g., some began sections such as choruses with a long-held high note that eventually found a seemingly sensuous or languorous way to descend (with those affective qualities suggested by chromaticism, small melodic turns attached to notes of long duration, etc.). This could be played out over a four-bar phrase at the start of a chorus, and sometimes restated at different pitch levels in subsequent phrases. But as were many other exoticist signs noted both here and in other bodies of song, this initially-held falling strain was more an occasional visitor than a core element in these songs (more common, and less codifiable, were descending melodies of the sorts treated below in connection with pentatonic and minor tonalities). Musical elements that recurred in such less than unremitting ways are largely set aside here.

\textsuperscript{253} Eugene West and Mary Earl [pseudonym of Robert A. King], “Kimono,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1922.
Another part of the performative background for these notated signs consisted of piano solos that used language to guide related performance. Interpretive directions for some orientalist songs’ accompaniment offered similar guidance; one piano introduction featured left-hand octaves to be sounded as “Temple Bells.” Some solos sought orientality in low register: “For Oriental effect play first note of each measure as low as possible.”

In these contexts, notated elements sounded orientality in the ways explained below. As did iconographic elements, each of these generally appeared with others. A few examples may suggest how each occurred in many hundreds of other orientalist works not specifically cited here.

Sign 1. Pentatonic melody, often including leaps of fourths or fifths

Phrases built with tones from 1-b3-4-5-b7 minor pentatonics (e.g., A-C-D-E-G) were common, as were others that used that same intervallic structure as a


257. These interpretations rely on my hearings of how these elements probably functioned in their contexts of musical discourse and racial ideology. This renders them hypothetical, in ways that proceed from fairly objective textual descriptions of (subjectively chosen) printed notes to speculation about wider meanings people may have made from them. If this were presented as a conclusive account of what these texts meant, it would echo traditions of writing about music by framing an author’s response as a window into unitary and objective compositional meaning; but on the contrary, these comments follow a tradition that seeks to offer plausible—and because of that, necessarily far from complete—accounts of how some people probably heard and interpreted certain works within contemporary contexts of use.

258. Were this a new claim or one likely to be contested, to present more examples would offer useful evidence to support it; since it is neither, to do so would accomplish little but would greatly expand this text. For the same reason, purposely not focused on below are about ten such songs that other scholars have discussed closely in regard to their musical notation in studies concerned specifically with evocations of Chineseness or of Japaneseness.
major 1-2-3-5-6 pentatonic (e.g., C-D-E-G-A). The minor form occurred in a huge number of songs including “Japanese Moon” (fig. 8.81). That song’s verse stuck entirely to a C-Eb-F-G-Bb scale aside from a brief A embellishing one phrase; its chorus began in the relative major (Eb-F-G-Bb-C). 259 In “From Here to Shanghai,” the first twelve measures of vocal melody used a D-F-G-A-C scale in a gamut of just a major sixth from D down to F. 260

Many phrases used only three or four pitches from minor pentatonics that were fully expressed over longer spans of melody. Sometimes this suggested triadic harmony more than exoticism. Arising most bluntly from emphasis on two or more of a pentatonic’s first, third, and fifth degrees, this is seen in measures 4–8 of the opening phrase of “Japansy,” which stressed F and D in a way that seemed to imply dominant-tonic motion in Bb despite being part of a five-tone modal line (fig. 8.82). 261 More common, however, were such moves as that in “Fast Asleep in Poppyland”; it used a repeated line built with D, F, G, and A, introducing the pentatonic’s remaining C only in the ninth measure. 262 In “Sayonara” (fig. 8.83), the refrain’s first eight measures used a complete F-G-A-C-D major pentatonic; but they began with a falling C-F-G-C contour that stated only three tones as a pair of descending fifths spread over two full measures of half and quarter notes. 263

One of several pieces titled “Rose of Japan” shows how this practice could be semantically meaningful while evoking a general sense of distance.

Its initial phrase, “Temple bells are calling me,” was set to an A-E-A-E-G-E-G contour (fig. 8.84); using only three pitches and beginning with a falling perfect fourth sounded twice at steady speed, this was easy to hear as the sound of distant bells. The use of small subsets of pentatonic scales could mark more plainly a work’s tonal material as being different from familiar diatonic scales, different in ways that made ideological sense. In these songs’ interpretive contexts, people could hear melodies with fewer than seven tones as being inexpressive of emotion, with smaller sets of pitches suffering further reductions of perceived expressiveness; some ascribed that same lack—often figured as an absence of feeling itself—to Asians and Asian Americans.

These same five-pitch structures also appeared in modal contexts that situated them as 1-2-4-5-b7 (and less often, with different intervals, 1-2-4-5-7) scales experienced as minor despite their absence of a third degree. This may be seen in the beginning of the vocal melody in one of several songs titled “Down in Chinatown” (fig. 8.85); the perfect-fourth drop from D to A in its first two phrases also was typical. The schematic sense of these pentatonics could implicitly underlie melodies using only four main notes (but as in most such cases, accompanied by piano parts sounding a larger tonal palette).

The verse of “Pinky Panky Poo” (fig. 8.86) began by using tones from an E-F#-A-B tetrachord (lent exotic color by A# neighbors below the B). With the piano sounding a low D# at the bottom of its many V6 chords (and in these initial measures, no C-sharps or C-naturals at all), this had the effect of

suggesting an E-F#-A-[A#]-B-D# environment (with the accompaniment’s prominent D# mentally filling an unused part of the vocal range, but its G made less welcome there by the melody’s F#). These measures’ inclusive 1-2-b3-4-[#4]-5-7 tonal scheme supported a sung line that implied a minor 1-2-4-5-7 pentatonic with #4 embellishments, but one which sounded only a 1-2-4-5 set of pitches (plus the ancillary #4). Each of these three nested tonal spaces was unlike normative diatonic major or minor scales. All contributed to marking the song’s “Chinee maidee” as alien.

Many melodies used 1-2-3-5-6 pentatonics with the same intervallic relationships as 1-b3-4-5-b7 ones, situating these as major tonalities by means of sung phrases’ initial and final tones and through piano accompaniment as tonically unambiguous as that of the chorus of “My Cherry Blossom.”267 “Ming Toy” (fig. 8.87) began its verse with a G-G-D-D-E-E-E-B line, suggesting a G-major pentatonic that the next measure’s initial A would complete, creating a phrase that also began with an iconic perfect fifth (G-D) and ended with an evocative fourth (E-B).268 The first four verse measures of “Cherry Blossom” (fig. 8.88) spanned an F-to-F gamut with tones from an F-G-A-C-D set of pitches harmonized in F Major.269 In a common type of musical scene-setting, characterization, and narrative development, measure 5 added a non-pentatonic E as the lyrics introduced a sailor to their old Japan, and measure 6 reverted to pitches from the previous set. By setting the words “Sailor boy lov’d” to an implicitly diatonic F-D-E-C and “geisha girlie” to

D-A-C-A, this gave the male figure an unmarked (diatonic) normality and assigned the female one to an oriental space already set up by pentatonicism.

Some songs quasi-modulated between relative major and minor five-note scales.\textsuperscript{270} The verse of “When the Cherry Trees Are Blooming in Japan” used an Eb-major pentatonic marked by perfect-fourth ornamentation (fig. 8.89, noting the approach to measure 4’s B-flat by a C-G-C-G sung to a liquid “yellow” and melismatic “round”); its chorus began in the relative minor of C-Eb-F-G-Bb (fig. 8.90) before rising to a D that announced the onset of diatonically expressed romantic sentiment. A closely derived song, “When the Lotus Flowers Bloom in Chinaland,” shows in its identically sung phrases (figs. 8.91, 8.92) how these same elements readily signified Japan or China.\textsuperscript{271}

As a notable aspect of these works’ routine use of repetition of many kinds, melodies that drew on this intervallic structure of major seconds and minor thirds often repeated notes at those intervals.\textsuperscript{272} “Japanese Sandman” (fig. 8.93) did so in the C-to-A motif (and its E-to-C\# transposition) that nearly filled the first page of its chorus.\textsuperscript{273} Falling minor thirds of that sort appeared in numerous works including “Najimi” (fig. 8.94).\textsuperscript{274} In “My Little Rose of Tokio” (fig. 8.95), ascending minor thirds and falling major seconds marked

the chorus’s first line, and “Rose of China” (fig. 8.96) began with a melody using only C, Bb, G, and F in phrases that reiterated C-Bb and G-F major seconds connected by a prominent minor third from B-flat to G.  

Along with a belief that Asian musics were repetitious, aural memories of this intra-pentatonic move may have led many listeners to hear orientality in diatonic melodies that alternated between two notes. Using the pitch set D-E-F-G-A-C (prior to its ninth-measure tonal expansion), the verse of “San Toy” used more than five tones, but it summoned up an air of pentatonicism with an insistent A-to-G second and an infilled fall from F to D (fig. 8.97). Some such phrases used minor and major seconds, as in the G-Ab and F-G intervals in the diatonic minor verse (fig. 8.98) of “My Dreamy China Lady.” The chorus of “In Blinky Winky Chinky Chinatown” did this in its first line (fig. 8.99), which—despite beginning with a stepwise diatonic run from G up to D—evoked orientality by toggling between D and C. Even before the line ended with a D-C-G figure that removed any doubt, that major second was sufficient to sound oriental—to seem to be, despite the B-natural that led to it, a C and D from a pentatonic scale rather than the same two notes (identical in isolation, but not in context) from a diatonic world.

276. William C. Polla (music) and Norman Clark (lyrics), “San Toy,” New York: Harms, 1930. The major second was phrased in a way that probably evoked notions of “chanting,” a term commonly used in many contemporary U.S. books and articles to evoke the sound of singing in Asian vocal traditions that were unfamiliar to most white American authors and readers.
278. In some ways this is an absurdly reductive distinction, but in this highly overdetermined context it makes some amount of sense. Jean Schwartz (music) and William Jerome (lyrics), “In Blinky Winky Chinky Chinatown,” New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co., 1915.
Other pentatonic materials appeared less frequently than minor and major versions of this structure of major seconds and minor thirds. Two were minor pentatonics with additional stepwise major thirds and minor seconds. These 1-2-b3-5-b6 and 1-2-4-5-b6 scales were not relative versions of the first two (or of each other).\textsuperscript{279} One clear use of a 1-2-4-5-b6 scale was in “China Lady o’ Mine” (fig. 8.100) which combined it (as E-F#-A-B-C) with a familiar rhythmic scheme and falling contour.\textsuperscript{280} The verse’s use of these pitches and the chorus’s reliance on a 1-2-3-5-6 pentatonic (on a relative tonic as G-A-B-D-E, as seen in fig. 8.101) patently were meant to evoke Chinese musicality; but the ways in which they did so may have been audible as indexing African American Spiritual melodic moves as well (this becomes evident if one sings the chorus’s repeated “China Lady o’ Mine,” with its pentatonicism and passing tones, down an octave). The seeming presence of this broadly non-white cultural charge, at least when sung in an often-male register, is not provable; the point, however, is the ease with which non-oriental associations could have arisen from some of these songs’ five-tone phrases in isolation or when combined with such things as that chorus’s chromaticism.

Because the 1-2-3-5-6 and 1-b3-4-5-b7 pentatonics most ubiquitous in these songs could gesture towards so many racial categories, their ability to mark orientality as such depended on more than intervallic structures in isolation. As Allen Forte notes in regard to one prominent composer in these

\textsuperscript{279} Their sonorities’ likely prototypes in East Asian music cultures may have been phrases heard (using the former case as an example here) within such structures as the in scale and related Japanese tonal materials; but specific derivation had (as usual) scant impact on their U.S. associations. As with printed images and lyrical invocations of kimono, origins counted for little or nothing once these materials began to circulate as U.S. signs of orientality.

\textsuperscript{280} Leon Close (music) and Lew Farris (lyrics), “China Lady o’ Mine,” Chicago: Forster, 1927.
cultural milieux, “the pentatonic is...a major stylistic characteristic...of Gershwin’s” music (Forte 1995, 343 chap. 12n7). In these songs, rhythmic, lyrical, and other kinds of contextualization were necessary to make these small groups of pitches signify specific racial positions. From another angle, certain moves within pentatonic melodies could link contextually oriental phrases to more general sentiments. For example, the b6-to-5 movement in the C-to-B moments of “China Lady o’ Mine” could effect a musical sigh that not only uttered locally orientalized longing but also evoked submediant-to-dominant gestures often associated more widely with loss and nostalgia.

Many songs supported pentatonic vocal melodies with diatonic accompaniment marked by other means. The verse of “Blinky Winky” used only a G-A-B-D-E pentatonic, but its piano part added an occasional F-sharp or C to complete right-hand triads (fig. 8.102). This enabled people to sing an orientality marked by a meaningful lack of melodic diatonicism, but to do so in contexts made emotionally accessible by the audibility of just such harmonies.

This could converge with the common practice of drawing selectively from seven-note scales to create phrases that suggested pentatonicism—or, heard from an equally valid perspective, stringing together phrases from structurally overlapping pentatonics to produce in succession a composite septatonic set of pitches. “Japanese Sailor” (fig. 8.103) began its vocal melody with a line offering various senses of tonality contingent upon whether one attended to each measure or two in the moment, or assembled the melody’s

cumulative pitch material in one’s mind. In more pared-down fashion, the first three vocal measures of “Lo-Ki” (fig. 8.104) consisted of G-A-B-D-B-A-D, G-A-B-D-B-A-D, and E-F#-G-B-G-F#-E phrases that could be heard either as suggesting two E-minor pentatonics (E-G-A-B-D and E-F#-G-A-B) or simply as a diatonic minor phrase sung at two pitch levels within a single seven-note scale. This perceptual latitude brings us to the next element.

**Sign 2. Septatonic minor melody, often using quasi-pentatonic motives**

Pentatonic melodies often segued or blurred into septatonic minors. Some songs, “Chee Wee” among them, had successive subsections set in each. Its melody began with 16 measures (figs. 8.105, 8.106) set to the pitches D, E, F, G, and A, in this context functioning as a minor diatonic scale’s first through fifth degrees—sung here to exotic effect within the small gamut of a fifth. The next line’s eight measures shifted into a minor pentatonic, newly avoiding the E. This marked further a transition emphasized by an octave leap up to the first sung instance of the high tonic and a linguistic shift from pseudo-pidgin to “Ki-yi Tung Gui” utterances. This used narrow-gamut, stepwise minor melody and pentatonicism as signs of orientality, but associated the latter with more highly exoticized lyrics and vocality.

Melodies moving between pentatonic and septatonic minors often used harmonically active chromatic passing tones. The first eight measures of the verse of “All Aboard for Chinatown” (fig. 8.107) illustrate this. Measures 1–5

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285. And continuing to avoid the septatonic’s B-flat, not yet sung but sounded by the piano.
used a G-Bb-C-D (5-b7-1-2) subset of a C-minor pentatonic implied within a perfect-fifth gamut. After creating oriental atmosphere with that constrained material, the melody moved down in measure 6 via G-F-Eb (5-4-b3). This expanded its cumulative pitches to C-D-Eb-F-G-Bb (1-2-b3-4-5-b7); with pitches 1 through 5 separated only by contiguous major or minor seconds, this moved the line into a diatonic minor, affording more familiar territory for developing and interpreting the melody. Measure 7’s B-flat stayed within this scheme, but the next measure slid up to a non-diatonic B-natural leading tone. That set up the initial C of the verse’s second half while evoking the mysterious air of such slippery motion, supported by similar leading-tone functionality and exotic color in the accompaniment’s F-sharps in measures 7 and 8. They employed that non-diatonic pitch in grace notes that not only implied V-of-V harmonic motion but also (in this overdetermined setting) sounded an orientality that was undispelled by the melody’s movement beyond an initial scene-setting pentatonicism.286

Other melodies played with minor tonalities and chromatic notes in ways that summoned up a rather general mysterioso exoticism. As seen in “The Geisha Girl in Tokio” (fig. 8.108), “Yokohama Love” (fig. 8.109), “Hong Kong” (fig. 8.110), and “Yan-Kee” (fig. 8.111), some did so with neighboring tones.287 The last example shows how such juxtapositions could characterize lyrical protagonists. “Yan-Kee” did this by means of its coloristic stress on

chromatic embellishments, fifths, and fourths early on (e.g., in the first line of E-D#-E-D#-E-A#-B-C-B-B-E-E) and its delayed use of any more than three adjacent diatonic seconds until the six-note ascent from E to C in the verse’s twelfth measure. The earlier, highly marked material underpinned generic scene-setting and an account of a Japanese woman’s feelings; meaningfully avoided in those eleven measures, the resolutely stepwise march of diatonic seconds seemed to carry the song into a zone of white male subjectivity sung in the line it introduced: “This American trav’ling man, loved Nankee too.”

Many compositions used the sorts of falling minor lines seen in vocal measures 1–4 of one “China” (fig. 8.112), which presented such a descent on the tonic and echoed it on the subdominant. This gave its lyrics about distance and foreignness a strong charge of the exotic; after this, the line’s second half set the phrase “Land of pigtails and slanting eyes” to the notes D, F, and A, skipping the previously sung E, F-sharp, and G to play with the minor triad in a way that suggested pentatonicism. Many songs traversed similar falls by local pentatonic means like those in the verse of one “Yo-San” (fig. 8.113), in which the first line fell from E to E by one such typical path (as well as signifying orientality with a melismatic major-second slur on the first word of “In old Japan”). Others made more intensely chromatic descents. “Ching-A-Ling-A-Loo” (fig. 8.114), for instance, began its E-minor verse with

288. Pushing harder on this so-far plausible hearing, it could be that the line’s climb from an E to a C figured in some way a subliminal sense of movement from the exoticized domain of the song’s initial tonal center to the most “normal” of pitches; but this may or may not be so.
a line that centered on a B-Bb-A-Ab-G-F#-F-E decline, and one “Fan Tan” (fig. 8.115) followed a similar downward path from its tonic to dominant.\

Some minor melodies used chromaticism in phrases with small sets of pitches evoking pentatonicism (and its frequent motion by intervals larger than major seconds) without implying a specific pentatonic scale. This was another means of presenting non-diatonic exoticism in a mysterious vein, as seen in the use of E-minor pitch material in “Frisco’s Chinatown.” The first eight measures of its verse (fig. 8.116) drew in aggregate on a heptatonic (E-F#-G-A-B-D-E) subset of its minor scale, supplemented with a lower D# leading tone. The phrase-by-phrase ways in which the melody used these pitches within each group of two measures, however, suggested a tonal world farther from a diatonic norm. Three of the first four lines of text were set to only three tones each, and one was set to four. With the voice moving to new pitches only on the first and third beats, and filling most half-measures with four eighth notes on a single pitch, in one sense this was generic repetition; but these phrases also sounded a primitivized orientality in their successive restriction of each two measures to small pitch sets and gamuts (D#-E-B, D#-E-B, D-A-F#, F#-G-B). Framed by discourses associating such attributes with notions of the primitive, this melody positioned its orient in that way.

A category especially often primitivized in related contexts of musical practice was blackness, which may have been implicit in bluesy melodic moves embedded in certain chromaticized minor passages. As a side-effect of this compositional milieu’s broad appropriation of such practices or as

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a purposely evocative move, some songs’ notation gestured in this way towards cultural (racial) locations to which their lyrics did not refer at all.

This may be heard in “Shanghai Rose” which launched its chorus with a long B-A-B-D-B, Bb-A-G-A-B line (fig. 8.117).293 Hinging on contrast between the B-flat and the B-naturals, this play with major and minor thirds was a move well-known from other (non-orientalist) choruses as a mildly exotic sign of wistfulness, nostalgia, and related sentiments. Within this racialized musical context (and locally marked in its first half with A-B-D neighboring tones that evoked pentatonicism), its B-Bb-B movement may have led some listeners to hear the expressively flexible thirds associated with many African American traditions, linking those to the song’s orientality. A similarly wide range of associations was available from such moves as the 6-b6-6 in the refrain of “When Bhudda [sic] Smiles” (fig. 8.118), which set off an A in a C-major context against an Ab over an F-minor chord. This I-to-iv-minor harmony supported a melody using a small C-E-G-[A/Ab] (1-3-5-[6/b6]) pitch set, suggesting a major pentatonic with an unstable or flexible sixth.294

“Santu” offers a clearer case of musical reference to African America in an orientalist song.295 Its verse began with a typical perfect fourth and falling strain, using a trimmed-down set of four pitches (D-F-G-A) from an implied D-F-G-A-C scale (fig. 8.119). Its second eight measures (fig. 8.120) reworked that phrase with chromatic variations that seemed at first to summon broadly exotic mystery with a half-step descent to a high Db; but then the initial movement of its second subphrase from a flatted to natural fifth (Ab-A) made

this figure seem to evoke both orientality and blackness. This set up the
second half of these eight measures, with its non-chromatic A-G-A-G-F-D
in otherwise typical 4-b3-4 motion, as sounding a similar duality of racial
positions in the line “’Till I return for you.” After investing those words with
multiple kinds of difference, the song returned to stock orientalist melody
and rhythm, newly contextualized in a relative-major (I-V) harmonic setting
that seemed to mark a shift away from distantly situated longing to locally
felt (white) remembrance of oriental climes and times.296

In complex ways intractable to unambiguous mapping, the melodic
practices examined above represented orientality. Much of their ability to do
so arose from each song’s specific contexts of notation, language, and images.
People apprehended these against backdrops of popular song in general, of
pervasive raciological discourse, and of varied and evanescent interpretive
contexts that surrounded each act of singing any one song.297 All of this

296. Less indicative of orientality than these minor-key gestures but notable in passing, many
songs’ vocal melodies slid from pentatonic phrases to chromatically embellished major-
diatonic ones. “Karama” did this in its chorus’s initial D-F-D-C-D-C-Bb-G and subsequent
lines (Vivian Grey [pseudonym of Mabel McKinley], “Karama: A Japanese Romance,” New
York: Leo Feist, 1904). “My Little Almond-Eyed Boy” accomplished much the same thing by
Bb remained implicitly pentatonic (with an unsung D that would have clashed with the piano
accompaniment’s movement to D-flat major triads). It then moved a variant of that contour
up a step to a pitch level where it included the same diatonic note. Alfred E. Aarons (music)
Sons, 1900. These practices often played out a shift in expressive tonal materials discussed
further below.

297. For a sense of these broader contexts of hearing race in melody, we may remember
Alla Nazimova’s statement that “I am an Oriental, a Jew” (Lucile Erskine, “Nazimova—The
Unknowable,” Theatre Magazine, December 1912, 186–88, 190, vi, this at 186). Resituated here,
this reminds us that not only did minor and pentatonic elements in popular songs evoke
many kinds of racial difference in addition to orientality; many conceptions of the latter
essence transcended not only East Asia but Asia as such. That broad scope informed many
ideas about racial musicality. This is evident in a passage that may be juxtaposed with
Nazimova’s. “Practically all folk-music of the Jew is modal or in the minor mode,” wrote
another author in 1925. “This peculiarity cannot be attributed entirely to the antiquity of the
modes, but rather to the psychology of the people…a soberness, seriousness and sadness,
informed the meanings people made from the notes they sang. Melody often
did mean race; but it never did so in isolation or in wholly scripted ways, or
without the locally situated interpretive agency of the people who heard it.

Sign 3. Open perfect-fifth ostinati, generally in a low register

While the first two elements above were noticeable aspects of vocal melody,
perfect-fifth ostinati were common in instrumental accompaniment. Piano
parts with these figures in the left hand were an ordinary feature of orientalist
pieces and of other types of exoticist works. “China Dreams” (fig. 8.121) is a
case in point; it also illustrates the practice of combining vertically sounded
fifths with movement by fourths or fifths within a pentatonic melody, seen in
the sung line’s initial alternation from E to A over the accompaniment’s A-E
ostinato.298 In “Mister Butterfly” (fig. 8.122) and other works, these left-hand
techniques interspersed open octaves among fifths.299 Played over many
measures, this lent sonorous variety to the proceedings while leaving their
low-register foundation intact. A related, but temporally collapsed, move
occurred in left-hand parts of such introductory vamps as that of “My Lotus
Flower” (fig. 8.123); alternating between a C-G fifth and an A-A octave in
each of its measures, it set up a foundation that continued under the verse.300

Many pieces sounded low fifths as single pitches in succession, as in
the vamp of “Sing Loo” (fig. 8.124) and in much of “Let’s Go Back to Dreamy

that is characteristic of the race” (Jacob Kwalwasser, “Jewish Folk-Songs,” Musical Quarterly,
January 1925, 55–62, this at 60). In these and other musical and discursive contexts, melody
signified race by means of interpretive frames and processes that seldom were simple.
298. Egbert Van Alstyne (music) and Raymond Egan and Gus Kahn (lyrics), “China Dreams,”
299. Leo Edwards (music) and Ballard MacDonald (lyrics), “Mister Butterfly,” New York:
Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1917.
300. Seymour Furth (music) and Edgar Selden (lyrics), “My Lotus Flower,” New York:
Maurice Shapiro, 1907.
Lotus Land.” Figure 8.125’s entire page from the latter piece was built on a constantly rocking left-hand oscillation between E-flat and B-flat, breaking out only in its last two measures to octaves sounding a chromatic 2-b2-1 descent back to the tonic. Sometimes these figures were embellished with chromatic or diatonic neighbor tones, most often of their upper (fifth scale degree) pitches, as seen in the F# grace notes and the eighth-note A framing the piano’s low G (fig. 8.126) in “Moon Eyes.” These types of ostinato produced an effect more active in linear terms than that of vertically-sounded, starker reiterations of the sonority they arpeggiated. Either technique laid an exotic foundation; and as seen in “Shanghai Dream Man” (fig. 8.127), they routinely were combined.

Related to these wide-interval ostinati was the use of open octaves in other aspects of piano accompaniment. “Tea Cup Girl” (fig. 8.128) relied on low octaves for much of its left-hand part. “Sweet San Toy” (fig. 8.129) began with an introduction that presented double octaves on the dominant pitch C, interspersed them successively with two quick G-C-G fillips in the right hand and two separate octave Gs, and then sounded a double-octave C-D-C finish before proceeding to an F-major vamp. Not an ostinato as such, this still defined a space of open octaves and perfect fifths—here an encompassing C-G-D sonority set mostly in a steady pulse.

As noted above, these sorts of devices represented a wide range of racial categories in various settings. Here we may note their routine presence in these songs and hear what one writer said about their linkage to orientality. An article on perceived similarities between modernist composition and “the music of the East” mulled over the idea of a tonally based “Yellow Peril in Music.” “Long before the dawn of civilization in Europe,” it argued, “…the Chinese originated an elaborate system of music founded on fundamental intervals—the octave, the fourth and the fifth; but it has never found favor in the West. The general opinion is that this is because of its crude, rudimentary character.”306 Despite the different context within which that text appeared, there is great resonance in the “crude, rudimentary” quality it invested into a Chinese musical system characterized by the intervals most prevalent in these songs’ ostinati. In contrast to American popular songs’ more usual styles of accompaniment, many of these left-hand figures—at least the more energetic, if not the more placid ones—were probably heard as bringing just such qualities home for the sake of an oriental novelty that might infuse a song.

Sign 4. Steady quarter-note rhythm, sometimes marked “tom-tom”

Steady quarter-note rhythm occurred in many vocal and piano parts. Along with its appearance in excerpts above, several other examples will show how it could support orientalist lyrics in mutually reinforcing ways or could help to vest orientality in texts that would have been stock expressions of non-racialized sentiment were they divorced from their musical context.

The first is seen in “Hong Kong Dream Girl” (fig. 8.130), in which the verse began with a monotonic string of twelve notes carrying lyrics (quoted in Part 3’s epigraph) about a “China boy.”\footnote{Harry Barris (music) and George E. Springer (lyrics), “Hong Kong Dream Girl,” New York: Robbins-Engel, 1924.} The second is clear in measures 17–20 of the chorus in “Down Along the Ho Hang Ho” (fig. 8.131), which made the plain words “I love, I love, I love you, love you, love you, love you true” into an oriental refrain.\footnote{Jack Raher (music) and Ed. Plottle (lyrics), “Down Along the Ho Hang Ho,” Philadelphia: Harry J. Lincoln Music Co., 1922.} Similar kinds of musical orientalization of stock verbal sentiment took place in many romantic choruses.\footnote{Another was “Oo Lee Long,” which cast its refrain in unmarked language but framed it textually by imagined Chinese names and set it entirely to an E-G-A-B-D minor pentatonic (George Evans, “Oo Lee Long,” New York World, 4 February 1900 [1899]).} Less often, the same steady rhythm appeared in eighth notes.\footnote{This difference seemed to have no representational significance, but just to reflect differences of overall framing tempo, desired rhythmic density, the presentational matter of notation in 4/4 or 2/4 meter, or various local combinations of these things.} An example is the vamp in “O That Oriental Rag” (fig. 8.132), which carried a “Tom-Tom” direction and a “Mysterioso” interpretive note. The vocal part began with a long stream of eighth notes that continued the steady pulse before breaking into dotted rhythms as the lyrics shifted from talk of “old Japan the home of parasols and fans” to a “funny kind of dance / An Oriental syncopated prance.”\footnote{Aubrey Stauffer and Ernie Erdman, “O That Oriental Rag,” Chicago: Aubrey Stauffer & Co., 1911.}

To offer more illustrations of an element that admitted virtually no room for variation would be pointless, but a few contemporary references to “tom-tom” rhythm will clarify the likely meanings many people heard in steadily sounded pulses. Sigmund Spaeth, a widely-read commentator on music (and an opponent of most music tainted by non-European practices), wrote that:
...some of our modern jazz-hounds...are foot-listeners, pure and simple, and the emphasis is on the second adjective.
Thousands never progress beyond the foot-listening stage. They go through life quivering with repressed rhythm, and all they need is a good, active trap-drummer to get them under way.

LO, THE POOR WHITE-MAN

The Indians got the same effect with a mere tom-tom, and probably the first savage musician satisfied his soul with simply beating on a hollow log with a club. When a child runs a stick over fence-palings, or romps around the nursery, clapping or shouting in time with its jumps, it is doing the same thing that appealed to its parents at their last dance: indulging a sense of rhythm; and both are closely akin to the savage, with the exception that he made much less fuss about it.
Not that people in general dance in time. Far from it. But it is the orchestra playing in time that stimulates their rhythmic centers, and even though these respond in very clumsy fashion, the music has done its work.312

This linkage of white versus non-white identities, music with a steady beat, and the body as the nexus between them was common for many years.313

Spaeth’s language was saturated with race, tom-toms, and the body, but he steered clear of explicit reference to a key fourth term: sex. A song from the show Bimbo illustrates how these percussive imaginings often were linked to sexuality. It went in part: “Jingle Jungle Melody, / South Sea island harmony,

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312. Spaeth (1933 [1924], 54–55); for more in this vein, see Spaeth (1929, 123–27, 139–51).
313. This text appeared in book form in 1924 and was reprinted at least as late as 1933. Later examples include the “Treasure Chest of Piano Tricks, Imitations and Novelties,” in which a page titled “TOM-TOM / Oriental and Indian” gave three examples (one with a variant labeled “Chinese effects”); its introductory text explained in part that:

The Tom-Tom is a sort of drum used by the Indians and various Orientals, and also by most of the aboriginal tribes throughout the world. It is used to give that insistent rhythmic beat which is so noticeable in all forms of Oriental and Indian music. The tom-tom has come down to us in the modern band and orchestra in perhaps the more refined tympani and other forms of drums. By many tribes of savages it is the only musical(?) instrument used. To its insistent beat some of these savages chant while they dance themselves to exhaustion. (“Treasure Chest of Piano Tricks, Imitations and Novelties,” New York: Treasure Chest Publications, 1937)

A 1933 song offered a less ethnography-like riff on this in another exoticized setting in such lines as “They play tunes that have no name / All their music sounds the same. / Just a Bom de de bom bo de de / Bom de de bom bo de de / Bom bo de de bom bo de de Bom.” Herman Hupfeld, “Savage Serenade,” New York: Harms, 1933.
/ From that tropical isle / Jungle ladies start to sway / When they hear the Tom-Tom play / When it commences they lose all their senses...."314

Remembering that “tom-tom” rhythm was common in works invoking Hawai’ian, West Asian, African, and other primitivized categories, this was not a specifically East-Asia-referential sign.315 Nonetheless, its presence in these songs was significant. Without itself constructing orientality in any precise way, it could give many white people who enjoyed these works a perceptible sense of racial difference from their own social locations, building on sonic experience to construct belief in hierarchical racial difference.

Sign 5. “Da-da-da-da dah-dah, dah-dah daah” and related rhythms

Another rhythmic device was the most specifically orientalizing musical element, marking Chineseness and Japaneseness with equal ease. It was such a strong marker of this kind of difference that it could hold its own even in songs that made little or no language-based reference to oriental characters or locales. For example, the lyrics of “My China Doll” treated its “China doll” in the generic porcelain-doll sense, but music orientalized the piece with a “da-da-da-da, dah dah” rhythm of four eighth and two quarter notes.316

Frequently notated at an initial rhythmic level of eighth notes (or less often, sixteenth notes) and continuing with proportional durations, this element may be rendered in type as “da-da-da-da dah-dah, dah-dah daah.”317 It was common in that specific form (figs. 8.133, 8.134), in which it began

317. With “da,” “dah,” and “daah” used to represent successive doublings of duration in a way that may be grasped without incessant reference to secondary notation below.
the verses of songs including “Pekin” (starting in verse measures 1 and 5) and introduced “My Yokohama Girl,” as well as in such variants as the dynamically inflected, melodically whittled-down two measures (fig. 8.135) that prepared the verse of “When the Lights Go Down in Chinatown.”

Composers reworked this rhythm in numerous ways while retaining its extramusical associations. Sometimes this took place within a single work, as in its spinning-out in the piano part of “Under the Golden China Moon” (fig. 8.136); but it is most evident when many pieces are examined together. Some barely strayed from the form given above. The vamp for “Oh Sing-a-Loo” used a shorter “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, daah” (fig. 8.137); “So Long! Oo-Long” offered a reshuffled “dah-dah-dah-dah, da-da-da-da-dah-dah” in its vamp (fig. 8.138) and expanded a similar phrase beneath the verse’s first four measures. “My Pretty Little China Maid” began with a piano figure (fig. 8.139) that maintained momentum by plowing ahead with nothing longer than quarter notes in a repeated “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, dah-dah-dah-dah.” The introduction to “Allee Samee” (fig. 8.140) was differentiated by


319. Norma Williams (music) and Jerome Sanford (lyrics), “Under the Golden China Moon,” New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1919. Whether these versions were conceived in any given instance as transformations of its most common form or were parallel, less usual variants of some ideal or subconscious orientalist ur-rhythm was not central to its discursive positioning, performative use, and raciological reception; while it could lead in interesting author-centered directions, that question is left open here.


its composite rhythm of “da-da-da-da-da-da-dah, da-da-dah, da-da-dah,” and the verse of “Buddha” (fig. 8.141) began with isorhythmic voice and piano parts sounding “da-da-da-da-da-da-dah.” In the abstract these all may seem quite different from the first form above, but context was crucial.

Situated in (often at the beginning of) songs of this sort, almost any phrase that began with four short, generally staccato notes or chords (usually with substantial pitch repetition), ended with a longer held one, and had at least a top line that used only or mostly tones from a pentatonic scale (often to create some version of a minor 1-b7-5-b7 contour), functioned structurally and conceptually as a local version of the phrase. These included such forms as the “[rest] da-da-dah-dah, dah-dah-daah” of “Chinese Moon” (fig. 8.142) and a differently inflected moment in “Sweet Maid of Tokio.” The latter song’s vamp (fig. 8.143) incorporated an eighth-note, quarter-note, eighth-note rhythm into beats 1 and 2 of its second measure, making what could have been a stock “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, dah-dah-daah” figure into “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, da-dah-da-daah.” In its contemporary interpretive contexts, many listeners would have heard the interpolated rhythm as a form of syncopation (seen as well in such other places as the setting of a Kipling line that led into the chorus of “Sya Nara,” shown in fig. 8.144), and thus as a sign of “raggy” or “jazzy” essence invested into oriental sound. This recombinance had a tonal counterpart in the chromatic interjection of an F#

between the F and G of an otherwise pentatonic line in the first vocal measure of “My Sweet Maid of Tokio” (fig. 8.143), embedding a 2-#2-3 melodic device that could evoke a general liveliness not limited to orientalist works.325

“Tom-tom” devices could converge with “da-da-da-da” rhythms, usually in introductory phrases that began with steady streams of notes played out to a sustained end. “Chin-Chin Chinaman” started with what boiled down to three measures of quarter notes landing on a half-note chord (fig. 8.145); with its top line’s C-major pentatonic contour and the accented treatment given most of its chords, its overall effect evoked both “tom-tom” sensibilities and an iconic phrase variant readily heard and represented as “da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da-da (da!).”326 Another common version of this convergent rhythm could be heard as shortening its phrase length by truncating its initial notes or as combining alternate pairs of quarter notes into half notes, as seen in the first four measures of “Chu-Chu-San” (fig. 8.146).327 And some songs’ introductions were two-beat loops evoking “tom-tom” and “da-da-da-da” figures precipitated to an almost zero-degree form. One such dense little package (fig. 8.147) bounced in quarter notes between a Bb-F fifth (embellished with an E-natural leading tone) and octave Gs in the left hand, while reiterated pairs of eighth-note Bb-major and G-minor triads sounded in the right. Constructed in this way with the pitches of a Bb-major (1-2-3-5-6) or a G-minor (1-b3-4-5-b7) pentatonic scale and an

exoticizing #4 (or raised 6th) accidental, this minimal vamp offered a surfeit of rhythmic and tonal signs of difference to those played or heard it.\textsuperscript{328}

The ways in which these varied rhythmic phrases all could signify the same referent, or even be the “same” musical thing despite their diversity, made this group of rhythms—or this single rhythm, in another sense—the least ambiguous way of marking Chinese/Japanese orientality with staff-notated sound.\textsuperscript{329} The many concrete ways in which this element was realized in works and performances coexisted with its power as a seemingly unitary musical sign of a specific kind of orientalized race. This disjuncture of diverse sound and laser-beam referentiality may just be one of appearances, with the adequate means of marking the element consisting only four quick notes (as in the two-beat vamps noted above); but that could be too reductive. Perhaps various aggregates of these variants, widely played as they were, enabled composers and their publics to develop, in each of their individual minds, a schematic model of what this musical thing was. Derived in each case from the particular subset of such phrases any one person had heard in these contexts, such a mental schema could accommodate future variants that had sufficient matching attributes, enabling them to be heard, despite their newness, as musical signs of already-known raciological meaning.

There are self-evident parallels, maybe more than metaphorical ones, between how people may have understood this most clearly orientalizing musical element and how we all make raciological use of stereotypes in our


\textsuperscript{329} To prove this absolutely would, of course, require both more extensive comparison with other bodies of song and some form of hard-to-imagine access to grounded reception data; but it seems credible as a first approximation based on the materials at hand. It also is supported by the presence of the same rhythm in many orientalist pieces for solo piano.
own thinking and social interactions. These similarities, and connections they may suggest between musical experience and raciological thinking, are intriguing in what they might enable us to understand about the musical signification of race; but to explore them would be another project.330

Sign 6. Augmented-second melodic movement
Stepwise movement by the augmented second was most noticeably a sign of West Asian and North African—broadly speaking, Islamic—orientations in U.S. popular melodies from these decades. It also served, however, as a portable sign of the exoticism vested in other parts of the world, and it was not unusual in songs referring to more eastern locales in China or Japan.

“Fu-Ji” exemplifies this pairing of place and scalar interval. As seen in figure 8.148, its vocal melody set the text “Gei-sha” to the prominent initial occurrence of a B-natural to A-flat that marked the character’s difference with weighty half notes; the next phrase situated its “old Japan” by linking this to Ab-G-Eb tonal material used in a way that evoked a 1-2-3-b5-b6 pentatonic. This prepared exotic ground for, among other things, the line “One day she met a man.” In contrast to preceding tonal material, that phrase celebrated her American suitor with the first four contiguously sung notes to proceed in an implicitly diatonic and forthright succession of steps by major and minor seconds (cf. “Yan-Kee,” fig. 8.111 above).331 Some songs used the augmented second in ways that seemed to prolong its sound beyond its actual notation. One set the words “tall bamboo” to pitches descending from G-sharp through

330. This line of thought could lead off to a consideration of experimental studies of music cognition or to certain social and cognitive psychologists’ work on stereotype formation; but either of those courses would require grounding in more disciplines than is this study. 331. Oliver G. Wallace (music) and Arthur Freed (lyrics), “Fu-Ji,” Seattle: Musicland, 1919.
F to E (fig. 8.149); even though it elided the F, the next phrase’s G-sharp to E seemed to reinforce this exotic atmosphere through resonant memory.332

In general, though, this study’s core group of songs used this device less often, and in less sustained ways, than the primary elements discussed above. As an intervallic sign of difference, it contributed to the ability of music to render certain narrative settings and characters alien by what were, in their contexts of performative use, entertainingly novel (even if conventional) means; but in this body of works, it often was of secondary importance.

Sign 7. Repetition of virtually any and all sorts

More repetition than was common in racially unmarked songs was ordinary in these. This may be seen in the monotonically sung four-note packets that launched “My Little Hong Kong Baby” on its way (fig. 8.150) and, in “Poppy Blossom,” nested levels of repetition created by reiterating (on different pitches) an eight-beat rhythmic phrase that began with four steady quarter notes.333 The diverse forms of repetition seen in many examples above render further illustration unnecessary. Glancing back over that notation, it is evident that beyond such readily defined elements as streams of notes of equal duration, piano ostinati, and repeated “sing-song” vocal phrases, almost any notated attribute of these compositions could be repeated—often for the sheer sake of creating audible difference from harmonic and melodic practices that were unmarked in these pieces’ contexts of use.334

334. In the light of widely shared belief in an ahistorically static orient, lyrical invocations of such ideas as “old Japan,” and widespread faith that harmony was what distinguished European (Western, white) musical traditions as the rational and progressive superiors to
Repetition usually occurred with pitch-related attributes treated above. This is seen in the reiterated C and A in “Japanese Sandman” (see fig. 8.93 above). Sigmund Spaeth attended to that chorus’s descending minor third:

Consciously or unconsciously a lot of popular composers have recently based their tunes on this universal combination. Do you remember the Japanese Sandman, that Nora Bayes sang so insidiously? The first eighteen notes of the chorus are nothing more the cuckoo call…. But by harmonizing them in Japanese fashion (or rather, the near-Japanese fashion of Puccini’s Madame Butterfly), the composer made his song sound quite original. Listen to it on a record, or get someone to play it for you, if you can’t manage it yourself.335

We may locate further meanings of repetition in these songs by relating them to language about other cultural practices. As seen regarding such things as the effects of danced repetition in pageantry (see Chapter 6) and the ways in which authors routinely wrote about forms of performance that were new to them, the idea of repetition as a sign of difference from Eurocentric norms was played out in many U.S. domains of experience and publication.

For example, certain interpretive moves in a 1925 account of a stage performance may have paralleled some that supported musical moments of meaning construction. Its tale of embodied representation of orientality in an Indian role had clear counterparts in sonic cultural practices:

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a singular oriental (Eastern, Asian) music, there are some grounds for interpreting the use of repetition in these songs as an ideological assertion made in sound, one many people could have apprehended in subliminal ways. Harmonic progression often was normalized as the necessary compositional means and historical condition of evolved musicality and, by proxy, of progressive social life more generally—on the one hand through functional harmony, on the other through specifically westernized kinds of technological, political, and cultural modernity. Performed and heard in this context (even when situated within harmonic frameworks), orientalist songs’ uses of repetition may have argued implicitly for belief in oriental stasis and the assimilation of real-world Chineseness and Japaneseness to an antimodern—and un-American—orientality. This speculation must be left unresolved; but this may be a plausible case in which widely enacted vocal performance enabled people to internalize dominant beliefs in ways that wedded together cultural hegemony, musical sound, and their own embodied practice.

335. Spaeth (1933 [1924], 15). More recently, David Jasen has heard the piece as “a catchy tune, repeating two notes in a sing-song way” (1990 [1988], 122).
If the dance has something very emphatic to say, as did the savage East Indian dance that preceded the entrance of the Rajah of Rukh in Archer’s play, “The Green Goddess,” then its repetition is needful. This dance said with terrifying clarity, “The Rajah’s savage ferocity is uncurbed; his power is limitless.” The same dance, done again after the Rajah’s infinitely suave departure, was repetition of dramatic power and contrast, besides leaving the desired impression. (Bates 1925, 78)

This use of kinesthetic repetition as a sign of oriental savagery recalls acts of performance in such areas as pageantry and professional yellowface, as well as linguistic images of primitive drumbeating. Embodied and notated tropes of repetition seldom laid groundwork for each other in ways that one could trace as evidence for causal relationships; but often they were performed and apprehended in overlapping social domains. This shared context positioned these various kinds of repetition as mutually reinforcing signs of orientality.

Wrapping up this exposition of notated elements of popular songs’ orientality, we may return to Writing for Vaudeville. One of Page’s “Qualities of the Popular Song Lyric” listed above offers a link to composed repetition. The eighth such point, “Rhythm the Secret of Successful Songs,” included:

Now by rhythm I do not mean rhyme, nor metre, nor regularity. It has nothing necessarily to do with poetic measures nor with precision of rhymes. Let me attempt to convey what I mean by saying that the rhythm of a song is, as Irving Berlin said, the swing. To the swing of a song everything in it contributes. Perhaps it will be clearer when I say that rhythm is compounded of the exactness with which the words clothe the idea and with which the music clothes the words, and the fineness with which both words and music fit the emotion. Rhythm is singleness of effect. Yet rhythm is more—it is singleness of effect plus a sort of hypnotic fascination. (Page 1915, 356–57)

His paired notions of “singleness of effect” and “hypnotic fascination,” located in an allusive realm of experience with the phrase “sort of,” connect the mutually reinforcing effects of certain elements sketched above: “tom-tom” rhythm, “da da da da dah dah” phrases, and repetition in general. “Ching-Chang-Chan (The San Pan Man)” (figs. 8.151–8.153) illustrates how
elements surveyed above could work together; it used a pentatonic melody
starting with a leap of a fifth, piano accompaniment with open-fifth ostinati
(with chromatic leading-tone grace notes), and various kinds of repetition.336

The compositional techniques used in these songs attained their full
effect when sung with lyrics, all as situated in structures that lent weight to
certain sounds in performance. This leads to these elements’ integration into
works that enabled white Americans to sing yellowvoice compellingly.

Signifying Musical Moves in Microcontexts

As seen in some notated examples above, many songs moved into and out of
musical means of representing difference at specific structural points. When
sounded in piano accompaniment, these moments framed singers’ voices and
reflexive aural experience in ideologically significant ways. When written into
vocal melodies, they led singers to enact socially meaningful practices with
their own bodies. These moments of sung sound and language offer windows
into Tin Pan Alley orientalist elements not just as traits of composed texts, but
as musical materials used routinely in performance to embody orientality.

Here Writing for Vaudeville is useful again. Page derived some principles
of musical aspects of song composition in ways that involved lyrics as well.
Among these were: “Music and Words Are Inseparable”; “One Octave is the
Popular Song Range” (“The average voice of an octave range is that possessed
by those who buy popular songs to sing at home”); “Melodies Should Go Up
on Open Vowels”; “Put ‘Punch’ in Music Wherever Possible”; “Punch is
Sometimes Secured by Trick of Repetition”; and “A Musical Theme Might be

336. Raphael Clifford, “Ching Ching Chan (The San Pan Man),” Los Angeles: Jackson-Lee,
1921.
Practically the Entire Song” (Page 1915, 322–27). These could combine in ways like that discussed regarding “Japanese Sandman,” as seen in Page’s attention to another writer’s idea of melodic “internal vamps”—a useful emic concept:

As a musical theme is the underlying melody out of which the variations are formed, it is possible to repeat the theme so often that the entire song is little more than clever variations.

One of the most common methods is to underlay a melody with what E. M. Wickes, one of the keenest popular song critics of today, calls the “internal vamp.” This is the keeping of a melody so closely within its possible octave that the variations play around a very few notes. Try on your piano this combination—D, E flat, and E natural, or F natural, with varying tempos, and you will recognize many beginnings of different famous songs they represent. (328)

With such general attributes (as well as the linkage between melodic and lyrical practice in mind), a look at songs’ musical dealings with the structural distinction between verses and choruses is in order; but first, an introduction.

PIANO VAMPS’ PERFORMATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF RACIAL ATMOSPHERE

In a succession of scene-setting and narrative development related to that of verses and choruses but played out in different ways, many introductory piano vamps distilled dense versions of racialized musical elements before singing even began. As seen above, vamps usually were two-measure (or occasionally one-measure) repeated phrases right before verses. Built with orientalizing materials, they prepared sonic environments into which singers could insert their voices whenever they were ready. In performance, a vamp’s reiteration of these materials set an aural stage for all that was to come.

“Cho-San” used one such pared-down performative loop (fig. 8.154). In very few notes, it laid out a minor-pentatonic snippet of melody with perfect-fourth leaps, a left-hand ostinato of low open fifths, a steady stream of staccato quarter notes, and a condensed but still iconic “da-da-da-da-daah”
rhythm. Those two measures foreshadowed musical elements used in more elaborate ways later in the song. From a performance-centered perspective, the vamp’s handful of notes did substantial work by getting everyone concerned into the mood of the song. In each instance of use, this prepared the singer in imaginative and practical ways while giving listeners a hint of musical signs they soon would hear linked to the language of race. This enabled them more easily to make such interpretive moves as locating the song’s “dainty oriental lady with a fan” in a distant space they had begun to imagine before the singing began. In these performative ways, the vamps that led into many of these songs had representational effects greater than their notated brevity might suggest, establishing exotic atmosphere within which singers could breathe in and sing out the same orientality at length.

Hearing Lyrics and Melody Together Across Verses and Choruses

Virtually all contemporary writers considered the chorus the most important part of any song; its musical content was asserted in performance and in aural memory as a mental (or hummed or whistled) soundtrack to later moments of daily life. That weighting figured here in several ways. Some choruses offered more marked notation. The vocal line of “Ching Chang Chan” (see figures

338. In a sense, vamps offered connotative counterparts to the denotative language found in prefatory texts to such works as one that bore this programmatic synopsis: “After a few bars characteristic introduction, the incantation of the priests in the temple; the perfume of incense floats on the air; a melody (given to cello, viola and oboe with pizzicato accompaniment) represents two lovers; a Manchu wedding-procession passes noisily by, a street disturbance ensues among the coolies (founded on an actual Chinese scale), the beating of the gong in the Temple restores quietude, the incantation of the priests is heard again, and the lovers’ song (amidst the singing of birds) with a brief quotation from the Temple and Coolies music brings the piece to a conclusion.” Albert W. Ketèlbey, “In a Chinese Temple-Garden: Oriental Phantasy,” New York: Bosworth & Co., 1923.
just above) maintained the pentatonicism its verse had set up, but (along with modulating to its relative major) it added “da-da-dah, da-da-dah” rhythm.339

Some songs, however, shifted into less marked notation as their choruses began; but many of these reintroduced orientalist phrases near the end of their choruses. There they not only prepared a return to the verse after their first and third renditions, but after their fourth and final singing they were left to ring (often as a “punch”) in people’s ears as the last part of the song they had sung and heard—even if much of the chorus used a less marked style that carried more sentimentally evocative power for most Americans.

Verses of songs such as “I’m Coming Back to You, Poor Butterfly” and “Chee Wee” (figs. 8.155, 8.156) used marked tonal materials, but their choruses shed these signs to embrace unmarked diatonic sentimentality (despite their racialized lyrics) with more broadly expressive accidentals.340 “Rose of the Underworld” also illustrates this. In contrast to its marked verse (fig. 8.157), its chorus (fig. 8.158) started with a routine device that began with a held note and then dipped down to its chromatic lower neighbor to gather emotional steam; that, in turn, fueled an ascent announcing the song’s embrace of standard melody and unabashed emotion.341 For many people who sang and heard them, these shifts in musical sound enabled a verse to establish an exotic atmosphere, one within which a chorus could tug on local heartstrings by using tonal material best understood as signifying emotion.

This means of creating an oriental mise-en-scène in verses and filling it with less exoticized sentiment in choruses was a stock practice. Songs with similarly apportioned melodic material include “Chen, My China Girl” (fig. 8.159), which also illustrates the common practice of leading into such a chorus with a measure or two of less-marked melody.342 Others such as a 1922 “China” (figs. 8.160, 8.161) began choruses with unmarked singing (complete measures 1–20), eventually set it to marked rhythms (measures 21–24), and then reintroduced pentatonicism (measures 25–32).343

Even many songs that used marked materials in their choruses fell back on locally familiar melodic moves at key emotional points. “In an Oriental Garden” (fig. 8.162) started its chorus with pentatonic melody, but it later segued into diatonicism; this left its scene-setting title phrase in a C-D-E-G-A pentatonic space while enabling its singers to bring fully diatonic drama to bear on the personally emotive lines “When the temple bells are ringing, / Then there’s lovelight in your eyes.”344 The chorus of “China Girl” (fig. 8.163) began with pentatonicism; but as the lyrics’ confessional quality deepened, the tonal material expanded beyond its established F-G-A-C-D. In measures 6 and 7, an interpolated B-flat and C-sharp lent psychological affect to the

protagonist’s imagined loneliness and longing.345 In “My Lady from Japan” (fig. 8.164), the refrain would have been wholly pentatonic but for one B-flat (the fourth scale step) in the key line “I love her, although her face is shady.”346 In a related moment, the chorus of “My Little Sing Song Girl” (fig. 8.165) answered its opening fifths with a chromatic descent from the fifth to third scale degrees.347 This positioned the words “Sing Song” as foreign context (marked by perfect-fifth leaps in a pentatonic domain) and “I’m Dreaming” as personal experience (by means of a strategically placed B-natural and B-flat). Such correlations of pentatonicism with oriental female figures lacking social power, and of diatonicism with the feelings of white male figures enjoying their own greater subjective agency, were common.

TIN PAN ALLEY ORIENTALITY’S CATEGORICAL PEERS: INTERETHNIC CONJUNCTURES & NOVELTY IN POPULAR SONG

U.S. popular music routinely represented meetings of ethnic and racial types including European immigrants, Native Americans, Latino American and Caribbean tropicalized others, and African Americans.348 Bumping these types up against each other for novelty, these pieces reinforced the credibility of the categories they invoked. Three relevant subgroups of works may be defined here: songs that placed European types in East Asian scenarios, brought together oriental figures and the protagonists of “Coon songs,” or invoked Chinese, Japanese, or Asian American characters along with “jazz.”

346. George Evans (music) and Ren Shields (lyrics), “My Lady from Japan,” New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1903.
348. A great deal of scholarship has addressed these representations; e.g., see Goings (1994).
European Ethnic Types in East Asian Narrative Scenarios

Compositions that may be assigned to the first of these groups include “My Little China Doll.” It told of “Pat McCann, a sailor man,” who came “to Hong Kong town one day, / In that chinky town, almond eyes of brown / Stole his Irish heart away.” The pentatonic setting that began the song (fig. 8.166) seemed to do double duty as orientalist sound and a quasi-hornpipe that had been, in a sense, stood on its head. In its narrative melding of a Butterfly scenario and a European-Asian romantic couple like those in nineteenth-century U.S. texts and stage acts about Irish-Chinese couples in America, this tale was broadly akin to many recounted in lyrics set in China or Japan.

Other songs of Europeans in East Asian scenarios centered on other kinds of imagined interactions. One widely heard piece was “Hi Lee Hi Lo” (fig. 8.167), which set loose a German band in China. Its adventures bounced stereotypes of Germanness off those of Chineseness in ways that left both firmly ensconced. The composition’s lyrics and notation (e.g., as seen in fig. 8.168) offered contrastively essentializing entertainment. These songs could tell of such musical encounters while further reifying identities ascribed to U.S. immigrants from either continent—but especially those from Asia, in ways that by racial logic did so to immigrants’ U.S.-born descendants as well.

Contexts of Interethnic Meetings with African American Forms

Another type of interethnic conjuncture involved inserting orientalist content into so-called “Coon song.” Most such works date to the late nineteenth

350. With the “da-da-dah” in the verse’s first measures echoing the final rhythm of that form.
century, situating them as background rather than a focus here. Some
conjured up scenarios in which African American figures took up (often
West) Asian cultural practices.352 Other songs from the 1890s and the very
early twentieth century concocted romantic liaisons between Chinese or
Japanese and African or African American figures.353 The cover of “My
Japanese Baby” gave no clue that it offered anything but typical orientalist
fare. However, the song offered an interethnic narrative invoking skin color
and musicality as signs of race, using nonstandard English in the first person
to help singers sound conventionally imagined blackness and orientality.354

Especially in the century’s first decade, many orientalist songs referred
to ragtime.355 One was “A Ragtime Jap” (fig. 8.169), which set off phrases of
steady eighth notes against what were, in context, raggy syncopations. Its
lyrics told of the cultural transformation these notated sounds represented:

A little man from old Japan came one day into town,
To gaze upon the wonders of this city of renown,
He was as homesick as could be all tired was his gaze,
Until he heard a ragtime air and got the ragtime “craze,”
From that time on he was quite changed he said “Ragtime for me,”
In fact he got the craze so bad he “ragged” incessantly.

353. E.g., George R. Wilson, “The Zulu and the Chinee Honeymoon,” Chicago: Windsor, 1892. Cf. such traces of visual culture as “‘Honeymoon of the Chinee and the Coon;’
Highbinder Headquarters, Chinatown,” color halftone lithographic postcard after a
York: Sol Bloom, 1903. Other songs offered related kinds of hybrid novelty; for instance,
“Navajo” sang of a romance between a “Navajo maid” and a “coon.” Egbert Van Alstyn 
(music) and Harry Williams (lyrics), “Navajo (Navaho),” New York: Shapiro, Remick & Co.,
1903.
355. As Judy Tsou has noted regarding “Wing Lee’s Rag-Time Clock” and “Ragtime Temple
Bells,” such songs offered characters as musical instantiations of racial stereotypes (1997,
Temperature,” New York: Myll Bros., 1899; Ivan Caryll (music) and James O’Dea (lyrics),
[Chorus two times:]
"Ragtime just Ragtime is the thing you bet,
It’s the best thing for nerves that you could get,
All of your troubles you can leave behind,
The greatest Panacea that you could find.
I don’t care what the people say of me,
If they say I’ve no sense of dignity,
For their opinion I don’t care a rap,
You see I’m a Ragtime Jap.”

Instrumental pieces such as “The Ragtime Laundry” and “Tokio Rag,” as well as songs referring to the blues (e.g., various “Chinese Blues”), also paired orientality with references to African American traditions and inventions, and many works invoked the latter forms with other ethnic types. But here we may consider a group of songs that brought together orientality and “jazz.”

By the late teens, many songs invoked the idea of “jazz” as a topical focus or a narrative element ripe for fusion with references to other exoticized

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356. First verse and chorus of “A Ragtime Jap: A Genuine, Up-to-Date Novelty,” Harry O. Sutton (music) and Jean Lenox (lyrics), New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1905. Lyrically invoking Chinatown and such other exoticized referents as Salomé, “That Chinatown Rag” juxtaposed related musical elements. Its chorus’s first two measures put the words “Prancee fancy Chinee dancy” to steady quarter notes as D-A-D-A-D-C-D-C, using only three pitches that implied a D-F-G-A-C minor pentatonic familiar from the preceding section. The line’s second half set “Hear that tune that makes you jiggle, do that Honolula wiggle” to an eighth-note contour of A-F-G-G#-A-F-G-G# and so on; its double-speed articulation and chromatic passing tones signified a less orientalized raggy sensibility, one conflated with sensuously embodied attributes many Americans also mapped onto Hawai’ian dance. George W. Meyer (music) and Jack Drislane (lyrics), “That Chinatown Rag,” New York: F. B. Haviland, 1910.

cultural forms. The popular attraction of these hybrid creations is clear from the number of such works and the quantity in which sheet music and records of some were produced. The songs that did these things presented novel content (consisting of stock signs of difference) in musical styles and structures that made it easily apprehensible.

As do many representations of hybridity, these pieces tended to leave firmly in place the credibility of the originary components they presupposed. In these songs, the main two such starting points were blackness and orientality. The latter element had no monopoly on singable fusions with evocations of jazz. Other songs evoked it in combination with almost any typified human group that American consumers would recognize as exotic. These included everything from religious communities to grass-skirted inhabitants of touristic versions of Pacific islands. A song of the latter sort, “Doo Wack-a Doo,” invoked multiple, overlain racial locations in a narrative of musical appropriation and the globalization of supercultural U.S. practices derived from occluded African American traditions. Its cover art and lyrics represented the carrier of jazz abroad as a white musician. Eliding the source of practices it evoked, this offered white listeners and singers a proxy figure within the song’s world—a space in which, as they crossed into the chorus from a verse ending with “He’d ‘Mute’ his old Cornet, and then he’d make it moan,” everyone involved could chime in on the refrain of “Doo Wack-a Doo,

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358. The scare quotes around “jazz” mark its usage here to denote white American musical styles often bound up with dominant beliefs about black musicality and essence, not the African American cultural forms and practices appropriated and sometimes described under the same rubric; this may help to preserve some critical distance from an oft-disputed term. 359. E.g., Pete Wendling (music) and Bert Kalmar and Edgar Leslie (lyrics), “All the Quakers Are Shoulder Shakers,” New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co., 1919; Clarence Gaskill, Will Donaldson and George Horther, “Doo Wacka Doo,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1924.
wack-a doo, wack-a doo.” The effect of all this was to imply that African American musical practices and tropical settings were exotic material for the music industry’s processing into singable novelties for European American entertainment. This means of melding multiple kinds of difference was quite ordinary; here it illustrates the ease and frequency with which songs centered specifically on the idea of jazz-inflected musical practice set those acts and sounds (or second-order notions of them) in narrative scenarios otherwise disjunct from African and European American cultural scenes.

This located much of the social agency involved in appropriating, transporting, and performing such musical sounds in white figures within these songs’ diegetic worlds and, by proxy, the real-world settings of their creation and use. But this was no absolute trait of such pieces; along with the common practice of vesting energetic enjoyment of dance into their nativized characters, many also made them active participants in music-making.

“Dusky” Jazz Meets “Dusky” India

Many songs that brought together “jazz” and orientality evoked South or East Asian locales, among others. A sidelong glance at the former meetings will lead to the latter. Many U.S. representations, musical and otherwise, framed India as a place both oriental and primitive. In a semi-elite musical domain, Lily Strickland’s foreword to “Himalayan Sketches” offered her statement on that issue. She wrote of musical representation as a bridge to the authentic essence of people fated to be forever alien but also to become comprehensible through her own interpretive agency and work—creative labor which could recast their essential identity into a form suited to America’s pianos:
The Indian Hill Music is characterized by a certain vigour, boldness and animation not found in the melodies of the Plains. In the softer moods, however, the music is wistful, elusive, with an indescribable quality of evanescent charm, so fascinating to hear and so difficult to transcribe and put into Western Notation. The unusual Scale Modes, the eternal Minor effect, the reiterated drum rhythm, the swift changes of tempo and hypnotic monotony of theme, are some of the musical ingredients that go to make up the essence of orientalism in an ancient art, that is a symbolic expression of a primitive, emotional, fatalistic, and forever alien people.

For these sketches, I have chosen some old Folk Tunes which I personally notated, transcribed and harmonized in Darjeeling, India; in the Himalayan Mountains.\textsuperscript{360}

Strickland’s attention to connections between her works and musical practice in Asia reminds us by contrast of the absence of concern with such ideas in most popular songs, despite marketing hyperbole that could wrap them in notions of “real oriental atmosphere.” Useful here is the clarity with which she expressed a belief implicit in many songs: that some Asian people were at once oriental and primitive, and—as followed from this—alien as well.

That idea offered a ready-made link between songs’ references to (Asian) Indian figures and evocations of styles associated with African Americans, also routinely represented as primitive. Songs worked with this supposedly common ground in various ways.\textsuperscript{361} The chorus of “Jazzin’ Down in Hindoo Land” began: “How those Orientals bend and sway, / ’Neath the big red moon / While you hear those tom toms play / A wonderful jazz tune”; the song ended with: “…soon you’ll find them on the sand / By the charms of dusky Hindoos swayed / And the melodies that Jazz Band played.”


\textsuperscript{361} An example from after this study’s decades bore a cover depicting a turban-wearing man’s transformation from a squatting snake charmer to an elegantly dressed soloist fronting an all-white big band. The westward slippage of stock images derived from South Asia is evident in the lyrics, which (along with mentioning “hot licks,” jamming, and swinging) actually told of a musician from an “old Bagdad” replete with sultans, sheiks, harems, and caravans. Teddy Powell (music) and Leonard Whitcup (lyrics), “The Snake Charmer,” New York: Edward B. Marks, 1937.
proximity of “dusky Hindoos” and “Jazz Band” suggests how ideas linking skin color, group temperament, and cultural practice enabled representations of Indian characters and African American styles to meld into one dusky cloud of associations. The song’s notation evinced similarly half-confounded, half-demarcated kinds of difference. Its opening lines were sung to quasi-mysterioso quarter and half notes in a minor tonality; in the first line of the chorus (fig. 8.170), the word “Orientals” was set to an eighth-note to dotted-quarter-note rhythm that presented the melody’s first subdivided beat in a rhythmic figure conventionally heard as jazzy syncopation.362

Another such piece illustrates how orientalist and primitivist tropes met in these works. “Hindoo Hop” bore an image (fig. 8.171) of dark-skinned men wearing turbans and dhoti as they danced or played instruments including the trumpet, saxophone, and trombone iconically associated with jazz. Set to music that mixed orientalist and jazz-referential gestures, its lyrics traded in racial novelty of several conflated types:

Way out in Hindustan
Where ev’ry skin is tan
They’re doin’ something new
For Jazz has hit ’em too
Someone has shown them a laughing Trombone.
Now ev’ry night all the Hindoos are goin’
One! Two! Three! Four!
They count and lift their feet
They do it mighty neat
And then they all repeat to the Rum! Dum! Dum!
Rum! Dum! Dum! Bum!

362. Reuben J. Haskins (music) and R. C. Young (lyrics), “Jazzin’ Down in Hindoo Land,” Columbus, OH: R. C. Young, 1919. Other songs also told of new dances in South Asia. One was about “natives” performing the “funny movements” of a “new Oriental prance” to the sound of “tom-toms”; without mentioning “jazz” as such, the fondly escapist lyrics evoked it with enthusiasm for “The way they make their tom-toms syncopate / Is bound to make you smile and say ‘It’s great!’” In these songs’ contexts of reception, virtually any reference to syncopation had clear connotative meaning. Otto Motzan and Harry Akst (music) and Howard Rogers (lyrics), “The Crocodile (Song),” New York: Irving Berlin, 1920.
Till the sands on the desert grow cold.
They do each movement so jazzy and bold,
They get the young and the old with their Rum Dum Bum Bum Rum Dum Bum Bum Bum!
on the

[Chorus two times to end:]
Desert sand a Jazzy Hindoo Band plays ev’ry day and say they sway
Like a caravan they roll from side to side see them all glide,
just watch each Hindoo with a grin do steps that win you,
You’ll be bound to dance around just like a spinning top
Allah be praised, you’re dazed you’ll drop
[first ending:] From doing that Hindoo Hop don’t stop / on the
[second ending:] From doing that Hindoo Hop don’t Hop! Hop! Stop!363

These works and practices enabled people to enact two (among other) kinds of imagined cultural motion. On the one, textually representational hand, they rhetorically universalized U.S. popular music and dance forms (which often had drawn substantially on African American styles) in an outwards direction to suffuse imagined Asias. On the other hand, in performance they brought into local white American practice notions of exotic Asian others, constructing them in part by mapping them onto extant ways of mimetically embodying (safely abstracted) ideas of blackness. This could render the latter moves more exotic. Songs that figured both Indianness and jazz could trade on notions of India and African America as cultural locations conceptually linked by primitiveness, a condition believed to overlap in South Asia with that of orientality. Songs offering parallel constructions of East Asianness and jazz had less of a shared base of ascribed primitiveness to build upon; but they often used the idea of (an implicit lack of) whiteness that could support similarly bidirectional play with race, space, the body, and danceable music.

Orientalizing Jazz in White America’s China & Japan

As seen above, some orientalist songs invoked African American points of reference. “China Dragon Blues” did so with a first verse telling of a new “dance craze” and “syncopated melody” in “Buddha land by the Yellow Sea,” and a chorus that sang of “pigtail men” irresistibly lured by “tom-toms” that made them “start a raggin’ to those China Dragon Blues.” Many songs represented meetings of orientality with African American musical forms. The language and images by which they did so had notated counterparts in such things as the pairing of an invariant melodic pulse with “old Japan” and dotted rhythms with “syncopation,” as noted in “O That Oriental Rag.”

“Chong” played with a compositional mix of orientalist elements and, in its chorus, dotted rhythms evoking ragtime. The lyrics worked in parallel:

Little Allee Fo Chong played all day in an oriental way,
In a swell Chinese Café,
But Allee loved his rag the same as you,
And ev’ry evening when his work was thru,
Allee layed his Tom Tom down,
Pretty soon you hear this sound:

[Chorus two times:]
“Chong, he come from Hong Kong
where Chinee-man play all day on a drum,
Chong no likee that song,
where Chinee-man cry ‘way up high,
sing-ee sung-y mung-ay, chick-a-lick-a-fung-ay,
Chong, go back to Hong Kong,
I betcha he teachee his China girl how to dance, like in a trance;
Teachee peachee Melican song, all day long to his China girl in old Hong Kong.”

366. First verse and chorus of “Chong (He Come from Hong Kong),” Harold Weeks, New York: Leo. Feist, 1919. The original sheet music still is common more than 80 years after its first publication, and it “was a short-lived ASCAP top seller” (Cohen-Stratyner 1988, 55).
This reinforced a belief in orientality made audible in music and a general enthusiasm for the tractability of African American styles to appropriation.

A key aspect of many such songs is the absence of any African American characters from their lyrics. While musical styles that self-evidently would be associated with such figures often were central, those results of cultural practice stood in these works as attractive things divorced from their social origins—as sounds, and ideas of sounds, already appropriated from an African America that could be occluded in songs appealing to a taste for its musical creations. A similar move is evident in a “Jazz One-Step Adapted from the Oriental Song Success ‘Hong-Kong’” (fig. 8.172). Its cover left no doubt not only that the excitement it promised had the added exotic charge of orientality, but that it also had been purged of any too-direct connection to blackness by being moved into a (lantern-lit) space for white sociality.367

Related moves were played out in songs themselves. The notation for “Pan Yan (And His Chinese Jazz Band)” began with orientalist conventions and shifted into ones signifying jazz as its chorus got under way with these lyrics: “Pan Yan will have a Jazz Band / Jazzin’ Chinese melodies / Chop sticks will do some queer tricks like Paderewski on the ivories....” Here the process of “Jazzin’ Chinese melodies” was not just tacitly a white American

367. Hans Von Holstein and Alma M. Sanders (music), “The Jazz One-Step Adapted from the Oriental Song Success ‘Hong-Kong’,” New York: Leo Feist, 1917. Situated within a theoretical framework more central to some recent studies than to this dissertation, the simultaneous exclusion and appropriation evident in these moves could be seen as a process of abjection (see Shimakawa 2002); but having invoked its potential link to that analytical apparatus, this discussion will do better to enrich by further examples our sense of how these songs operated than to move to that concept’s different (more psychoanalytical) interpretive register.
thing to do (in musical acts shadowed by unspoken ties to Africanness), but
one that might attain the European virtuosity of Paderewski.368

More jazz-referential songs invoked Chinese than Japanese characters.369

“Ching-a-Ling’s Jazz Bazaar” (fig. 8.173), “Jazzy Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy
Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown),” and “Ching Ching Chan (The San Pan
Man)” (see figs. 8.151–8.153 above) are among the other such pieces.370

Despite being enjoyed as a “novelty,” each of these songs restated dominant
ideas about race—intersections of (tacit) whiteness, (occluded) blackness, and
overtly stressed orientality—more than anything particularly new. Along
with songs set, as were they, entirely or in part in U.S. Chinatowns, others
were set wholly in China. The lyrics of one began: “Out in China land they’ve
learned to understand the Chinese Jazz. / Ev’ry music man and ev’ry band is
playing Chinese Jazz. / On the streets of old Shanghai I heard that Oriental
tune, / Dancing with a lovely Gee-gai girl beneath a magic moon….”371

368. J. Russel Robinson (music) and Al. Bernard (lyrics), “Pan Yan (And His Chinese Jazz
369. One hypothetical reason for this could be the more visible presence of Chinese American
than Japanese American communities in major U.S. cities and the long popularity of those
neighborhoods as sites for exoticized clubs, which offered many white people experiences
of popular dance music framed or inflected in Chinese-referential ways; but while plausible,
this remains a guess, lacking contemporary musical consumers’ statements on the matter.
370. Ethel Bridges (music) and Howard Johnson (lyrics), “Ching-a-Ling’s Jazz Bazaar,” New
York: Leo. Feist, 1920; Louis F. Borromeo and Al. Heather (music) and Herman Bush (lyrics),
“Jazzy Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown),” New York: Fred Fisher,
1920; Raphael Clifford, “Ching Ching Chan (The San Pan Man),” Los Angeles: Jackson-Lee,
1921.
songs from after this study’s main decades dealt with similar scenarios. “Sing a Little Low-
Down Tune,” “Hot Cha China Joe,” and “Jitterbug Jim Kee” offer examples from the 1930s;
singers of “Hot Cha China Joe” could insert such “Extra catch lines” as “Chinese music
seemed so strange to him in old Hong Kong / Made him think of the radio and the well
known Major’s gong.” See Charlie Tobias, Jack Scholl and Murray Mencher, “Sing a Little
Low-Down Tune (Little Sing-A-Lee),” New York: Leo. Feist, 1933; Will Heagney and Bert
Read, “Hot Cha China Joe,” New York: Gene Labrador, 1935; Frankie Masters, Ben Ryan
A key aspect of many such pieces was the tendency for songs intended for dancing to include lyrics urging everyone within earshot to move their bodies. Some of the language that did this built on the convergent ways in which many white Americans characterized bodily practices of people ascribed to either of the racial categories being evoked. “Shuffle” was one such word. In “Shanghai Shuffle,” it did double duty as a word common in dominant representations of African American and of Chinese walking:

There’s a dinky little chinky Oriental place I know,  
You will find there it’s the kind where sentimental people will go,  
It’s a lazy kind of hazy atmosphere but wait till you hear  
The melodies those Chinese play, say:

[Chorus two times to end:]  
Come on down to Chinatown and step around with me,  
That Shanghai Shuffle sure enough’ll be what we want to see,  
They put kicks in all the tricks you ever saw before,  
As each Mongolian like Napoleon struts all around the floor,  
Each pretty Chinese maiden, too,  
Will shake her pigtail right at you,  
It’s the hottest dance those modest Chinamen do,  
That Shanghai Shuffle from Shanghai.372

Other songs invoked dance in ways that were related to this but had a more openly suggestive sexual charge. “So Does Your Old Mandarin: A Chinky China Fox Trot” ended its chorus with “‘Kimonas’ to my house and sip a little Oo-long, / I’ll be all a-lonely, but don’t take too long, / You like ‘em dance, jazzy dance, wig-wag wiggin’ / So does your old Mandarin,” leaving little doubt about the connotations of “jazzy dance.”373 Lyrics such as this could

372. Gene Rodemich and Larry Conley, “Shanghai Shuffle,” New York: Gene Rodemich, 1924. In a loosened-up sense, these lyrics could be seen as a decade-later successor to the ta-tao’s prescriptive movement instructions. Having enjoyed a far longer life in instrumental form than with its lyrics, “Shanghai Shuffle” also shows how musical figurations of race may outlive linked (in this instance, language-based) representations that more quickly become seen as inappropriate or even merely embarrassing.
perform a kind of mutual leverage using erotic valences with which some white Americans charged African American and Asian female characters.

A related convergence occurred in “Poor Little Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now.”374 For its time, the song’s chorus left little to the imagination:

Poor little Butterfly, has learned to roll her eye,
And when she shimmies she’s as cute as she can be;
Say, when this baby shakes,
She’s got just what it takes,
To keep her sailor boy from going out to sea.
She knew the ‘Ballin’ Jack,"
Was bound to bring him back,
She learned to do an Oriental dance and how, wow! wow!
You ought to see,
You ought to see, the way she shakes her Japan knee,
Poor little Butterfly, is a fly gal now.

Americans who sang or heard these lyrics could interpret them within a wide range of remembered contexts.375 Songs of orientalized (African) American music-making were linked to ways of categorizing humanity by racial logics, to which they lent the somatic credibility of performance and the hegemonic subtlety of being all in fun. With specifically performative aspects of these and other intersections of ideas about orientality and jazz to be discussed in the following chapter (where sound recordings will be better able than print media to illuminate such matters), we may move on to a parting look at one more aspect of sheet music only alluded to above—questions of media and markets, preparing the way for close listening to commercial records.

374. M. K. Jerome (music) and Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young (lyrics), “Poor Little Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now,” New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co., 1919. Rebecca A. Bryant notes this song as one of the “common” intersections of East Asian references with the shimmy, a dance associated more generally with African America and “Middle Eastern” exotics (2002, 177).

375. Conjoined references to Asia and African America appeared in quick succession on many vaudeville bills, as noted in Chapter 3. On related moments in other theatrical settings, see Bordman (1995, 347, 366–67; 1978, 274, 347, 406). They did so as well in other musical texts for amateurs. One operetta included the lines “You can have Japan and China and the land of rice and tea: I’ll take Georgia, Alabama, or the hills of Tennessee...” (Geoffrey O’Hara [music] and Geoffrey F. Morgan [lyrics], “Lantern Land,” Boston: C. C. Birchard & Co., 1932, 57).
ORIENTALIST SONGS AS COMMODITIES

Made and sold in quantity to national markets, sheet music was every bit a commodity. Publishers occasionally reused elements of songs as if they were interchangeable machine parts or different colors of fabric cut to the same pattern, and thus able to be sewn together in any combination. The industrial flavor of this practice is evident in three pieces issued in three consecutive years, all within the production-side microcontext of a single company.

Published by the Charles K. Harris company in 1917, 1918, and 1919, the pieces were “My Little China Doll,” “When the Cherry Trees Are Blooming in Japan,” and “When the Lotus Flowers Bloom in Chinaland.” Covers for the first and last works used the same photograph of a woman in yellowface. Harris was credited as both the publisher and the composer of the 1919 piece, and its reuse of the 1917 cover design accompanied its reuse of content from the 1918 song. As noted, the lyrics and musical notation of “When the Lotus Flowers Bloom in Chinaland” were almost identical to those of “When the Cherry Trees Are Blooming in Japan.” Serving economies of production, this was possible because virtually the same visual, lyrical, and notated content could be poured into printed vessels telling musical tales of China or Japan.

Evident in Harris’s repurposing of material already published, sold, bought, and sung, the location of popular songs within commercial culture also is clear in advertising practice. Most sheet music marketed other such

377. One wonders what those serial purchasers of the 1918 and 1919 songs who did not closely examine the later one before buying it thought upon singing its strangely familiar (and redundantly bought) strains once they returned home.
works, and some covers advertised nonmusical commodities, often in pieces
distributed as promotional devices for them.378 “Sousa’s Sen-Sen March”
advertised breath mints, and the piece itself was marketed in magazines (see fig. 1.9).379 In order to see how marketing tied together orientalist songs in multiple ways, two cross-cutting slices across selected examples first will address the means by which these advertisements pitched the songs they did, and second will survey certain relationships among distinct types of ethnic and racial representation that many advertisements implicitly seemed to link.

Sheet music often listed selections from a publishers’ other products.380 Other advertisements presented short blurbs. One in a “Chinese Serenade” commanded its readers to “Get a copy of the greatest novelty of the age, The Chinese Highbinder’s Patrol, / From the Realistic Chinese Play / ‘The First Born’ / By Lee Johnson, Composer of Chinese Serenade.”381 Some trumpeted (often inflated) sales figures; one on “Sweet Oriental Rose” exclaimed: “POOR BUTTERFLY sold over three million copies, AND ‘WHEN IT’S CHERRY TIME IN TOKIO’ IS ANOTHER BIG SONG SUCCESS! The daintiest and sweetest of Japanese love ballads.”382 Many offered notated excerpts.

Based on past successes, failures, and histories of consumption, publishers seem to have chosen to publicize certain pieces on certain others. This may offer traces of how they played to consumers’ musical tastes, and thus may provide an indirect and aggregated sense of some people’s paths of musical use over time—a hard thing to get at in directly documented ways. Many orientalist and other exoticist songs advertised one another, and some of these promotional texts made plain appeals to a specific taste for musical orientality or a general one for exoticist works apparently of all types.383

**Advertising in & for Tin Pan Alley Sheet Music**

Sheet music for songs that did not invoke racial or ethnic difference often carried advertisements for orientalist pieces. The back cover of “Good-bye, Wild Women, Good-bye!” promoted “Chong” as one of “Two Smashing Song Hits!” The advertisement billed the song as being “By HAROLD WEEKS Of ‘HINDUSTAN’ fame” and “The New Song Hit They’re Dancing, Singing, Humming and Whistling Everywhere.” A notated excerpt included the lines “Chong, he come from Hong Kong where Chinee man play allee day on a

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383. Other recurrent pairings seem to suggest linkages between a taste for orientalist music and for such other racialized representations as those of Tin Pan Alley’s versions of African America. The methodological problem here, of course, is again the double one of reading consumer taste from the products that fed it, and of the massive control group of texts that would be necessary to support hard claims about the ones selected here. As in certain earlier sections of this chapter, those issues must leave this interpretation in a semi-speculative state, and due to this condition no overly specific and firm claims appear below. It is worthwhile, though, to keep in mind the likelihood that the conjunctures noted between different types of pieces that were repeatedly connected by advertising did respond to (and thus reflected) some consumers’ categorical taste for certain kinds of exotic musical fare.
drum, Chong, no likee that song....” Along with such advertisements for single songs, others appeared on, or pitched, folios comprising orientalist and non-orientalist works. The Gem Dance Folio for 1922 included “Ting Ling Toy,” and it promoted “Sweet Siamese,” “Ting Ling Toy,” and more. Related marketing appeared on single songs. The back of “My Oriental Girl” listed such Remick company products as the Star Dance Folio no. 18a, including “My Yokohama Girl”; a list of “New Song Hits” included “China Dreams.”

Within this wide commercial field, sheet music for songs that played to one sort of exoticist taste often promoted others evoking difference. Many pieces that were centered on European, South American, or African American stereotypes promoted works on Japanese or Chinese subjects. For example, the Feist company promoted “China Boy” on the back cover of “Carolina Mammy.” The reverse kind of linkage also was common.

387. While much of this may simply reflect the large number of songs on ethnic subjects and the practice of advertising whatever a publisher thought might hit it big, some of it may have arisen from more specifically conceived tactics.
Other advertisements linked orientality to conditions less differentiated from it, as seen in connections to songs about Hawai‘i as a site for touristic fantasies, a place sometimes made semi-oriental. Some kept orientality and tropicality distinct, but worked in blurrier ways. The back covers of “The Jazz One-Step Adapted from the Oriental Song Success ‘Hong-Kong’” and of “The ‘Jazz’ Fox-Trot Adapted from the Sensational Song Hit Hawaiian Butterfly” bore the same advertisement for those Feist products (fig. 8.174). Depicting a transplanted torii, it pitched the former piece in this way:

“HONG KONG!” is a round-trip ticket to the lantern-lit Chinese gardens, where the beauty of the Geisha girls vies with the moon and the music to waft you to “Jazz” land by way of this wonderful inspiration. Join the “Jazzers” and live! Your dealer has it as a song and also as a “Jazz” one-step. If you have a Player Piano, be sure to get “Hong-Kong.” It’s the greatest “Jazz” dance roll ever produced! —do you get that?

In this moonlit world of musical transport, “jazz” versions of imagined Chinas and Hawai‘is were not so far apart, and geisha populated Chinese gardens while Butterflies pined on Hawai‘ian shores. This offered consumers an idea of a transpacific world rendered as one hazily homogeneous place.

America’s orients comprised not just ideas of East Asia but of West Asia and North Africa (especially Egypt), as well as South and Southeast Asia; in some songs, an abstract orient represented a space tied to no one locale. Many

advertisements invoked an orientality in which all such pieces were thought to share. “Karzan” pitched “My Cairo Love (An Egyptian Serenade)” as “THE ORIENTAL SONG YOU HEAR EVERYWHERE / IT HAS THAT GENUINE ORIENTAL FLAVOR WITH AN IRRESISTIBLE HAUNTING MELODY.”

Some advertisements implicitly connected a diffuse orientality and specific referents, as in the promotion of “Oriental” on “Down in Hindustan.”

Within this encompassing orient, many songs about China or Japan were linked to others. Evincing publishers’ belief that people who bought songs of one such sort might buy those of another, marketing ties between songs about eastern, western, and geographically indeterminate orients were especially common. One publisher advertised “Fu-Ji” on “My Oriental Symphony,” which also invoked its creators’ respective authorship of “Cairo” and “Hindustan.” “Oriental Moon” promoted “Dream Maker of Old Japan,” steering people who had purchased a broadly orientalist song to a more precisely referential one. Similar practices linked pieces about specific locales in a western orient to those associated with China or Japan.

393. Walter Smith (music) and Raymond Egan (lyrics), “Down in Hindustan,” San Francisco: Daniels & Wilson, 1917, back cover.
Certain advertisements also offered implicit contrasts between multiple orients and signs of a (white) American home. The upper half of the back of “Araby” promoted “In Blinky Winky Chinky Chinatown”; its lower half pitched “Just Try to Picture Me Back Home in Tennessee.”397 With the upper title in brushy letters and an image of a Chinese woman and man, this set off signs of the exotic and the domestic against one another. Printed on the back of a song invoking Arabia, it located Chinatown as part of a larger oriental sphere and heightened its difference from an unmarked (white) America.398

Advertisements on the backs of pieces including “Idol” and “In Siam” listed songs by category and included the heading “Oriental,” illustrating a typological way in which that word functioned as a marketing term.399 More common were unsystematic connections among pieces that constituted chains of musically linked orients. As one example, “Shantung” advertised “Hindoo Lady,” which in turn promoted “Singapore” as “An Oriental Syncopation. Fox Trot Tempo.—Blended with Words full of Charm and Color.”400 Without overstating the case, since unrelated concerns may have driven some of these links, their recurrence may be traces of marketing practices that responded to (and anticipated) sustained patterns of many consumers’ musical taste.

398. This contrast (which may have been unintentional) was cranked up further by such touches as the placement of “Back Home” lyrics within the outline of a brick-chimneyed house, and the advertisement’s overall flag-like color scheme of red and blue ink on white paper—a backdrop implicitly at odds with the content of the upper half of the page. 399. Vincent Rose (music) and Richard Coburn (lyrics), “Idol,” New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1919; Johnny Cooper (music) and A. A. Burden (lyrics), “In Siam,” New York: Leo Feist, 1919.
Many songs evoking Chineseness or Japaneseness (or both) promoted much the same sorts of works, sometimes including themselves. Other advertisements promoted groups of exoticist songs and appeared on all of them, as seen in one for “Japanese Sailor,” “Beshebara,” and “Fateema”:


“My Chinese Butterfly” also promoted three pieces, including itself, with:

Somewhere down in everybody’s heart is a love for Oriental song—the weird luring chords of the Far East music—and an Oriental novelty is

**My Chinese Butterfly**

with its fascinating mysterious melody. It’s a Fox Trot Supreme.

Certain other such advertisements linked pieces associated with theater and cinema. These evoked acts of public performance and reception beyond these songs’ amateur use at home; but rather than following those leads, we

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401. In some cases, the latter practice resulted from printing one advertisement on many pieces; e.g., Dolly Jardon (music) and Edward Madden (lyrics), “Lotus San,” New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1908.
402. All by Thomas Hughes (music) and C. P. McDonald (lyrics), published Williamsport, PA: Vandersloot, 1922. The advertisement appeared in identical form on all three pieces.
may glance at intermedia linkages that connected advertising on sheet music to mechanically reproduced traces of performance of the same songs.\textsuperscript{405}

Itself marketed in such media as magazines and postcards (fig. 8.175), sheet music often promoted other musical products. Printed on the back of another piece, an advertisement for “I Want to Go to Tokio” almost pleaded:

Let Joe McCarty [sic] and Fred Fischer take you on the pleasantest trip in many a day—To Tokio.

See the little sweetheart, “Ho, Yo-San,” across the sea—beneath the bamboo tree, sitting on a Jap-a-(k)nee.

There have been many quaint Japanese songs written before, but never one so good as “I Want to Go to Tokio.”

Here’s how good a song “Tokio” is: You sing it once at a party or “song-fest”—it is good for \textit{all night.} “I Want to Go to Tokio” is \textit{that good!}

“I sing a-high a-lee a-low”—which begins and ends the chorus—is a catchy bit of irresistible, tuneful, Oriental melody.

These pieces may also be procured for your Talking Machine or Player Piano. Orchestra leaders will gladly play them on request.\textsuperscript{406}

Sheet music often urged consumers to seek piano rolls of the same piece.\textsuperscript{407}

An even more frequent kind of pitch consisted of small logos or bits of text

\textsuperscript{405} All of these approaches operated alongside such others as plugging by vaudeville musicians and price-conscious pitches that called attention to songs’ status as purchasable things. As noted early in this chapter, a physically overlain trace of sheet music’s commodity status is seen in the frequency with which resellers stamped its covers as a piggy-backed marketing move designed to encourage repeat business. Lithographically printed to begin with, locally rubber-stamped as they traveled through channels of distribution and resale, and often hand-inscribed by their owners, these publications often became palimpsests of meaning—much of it commercial, much of it ideological, all of it attached in one way or another to texts and acts that gained much of their attractiveness and utility because they were entertaining vehicles for amateur musical performance.

\textsuperscript{406} Fred Fischer (music) and Joe McCarthy (lyrics), “There’s a Little Spark of Love Still Burning,” New York: Leo Feist, 1914; Fred Fischer (music) and Joe McCarthy (lyrics), “I Want to Go to Tokio,” New York: Leo. Feist, 1914.

in the margins of notation pages, where they offered such phrases as “may be had for talking machine” or for player piano.408

Few companies produced both sheet music and records (or piano rolls), but the commercial interests of all concerned could align in ways that made intermedia promotion attractive.409 People who bought sheet music and took it home to sing had an even easier time finding records of these songs than one might imagine, and they had plenty of explicit encouragement to do so. This precisely guided push towards audible traces of professional renditions of musical orientality steered amateurs towards mediated aural experience of performative techniques not tractable to notation. This suggests that neither the ways in which people used sheet music in domestic performance, nor the meanings they made from these songs, necessarily were limited to those performative or interpretive moves that could be conveyed in ink on paper.

Another side to intermedia advertising is seen in record companies’ materials. Effusive blurbs in “New Victor Records” brochures from 1918 illustrate this. One pitched a record of “Madame Butterfly—Fantasie” (rec. 8.6) with text that included: “...the beautiful scenes from the opera unfold before one’s imagination as the opera progresses.”410 It also plugged records in ways that plugged songs themselves as well. A blurb for Joseph C. Smith’s recording of “Oriental—Fox Trot” (rec. 8.7) included this:

“Oriental,” by Vincent Rose, is just what you would expect it to be from the title—full of color, wild and passionate in feeling, suggesting the barbaric splendors of the Orient. But it is good dance music, too, for the melody stands

409. Whether corporate agreements on a reciprocal quid pro quo or fee-paid basis underpinned some of this advertising has not been investigated for this study, and is not central here; the local point is how consumers routinely encountered its printed results.
out clear, and the rhythm is perfect. More plaintive, but not less passionate, is the waltz....” (11)

This promoted a performance and an underlying composition that one might buy as sheet music. Another brochure did the same for the Smith ensemble’s record of “Hindustan,” which was said to have “the Oriental touch; vigorous melody, insistent rhythm, and powerfully picturesque in its instrumental effects.”411 A montage of covers for “some of the November Popular Songs” included that of “Hindustan” (10).

These webs of advertising show how raciological categories served both ideology and commerce. In advertisements for sheet music and records, these marketing strategies spanned material-economic contexts involving multiple firms. This forged concrete links between printed musical commodities and audio media, enabling amateur singers to learn how to emulate professional yellowvoice by performative means that were intractable to notation.

As we leave this print medium, its role in performance is the key point. Sheet music gained its social power not only by conjoining images, language, and musical notation, but even more because of its domestic use. Millions of white Americans did more than just look at these printed things. They actively used these products to sing themselves of orientality, imagining it into their own musical bodies and envoicing it for all to hear.

Chapter 9

Listening to Professional Mimetic Orientality

Mechanical Traces & the Racial Grain of Recorded Yellowvoice

VINCENT: Higher, make your voice higher! Da Da Da Da—Dah Dah Dah Dah Dah Dah.

BRADLEY (struggling to go higher): So Solly Cholly!

VINCENT: Higher! Higher!

BRADLEY (falsetto): So Solly Cholly!

(They are whirling around the stage. VINCENT singing and tap-dancing with BRADLEY in tow singing in a high-pitched falsetto. Both are getting more and more involved, acting out more and more outrageous stereotypes.

BRADLEY slowly starts to realize what he’s doing.)

BRADLEY: Wait, wait, wait, what is this—WAIT! What am I doing? What is this shit?

—Philip Kan Gotanda, Yankee Dawg You Die (1995, 93)

Sheet music illuminates some key aspects of orientalist cultural moments, but as a print medium it tells us little about certain aspects of actual practice. The sounds discussed in this chapter show how music in performance offered additional ways of representing racial difference. These involved the use of multiple levels of racially marked sonic signs contributed by a song’s original composer, its subsequent arranger (often for a specific ensemble or recording session), and the performers who actually sounded it in the moment. As with printed music, most of the ways in which these people did these things drew upon stock signs and practices that were part of an encompassing discourse of musical orientality; but singers’ and instrumentalists’ contributions often relied on performative moves that were not so tractable to staff notation.

Despite the varied means of signifying race in musical performance and reception, one key referent of most of these recorded acts was no more nuanced than it was in orientalist sheet music. Here as there, musical sound—and the acts by which people made and listened to it—generally represented
a raciologically collapsed China/Japan imagined by many white Americans. That space could gain a compelling illusion of veracity when it was made audible in mechanical traces of performers’ embodied musical practice.

A central point here is the way in which certain media technologies can support certain kinds of linkages between music and race. Sheet music used industrial printing to disseminate prescriptive texts that linked staff notation marked by orientalist gestures with language-based claims and insinuations about orientality as a human condition and set of attributes. People could use those texts to sing tales about—and in first-person lyrics, to sing fantasized identification with—orientality; but sheet music tells us little about precisely how they sang these songs. Although some pieces embedded interpretive directions (e.g., nonstandard spellings) in their lyrics or appended them to sections to be delivered in “sing-song” style, each act of music-making from such a text enjoyed great latitude in its performatative realization into sound.

Each amateur or professional singer could draw from a pool of common-practice orientalist vocality in ways not determined by printed instructions. In performance, the voice—as well as its instrumental peers or accompanists—grounded sheet music’s printed linkages of race and music in the bodies of white Americans who inflected these works with non-notated signs of orientality, giving them the experiential, persuasive, and memorial weight of musical embodiment. Records offer a window through which we may listen back in time to moments when the results of these practices still were widely sounded, and by extrapolation to the larger stream—in a sense, a sometimes-mediated oral (sub-) tradition—of raciological performance they instantiated.
This chapter offers a quick survey of some common performative (and a few arranging) moves in these recordings. Future work may use the corpus on which it is based to examine aspects of mimesis only mentioned here.\(^1\) To serve this study’s central aims, the focus here is on a long-lived repertoire of racially signifying musical practices as such, not so much on the specific ways in which musicians performed certain songs in different ways across longer spans of time (into decades that exceed the scope of this dissertation). Also largely elided, for reasons of space, are some contexts that connected records to other media. For example, an advertisement for the novel “Ways That Are Wary” asserted that “all dancing America has thrilled to the haunting loveliness of the rhythm of ‘Limehouse Blues,’” and that the book’s author:

…has taken San Francisco’s Chinatown for his background,—“The Alley of Lingerign Shadows”—“The Shop of Ten Thousand Profits”—dim interiors where opium is smoked and flageolets pipe—ornately carved balconies where lanterns glow and Cantonese daughters quaintly sing “The Ballad of the Unapproachable Maidens.”\(^2\)

With such connections among various modes of orientalist consumption in mind, but not dwelt upon below, this chapter proceeds straight to musical media. After an initial look at piano rolls, it considers recordings from the perspectives of racial mimesis in vocal and instrumental performance, ethnic cross-referencing, and performative intersections of orientality and “jazz.”

\(^1\) Among these are timbral practices that represented not just a Chinese/Japanese orient but also South or West Asian and North African ones (e.g., in “Hindustan,” “Moonlight on the Ganges,” “Song of India,” and pieces on Egyptian topics), and crossings of orientalist and “jazz” references. The last topic is documented in records of pieces including “Chinatown, My Chinatown” (see Garrett 2004), “Japanese Sandman,” “Poor Butterfly,” and “China Boy”; post-1930 recordings of these works also were consulted, but are set aside below in order to maintain temporal focus.

Piano Rolls as a Liminal Media Technology for Experiencing Race

Player piano rolls may be seen in use-centered ways as a liminal medium between sheet music and recordings. By enabling amateurs who had no keyboard proficiency still to sing with piano accompaniment, they offered mechanized support for enacting orientalist musicality at home.3 Unable to reproduce the voice itself, many displayed a song’s lyrics as the music progressed. For example, among the pieces listed in a flyer for Vocalstyle products (“The roll with the song on the margin and marks showing how the song should be sung”) was “All Aboard for Chinatown.”4 Often called “word rolls,” these included songs familiar from Chapter 8.5 Along with these, some non-vocal rolls bore titles marking representational intent of a sort seen in one called “Characteristic Tone Pictures (Chinese).”6 Others conveyed music from theatrical versions of Asia into U.S. homes; one instrumental roll offered music from the 1909–1910 New York Hippodrome show, “A Trip to Japan.”7

Some piano-roll advertisements invoked orientalist acts treated in earlier chapters on theatrical mimesis.8 Connections between this medium and those central to this study are clear in cross-media marketing which linked sheet

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6. McNair Ilgenfritz, “Characteristic Tone Pictures (Chinese)” (McNair Ilgenfritz), Duo-Art 5606 (piano roll), early 20th century.
7. Manuel Klein, “A Trip to Japan. Selection. Introducing: (1) Every Girl Loves a Uniform; (2) Fair Flowe[r]s of Japan; (3) Meet Me Where the Lanterns Glow; (4) Our Navy’s the Best in the World”), Universal Music Co. 77449 (O) (A 48) (piano roll), 1909 or after.
8. E.g., Perforated Music Roll Company, “Perfection Perforated Music” [advertisement], Theatre Magazine, March 1905, xviii,
music, piano rolls, and records. Sheet-music publishers’ advertisements in magazines sometimes promoted the latter products as well,9 and those on sheet music itself did the same with such language as “get this song for your talking machine or player piano.”10 One for the “Hong Kong” One Step included: “If you have a Player Piano, be sure to get “Hong-Kong.” It’s the greatest “Jazz” dance roll ever produced! —do you get that?”11

With this contextual sense of piano rolls, we may move on to another medium, one that offered mechanical traces of the mimetic voice itself.

**Hearing Orientality in Commercial Sound Recordings**

> A Victor record never sounds the same no matter how often you play it. The record doesn’t change, but you do. —“New Victor Records October 1918”12

While piano rolls gave amateurs mechanical support for singing at home, recordings enabled them to hear actual traces of professionals’ mimetic vocal acts and to emulate those racially meaningful musical practices (whether they chose to do so consciously, or just ended up re-enacting them without quite knowing why when singing similar songs). In the course of the 1920s, the rise of radio would come to offer analogous opportunities; but for most of these decades, phonograph records were the primary medium for such processes.13

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9. E.g., Leo Feist, “Song Lovers! Three New Song Hits Accepted by Everybody Everywhere!” [advertisement], *Theatre Magazine*, September 1919, 207.
11. Hans Von Holstein and Alma M. Sanders, “The Jazz One-Step Adapted from the Oriental Song Success ‘Hong-Kong,’” New York: Leo. Feist, 1917, back cover. Chapter 8 presents a longer quotation from the advertisement, which is reproduced there in fig. 8.174.
13. For a theoretically apposite study of radio and race in one U.S. cultural scene, see Vaillant (2002); on later broadcasts involving orientalist practice, see Russo (2002); see also Toll (1982, 48–60), Oberdeck (1999, 329), McLoone (2000), Hilmes and Loviglio (2002); on other meetings
Various streams of American audio production and consumption linked performers and audiences through what are sometimes categorized as “ethnic recordings” outside an industry-defined mainstream, and field production made small numbers of recordings for cultural researchers. Those efforts’ products seldom crossed into the mass-market trade in records, but a few recordings were made in China or Japan and released in the United States as exotic fare for white consumers’ enjoyment (which probably took raciological form in many cases). Among them were cylinder records titled “Chinese Song” and “Chinese Comic Recitation” (recs. 9.1 and 9.2); a Chinese recording released “as a novelty” and “One-Step” (rec. 9.3); and a gong-laden “Chinese Vocal Record Recorded in Canton, China: Issued as a Novelty” (rec. 9.4). Generally these releases were framed in ways that cohered with the sense of a later writer’s assertion that “Chinese vocal music is beyond the comprehension of the Occidental” (if not quite beyond that of a 1917 play in which Chinese singing provided the ideal diversion by which one might conceal a murder). Other U.S.-issued records also offered non-mimetic sounds. A 1905 disk titled “Japanese National March” (rec. 9.5), for instance, included a Japanese-language vocal section. But with such rare exceptions, virtually no records sold through “mainstream” U.S. channels—not as products for ethnic communities—document performances by Asian or Asian


American musicians. This was in contrast to Hawai‘ian musicians’ routine presence (sometimes with white Americans) in mass-marketed records of Hawai‘ian songs. While this disparity arose from different histories of political and cultural relations and of musical traditions, it highlights a social fact that framed the recordings discussed below. Just as most of the notated works that underlay them were entirely “Made in U.S.A.” with local musical materials (aside from an occasional melody) believed to represent orientality, almost all of the performers who made these sounds were white Americans.

Widely sold and heard, these orientalist commercial recordings were both products and objects of white Americans’ raciological imaginations. Diverse studies examine social and technological histories within which these documents circulated (figs. 9.1–9.6 show how record companies often used orientalist imagery to promote phonographs as domestic goods; see also fig. 1.6); but those well-known contexts are not rehashed here.\textsuperscript{16} Many writers also offer information about performers represented in this chapter, where biographical details are absent for reasons of focus.\textsuperscript{17} The subject here is more a body of practices than the individuals who drew from it in performance.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} E.g., see E. Marks (1935); Hoffmann et al. (1997, especially 115–30, 467–515); R. L. Smith (1998); Gracyk (2000); and many passages in the earlier parts of Averill (2003). For a sense of highlights in some of these performers’ recorded careers, see also Whitburn (1986).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Performers and arrangers working in a wide variety of genres and venues employed these practices, many of which transcended any one stream of musical activity. The examples below span such sometimes overlapping things as sentimental solo ballads, novelty songs, vocal quartets, military (brass) bands, dance orchestras with European- or jazz-inflected sounds, and other popular traditions. Recent studies offer a sense of genre context for some of these; the vocal tradition heard in recordings 9.6–9.8, for example, is central to Gage Averill’s *Four Parts, No Waiting* (2003, especially 69–77).

Also relevant were related moves in elite settings (for example, violin or salon-orchestra performances like those in recordings 9.9–9.11), but those do not figure centrally here.\(^\text{18}\) Also largely set aside are records marketed under such rubrics as “hillbilly” (e.g., recs. 9.12–9.14), as well as the many versions of “Chinese Picnic and Oriental Dance” and similar pieces recorded by such banjoists as Fred Van Eps (e.g., recs. 9.15–9.20).\(^\text{19}\) Examples 9.9–9.20 may supply a sense of those aural contexts, without dwelling on their details.

Because most orientalist recordings combined musical signs that are separated for systematic discussion here, many examples of any one practice also illustrate others. For example, a 1929 record of “Chinese Wedding Procession” (rec. 9.21; cf. rec. 4.9) offered its listeners a densely packed aggregation of audible signs of race, ranging from steady woodblock rhythms to vocal interjections. With this mixing of their performative use in mind, the interpretive path below considers vocal practices and then instrumental ones.

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18. Also in play were other orchestral recordings consulted but not reproduced here; e.g., Symphony Orchestra, “O Kioto San” (T. H. Thurban?), 2-minute Albany Indestructible cylinder 1130, 1909; Symphony Orchestra, “Belle of Yokohama,” Edison cylinder 1306, 1910.
19. For another recording like the “Chinese” pieces of Van Eps, see Vess Ossman (banjo with piano accompaniment by J. Roberts), “Chung Lo (Banjo Solo),” Edison cylinder 4671, [1913?].
A group of widely heard spoken-word routines provides an initial avenue to listening to more strictly musical acts, into which the former actually blurred.

VAUDEVILLE MIMESIS, UNCLE JOSH, & RACIOLOGICAL MONOLOGUE

Mimetic spoken acts representing racial or ethnic types were a staple of performance in vaudeville and other settings, and they could commingle speech and song. In her work on female mimics in vaudeville, Susan A. Glenn has examined the period idea that mimicry or imitation was a creative act on a par with any other. Glenn has found that a “...paradox—the idea that imitations could also be ‘original’ creations—was central to early twentieth-century intellectual reformations. Imitative comedy tweaked the sacred notions of authenticity upon which bourgeois concepts of culture and individuality rested....”20 While Glenn’s article aims chiefly to connect contemporaneous performance and social theory to explore possible cross-influences between those domains, it offers a gender-centered counterpart to this study’s focus on race. Mimesis was central to performances of both.

Early twentieth-century notions of spoken comedy could play to convergent identities of gender and race. The ease with which these could intersect is evident in an article noting situations in which “a vaudeville audience always laughs.” Atop the first of two lists which included stage-dialect speech and gestures representing German, “Hebrew,” Irish, and blackface types, it proposed: “1. When a comedian walks with a mincing step and speaks in a falsetto tone.”21 In different contexts, those ways of moving

and speaking could signify either male drag performance as “female” or white racial drag as “Chinese.” With a sense of the contingent parallelism seen in how acts termed “mincing” and “falsetto” could mark femaleness or orientality, we may listen to performances of the latter essence in ways that attend to both its racialized and its gendered status (cf. Moy 1993, 61–62).

One prominent monologist in the century’s early years was Cal Stewart, who made many records in the role of “Uncle Josh.” Stewart and other performers spoke in that rusticated figure’s voice to derive comedy from imagined misadventures in a world grown suddenly modern. Sometimes categorized as “rural comedy,” these tales variously invoked such emergent technologies as the bicycle and the automobile, city life, new ways of marking socioeconomic class, encounters with immigrant communities, and other aspects of contemporary existence (rec. 9.22 presents a baseline example of rural humor; 9.23 offers quasi-West-Asian vocality in an urban scenario; and 9.24 tells a tale of a pseudo-Chinese Billiken figurine). The story that matters most here centered on the United States as a place where racialized labor and violence could offer audible grounds for many listeners’ amusement.

Titled “Uncle Josh in a Chinese Laundry,” one of these monologues recounted the frustrations of an Uncle Josh adrift in New York and beset with dirty clothes in need of washing (several of Stewart’s performances of the piece are heard in recs. 9.25–9.28, all from the century’s first decade). Culturally lost in multiethnic urban modernity, he follows a lead to a Chinese laundry; drops off his clothes in exchange for a receipt; and later returns for

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22. On Stewart, see Whitburn (1986); also relevant, but not yet located, is R. McNutt (1981).
them. In that final scene, his determination to reclaim his garments despite having lost the receipt provides the narrative impetus for a physical struggle expressed in part through mimetic vocalization.\textsuperscript{24} This took the double form of nonsemantic vocables (much like those represented in some typeset lyrics) and timbral practices that were far less amenable to printed representation.\textsuperscript{25}

Enacted in the context of a narrative that made now-dismaying (but then not unusual) use of anti-Chinese violence as comic material, Stewart’s vocal performance shifted fluently between modes of speech understood as representing an old(-ish) white man from a profoundly rural “Pumpkin Center” and a Chinese-born New Yorker protesting against his customer’s frustrated aggression. In the course of the attack and ensuing fight, Stewart used specific kinds of pitch and timbre to signify the unnamed Chinese character’s alienness in ways comprehensible through sound alone.\textsuperscript{26} This may be heard in recordings 9.29 and 9.30, which present excerpts of those transitions. These represented male Chineseness by utterances pitched higher than most American men’s speech and produced with sustained nasality.

White Americans could make meaning from these performances by relating them to socially pervasive discourse about race and to texts that used the sounds of Asian people’s voices to signify oriental identity. For example, one book told of a “popular love of music” that “is displayed everywhere in

\textsuperscript{24} On the phrase “no tickee, no washee,” which is not uttered in this piece but seeks humor in related ways, see Mieder (1996). On more broadly relevant social contexts, see Berman (1982) and other studies of early twentieth-century U.S. modernity and cultural anxieties.\textsuperscript{25} Many folklore studies offer general background on storytelling and other verbal arts as performance; one is Bauman (1975); for more recent capsule presentations of key topics in this area, see various authors’ contributions to Bauman (1992).\textsuperscript{26} Along with works on musical perception by investigators including Diana Deutsch and ongoing work on vocal production by scholars including Steven Feld, Aaron Fox, and David Samuels, a few of the many studies offering useful discussions of timbre are Roederer (1975, 133–42); Fox (1992, especially 55, 58–59); Fales (2002); Averill (2003, 163–69).
daily life” in China, where “bands of musicians parade the streets, all the
domestic festivals are celebrated with music, and children in their play are
constantly singing.” “Girls are taught to play the moon-shaped guitar, and
the balloon-shaped, and the three-stringed guitar, whilst they sing the ballads
which the Chinese say are thousands of years old”:

The singing is very peculiar, being a kind of singsong extremely nasal; so little
have the lips to do with the enunciation that it can hardly be called
vocalisation. This we find almost everywhere the characteristic of barbaric
song: the savage and the semi-civilised seldom get beyond a high-pitched nasal
chant. Yet, when civilization has progressed, the strong conservative instinct
remains, and this same twang is a delicious indulgence, and a sign of long
descent and high breeding. I am told by those who have had the experience,
that the only opportunities of hearing the natural voice of the Chinese and
the Japanese in singing are when groups of workmen are setting off to work,
or when soldiers are passing; and then some good musical effect is produced
in unison, the singers joining in their quaintly sounding and well known
melodies, which have been handed down for generations. No decent, self-
respecting, or respectability-loving Chinese would condescend to the vulgarity
of singing in the natural voice: they use invariably falsetto, emitted mostly
through the nose, the mouth almost shut. Male and female alike cultivate this
evidence of gentility. (H. Smith n.d. [1904]: 280–81)

Such U.S. textual linkages of high-pitched and nasal vocality to Chineseness
and Japaneseness were common. While any one listener to an Uncle Josh
recording was unlikely to have read any one such text, the overall logic they
offered—that race was present in the voice, and that orientality had precisely
audible attributes—was so prevalent as to be accessible to most Americans.27

27. For a sense of the wide backdrop of invocations of racialized vocality, cf. “‘Excelsior’ in
‘Pigeon English’,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, October 1869, 783–84; “Chinese sketches”
including those in a book advertised in Cartier and Baron (1879); Osman Edwards, “Japanese
65; Frederic Chapin (music) and Guy F. Steely (lyrics), The Forbidden Land: An Original Tibetan
Comic Opera in Two Acts, New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1904; “Japanese Students Present
Comedy Version of Macbeth with Unique Stage Settings,” San Francisco Call, 18 November
1907; a vaudeville performance by a “mimic and dialectician” of “Some Chinese Small Talk”
billed in “Keith’s Theatre Program Week of July 29, 1907,” Boston; Abbott and Bryant’s
“celebrated spectacular Japanese vocal sketch” promoted in “Chutes” [theatrical note],
San Francisco Evening Post, 9 September 1905; newspaper cartoons such as “Here’s Another
Candidate for President,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, 21 June 1914; Oliver M. Sayler, “Behind the
Scenes in Tokio: Noted Japanese Players to Visit America as a Result of the World War,”
These twin characteristics of high register and nasal formants infused the recorded vocal mimesis of Chineseness. Some of these performances offered both speech and song. For one phonograph cylinder of this Uncle Josh tale, monologist Andrew Keefe stuck to the same text as did Cal Stewart, but Keefe embedded a more song-like version of pseudo-Chinese speech that was strangely reminiscent of bugle-call contours (rec. 9.31). Another vocalist, Gilbert Girard, made several recordings of mimetically Chinese sound in the same decade. One of these (rec. 9.32) presented his series of imitations of everything from “Shanghai” and “Hebrew” roosters to a Chinese song with his emulation of a Chinese fiddle, which Girard sought to evoke by means of a nasalized vocal rendition of wordless melody. His version of that exoticized instrumental timbre shows from one direction not just how the boundary between racialized speech and song was often blurred, but how that between vocal and instrumental representations of difference could be as well.28

Without discussing other spoken acts (cf. rec. 9.33 for a later example with thinly metaphorical sexual content), this shows that some mimetic techniques of the voice and of instrumental sounding bodies are not wholly separable. This understanding, which will be reinforced below from the other

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direction (i.e., by hearing instruments imitating vocal inflections), suggests how the analytical divisions to follow represent more a series of aural windows into one semi-coherent musical discourse (about race made audible) than they do a succession of actually separate practices. All of these musical signs could reference China, Japan, or Asian America—chiefly Chinatowns—with equal ease, as well as such other places as an imagined Singapore (which often was positioned in related ways, as heard in rec. 9.34).

Musical Practices of the Racially Mimetic Voice

He who has listened to Chinese will have noticed the musical or half-musical character of the speech. It has a kind of prolonged metallic tone which enables the speaker to vary each syllable much as a singer might vary the notes of a scale.
—John Clark Ridpath, With the World’s People (1916, 10:66)

Three main vocal practices, sometimes applied in combination, marked this Chinese/Japanese orientality in mimetic musical acts. These consisted of vocal interpolations, timbral and ornamental treatments of composed melody, and (less often) more than one vocalist singing in parallel fourths or fifths.

Vocal Interpolations into Composed Musical Texts

Just as monologists could insert snippets of song into their routines, singers could inject ersatz Asian-language speech into their sung performances. Judging from their seemingly impromptu exuberance, these unscripted moments may seem to have been improvised; but as becomes clear from listening to multiple versions of any one song recorded by the same singer(s) for different companies, performers probably worked these out in advance to varying degrees, in some cases extemporizing their finer details (cf. Potter 1998, 162–64). Some may have been planned out by conscious design, and others subconsciously codified through repeated rehearsal. Either way, these
utterances embedded, by means of performance, additional racial meaning into musical texts that made similar assertions in the form of sheet music—a medium less able to support this mode of representation. While some printed lyrics prompted such interpolations, ink on paper could do little to convey their defining timbral character, which relied on aural and oral transmission.

Mimetic interpolations spanned a continuum from speech-like to song-like vocalizations, and were uttered by primary singers or by vocalists who were not then singing the main melody; sometimes otherwise non-singing members of instrumental ensembles also voiced them. Recordings 9.35–9.41 offer examples which also illustrate the interrelated tendencies for certain singers to add such sounds, and for Chinese-referential songs to be especially loaded in this way—something driven in part by several songs’ prominence in this regard. Some records’ interjections reflected composers’ and singers’ ideas; many renditions of “From Here to Shanghai” (e.g., recs. 9.35–37 in the group just cited) sounded “Hock-a-my, Hock-a-my,” printed in the sheet music, along with sounds not found there but interpolated by performers.29 As heard in the Peerless Quartet’s renditions of “Chin Chin Chinaman” (e.g., recs. 9.42 and 9.43), uttering mimetic Chinese speech in imagined contexts of anti-Asian violence was not unique to monologists speaking as Uncle Josh; and as is evident in such performances as one documented in recording 9.44, some vocal passages inhabited an ambiguous space between speech and song. This may have reinforced notions of “sing-song” Chinese speech.

This nonsemantic practice may have signified diverse things to different listeners, but its sheer lack of linguistic meaning must have been important to

many. Suggestive here is Lawrence Kramer’s hearing of Ravel’s “prominent use” in *Daphnis et Chloë* “of a chorus singing in a style as far removed as possible from that of the European choral tradition: a wordless chorus ecstatically vocalizing in short, fast-fading cries and long-drawn-out sighs and undulations”: “The chorus reduces the human voice from a vehicle of agency and signification to a pure and mobile materiality” (Kramer 1995, 208). A similar link between wordlessly sung sound unlike that of familiar traditions and a shift from perceived subjective agency to sonic objectification may, despite differences of context, have operated in these performances too. As noted previously, works in Asian American studies have shown that the reduction of supposedly Chinese speech to literal non-sense in printed texts had dehumanizing effects. In these records, mimetic vocality and audio media combined to make oriental incomprehensibility audible at home.

Incomprehensible utterances also opened up space for performers to add their own invented translations. For a recording of “So Long! Oo-Long” (rec. 9.45), Victor Roberts followed his addendum of spoken ersatz Japanese by translating it as “Pay your income tax.” This possibly off-the-cuff (but probably well-rehearsed) statement still located orientalized Asianness—something already rendered monolithic by the song’s lyrical conflation of Chineseness (“Oo-long”) and Japaneseness (“Nagasaki”)—as a wholly foreign condition; but the singer’s mock-translation made it one which defined audibly racialized characters that could be made to speak as playful (ventriloquized) outsiders commenting on U.S. social issues.
TIMBRAL AND ORNAMENTAL RACIALIZATION OF SUNG MELODY

As heard in “Uncle Josh” and other spoken acts as well as in the examples above, two stock vocal signs of orientality were high pitch register and nasal timbre. Performers routinely applied these markers not only when making their own interpolations into composed musical materials. They also did so when singing notated orientalist melodies. Investing added racialization into the musical sounds they made, this practice was equally applicable to songs about Japanese or Chinese scenarios. As heard in recording 9.46, these practices could be paired with instrumental signs discussed below—here, the ever-popular gong—as well as quickly executed interstitial moments of nonsemantic vocal mimesis. Victor Roberts’s “So Long! Oo-Long” (rec. 9.45 just above) also shows how some singers applied these techniques to passages narratively framed as Asian—in that instance, Japanese—song.

Along with these most widely used vocal signs of orientality were others based less on timbre (as a sustained attribute of sung tones) and more on ornamentation (as comparatively fleeting marks of difference attached only momentarily to such tones). This distinction is not always a clear-cut one, since perceptions of timbre can be strongly shaped by how a singer begins and ends certain notes; but still it is useful here. The vocal ornaments most often sung to signify oriental difference comprised various embellishments that could be broadly classed as shakes or glides. In using these, a singer would approach, vary, or depart from a composed melodic pitch in ways not so often heard in renditions of non-orientalist songs. To some unknowable degree, these moving tones may have been derived from linguistic outsiders’ hearings of certain aspects of spoken Cantonese in the United States; but
regardless of their lineage, they functioned in these contexts of performance and reception as typical signs of a generically racialized orientality. Perceived within these performances’ wider genre context of all kinds of popular song, their audible strangeness marked orientality as a musically alien condition. As heard in the introduction to a recording of “Japanese Moon” (rec. 9.47), they also could set up an exotic mise-en-scène for an entire performance.

While some specific forms of this raciological embellishment made up a kind of “common tongue” instantiated by many performers, certain singers apparently had favorite—if not exactly trademark, even in the colloquial sense—ornaments, and in many situations they used them rather than other potentially applicable moves.30 Two immensely popular vocalists who seem to have done so were Nora Bayes and Irving Kaufman. Bayes sometimes favored a quick descending gesture added to the beginnings of certain notes, for which she would start with a higher grace note and drop quickly to the destination pitch. She did this, for example, on the words “Sing” and “Song” in “Sing Song Man” (rec. 9.48), in which the gesture’s immediate reiteration also evoked notions of repetitive musicality. In “Oh Sing-A-Loo” (rec. 9.49), issued as the B-side of the same disk, she used the same ornament, as well as its inverse, ascending cousin by starting below and rising quickly up to the composed note. Irving Kaufman seems to have favored a different move, one involving the insertion of a quick upper-neighbor tone into the midst of a main melodic pitch. He used this orientalizing ornament repeatedly, for example, when singing “Chong” (e.g., rec. 9.50, as well as in numerous other

30. Whether this was a conscious or an accidental process remains an open question, but one not central to a study concerned more with an encompassing musical/racial discourse than with acts of authorial selection from—or here, perhaps also of contribution to—it.
recordings he made of the same piece); in those renditions, it appears as a consistently executed fillip that used audible divergence from his more usual ways of singing to mark the human difference of that song’s protagonist.

In these and other songs, Bayes’s and Kaufman’s mutually distinct (yet similarly deployed) and idiosyncratic (but not exclusive) ornaments show how some singers had personalized ways of performing notated melodies of orientalist songs. These recurrently interpolated grace notes signified race in ways that were literally embodied in performance and were intractable to notation (of any easily comprehended sort). Even heard in mediated form, these performative practices were another way in which singers deepened songs’ raciological meanings beyond those that could be conveyed in print.

Although many performers infused orientalist songs with these sorts of audible divergence from European American norms, others gave such pieces precisely the opposite treatment by eschewing any trace of racially marked vocal production. In some records, singers including Edna Brown and Charles Harrison sang tales of oriental goings-on in voices that strayed little or not at all from European norms of “good” vocal production—perhaps thereby staking claim to the status of elite musician-artists broadly affiliated with operatic singing (if not themselves opera singers) rather than that of musical entertainers eager to bend their voices for the sheer sake of novel attraction.31 These relationships between vocal technique and class position within both artistic and socioeconomic hierarchies are clear in an Italian opera singer’s comments, as they were published in a U.S. magazine in 1917:

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31. For a related perspective on the adoption of quasi-English accents by some 1920s singers, possibly to distance and distinguish their voices from styles associated with “jazz,” cf. Potter (1998, 152).
Vaudeville singers, too, … and song and dance artists might just as well learn the rudiments of singing and producing a pleasing tone instead of shouting at their hearers with hoarse voices. It’s all a matter of interpretation. The musical comedy star cannot indulge in grand opera airs and the vaudeville performer cannot neglect the enunciation as can the artists who sing in French, Italian and German to American audiences at the Metropolitan. The whole business of interpretation is different for each branch of the singing stage, but the vocal production should be the same.32

Along with such comments as “There are only two kinds of singing, good and bad,” this elite view of a universally proper technique of the voice—one that should crosscut all genres and venues—suggests how ideology may have driven certain singers’ sound-making practices in orientalist recordings.

Brown’s and Harrison’s versions of “Poor Butterfly” (a piece which came in for all manner of treatment by various performers) may illustrate this. In his Columbia record of the song (rec. 9.51), Harrison not only forsook the addition of any orientalizing vocal gestures. Evidently he took under advisement the quasi-dialect of the lyrics’ words “the ’Merican way” and decided to clean things up before enunciating “the American way” with a rolled “r”—almost as though he couldn’t bear to sing the printed version in lieu of a more classy alternative.33 This way of singing the letter “r” long had helped singers gain intelligibility in acoustic recordings, and it probably was habitual for some, but it also clearly played to Anglophilic class leanings. In her performance of the song for Victor (rec. 9.52), Edna Brown also used an elite European singing style. Her version, more than Harrison’s, shows also how such a singer could locate herself vocally as being racially unmarked (and not just white, but elite) while still bringing to market a record that

offered exotic charms. Brown’s voice as such sang no mimetic difference, but it sounded in an ensemble space made oriental by the orchestra’s initial “tom-tom” percussion and 1-5 ostinato accompaniment. Hearing all these things together, listeners could enjoy a sense of exotic musical transport while still knowing that the singer herself was no mere purveyor of vocal novelty.

Gender also mattered here in vocal and ideological ways. Harrison’s stentorian eruption on “To love with her soul was easy to learn,” following the line “taught her how love in the American [formerly “‘Merican’] way,” may be a timbral trace of a peculiarly male affective stance—one not heard in Frances Alda’s (rec. 9.53) or Edna Brown’s less marked treatments of the phrase. Harrison’s delivery of the line seems to have embodied aggressively heterosexual male identification with the lyrics’ (white) American romantic instructor. Through the mutually leveraging effects of tonal intensity and sheer volume, that moment of vocal production gave the performance’s greatest weight to a musical embodiment of white male agency; while the line located some subjectivity in “Poor Butterfly” as a character who was learning something (even if a lesson in dominant power structures), the categorical alignment of her teacher’s and the singer’s identities as white, male, and American lent this stress clear significance. This suggests how vocal practice could guide the meanings most available to listeners from a specific record of any given song. The nature and persuasiveness of the social interpretations these techniques proposed could vary tremendously among different singers’ renditions of the same composed text, even as they all evoked orientality.

Musical processes, social concerns, and modes of racial representation similar to those in these Harrison and Brown records are audible in others.
One example will show that the practices heard in these versions of “Poor Butterfly” were not specific to that song. George Wilton Ballard’s “San San Soo” (rec. 9.54) also presented disjunct degrees of vocal and instrumental mimesis. The musical text underlying the performance offered pentatonicism and other marked material. To this composed base, the arrangement added such signs as passages with prominent gong strokes. In the midst of all this, Ballard’s vocal delivery held tight to the conventions of sentimental ballad singing. Musically supported and ideologically framed by orientalist accompaniment, this singer too could forego racially marked vocality.

This interpretive linking of orientalist vocal practice as such (or its lack) to musical class position (desired or achieved) should not be overstated. Unmarked vocal production in these songs sometimes was paired with openly populist urges. In recording 9.55, Ernest Hare and Billy Jones sang pseudo-dialect words (e.g., “Melican”) of “So Does Your Old Mandarin” with fairly unmarked timbre, but they did so in a musical setting plainly meant to appeal to many audiences’ taste for novelty.

Considered together, recorded performances saturated with stock vocal signs of orientality, those so marked by more idiosyncratic means, and others in which singers sang themselves closer to home in the midst of orchestral representations of difference, all suggest the varied means by which vocal timbre functioned in these settings. In the latter instances, timbrally and ornamentally unmarked singing established a sense of referring to orientality from some external location, a place from which the performer observed and recounted exotic events. In the former cases, of which many more will be encountered in diverse connections below, transformations of the voice itself
conveyed a sense that the singer was mimetically internalizing and producing orientality through actual musical enactment. But whether the racial essence invoked in these ways bore more a third-person or momentarily first-person sensibility in strictly vocal terms, the voice figured centrally in its production.

**Parallel Fourths and Fifths as Expertly Sung Signs of Orientality**

The last aspect of vocal performance to be noted here was less common, but its occurrence at all in recordings stands in contrast to its virtually complete absence from sheet music. In a few recordings, vocalists sang short melodies in parallel at intervals of a perfect fourth or fifth. Sheet music almost never called for this (even in the toned-down form of similarly parallel vocal and piano lines), presumably because it would have risked luring amateur vocalists out of a song’s key; but professional singers were better equipped to pull off this highly marked move while keeping their tonal bearings.

Two examples will illustrate this practice. A vocal duet of “Shanghai Honeymoon” (rec. 9.56) featured its singers performing some sections in parallel at the interval of a perfect fourth (interspersed with sections largely harmonized in thirds and sixths). The alternate, and equally marked, form of this practice is heard in the parallel fifths sung as a vocal pickup to the chorus in an Orpheus Trio record of “The Japanese Sandman” (rec. 9.57). Perhaps significantly, this arrangement vested the musical strangeness (contextually speaking) of that vocal practice into the words “Here’s the Japanese.”

*Instrumental Voices & the Ensemble Mimesis of Orientality*

Certain records not framed as vocal ones included such moments as the nonsemantic vocal mimesis (evidently uttered by instrumentalists) that set
up, perhaps to greater alienating effect than sound not emerging from unassisted bodies could muster, the ensuing dance-band performance of “Japanese Moon” in a 1922 arrangement (rec. 9.47 above). Some racially signifying practices treated in this chapter blurred in other ways the boundary between vocal and instrumental musicality; but here we may consider those more commonly found in the latter. To begin with, a quick sidestep from recordings will be useful.

PUBLISHED ENSEMBLE ARRANGEMENTS OF ORIENTALIST WORKS

Many orientalist works first published for voice and piano were later arranged for popular ensembles and published as “stock charts” for use by dance bands or theater orchestras. These were widely played in their time, although nowadays we may associate such published arrangements more exclusively with marching bands—and some of these publications, as was one for “Ching A Ling A Loo” that also introduced “My Little Japaneese,” were printed on small sheets congenial to that use.³⁴ In a conceptual (but generally not a literal) sense, these arrangements present an intermediate step between Tin Pan Alley sheet music and ensemble recordings; they exist in print rather than audio media, but they document contemporary arrangers’ ideas of how a composition’s orientality could be expanded in ensemble performance.

As seen in “Chinky Butterfly” (fig. 9.7) and “Nagasaki” (fig. 9.8), some arrangements provided lyrics that instrumentalists could sing, often in chorus sections.³⁵ More commonly, arrangers wrote into individual parts a range of

³⁵ These printed words also could have served as cue texts; but their general absence from verse sections, their usually complete presence when printed in the chorus sections of
signs of orientality derived from the original piano part or from the wide stream of common practice that is central here. Among these were textual instructions such as one directing banjoists to produce a “funny Chinese effect” in “Sing Song Girl” (fig. 9.9), and slurs (e.g., in fig. 9.10 from that piece) akin to the ascending version of Nora Bayes’s pet vocal embellishment. Related kinds of grace notes appeared in parts for violin (fig. 9.11) and other instruments; sometimes they gained representational weight by embellishing repeated notes such as the four-note groups in the flute part for a “Hong Kong” arrangement (fig. 9.12). Drum parts routinely bore the marking “tom-tom” as more than just a direction to play a certain drum, but specifically to do so in steady four-note groups of contextually oriental pulses like those in “Japanola” (fig. 9.13).

Rhythm figured in other important ways in notated percussion and other instrumental parts. The iconic “da-da-da-da-dah-dah” figure and its variants were massively used in ensemble charts. They appeared in such drum parts as one for a “Chinese Jumble” (fig. 9.14) which, unlike the other publications mentioned here, was not based on an extant song (but was intended for the same array of performance contexts and social uses). These signs also recurred in ensemble passages that lent them the added weight of rhythmic unison. For example, one arrangement of “Chinatown, My Chinatown” gave staccato reiterations of such phrases to the entire saxophone section; figure 9.15 shows one such excerpt from the first alto sax part. Along with rhythm as such, many drum parts called for more coloristic means of evoking orientality. Those for “Good-bye, Shanghai” (fig. 9.16), “My instrumental parts, and sound recordings’ documentation of many basically instrumental arrangements with uncredited vocal choruses, suggest that they often were actually sung.
Yokohama Girl” (fig. 9.17), and “Chinese Wedding Procession” (for two percussionists, as seen in figs. 9.18, 9.19) exemplify this with directions to use chopsticks, woodblocks, Chinese drums, “Oriental drums,” gongs, and more.

These published arrangements were widely used by dance bands and theater orchestras. In performative ways, they linked orientalist ensemble practices heard by ordinary people in “live” and in mediated forms. While few recording musicians were likely to use stock arrangements in sessions, these mass-produced charts and more tailor-made orchestrations drew from a common pool of instrumental tropes for sounding orientality. But as print-media documents, these arrangements have severe limits (albeit less extreme than those of song sheets for voice and piano) in what they can tell us about musical sound in performance; so now a return to recordings is in order.

**QUOTATION OF OTHER WORKS’ ICONICALLY “ORIENTAL” MELODIES**

This and the following sections examine some key aspects of orientalist instrumental musicality that generally were contributed by specific groups’ arrangers or by performers themselves, and thus are best documented in recorded form. First up is the intertextual quotation of other compositions’ widely recognized “oriental” melodies in introductions, interludes, countermelodies, or codas. Some such musical references were composed into the original voice-and-piano works from which most of these arrangements were derived, but many were added in their entirety by later arrangers.

Two heavily used sources were the aria “un bel di” from Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* (cf. recs. 1.1, 1.4) and the Japanese anthem “Miya Sama”—in these contexts, almost certainly heard through the intermediary work of *The Mikado*. In yet another mode of musical racialization, the fact that each of
these melodic borrowings drew on a Japanese-referential source did not at all inhibit their routine appearance in arrangements of Chinese-referential pieces. A 1926 version of “Song of Shanghai” (rec. 9.58), for instance, smoothly integrated a quotation from “un bel di”—suggesting through music that China and Japan really were the same place, and that this imagined locale was the (ideological) space where Butterflies pined for white sailors. Other recorded performances blurred any line between the musical use of the aria in compositional quotation or in more performance- or ensemble-specific allusions. This is heard in ensemble passages of Paul Whiteman’s “Cho-Cho-San” (rec. 9.59), which as a work itself already was derived from “un bel di.”

Probably the most-quoted melody was that of “Miya Sama.” It served as an introduction to many arrangements, including more than one version of “In an Oriental Garden” (recs. 9.60, 9.61; it does not appear in the published introduction in the song’s sheet music, so this recurrence seems to reflect its independent use or transmission via mediated performance); an interpolation into Olive Kline’s version of “The Japanese Sandman” (rec. 9.62); and a parting line before the final hit of a “Shanghai Lullaby” (rec. 9.63).

Holding a rather distant third place (after “un bel di”) in its apparent frequency of use was “Chopsticks,” which novelty pieces occasionally invoked. Some of these were not intertextual in any real sense, but were more reworkings of the tune itself. An example of this is “Ragging the Chopsticks,” which was recorded in many basically similar versions (e.g., rec. 9.64). Some recordings, however, inserted or paraphrased the piece in other settings. One of these was the arrangement of “O, Sing-a-Loo” heard in recording 9.65.
Various arrangements linked together less long-recognized orientalist pieces in similar ways, and what could be called compound quotation is heard in such recordings as one version of “In a Bamboo Garden” (rec. 9.66). Embracing and reinscribing multiple previously composed points within the domain of orientality, it encompassed snippets of musical works from “Miya Sama” (presumably via *The Mikado* and perhaps some other downstream intermediaries) to “Chinatown, My Chinatown.” This supplied the sonic backdrop of a pan-“Chinese” / “Japanese” bricolage, one that conjured up a bluntly racialized space—a culturally undifferentiated “garden” where the works it quoted all were made into indigenous sounds. The apt close to such a musically imagined oriental world was the one supplied: a gong.

**MIMETIC INTRODUCTIONS, INTERLUDES, & CODAS**

Many recordings included instrumental passages that clearly were meant to be heard as quasi-“oriental” performance. Played as introductions, interludes, or codas, some of these often-brief moments of musical mimesis were orchestrated versions of material from extant piano parts; others, probably more of them, were composed by arrangers themselves. In either case, as well as in less frequent moments that may have been created by performers in more impromptu ways, the use of stock devices for sounding orientality enjoyed a freer rein than it did in accompaniment as such. Unconstrained by any need to support—or even to mesh in any way with—a composed melody, these passages drew from a palette of timbral, tonal, and rhythmic resources that was especially wide in some regards, but highly conventional in others.

As did many orientalist moves, these also often conflated dominant U.S. ideas about Chinese and Japanese musical sounds; but while the practices of
quotation treated above often embedded Japanese-referential melodies into pieces invoking China, generically mimetic ensemble work tended to perform the same conflation from the other direction. The musical traditions most often evoked in these passages seem to have been those of Chinese opera, often in extremely loose ways. As aural models for emulation, these were more available to many white Americans—composers, arrangers, musicians, and listeners alike—than were Japanese musical traditions. As is audible below, mimetic performances commonly evoked Chinese musics (in highly transformed and generally reductive ways) within pieces on Japanese or on Chinese topics, despite being somewhat more common in the latter.

Mimetic introductions could serve as a kind of establishing shot by setting up oriental atmosphere before the main part of a piece began. This was analogous to how piano introductions and vamps functioned when people used sheet music to sing at home, but recorded performances could draw on a wider array of racially significant sounds based on instrumental timbre and ensemble texture. Sometimes including such (seemingly) actual Chinese instruments as the small gong used in recording 9.67, these passages worked not just by individual timbral means (treated below as applied in less thoroughly distanced musical contexts). Rather, they presented moments of sound made wholly evocative of difference by such techniques as the temporary absence of functional harmony. Drawing doubly on arrangers’ re-compositional moves and performers’ physically enacted ones, these introductions offered a compelling sense of entry into a space rendered strange in both musical and racial domains of experience. A 1927 “Song of Shanghai” (rec. 9.68) did this by beginning with a bare combination of just
three musical signs sounded in mutually reinforcing simultaneity: a high reed, “tom-tom” rhythmic accompaniment, and gong punctuation. These kinds of introductions were especially popular in 1920s dance-band recordings (e.g., recs. 8.4 and 9.64 above, as well as rec. 9.69), but also appeared in other streams of performance (e.g., rec. 8.2 above, rec. 9.70).

Similarly arranged moments were common in interludes, as heard in the reed and “tom-tom” passages in another 1922 version of “Japanese Moon” (rec. 9.71). That record and such others as a Campbell and Burr duet of “Where the Lanterns Glow” (rec. 9.72), a song about yearning for a Cho Cho San in Japan, show as well how broadly Chinese-mimetic passages generally signified an expansively racialized East Asian orient. Many (e.g., recs. 9.73–9.77) offered similar interludes built entirely with such conventional materials as high woodwind notes, “tom-tom” rhythms, gongs, woodblocks, staccato pentatonicism, and so on. Some combined these sections with audible signs of “jazz” (e.g., rec. 9.78), or with such less common markers of difference as the whole-tone line at the end of recording 9.79. A smaller number of these instrumental moments (e.g., rec. 9.80) added vocal mimesis to the mix, often in ways not suggested by a piece’s sheet music. A passage from a 1916 Collins & Harlan recording of “All Aboard for Chinatown” (rec. 9.81) illustrates how arrangers and performers could collaborate to produce such effects. Figures 9.20 and 9.21 illustrate this visually with sonographs of its mimetic vocality.

**Orchestral Expansions of Orientalist Works’ Tonal Devices**

As heard in the entirely exoticist musical sections treated above, tonal devices commonly used by composers to signify orientality also figured prominently in many arrangers’ practice. These moves were not restricted to structurally
delimited passages, but appeared as well alongside less marked materials in other parts of arrangements. Among these signs were ostinati centered on the first and fifth scale degrees (e.g., rec. 9.82) and instrumental lines moving in parallel at the interval of a perfect fourth or fifth (e.g., as in recs. 9.83–9.85).

Just as arrangers could introduce into a piece these intervallic means of accompaniment or harmonization with perfect-fourth/fifth sonorities, or could expand them from piano parts into full-blown ensemble charts, they also could use the scalar materials by which sheet-music composers marked orientality in that medium’s instrumentally more constrained format. Many recordings document tonal practices which were familiar from printed piano parts, but which arrangers scaled up for whole groups of instruments. This could take iconic form in pentatonic melodies arranged in big unisons, as heard at the start of recording 9.86, in many passages in recording 9.87, and in the staccato pentatonicism played by violins to introduce recording 9.88.36 Other pentatonic moves ended recordings (e.g., the closing unison saxophone melody probably added by an arranger to “Tokio Blues” for rec. 9.89), or recurred in accompanying horn lines to fill more densely a racially evocative tonal space (rec. 9.90), or ran rampant in countermelodies that created another kind of tonally representational surfeit (rec. 9.91).

Less canonically representative of orientality, but still able to lend an added exoticist charge to recorded performances, were the chromatic and whole-tone lines similarly folded into some of these arrangements. Taken in isolation, these tonal materials had even broader referential scope than did

36. Also worth noting in this example, a recording of “Chinky Charleston,” is that piece’s vocal melody. It begins with the eight-note descending contour of “Miya Sama,” followed by a similar upwards leap (but by a fourth rather than the third heard in “Miya Sama”).
pentatonicism’s already wide domain (as discussed in Chapter 8); but they too could signify orientality when situated in these pieces. Snippets of whole-tone material helped to set the stage for a 1923 disk of “Japanese Sunset” (rec. 9.92) and did similar scene-setting work for a 1925 “China Girl” and 1926 “Chinky Butterfly” heard above in recordings 9.90 and 9.78. In these introductory contexts and in fleeting phrases set within the bodies of other works (e.g., rec. 9.93), such phrases could articulate an entire six-note scale or could imply a whole-tone sensibility through strategic use of a set of five pitches separated by successive major seconds; and in some of these cases, just four such notes (despite also being degrees 4, 5, 6, and 7 of a major scale) still could evoke an exotic air by virtue of their context and articulation.

Chromaticism also worked in context-dependent ways. Although it could signify all manner of things in other musical settings, when deployed in these works it invested them with a further sense of orientality. This may be heard in a 1923 record of “Mah Jongg Blues” in which chromaticism comes contextually to signify Chineseness (rec. 9.94; cf. the beginning of rec. 8.4). These moves could blur the distinction between the Chinese/Japanese orientality at issue here and a broader exoticism (e.g., in rec. 9.95). This was true of a 1921 arrangement of “Lotus Flower” that made prominent use of its b3-5-b5-4-b3, minor-key phrase (rec. 9.96). Stressing its diminished-fifth chromatic descending passing tone, that phrase was audible in this context as both a stock mysterioso device and an orientalizing contour. Attributes such as this arose from both compositional and performance practice; but for many recordings—including this one—arrangers and performers treated extant compositions in ways that made them extra “oriental.” Listening to such
records, consumers could enjoy mediated musical experiences that were redolent of an orientality both imagined and made literally audible.

**ORCHESTRATED SOUNDSCAPES OF “TOM-TOM” RHYTHM & “DA-DA-DAAH”**

Rhythmic as well as tonal signs from sheet music could assume greater weight in recorded form. Two of the former were “tom-tom” rhythm and variants of “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, dah dah daah.” As we have seen, “tom-tom” rhythm was far from solely an orientalizing sign; both the idea of the tom-tom and the musical trait of a steady pulse train could signify many kinds of racial difference. In these recordings, context invested orientality into steady beats played on “tom-toms” and related drums (rec. 9.50 above and rec. 9.97) in introductions or under strategic parts of vocal melodies or instrumental passages. A similarly meaningful variant subdivided the first and third drumbeats into eighth notes, producing a performatively looped “da-da-dah” that evoked both tom-toms and more fully developed “da-da-da-da-da-dah-dah” phrases. A 1920 “Japanese Sandman” (rec. 9.98) did this with a very dry, up-front drum sound that probably was made prominent in that way by locating its player especially close to the session’s recording horn.

Some arrangements gave invariant “tom-tom” rhythms to plucked chordophones, with banjos sometimes sounding as pseudo-*sanxian* (as at the end of Paul Whiteman’s “Shanghai Lullaby” in rec. 9.99). Many orchestrated steady quarter notes by giving them to horn sections or entire ensembles (rec. 9.100). Recording 9.101 shows how this could help to sew together an arrangement with such orientalist thread as the structurally extended stream of quarter notes played by the horns near the beginning and continuing on under the first section of the piece proper. Steady pulse trains played by
horns also could be paired with melodic signs of difference. The introduction to one version of “Sing Song Girl” (rec. 9.102) combined drums and horns on steady quarter notes; this was paired with other horns ornamenting double whole-notes with initial (major second) upper-neighbor grace notes much like those noted in some acts of vocal mimesis.

A principle underlying all of this, that performed repetition sounded oriental (as one of its potential meanings, depending on context), enabled other steady pulses to do similar representational work in too many ways even to summarize. They ranged from Arthur Fields’s delivery of the line “tick tick tick tick / like a clock ticks,” accompanied in part by a steady woodblock pulse in another version of “Ragging the Chopsticks” (rec. 9.103), to medleys using similar devices to mark embedded orientalist pieces. The latter structural use is apparent in some mid-teens 12” medley records often used for dancing. In one, Prince’s Band flagged a shift into the orientalized space of “In Blinky, Winky, Chinky, Chinatown” by introducing a steady stream of woodblock pulses at the transition (rec. 9.104); in another, the Victor Military Band marked the musical world of “All Aboard for Chinatown” with woodblocks and “tom-tom” drumming (rec. 9.105).

Other kinds of arranger- and performer-crafted repetition included basically invariant playing of ensemble vamps four or more times (e.g., in rec. 9.106). Leaping out momentarily from performance to mediation and considering records as commodities, we may see in regard to these practices how this medium layered industrialized repetition over that enacted through musical practice. Recalling Chapter 8’s example of the repeated minor third in the chorus of “Japanese Sandman,” that work’s dissemination in massively
popular recordings by such musicians as Nora Bayes and Paul Whiteman multiplied the song’s internal, micro-scale reiterations by literally millions of times. In a third and further multiplying stage of musical experience, each of those mechanically pressed reinscriptions of a matrix’s traces of performed repetition supported many listenings on its owner’s individual phonograph.37

Returning, though, from mediation to performance, the sound of a drum itself could be a sign of oriental difference in certain contexts. One of these was heard in recording 6.1, in which Edna Brown sang lullabies from various nations; the only track (of all the arrangements on both sides of the record, in fact) to merit a drum was the one presenting Japanese and Chinese songs. In these and other specific ways, recorded performances used steady rhythm, drum timbres, or the two combined in “tom-toms” to construct orientality.

The other main rhythmic means of doing this involved the iconic rhythm of “da-da-da-da-dah-dah, dah dah daah” in its many variants. Accompanying parts of orchestrations routinely used it in distilled forms like that abundantly reiterated in a record of “Japanette” (rec. 9.107). In its most typical form it could resound in people’s ears after its common use to end performances—for example, that of a Peerless Quartet rendition of “Ting Ling Toy” in which it was set to equally canonical pitches (rec. 9.108). Some arrangements, such as one of “Cho Cho San” played by Conrad’s Orchestra, used these rhythms in exuberantly sustained repetition; that recording underpinned some sections with a “da-da-da-da-dah-dah” figure played on woodblock in a way now evocative of present-day looping practices.38 Others used them in ways

38. Edison Blue Amberol cylinder 4356, not reproduced in this study’s recorded examples.
ranging from introductory ensemble unisons derived from previously composed introductions (recs. 9.109–9.112; see also rec. 9.75 above), to fills interpolated by arrangers (rec. 9.113), to interludes in vocal pieces (rec. 9.114), to drum parts that used an ensemble’s percussive resources to underpin more forcefully the already marked rhythmic content of an extant melody (recs. 9.115 and 9.116), to string parts that executed these rhythms with various kinds of exoticist ornamentation (rec. 9.117), to diverse other arranged occurrences (e.g., in woodblock parts in rec. 9.118).

This iconic rhythm also was common in fills that may sound improvised but probably (as in other such moments) were worked out in advance, perhaps by individual musicians who played them, and in other fills that clearly were pre-arranged (e.g., rec. 9.118; rec. 9.59 above). Sometimes it functioned in multiple ways. One arrangement of “My Cherry Blossom” (rec. 9.83 above) used it in a two-sixteenth-to-three-eighth-note form, first in a trumpet figure (at 0:28 in that earlier example) and then in woodblocks (at 1:21). That shorthand precipitate of the rhythm served as a hocketed component of a composite ensemble rhythm which added up to a fully iconic “da-da-da-da dah dah,” but it also offered on its own a more compact form with the same significance. In these recordings, stock rhythmic means of signifying orientality could do their work in densely multi-layered ways.

**ORIENTALIZING INSTRUMENTAL IDENTITIES & TIMBRES**

As heard above in different contexts, the sounds of specific instruments could conjure up oriental atmosphere, and certain ways of playing more widely used instruments could be similarly evocative. The two main instruments that intrinsically—which is to say, by massively mediated cultural association—
had such power in their own right were gongs, or occasionally their proxies, and woodblocks. The gong (of any variety, including at times the playing of cymbals in ways that situated them as proxy metallophones) was most white Americans’ orientalizing instrument \textit{par excellence}, and in some contexts it signified orients other or more inclusive than the imagined Chinese/Japanese space most central to this study (rec. 9.120 presents one such example).

In arrangements of works invoking an imaginary China/Japan, gongs routinely began recordings as an instantaneous timbral sign of movement into that kind of orientality. This marked, by sonorous means, thresholds that were both musical (in people’s lived temporal and aesthetic experience when listening to such records) and ideological (in regard to the dominant beliefs which many of those listeners mapped onto human groups they associated with imagined spaces into which they were musically crossing). Examples of gongs at these liminal moments of entry abound (e.g., recs. 9.121, 9.122, and others elsewhere in this chapter). Gong strokes (in organological actuality or as represented by isolated cymbal strokes) also commonly ended pieces (e.g., rec. 9.113 above and recs. 9.123–9.125), and in those positions they may have been heard as both signs of structural closure and the parting sounds of oriental musicality as listeners departed it for other fare. In some recordings, perhaps by bands whose drummers lacked the “real thing” at a given session, even higher-pitched—hi-hat or small “crash”—cymbals seemed to serve as substitute gongs (e.g., in introductions to rec. 9.126 and to rec. 9.75 above).

Some performances selectively punctuated internal passages with gongs or quasi-gongs (rec. 9.127 and rec. 9.86 above, e.g. at 1:39), often with “tom-tom” rhythms (rec. 9.128), or used them in variously combined structural
locations. Recordings 9.129 and 9.130 provide a sense of these uses (along with rec. 4.4 above, e.g. at 0:40; cf. rec. 9.4 above for a related instance of prominent gong-playing in a record sold as an authentic “novelty”). In some of these internal uses, they underpinned sung assertions about orientality. This direct musical linkage of instrumental sound to racial essence was clear, for example, in a recording of “Beware of Chu Chin Chow” in which a gong was struck under the phrase “Chinese — [GONG] Sentiment” (rec. 9.131).

Many arrangements both began and ended with gongs. This offered a symmetrical path of ingress into and egress from a work’s musical orient. One of these was a 1925 Melody Sheiks disk of “Tokio Blues” (rec. 9.132) that used a small (Chinese?) gong probably much like those available from such mail-order instrument suppliers as the Wurlitzer company (fig. 9.22 shows a page from a 1924 catalog). And gongs began, accompanied, and ended some performances, to which they gave both broadly oriental and more historically specific affective charges. An example of this is a 1904 phonograph cylinder of “The Jap’s Tattoo” (rec. 9.133), in which energetic gong-playing seems to be an audible sign of commingled orientality and martial clangor (at a specific historical moment when many white Americans were celebrating Japanese military prowess in Asia as a sign of a junior-Yankee imperial masculinity).

Steady pulses played on woodblocks were noted above in rhythmic and structural connections. In many such contexts, that instrumental timbre itself also was significant (e.g., rec. 9.134). Unlike gongs, however, woodblocks also were common in arrangements of non-orientalist works. This made their presence in these recordings less clearly a racial sign when playing rhythms.

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39. Another example, not reproduced here, is an American Republic Band record of Wendling’s Ching Chong (Pathé 20211, ca. 1917).
other than steady pulses. As an example of how their rhythmically less
typified use could be heard as a timbral allusion to orientality, a less loaded
means of generating rhythmic lift, or both, the end of one recording of “The
Japanese Sandman” (rec. 9.135) illustrates this ambiguity. In other cases,
woodblocks’ contextual pairing with such markers as pentatonic melody (e.g.,
in the introduction and coda of rec. 9.136) left little room for listeners to doubt
that, at least in the moment at hand, their sound itself signified orientality.

Such reciprocal interpretive framing was common. Often arrangers
summoned the sounds of gongs and woodblocks together (e.g., in rec. 9.137,
along with “tom-tom” rhythm). This pairing gave listeners two key means
of imagining tangible objects associated with China and Japan based on the
sounds they made, aural signs this medium readily could convey. Other
percussive combinations worked in ways related both to this and to the
entrance/exit framing noted above; for example, one dance-orchestra version
of “Hi Lee Hi Lo” (rec. 9.138) entered musically oriental space with a scene-
setting cymbal crash and ended with woodblocks sounded between ensemble
hits. Reaching further afield, some records offered effusively pan-exoticist
arrangements. One version of “Chinese Rose” used virtually everything from
“da da da da dah dah” rhythms to tuba to Hawai’ian guitar (rec. 9.139).

Along with actual instrumental exoticism, certain related practices did
not rely on instruments other than those widely used for racially unmarked
performance. These latter techniques often involved producing what could
broadly be heard as “nasal” timbres on various instruments. Violinists did
this on some records (e.g., in the introduction to rec. 9.88 above), in which
they seemingly sought to emulate the sound of erhu or other Chinese fiddles,
or at least of imagined versions of them; some of the violin work in recording 9.117 (above) seems mimetic in that way. Especially common was the use of clarinets or saxophones (or less often, their players’ momentary doubling on oboe) to create analogous impressions (e.g., rec. 9.140, as well as recs. 9.61 and 9.65 above, with players in the latter heightening the timbre’s exotic effect by scooping up to pitches in its introduction). Some recordings (rec. 9.141) seem to present more borderline cases, in which reed instruments’ timbres may be heard as orientally evocative or more generally expressive. Others, such as a 1922 version of “When Buddha Smiles” (rec. 9.142), may illustrate inter-exotic timbral slippage; the clarinet fillip at the end of that record could be heard as indexing East Asian orientality or as a vaguely klezmer-like tonal gesture.

Whether such moves as intentionally “pinched” woodwind sounds were founded in direct, or even indirect, aural knowledge of Chinese or Japanese aerophones is largely impossible to determine. More to the point here is many white American players’ established use of—and their listeners’ consequent familiarity with—this practice as a local (national) means of representing race, specifically orientality, in musical sound. These sounds and their extramusical associations must have been a mutually supportive partner to similar timbral modes of vocal mimesis noted above. This connection of instrumental timbre to the racialized voice may have run more deeply in these acts—and in some listeners’ ways of hearing and interpreting them—than one might at first imagine. Heard in U.S. social contexts in which performative and textual characterizations of oriental vocality routinely played to notions of audible race, these practices may have drawn on, and appealed to, popular ideas about a prototypically oriental voice more than they emulated any actual
Asian instrument. This plausible, albeit unprovable, interpretation suggests how even those recorded (and “live”) performances that presented no singing still could offer musical assertions about the racially embodied voice.

Along with timbre, other aspects of instrumental sound could evoke orientality. Intonation, specifically in the form of sounding tones “between the keys” of the piano or otherwise off the grid of tempered tuning systems, would seem a likely candidate; but in fact, the recordings consulted for this study yield surprisingly few instances of held pitches of that sort, even in fiddle passages. More common, most often in ensemble sections, were various ornaments, scoops, and glissandi of the sorts noted above. But even without diverging markedly from basically European sensibilities of tuning, timbre, and ornamentation, the recorded sounds of melodic instruments could evoke (and orientalize) their Asian counterparts. Sometimes they did so in fairly subtle ways set up by arrangers and performers. In another record of “Japanese Moon” (rec. 9.143), a prominent violin part that offered few blatant attributes of difference still (sort of) evoked Chinese fiddle music in its U.S. setting—partly by the obvious means of a pentatonic melody, but also by a certain sense of soloistic exposure in that tonal context. This passage’s use in a “Japanese” piece shows further how the musical conflation of China and Japan could operate in instrumental settings both blatant and more subtle.40

Having begun with arrangers’ contributions to recordings’ orientality (e.g., mimetic ensemble passages) and moved gradually towards those more

40. In some instances, brief irruptions of these sorts may have been heard as performances of the ways in which Japanese music was not heard as music, or more precisely was heard as categorically “not music”—a conscious practice of, as it were, musically representing ostensibly nonmusical music—brought into sound by instrumental mimesis of perceptual traces afforded by uncomprehending ears (analogous in some ways to widespread textual references to musical discord in Asian settings); but this is impossible to ascertain.
often supplied by performers (e.g., timbral moves), we should note as well the presence of short fills and obbligati in certain examples above. Especially in those played by dance bands in a comparatively—if sometimes calculatedly—loose style, musicians may have interpolated some of those racially signifying sounds in the moment (but based, in all likelihood, on plenty of advance working-out). Equally audible signs included conspicuous grace notes and other embellishments. Akin to those seen in some published arrangements (but more frequently offered in performance than in printed form), these ornaments also were much like those some singers used. An example may be heard in a Happy Six version of “Good-Bye, Shanghai!” (rec. 9.144). In it, an instrumental gesture consisting of two upper neighbor tones, with each quickly falling to the same primary pitch, sounds quite like the vocal move that Nora Bayes applied to “Sing Song Man” and “Oh Sing-A-Loo’ (recs. 9.48 and 9.49 above). Here, much the same kind of gesture made instrumental sound into a related—but more mechanically enabled—type of racially mimetic voice.

Lest it seem that all popular U.S. recordings of orientalist pieces were heavily laden with orientalist gestures, an example of one that was relatively lightly touched by exoticist affectations may be a useful counter-example. Apart from its final saxophone fill, a version of “When Buddha Smiles” by the Glantz band (rec. 9.145) was fairly unmarked in such ways. And as we leave this general survey of the performative moves that made up these recordings’ sonic orientality, that record’s flip side offers a reminder that all of them were experienced in wider contexts of musically represented difference—most
immediately in this case, the physically attached form of an A-side of the same group playing the hugely popular “Song of India” (rec. 9.146).

If heard in terms of their marked musical materials, records evoking an imaginary Chinese/Japanese orient constituted in some ways a sub-genre, one that radically crosscut other, more widely noted genres; but they also were part of a larger world of musically signified difference, all of which was marked as being other than white, and thus (in many interpretive contexts) not truly “American.” An evocative sense of how place and race, national domesticity, and musical difference operated here may be heard in a 1912 record of “Home Sweet Home (As it might be played in Germany, Spain, Hungary, China, Ireland and America)” (rec. 9.147). Without belaboring its audible details, we may note that it left its (mostly white) listeners little room for uncertainty that America was where “home” truly was, that European nations were places where it reasonably could be imagined to have been not too long ago, and that the one remaining (Asian) place represented was so foreign that Americans with roots there were destined to be forever alien.

**Orientality & “Jazz” Revisited in Mediated Performance**

As seen in Chapter 8, some orientalist sheet music set up scenarios of interethnic conjuncture for novelty’s sake. Recordings shed additional light on how these imaginary meetings were played out in musical practice. Along with recorded performances that juxtaposed imagined oriental singing only with a racially unmarked white vocality (one thus rendered all the more normative), some presented more complex soundscapes. These made various kinds of ethnic difference musically audible in ways partially like those heard in the sequentially sung lullabies mentioned in Chapter 6, the medleys heard
above, or the ethnicized versions of “Home Sweet Home” just noted, as well as in musical consumers’ successive listening to separate records that offered orientalist or such other mimetic practice as pseudo-African American (blackvoice?) vocality (e.g., as heard in rec. 9.148). Recordings of single songs about multiple human types, however, could support more immediately juxtaposed—and thus, often more sharply differentiated—racial contrasts.

In presenting a song of interethnic conjuncture, musicians could use performative means to represent more than one racial or ethnic type. Bouncing such essences off one another, they could use moment-to-moment changes in timbre to leverage a song’s already composed signs of race. These immediate contrasts positioned each ascribed identity more firmly in the category system that framed them all. Billy Murray and Ed Smalle’s record of “Hi Lee Hi Lo” (rec. 9.149) exemplifies this added level of performed representation. In printed form, the song text presented such linguistically based signs of difference as the “l”-for-“r” substitutions of “velly velly nice” and the pseudo-pidgin of “me likee” (see Chapter 8). To those published signs, the singers added such non-notated vocal practices as nasalization and “sing-song” speech intonation in passages representing orientality. Another version of the song (rec. 9.150) documents a similar mix of scripted linguistic moves and timbrally performed mimesis, one that created a multiply layered orientality audible in singing techniques and spoken fake Chinese. In “Hi Lee Hi Lo,” these vocal acts bumped up against unmarked musical practice and representations of European immigrant identity—the German ethnicity invoked by the song’s lyrics and yodel-like title (cf. rec. 9.151 for a purely German-referential “Hi-Le-Hi-Lo”). As in these examples and recordings 9.84,
9.86, and 9.138 above, this contrast may be heard in vocal and instrumental aspects of one of Irving Kaufman’s records of the song (rec. 9.152). At the end of that version, a fiddle’s reiteration of the fifth scale degree seemed to pose a Chinese question answered by a tuba that was contextually made German.41

Similarly layered musical orientality and “jazz” evocations occurred in recordings of such pieces as “Chinky Charleston,” “Chinese Jazz,” “So Does Your Old Mandarin,” “Ching-a Ling’s Jazz Bazaar,” “Poor Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now,” and other works less obviously marked by such titles (recs. 9.153–9.161 and others cited above illustrate this; cf. rec. 9.162 for such juxtaposed passages in a musical context in which signs of “jazz” were otherwise absent). Many of these recordings alternated systematically between passages racially marked by rhythm. These contrasts were analogous to standard moves in sheet-music notation, but could become especially sharp when emphasized by seldom-notated aspects of ensemble performance.

For example, one arrangement (rec. 9.88 above) infused “Chinky Charleston” with episodic juxtapositions of steady quarter-note versus dotted quarter-note rhythms. The distinct racial referents of these contrasting “tom-tom” and “Charleston” rhythms were clear. Comparable rhythmic pairings of orientalist and “jazz”-referential passages occurred in a wide range of other recordings, many of which (e.g., rec. 9.163) bore titles that gave no advance hint of this doubly racialized musical content. Some used functionally similar alternations of such rhythms as orientalizing four sixteenth- to two eighth-note and “raggy” sixteenth- to dotted eighth-note figures. Also as heard

41. For coincidental but suggestive commentary by a Chinese observer of German brass bands in the streets of London as parties “of strong-lung and long-hair musicians with cheap cornets, horns, or other noisy instruments,” see Tyau (1920, 88).
above, rhythmic means of marking race could work with ensemble textures that shifted at the same structural moments from the bare parallelism of open fifths to looser heterophonic playing. These arrangements had forebears in earlier records that inserted ragtime into oriental settings, as heard in a 1908 cylinder of Arthur Collins singing “The Dance of Sing Ling Foo” (rec. 9.164).

Beyond the conventional novelty they promised and delivered, these records lent perceptible musical force to racial logics that displaced sexuality onto certain bodies in certain ways. Dominant U.S. ideas about blackness linked ideas of “jazz,” and African American expressive culture of all sorts, to the actively sexualized body, while many white Americans’ notions of orientality vested a stereotyped female passivity into bodies that were racialized in different ways. Those currents of belief and discourse have been widely examined (and the preceding chapter noted specific connections to sheet music), but a few examples especially apposite to performance may show how they offered widely diffused social frames within which people could experience recorded performances that brought together “jazz” and orientality. This may offer a sense of how writers often linked “jazz” and sexuality in the form of an imagined blackness heard in musical sound.

In his contemporary book on Tin Pan Alley, Isaac Goldberg wrote:

Jazz is all things to all ears. To the theological dogmatist it is a new guise of the ancient devil, to be fought as a satanic agency. To the pagan, if he is minded to interpret novelties in the language of social ethics, it is the symptom of a glorious release from the bonds of moral constraint. The musician, if he is one of the old school, looks upon it with mingled amusement and disgust; if he is of the modernist persuasion, he beholds in it rich possibilities of a new style. (1930, 259)

In a later passage Goldberg quoted Paul Whiteman, who evoked in his music enough attributes derived from African American performers (unreferenced
amid invocations of the oriental and the Russian) to adopt the disputed title
of “The King of Jazz.” His and Goldberg’s comments located the “jazz spirit”
as involving raciological ideas of melancholy and hysteria meeting in a
“cheerfulness of despair.” This was played out in musical ways which, in its
opponents’ ears, made “jazz…the sexual symbol of an inferior race.” Adding
another type of racial framing, Goldberg linked this to ideas of Jewishness as
a kind of orientality that enabled deep response to the “minor-major, what we
might call amphibious, mode of the typical blues” (291–94). Woven through
this was a thick thread of white appropriation (renamed as the “adoption” of
a gift) of African American practices; but the apposite point is its location of
both blackness and Jewishness as racial conditions permeated by oriental
melancholy. Along with primitivist tropes of appreciation, this discussion
gave a key place to orientality as a logically comparable racial condition.

Another text linking primitivism and orientalism in discussing jazz
began by asserting an affiliation of Asian and “ultra-modern” musics:

YOUR ultra-modernist of music just loves to remind you that the Chinese scale
contains more tones than the keyboard of the civilized piano, that the ancient
Greeks knew musical intervals which the modern world fails to recognize, and
that the veriest savage sings in quarter tones and less, with unlimited
complexities of rhythm besides.

Scholarly pioneers have gone out from time to time among primitive tribes,
armed with a recording phonograph, seeking what cacophonies they might
devour. (Spaeth 1929, 155)

But while those recordings might seem to document intentional musical
complexity or refinement, the author believed that to be an illusion:

The actual truth of the matter seems to be that primitive people, like all
children, sing and play out of tune and out of time. The much vaunted sense of
rhythm possessed by savages is mostly a myth, and granting that the
primitives, like all other musical illiterates, do sing and play quarter tones and
even smaller intervals, there is no way of proving that they do this
intentionally, or that they are aware of the musical significance of the result.
They are aiming instinctively at the intervals which create a common response
in all mankind, but their ears are bad, and so they seldom if ever strike them exactly. The enthusiastic musical scholar, however, hearing the subject of his researches producing noises which are always slightly out of tune, immediately and with great avidity credits them with an absolute command of infinitesimal intervals and shakes his head over the decadence of a generation which satisfies itself with a scale of only twelve different tones. (156)

Eventually he brought these concerns around to a rhetorical meeting of Asian musical traditions and jazz-derived performance practices:

The music of India is perhaps as elaborate as any in the world in the subtle and complex associations built around its materials. Yet the materials themselves are deadly dull and frightfully monotonous after the first impression of novelty has worn off. All such oriental music can be made temporarily effective by careful showmanship and exotic staging, particularly if all the hidden meanings and mystical traditions have been clearly pointed out in advance. But its direct appeal is exceedingly limited beyond the circle of the faithful initiates.

There are oriental wind instruments which produce weird noises, piercing in quality, and certainly not in tune with the civilized scale. But it may have been noted that all bad performers on the clarinet, oboe, etc., produce similar noises merely because they are unable to keep to a definite pitch or to control a pleasing tone.

When Ross Gorman played the opening measures of George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” on his trick clarinet, he slid like a calliope up a wailing glissando which most trained players would have found literally impossible, but which represented the deliberate imitation of the savage’s imperfect command of intervals and hence the accidental discovery of tones smaller even than a quarter or an eighth. What Gorman did purposely, by a modification of the conventional reeds, the illiterate player of primitive music has always achieved, accidentally, but with blissful unconsciousness of any departure from conventional paths.

The “close harmony” of a negro quartet is often gained by tentative searchings and experimental wanderings of the voices, which, while often slightly out of tune, create all the great satisfaction when they slide into a chord that actually makes sense. (162–63)

Here a white instrumentalist’s production of a sound heard as evoking primitivized practice signified that distanced referent as well as the player’s technical and mimetic skill. Here too, musical mimesis was an audible sign of both (building on Michael Taussig’s pair of terms) a desire for exotic difference and the power—enhanced by mechanical cleverness—to offer a concocted representation of it (cf. Taussig 1993). This tale of hearing expertly
sounded difference offered readers a new means of learning to hear in these raciological ways, were they not already predisposed to do so.

A few examples will show how, in a context fraught with such images of racial musicality, ideas about performance linked orientality and blackness in diverse ways. Some located Asian intercultural musical scenes within a global diffusionist model of jazz; one Japanese writer informed American readers that “jazz is contagious and the Orientals are not immune from this fad any more than Europeans.” Others cast Asian musicality or musical orientality as things that were categorically opposed to “jazz” but could be brought into telling conjuncture with it. A dancer touring Japan wrote of a piece that:

…is about a flapper and a quarter-back, done in truly jazz style. The audience does not seem to understand or enjoy it, and the applause is not prolonged. The American flapper, gesticulating wildly with her arms and legs, in a dress that ends above her knees, shocks the sensitive people of Japan, whose dances are stylized to carry out the dignified poses and gestures of the ancients.

A contrast between jazz extroversion and orientalized quietude pervaded an article on angklung (a Javanese bamboo instrument), which concluded:

It is difficult to understand why this instrument has not spread to other lands, especially to the other lands of bamboo…. … Its music will not record on the phonograph, nor can it be broadcast through the present radio, yet, even so, the writer urges you to do a little angklonging in your home, if only as antidote to too much of quite another tropic music—jazz.

And a magazine advertisement stated: “This wild tribesman of the Philippines has something new in jazz bands. He plays the flute with his nose.”

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42. Setsuo Uenoda, “Jazz Songs from Japan: Translations of Modern Hits from Tokyo’s ‘Tin Pan Alley’,” The Trans-Pacific, 26 September 1929, 6.
Other texts linked popular ideas about nocturnal jazz venues and nighttime tourism in Chinatown; the novel *Babbitt* did so in this way:

Then the storming lights of down-town; parked cars with ruby tail-lights; white arched entrances to movie theaters, like frosty mouths of winter caves; electric signs—serpents and little dancing men of fire; pink-shaded globes and scarlet jazz music in a cheap up-stairs dance hall; lights of Chinese restaurants, lanterns painted with cherry-blossoms and with pagodas, hung against lattices of lustrous gold and black. Small dirty lamps in small stinking lunchrooms. The smart shopping district...” (S. Lewis 1922, 218)

Language such as this linked venues for “jazz” dancing and Chinatowns as potentially convergent locales and signs of modern urban life. It played to two tropes, each centered on an idea of a dimly lit urban enclave of racial difference. Both could be rendered at once excitingly dangerous and safely contained sites for white protagonists’ musical and raciological recreation.46

By various means, printed texts made it even easier for white Americans to hear jazz-inflected orientalist popular records as signs of blackness and of orientality. Musical signs of the former essence often marked both its exciting

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status as a racialized space for displaced sexuality, and its appropriation into white American practice and the “mainstream” culture industry. Musical signs of orientality summoned up fantasies of more distant locations, eliding the presence of Asian Americans at home. Heard together in recordings of performances by white musicians, these practices could seem more strongly to index real identities. This could affirm by musical means the ideas that blackness was a domestic racial condition with attributes ripe for white Americans’ recreational appropriation and that orientality was a condition alien to U.S. culture. Records rarely, if ever, made such harshly ideological statements in any explicit way, of course; but they are immanent, and hard not to hear, in many of these mediated traces of raciological performance.

Extremely few commercial recordings of Asian American musicians circulated in these contexts, so there is scant grounding for a look at these issues from such vantage points; but the importance of white Americans’ ideas about blackness to this discussion raises the question of what kinds of light orientalist records of African American musicians might shed on these moments. Certain recordings by African American performers drew on the same signs of orientality as did those by white musicians. Because this study’s analysis of orientalist experiences is based on their relationships to dominant U.S. contexts of belief and discourse within which many white people made raciological meaning from them, however, to propose parallel interpretations of African American performers’ or listeners’ experiences would be a mistake. While many white listeners may have heard African American performances of orientalist music as conjoined signs of an orientality and a blackness they had apprehended in other moments of raciological interpretation, other social
contexts probably guided many African Americans’ understandings of such acts. Without delving into those now, and certainly without implying that there were any unitary “white” or “black” ways of hearing such things (but that broad differences in social context tend to lead to broadly differentiable patterns of cultural interpretation), we should note a few recordings which were available to all manner of interested listeners. Along with the sense of context it offers, this may illustrate that African American musicians exerted considerable agency in the history of U.S. orientalist performance.

Many prominent African American musicians recorded orientalist works. Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle’s “Oriental Blues” used a perfect-fifth ostinato to conjure up a West Asian/North African orient (rec. 9.165). Fletcher Henderson recorded works including a “Chinese Blues” (rec. 9.166), and he arranged “The Japanese Sandman” for Benny Goodman. Don Redman, who created many arrangements for Henderson’s ensemble, recorded “Nagasaki” as a bandleader in his own right.47 Louis Armstrong recorded “Chinatown, My Chinatown” and other apposite pieces. Duke Ellington’s version of “Japanese Dream” began with three isolated cymbal/gong hits (rec. 9.167); foreshadowing such later recordings as his “Far East Suite” of 1966 and “Afro-Eurasian Eclipse” of 1971, among his other earlier disks was one of “Limehouse Blues.”48 Many other musicians figured in these ways after 1930; Cab Calloway recorded “Kickin’ the Gong” and “Chinese Rhythm,” and Lil Armstrong’s “Oriental Swing” imagined a musical trip to multiple orients. As one instance of mid-century practice, a 1945 “Limehouse Blues” featuring Ben

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47. For a photograph of Redman, perhaps less widely known nowadays than most of the other musicians mentioned here, see A. Murray (1976, 223).
48. Ellington’s and Armstrong’s work may readily be discovered and heard on CD reissues.
Webster began with a “da-da-dah” rhythm. In these and many other records, African American performers offered their takes on musical orientality.\(^{49}\)

As mentioned previously, certain pieces noted here and in Chapter 8 became popular vehicles for recordings of jazz-inflected popular dance music in later decades. Alongside those compositions, new ones presented other kinds of conjunctures of orientality and “jazz.”\(^{50}\) Later moments of recording activity documented differently germane practices. These ranged from country songs about geisha (many from the years of the U.S. Occupation in Japan, when large numbers of military personnel from southern states served there), to orientalist tracks on 45 RPM rock singles, to string bands’ “Chinese Breakdowns,” to 1960s–1980s experiments and explorations in African American musics framed as avant-garde, creative music, and so on; but to discuss those moments, no matter how intriguing their connections to earlier recordings, would expand this study in unreasonable ways.\(^{51}\)


\(^{50}\) E.g., in 1937 various dance-band records of “The Snake Charmer” musically juxtaposed a swing-era sensibility and Indian-referential orientality; three were by Larry Clinton, Victor 25734; Ben Pollack and His Pick-A-Rib Boys, Brunswick 80156; Eddie Stone, Perfect 7-12-05.\(^{51}\) The last topic is especially interesting as played out, conceptually and literally, in diverse recordings by musician/composers John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Roscoe Mitchell, Charles Tyler, Frank Wright, Arthur Blythe, the Human Arts Ensemble, the Revolutionary Ensemble, and other artists whose music figures in “On ‘Jazz’ Orientation,” a work in progress by the author. On some contemporaneous representations of Africa, see Weinstein (1993); and on certain later musical projects related in some ways to those moments, cf. F. Ho (1995).
Coda: Glancing back at Orientality Experienced through Two Media

After reading the previous chapter and this one, it could seem from a media-centered perspective that the key representational difference between sheet music and recordings was simply that the former offered people a package of images, text, and notation for their own performative use, while recordings offered musical experiences that were inflected in more varied, and often deeper, ways with already-made raciological sound—but which did not foster participatory embodiment through music-making. Although true to a first approximation, this would ignore connections among the ways in which people used these media, both with conscious intent and by often less self-aware processes—and it would ignore the fact that each of the documents examined in these chapters was part of a larger musical discourse about race.

Many people who enjoyed one of these media also enjoyed the other. The kinds of experience the two offered could combine to powerful effect. Visual memories of typified bodies on music covers could supply interpretive context when listening to recorded songs about faraway geisha or mandarins, or about shadowy goings-on in U.S. Chinatowns. Mimetic racial difference sounded in recordings not only offered immediate listening pleasures; it also gave amateurs a base of aural knowledge about the means by which one could sing not only of, but also as, the oriental. The sounds by which expert musicians performed orientality for recording machines could re-emerge through phonographs in U.S. homes. From there these sounds could pass through air and ears and then, by means of readily surmised understandings of how to make them, into acts by which untold numbers of white Americans made music and race together in undocumented moments of domestic fun.
As the recording industry’s products found their way into ever more homes, sheet music remained popular (for a while); and despite the rise of radio in the 1920s, records would survive as a viable commodity in a more substantial and long-lived way. Sticking to the century’s first few decades, however, musical representations of race figured as well in a third major, historically overlapping medium: so-called “silent” film, which audiences often experienced in fundamentally musical ways.
Chapter 10

Hearing Race in Cinematic Shadows (Segue Out)

Musical Orientality in Silent & Sound Film

There was music that had to be played and yet not heard—
music that you could not hear but feel. 
—D. W. Griffith on Broken Blossoms¹

Cinema was another major medium through which American audiences could hear musical orientality. As forms of entertainment widely enjoyed in U.S. theaters, vaudeville and film coexisted strongly through the teens, but over the twenties the former genre declined in the face of cinematic attractions. (In a very rough and wholly coincidental sense, this overlap and shift in popularity may be seen as a publicly enacted counterpart to contemporary patterns of consumption of sheet music and recordings as media for private use.) During a transitional period, vaudeville houses routinely featured cinematic shorts or one-act “photo-plays” among their bills’ novel attractions; and as the center of gravity shifted, presentations framed primarily as film showings routinely offered vaudevillian opening acts. Many theaters and presenters made the shift themselves, and some performers worked both on the vaudeville stage and in the movies. Among them was Tsen Mei, who was billed as both a “Chinese Nightingale” singing on major vaudeville circuits and “the only Chinese movie star in America.”²

After coexisting with film for a while, vaudeville performance would fade away into a residual and eventually moribund form (while some of its practices would recirculate into radio—and later, television—comedy). The

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¹ “To Illustrate the Importance of Good Music in Movies,” Boston Herald, 1 August 1920.
² “Orpheum Theater” [program], San Francisco, week beginning 24 July 1921.
commercial explosion of synchronized sound film in the late 1920s quickly sealed its fate. Elite theater of the sort that afforded a venue for yellowface acts by such performers as Blanche Bates and Walker Whiteside also would suffer, but its survival was not so deeply threatened. Gerald Bordman writes that after the season of 1927–1928, “Broadway would never again be as lively, generous, diversified, or insistently exciting”: “With a few small exceptions, from 1928–29 onward each year saw a drop not only in the total number of productions but in the number of new plays offered as well.” Bordman attributes that decline chiefly to “the arrival of sound film…and the stock market crash of October 1929” (1995, 355).

These cinematic displacements of live performance lead most directly to sound film, which mostly postdates the years upon which this study focuses. At the end of this chapter, that medium will offer a bridge to later decades; but music also deepened people’s experiences of raciological images and narratives in orientalist silent film during times more central here. The text below glances at a few telling moments involving this earlier medium.3

Cinematic musical practice illustrates further how such different media as film, sheet music, recordings, and printed texts all could invoke racial discourse in musically related ways, and how each medium could offer interpretive context for others. For instance, people who heard orientalist music underpinning a filmic narrative could listen to those performances’ remembered traces while reading novels’ stock scene-setting descriptions of

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3. Many works discuss racial representation in cinema; some are cited in a supplementary text (not part of this dissertation, but available directly from its author) that surveys certain theoretical concerns and selected areas of scholarly literature relevant to this study.
exotic sounds. A sensationalistic newspaper article on gang murders in a Chinese theater illustrates how journalistic writing could refer to music in language directly comparable to some aspects of film accompaniment:

It was just after the evening meal and the smoky little theatre... was crowded with more than 500 Chinese—men, women and children. The tom-toms and the cymbals were pounding and squeaking, and the tragedy of the third emperor had reached its thrilling climax when the disturbance came.

With this textual establishing shot and musical context having instilled in its mostly white American readers an unearthly sense of alien sounds in their own city, the article cut straight to its dramatic tale of murder.

This chapter takes as established context the many studies on orientalist representation in U.S. cinema. (And its small selection of examples leaves out many prominent figures in these cinematic histories; one major figure not

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4. More direct intermedia connections also were common in these intensely cross-linked mediascapes; one bidirectional nexus comprised novels adapted into cinematic narratives, and books marketed with images of actors from film versions of the same stories. The former practice underpinned many films; the latter was visible in Photo Play book editions. One such volume, of *The Typhoon*, curiously featured images of Walker Whiteside in yellowface in the leading role on its dust jacket, but used stills of Sessue Hayakawa’s film for its interior illustrations (McConaughy 1912); see also “Whiteside to Make Patriotic Picture,” *Moving Picture World*, 22 June 1918.

5. “Tongs Fight in Theatre; 1 Dead; 4 Hurt: Gunman’s Five Bullets Spill Five Members of the Hip Sing Organization out of Their Chairs,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 7 March 1916; for a brief account of a Chinatown film evoking a more general concern with authentic mise-en-scène, see “‘Hop’ Sensational Picture of Chinatown,” *San Francisco Call & Post*, 13 March 1916.

represented below is Sessue Hayakawa.\(^7\) Beginning with generic music for silent cinema, moving on to musical aspects of two D. W. Griffith films, and then closing with some examples of racialization in “classic” scoring practice for Hollywood sound film, it offers a sweeping kind of segue out of this study’s main decades to more recent times. By pointing out along the way a few relevant mid-century practices, this transitional dissolve leads to the later twentieth century and so to this dissertation’s conclusion and epilogue.

**Crafting the Audible Orientality of Silent Shadows**

Prior to the widespread use of synchronized soundtracks with film starting in the late 1920s, theaters generally showed moving pictures with music played by an organist, pianist, or small orchestra. This gave musical support to the stories being told on screen, and—like later practices of scoring and recording for sound film—could suggest particular emotional tones and cultural associations to people who were watching, hearing, and making meaning from a cinematic presentation. Without surveying the many studies of silent film music and silent cinema more generally, we may note that theaters showing orientalist films had plenty of musical materials at their disposal.\(^8\)

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7. Hayakawa figures centrally in many studies cited above, especially in connection with the film *The Cheat* (e.g., see R. Chang 1999, 14–18, 25–26); see also Kirihara (1996), Choi (1999, 108–30). For a compelling interpretation of Hayakawa’s cinematic practice in historical relationship to yellowface, and his career trajectory vis-à-vis U.S. social (and specifically legislative) discourse about Asianness and Americanness, see M. Liu (2003, 300–68). Hayakawa also appeared in stage plays; e.g., see “Orpheum” [advertisement], *San Francisco Daily News*, 15 December 1926; “Golden Gate” [theatrical column listing], *San Francisco News Letter*, 8 January 1927; “President” [theatrical note], *San Francisco Call & Post*, 18 July 1928; “Orpheum” [advertisement], *San Francisco Daily News*, 26 July 1928; for an earlier “live” promotional appearance, see “Imperial Theatre: The Soul of Kura San” [advertisement], *San Francisco Call & Post*, 18 November 1916. On the professional climate within which Asians and Asian Americans made careers in the early U.S. film industry (and on some who did), see Kishi (1991a, 1991b); see also other contributions to R. Leong (1991) and to Garcia (2001).

Cinema accompanists could draft into service numerous individually published orientalist works for keyboard, and ensemble directors could use theatrically targeted stock arrangements like some of those noted in the previous chapter. Popular songs also were used to accompany film. A 1908 vaudeville program from Keith’s Boston Theatre preserves a trace of a week when “Kokomo. A Japanese Serenade” was one of two compositions played with one act’s kinetograph showing of “interesting and humorous motion pictures” that began with a film titled “Japanese Butterflies.”

Other musical publications were produced for cinematic use. Often they categorized works by racial or national identities each was meant to evoke. For example, *The Eclipse Motion Picture Music Folio* presented a “Chinese or Japanese Selection” and a “Japanese National Air.” Organized into “National Scenes” and “Miscellaneous Scenes,” the *Witmark Moving Picture Album* included compositions for “Chinese” and “Japanese” scenes. The

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Favorite Moving Picture Music Folio offered pieces categorically titled “Chinese or Japanese Music” “A” and “B.” Among the works in Martaine’s series of albums of “Photo-Play Music” were a “Chinese Serenade” to be used “For Dances, Scenes in China, Comedy, Jugglers, etc.” and “Japan—Geisha Dance,” “For Japanese and Chinese Scenes, Jugglers, Comedy, etc.” And the fifth Jacobs folio, Oriental, Spanish and Indian Music for Racial and National Atmosphere, included a “Javanese Dance” and “Girl of the Orient.”

One comprehensive work of this sort was Erno Rapée’s Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists, published in 1924 and reprinted in a 1970 facsimile edition. Its preface stated that “In the music of ‘Nationalities’ Chinese and Japanese music has been treated as a unit” (Rapée 1970 [1924], iii). As that quotation shows, Rapée took this raciological conflation so far as to use the singular verb “has” to refer to music evoking both nations. The pieces lumped under that rubric included “national hymns” of China and Japan, a work titled “Chinese-Japanese,” “In a Chinese Tea-Room,” the “Chinese Lullaby” from East Is West, and “Fuji-Ko” (324, 330–39).

Rapée’s compilation and its many smaller-scale counterparts supplied a basic collection of musical material for film accompanists to use and reuse in

15. These decades’ performance scenes led to chance conjunctures of musicians now known mostly for cinematic work and in other ways; as one example, during a week in 1914 San Francisco’s vaudeville bills presented opportunities both to hear Lai Mon Kim sing and to hear Rapée, promoted as “the Hungarian court pianist” (theatrical column clipping, title cut off, San Francisco Call & Post, [28 February 1914?]).
supporting their theaters’ ever-changing shows. The pieces these collections organized in categorical terms stocked a kind of storehouse for performance, a source of fungible signs of orientality and other essences. They relied on the same iconic sounds as those common in popular sheet music; but in cinematic use, these were wedded in performance to moving pictures of mimetic acts that played out longer narratives with raciological meaning. This offered a key means of commingling musical and mediated bodily figurations of race.

Racially Figuring Music in Broken Blossoms & Dream Street

Not all orientalist music for silent cinema came from stock sources. Two films that illustrate this were made by D. W. Griffith, a renowned director in the century’s early decades. Many studies examine Griffith’s work in general or focus on his most famous film, the racially fraught The Birth of a Nation.16 His two best-known works with orientalized characters were Broken Blossoms of 1919 and Dream Street of 1921; some of his other films, such as Intolerance (1916), dealt with exoticized settings and characters of different sorts.17

Many orientalist films offered cinema fans related experiences; without delving into them (fig. 10.1 shows an ephemeral trace of one), a few may be noted here for their Chinese subject matter and temporal proximity to Broken

16. On Griffith, see Barry (1965); Brownlow (1968, 78–93); Henderson (1972); Schickel (1984); Pearson (1992); Bernardi (1996a); Noriega (1996); Everson (1998 [1978], 72–99). Many of the studies cited above and elsewhere in this chapter examine racial figurations in The Birth of a Nation, which also serves as a point of reference for such writings as Ramsay (2000). On Griffith’s representations of “Indian” figures, see G. Jay (2000); on contrasts between his and David Belasco’s views on film, see Marker (1975); see also Glassberg (1990, 326 n. 77); R. Chang (1998). For further references to studies of Griffith and his work, see “D.W. Griffith: A Bibliography…” online at http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/GriffithBib.html.

17. This section’s references to “Griffith’s work” and so on should not suggest that it takes an auteur approach to Broken Blossoms and Dream Street, but reflect that director’s prominent role both in their production and in promotional texts and other public discourse; the point here is not authorial celebration or critique, or the parsing of collaborative creative credit, but the ways in which music figured in these films’ widely constructed social meanings.
Blossoms.\textsuperscript{18} Released in 1918, \textit{The Forbidden City} starred Norma Talmadge (fig. 10.2, in a costume not from that film). \textit{The Red Lantern} (1919) featured Alla Nazimova—met in Chapter 1 with her self-exoticizing line “I am an Oriental, a Jew”—as a biracial heroine.\textsuperscript{19} A song (fig. 10.3) spun off from that film included the lines “Shine on Red Lantern till the morning gleams, / Wake her [China] from her dreams, / Sound the tom tom till they come, / Beat the cymbal and the drum…”; recordings 10.1 and 10.2 document early performances of it.\textsuperscript{20} A record-catalog pitch for the former disk promoted the piece as “a weird Oriental novelty that is a part of the incidental music of this play and that is an interesting example of the modern idea of writing special music for the ‘movies.’ This bizarre selection is so catchy that it is whistled by thousands of people every night as they leave the theatres where the picture is shown.”\textsuperscript{21} Other Chinese-referential films from around this time included a 1921 version of \textit{East Is West} (fig. 10.4; cf. figs. 4.8 and 4.9; a later version with Lupe Velez led to the sheet music seen above in fig. 8.63). The Griffith films discussed here were part of this wider milieu of orientalist U.S. cinema.

\textsuperscript{18} A few other silent films that had Chinese or Japanese roles were \textit{Wrath of the Gods} (1916), \textit{Forbidden Paths} (1917), \textit{The Dragon Painter} (1919), \textit{The Tong Man} (1919), \textit{Bits of Life} (1921), \textit{The First Born} (1921), \textit{When Lights Are Low} (1921), \textit{Shadows} (1922), \textit{Toll of the Sea} (1922), \textit{The Vermilion Pencil} (1922), \textit{Chop Suey Louie} (1923), \textit{The Danger Line} (1924), and \textit{Old San Francisco} (1927). Most of these presented white actors in yellowface; some featured Sessue Hayakawa, and Anna May Wong starred in \textit{Toll of the Sea} (recently reissued in DVD format in \textit{Treasures from American Film Archives} by the National Film Preservation Foundation, 2000). Many more are listed in secondary sources cited above and standard reference works in cinema studies.


The narrative of *Broken Blossoms* took place not in China but in Limehouse (London’s Chinatown), and it was played out on an intimate scale. Based on a story by English writer Thomas Burke, the film is widely familiar in cinema studies. In brief, a Chinese merchant gives shelter to a white boxer’s abused daughter, whom he loves in an asexually worshipful way; the father kills his daughter; and the merchant kills her father, then kills himself. Within this schematic structure, the melodrama offered intensely figured representations of race, gender, sexuality, and class that have been much examined, rendering it a classic text in studies of racism and film. Here we may just note that Griffith and lead actor Richard Barthelmess strove to offer a sympathetic portrayal of its Chinese protagonist (and in their time, were widely seen as having done so in poetic and affecting ways); but that this role and its enactment were deeply fraught with false beliefs about an essentialized male oriental character—for instance, as being passive to an extreme (except when succumbing to vengeful and murderous rage).


24. As Brownlow notes, Griffith changed the ending; in Burke’s story, the merchant stabbed himself and the boxer died from snakebite (Brownlow 1992 [1990], 324). Magazine-reading Americans had a deep back-story of journalistic accounts to which they could relate the narrative; as one example, an article ten years before had told of “the revolting murder of a young girl in the room of a Chinaman in New York City last week” (while arguing disingenuously that it was “not a racial crime”); other tales of Chinatown violence were common (“The Lessons of a Crime,” *The Outlook*, 3 July 1909, 530–31). The trope of passivity
Lillian Gish starred as the girl, Lucy; Richard Barthelmess played the starring part of Cheng Huan in yellowface, basing his bodily techniques in part on observations he had made expressly for that purpose in Los Angeles’s Chinatown (fig. 10.5 shows some stills in a montage published in England).25 In quest of realism, late in 1918 the Griffith studio contracted Moon Kwan for three weeks as a consultant regarding “Chinese manners and costumes.”26 A few passages from Burke’s “The Chink and the Child” (1917) show how the prose foundation for Griffith’s film evoked sound through language:

IT is a tale of love and lovers that they tell in the low-lit Causeway that slinks from West India Dock Road to the dark waste of waters beyond. In Pennyfields, too, you may hear it; and I do not doubt that it is told in far-away Tai-Ping, in Singapore, in Tokio, in Shanghai, and those other gay-lamped haunts of wonder whither the wandering people of Limehouse go and whence they return so casually. It is a tale for tears, and should you hear it in the lilied tongue of the yellow man, it would awaken in you all your pity. In our bald speech it must, unhappily, lose its essential fragrance, that quality that will lift an affair of squalor into the loftier spheres of passion and imagination, beauty and sorrow. It will sound unconvincing, a little . . . you know . . . the kind of thing that is best forgotten. Perhaps . . . But listen. (15)

…that beauty which all Limehouse had missed smote Cheng. Straight to his heart it went, and cried itself into his very blood. Thereafter the spirit of poetry broke her blossoms all about his odorous chamber. Nothing was the same. Pennyfields became a happy-lanterned street, and the monotonous fiddle in the

figured prominently in films and other media. For example, Vanity Fair and the Literary Digest disseminated Aldous Huxley’s sarcastic comment on a Javanese audience’s forbearance of a Hollywood film’s “imbecility”: “fortunately for us, the Oriental is patient and long-suffering,” Huxley wrote, linking that quality to colonial relationships of rule and subjection (“Our Films Disillusioning the East,” Literary Digest, 7 August 1926, 26–27, this at 27).

25. The Chinatown story is according to Kevin Brownlow (1992 [1990], 325). For a recent biography of Gish, see Affron (2001).
26. Many working papers of D. W. Griffith, along with press clippings, are accessible in The Papers of D. W. Griffith, 1897–1954, a 36-reel microfilm set representing documents in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, henceforth referred to as “PDWG”; much of the (often incomplete) source information cited below for clippings reproduced in PDWG is based on slips attached by Griffith’s clipping service or hand annotations in the original scrapbooks, and may be useful for locating sources in that microfilm facsimile (Griffith 1982). The Moon Kwan source is PDWG reel 3, contract dated 25 November 1918; cf., later on that reel, an undated letter from Kwan effusively praising Griffith’s The Greatest Thing in Life by (in part) implicitly comparing the director to Confucius. For a capsule biography of Kwan (born 1896 in Guangdong), see Garcia (2001, 250).
house opposite was the music of his fathers. Bits of old song floated through his mind: little sweet verses of Le Tai-pih, murmuring of plum blossom, rice-field and stream. Day by day he would moon at his window, or shuffle about the streets, lighting to a flame when Lucy would pass and gravely return his quiet regard; and night after night, too, he would dream of a pale, lily-lovely child. (20)

Low couches lay around the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls; and sleek, noiseless attendants swam from couch to couch. Away in the far corner sprawled a lank figure in brown skirting, its nerveless fingers curled about the stem of a spent pipe. On one of the lounges a scurvy nigger sat with a Jewess from Shadwell. Squatting on a table in the centre, beneath one of the lanterns, was a musician with a reed, blinking upon the company like a sly cat, and making his melody of six repeated notes. (22)

No, she was not afraid. His yellow hands, his yellow face, his smooth black hair... well, he was the first thing that had ever spoken soft words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she, too, had a right to live. She knew his words were sweet, though she did not understand them. Nor can they be set down. Half that he spoke was in village Chinese; the rest in a mangling of English which no distorted spelling could possibly reproduce.

But he drew her back against the cushions and asked her name, and she told him; and he inquired her age, and she told him; and he had then two beautiful words which came easily to his tongue. He repeated them again and again:

“It’s Lucia... li’l Lucia... Twelve... Twelve.” Musical phrases they were, dropping from his lips, and to the child who heard her name pronounced so lovingly, they were the lost heights of melody. She clung to him, and he to her. She held his strong arm in both of hers as they crouched on the divan, and nestled her cheek against his coat.

Well... he took her home to his wretched room.

“Li’l Lucia, come-a-home... Lucia.”

His heart was on fire. As they slipped out of the noisomeness into the night air and crossed the West India Dock Road into Pennyfields, they passed unnoticed. It was late, for one thing, and for another... well, nobody cared particularly. His blood rang with soft music and the solemnity of drums, for surely he had found now what for many years he had sought—his world’s one flower. (24–25)

Now a terrible dignity came to Cheng, and the soul of his great fathers swept over him. He closed the door against them, and fell prostrate over what had been the resting-place of White Blossom. Those without heard strange sounds as of an animal in its last pains; and it was even so. Cheng was dying. The sacrament of his high and holy passion had been profaned; the last sanctuary of the Oriental—his soul dignity—had been assaulted. The love robes had been torn to ribbons; the veil of this temple cut down. Life was no longer possible; and life without his little lady, his White Blossom, was no longer desirable. (32–33)
Beyond its narrative content as such, these rhetorical interminglings of race and body and voice and music positioned Burke’s novel as a text especially ripe for adaptation into musically supported cinematic form.27

Griffith had Louis F. Gottschalk compose a musical score specifically for the film.28 (Gottschalk, we may remember, had composed “The Chinee Man” and other songs in the 1904 pedagogical book Merry Songs for Little Folks, discussed in Chapter 6).29 The director himself composed “White Blossom,” a song which also was published in sheet-music form (fig. 10.6), as was “Broken

27. Burke (1917). Burke’s language of music and race was recirculated in various ways; a 1921 Midwestern newspaper article (with the long and telling headline given in full below) presented stills from Broken Blossoms and passages including the “six repeated notes” one from “The Chink and the Child”; PDWG reel 30, Carlton Miles, “Horrors of London’s Worst Slum Are Passing: Did Thomas Burke’s Book ‘Limehouse Nights,’ and Griffith’s ‘Broken Blossoms’ Have the Effect of Throwing the Rottenest Spot in the World’s Metropolis Before the Eyes of the World? Whatever the Cause, the Vices of That Dark Causeway on the West India Dock Road Are Fast Disappearing,” Minneapolis [illegible title], 27 November 1921.
28. Parts for Gottschalk’s score exist in the Museum of Modern Art music collection, on permanent loan to the Library of Congress at the time of Anderson’s guide (1988, 15). This chapter’s comments on Broken Blossoms are focused not on the notated score but on how people could make racial meaning from music as an intrinsic part of their total cinematic experience. While theatrical experiences of projected film with live accompaniment differ hugely from the visual and aural experience of watching “film” on video, viewing the latter transfers still can provide a second-hand sense of what cinema audiences saw. Various reissues have made Broken Blossoms available in NTSC video on VHS or DVD, with a wide range of soundtracks (and of source and transfer quality). The versions of Broken Blossoms chiefly consulted for this study are a DVD said to present Louis F. Gottschalk’s “original orchestral score” (Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment, 1999) and a VHS videocassette also said to use “a new recording of the original score” (New York: HBO Video / The Rohauer Collection, 1978). For a CD of a version of the score reworked in the 1980s with additional “Chinese melodies,” see Carl Davis with the London Philharmonic, “The Silents: The Musical Scores for Classic Silent Films” (Carl Davis), Virgin Classics CD VC 7 90785-2, 1988. A close analysis of how the film’s music functioned in precise visual and narrative contexts (on the level of individual cues) would require close study of the score; but for this quick look at the general importance of music to the construction of racial meaning from silent cinema, it is sufficient to know that it dealt in sonic markers of orientality also common in other settings.
Blossoms” (fig. 10.7), by Gottschalk and another collaborator.30 For some high-profile showings of Broken Blossoms, special orchestras played the score, which also used “Chinese” material by another contributor, Lee Johnson.

Correspondence between Griffith’s studio manager and Johnson, a Los Angeles-based composer who had written music for The First Born some two decades earlier, shows how intersecting concerns for musical realism, production schedules, and the bottom line informed the making of the film’s music. The studio hired Johnson for two weeks during which he was to prepare “Chinese themes” for the forthcoming picture (then identified only as studio number D4). His themes were “to be used in connection with other melodies as well, and the whole orchestration will be a musical setting for this picture.” Leaving to the composer the right to publish his musical work in other forms, the studio noted that it would print over 100 copies of the orchestration to use in showing the film.31

As the weeks passed and Johnson’s work dribbled in more slowly (and in more piecemeal form) than planned, the studio became increasingly antsy. “Of course,” one letter noted, “Mr. Gottschalk is able to write orchestrations

31. PDWG reel 4, fully executed letter of contract dated 18 January 1919 from Griffith Studio (henceforth “GS”) to Lee Johnson, countersigned by Johnson; unsigned file copy of letter dated 21 March 1919 from GS to Johnson. The March letter (seemingly a penultimate draft) had two hand corrections; both changed references to “the” themes to “your” themes.
himself, but he has other work to do in connection with synchronizing music for this picture.” It went on in greatly peeved detail, including: “All we want to do is to use these notes in our score as they will be required to fit the scenes, which will be assembled in the way Mr. Griffith may see fit. Your first melody may come last and your last melody first and it may be cut into a dozen different sections but it will be your music nevertheless.” Ending with a threat to cut Johnson’s work entirely out of the project, the letter’s stress on his music’s potentially recombinant use shows how closely the director meant to match this “Chinese” music to picture—and thus how tightly its musical significations of Chineseness would be bound to those embodied on screen.32

The notated result of this process and of Gottschalk’s work was a score thickly infused with stock American musical signs of orientality. Among them were pentatonicism, prominent melodic leaps of fourths and fifths, open-fifth vertical sonorities, “da-da-da-da dah dah” and steady tom-tom rhythms, and typically employed gong and woodblock timbres.33 As is true of most film music, sudden changes between contrasting musical episodes often matched those between narrative scenes, underpinning visually told elements of the story with musically suggested meanings. Music made to

32. PDWG reel 4, unsigned file copy of letter dated 28 March 1919 from GS to Johnson. Later correspondence tussled over remuneration vis-à-vis (from the composer’s side) union rates and (from the studio’s) reported errors, consequent rescoring hassles, and minimal use of his material; see PDWG reel 4, letters dated 8 April 1919 and 9 April 1919 from Johnson to GS; unsigned file copy of letter dated 15 April 1919 from GS to Johnson. In the early 1920s, Griffith would encounter far greater (and actionable) disputes over music in connection with licensing fees to the Fischer, Fox, Jungnickel, and Schirmer publishing firms; the long negotiations and settlements are documented in many depositions, memoranda, threatening letters, and other documents reproduced in PDWG reels 7 and 8.

33. This description is based on the recent soundtrack recording of the score on the DVD cited above, which also includes such orientalist signs as major-second, lower neighbor grace notes in certain woodwind passages; whether those ornaments are precisely notated in the score (or reflect its later interpretation) will become clear from future work with that document itself.
sound “oriental,” or not, generally situated scenes as either inside or outside of Cheng Huan’s Chinese social world. Many musical passages that were marked most heavily were matched to scenes that established or pointedly stressed Cheng Huan’s oriental nature, or that of his narrative contexts.

A point-to-point reading of these moves would be excessive, but a complicating example will show that, despite the score’s racial logic and its broad divisibility into passages marked or unmarked by orientality, these musical elements were articulated to the visual tale in ways that did not always obey a Chinese/not-Chinese binary system by synchronously playing it out in picture and sound. Near the end of the film, non-orientalist organ music is played under a scene set in Cheng Huan’s previously orientalized interior space as he resolves (futilely) to rescue Lucy from her father, and later under a scene in which he mourns with Lucy’s corpse in the same room. This could be heard as a musical means of temporarily marking him as not orientally powerless, but filled with social agency—and thus, within a racial logic of oriental passivity, perhaps as giving Huan a kind of honorary white masculinity. An alternative view could assert that genre codes for musically supporting melodrama simply required conventionally understood means of marking a protagonist’s emotional state in such stressful narrative moments. Either way, at those times music seems to have offered a preferred reading that involved more audience identification with Huan than before, and which proposed some universality of human experience—but an assimilationist universality which located European sounds as the only musical signs of subjectivity. This shift towards identification also was a momentary one. Soon
after, as Cheng Huan committed suicide, the score returned to highly marked music—and those who heard it could retreat to spectatorship of orientality.

Along with these signifying aspects of actual musical sound, *Broken Blossoms* visually represented music-making and other signs of audible Chineseness. Recurrent shots of a priest striking a temple bell represented a China that was diegetically present (early in the film) or remembered (later on), and a scene of dissipative urban entertainment was established in part with a two-shot and close-ups of men playing *pipa* and flute. Prominently hung in Cheng Huan’s shop, and visible behind him in some shots, was an iconic gong. In these ways, music figured both aurally and visually.

An unattributed clipping in Griffith’s archival papers stressed his general concern with music for his films. This led to direct involvement not only in its composition but in recursive loops of arrangement and rehearsal. This enabled a collaborative process of ensuring that musical themes and effects would sound in synchrony with the appearance of certain characters, or that they would be played with the precise timing and sensibility needed to invest a scene or narrative event with a specific psychological tone.³⁴ “‘I consider music a handmaiden to the picture,’” another article quoted him as saying, “‘and I like to have some well-remembered melody to typify various characters in the picture.’”³⁵ But beyond this leitmotif function, scores for his films exerted more broadly felt effects on many people. The power of music to guide audience members’ interpretations of what they were seeing on screen, especially their emotional stance towards its content, was not lost on

³⁴. PDWG reel 4, unattributed article clipping, hand-dated “Oct 9” [9 October 1920?].
³⁵. PDWG reel 30, R. A. Mitchell, “Griffith and Music,” *Wichita Eagle* [1 April 1921?].
reviewers of *Broken Blossoms* and Griffith’s other works. His best-known and most hotly debated film offers a useful contextual sense of this centrality.

Musical figurations of race in *The Birth of a Nation* were intense beyond words. This was most acutely true of the interwoven musical quotations which, to many white critics’ ears, lent stirring force to battle scenes and the infamous call-to-arms, gathering, and ride of the Ku Klux Klan. Scrapbooks of the film’s southern exhibitions offer stark examples of this. One Baltimore review focused on the score, and its writer clearly felt a simultaneous musical and raciological satisfaction—one so deep that it can only be interpreted (now dismayingly) as the result of a profoundly inspirational experience:

...in the closing scenes of the drama, when the negroes pursue the white women and the tragic horrors of the times necessitated the organization of the Ku Klux Klan to preserve the rights of the Aryians [sic] in the South, the score becomes richer and more moving and, in its cleverness rises to real emotional heights, for here it is a skillfully arranged web of themes from Tschaikowsky’s “1812” overture...[and many more sources]...and, overshadowing all, the famous “Ride of the Walkueres.”

This and other passages not only laid bare but also celebrated the score’s ideological power. The *Afro-American* presented a more critical hearing, calling *The Birth of a Nation* “a vicious film with vicious methods” and arguing that its last-minute Klan rescue made “a bid for race hatred stronger than any play yet shown in the country”: “To be more specific, there is hardly a theater audience from Maine to Florida that does not applaud the orchestra when it

36. PDWG reel 27, J.O.L., “J.O.L. Finds Thrills in Music of ‘The Birth of a Nation,’” *Baltimore Evening Sun* [probably early March] 1916. Many articles praising the score were transparently based on promotional text, which they often ran more or less verbatim; examples of this abound in the PDWG scrapbook reels, and may be illustrated by basically identical articles from the *Indianapolis Star* [mid-December 1915?] and the *Baltimore American*, 16 April 1916; the same is true of many September 1916 pieces on the music for *Intolerance* (PDWG reel 27). Some pieces praising *Intolerance* also seem to have been independently written; e.g., PDWG reel 27, Belle Squire, “Cinema Grand Opera Again—Concerning the Part that Music Plays in the Great Photoplay ‘Intolerance,’” *Music News*, 2 March 1917 (source per hand inscription).
plays ‘Dixie,’ and the intensity of the applause increases to an uproar as you pass the Mason Dixon’s line going South.”37 Without rehashing the debate about Griffith’s precise aims, beliefs, or social culpability in regard to that film’s depictions of racist violence, these responses show how (regardless of authorial intent) music supported the ideological meanings many people made when experiencing the film, including its score.38 The technically astute ways in which it married sound and picture had major hegemonic force.

Most reviewers attended with less specificity to Broken Blossoms’ music, probably because it did not offer quoted (and thus easily namable) material akin to the surfeit of recognizable works heard in Birth of a Nation. Rather, the use in Broken Blossoms of sounds plainly audible as “oriental,” and their painstaking articulation to events on screen, could produce a compelling but diffuse impression of both representational veracity and aesthetic refinement. As well as referring to “atmosphere” and so on, some articles invoked the score as an exemplar of “good music” for film. That term that could signify both elite refinement and pragmatic efficacy as part of a medium experienced through sound and sight. One writer recalled Griffith’s “last visit to Boston for the initial showing here of ‘Broken Blossoms,’ when he spent a whole day rehearsing four orchestras which he had engaged to interpret the story”:

Four orchestras—a symphonic band, a Russian balalaika orchestra, a string quartet and some Chinese musicians—all blending their notes with the picture. To quote Mr. Griffith: “There was music that had to be played and yet not heard—music that you could not hear but feel.”39

37. PDWG reel 27, “Hate of a Nation,” the Afro-American, 18 March 1916.
38. For an analysis of Joseph Carl Breil’s The Birth of a Nation score in its cinematic contexts, see M. Marks (1997, 109–66); for a tightly focused look at the musical figuration of barbarism in non-pastiche parts of the score composed by Breil, see Gaines and Lerner (2001).
39. PDWG reel 30, “To Illustrate the Importance of Good Music in Movies,” Boston Herald, 1 August 1920.
The idea of a psychological state induced by music so subtle as to seem unheard, despite being created by four ensembles in a single acoustic space, evokes a sense of Griffith’s intentions and of much response to the film. Some of the most specific press comments about music concerned certain showings in which a special live performance preceded the film. Along with noting that “An augmented symphony orchestra, directed by Mr. Louis Gottschalk, added greatly to the enjoyment of the production, while a section of the celebrated [Balalaika] Orchestra accompanied certain scenes in a position on the stage,” a review of one such presentation reported:

Mr. Griffith selected for his initial offering, “Broken Blossoms,” …preceded by a thematic pantomime in which appeared, in real life, the characters of the picture. The pantomime, or prologue, was one of the most artistic things New York has seen in years, and immediately put the audience in the Oriental atmosphere of the picture that followed. Weird Chinese music, played back of the screen, added to the appeal of the prologue, while burning perfumed incense filled the entire theatre with the fragrance of the Orient.40

A San Francisco notice praised the film and its prologue in these terms:

“Broken Blossoms” has completely caught the favor of San Francisco theatergoers. It is not a spectacular production like Griffith’s “Intolerance,” “Birth of a Nation” and “Hearts of the World,” but no one has produced such a photodrama with such delicate shadings, such gripping pathos and such exquisite intonations. Nothing yet given the screen is so powerfully human and yet so fragrantly poetic as “Broken Blossoms.”

The prologue, with its remarkable combination of music, voice, pantomime and impressionistic lighting effects, is surpassingly beautiful.41

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41. “Curran” [theatrical column listing], San Francisco Chronicle, 7 September 1919. A continuity for the Prologue specifies early on: “There is crashing music, heavy and thunderous, effect diminuendo into recitative, played in subdued manner that Voice may be distinctly heard. / VOICE -- “I am Fate! That which I will, must be!”; PDWG reel 5, undated continuity titled “PROLOGUE: ‘BROKEN BLOSSOMS’.”
Many newspaper notices basically (or literally) repeated language from promotional materials, and this may have been among them; but in any case, music figured prominently in public discourse about these showings. This emphasis also was seen in overt marketing efforts; among that same presentation’s selling points, promised an advertisement, were “A Special Augmented Orchestra and Two Oriental Orchestras on the Stage.”

Musical and other aspects of Broken Blossoms traveled out of U.S. movie theaters and into other cultural domains. These included overseas venues, amateur musical practice at home, live theatrical performance, and (in later years) radio broadcasts. An example of the first sort is the film’s presentation in London. Before it opened in that city, newspaper readers could imagine the sounds of its New York showing. Describing the Prologue as it was performed there, an English writer reported that Griffith “took a theatre”:

…and invested it with a Chinese décor. He [set] out to induce a particular mood from the moment you entered, when your eyes fell on inscriptions from Confucius and Buddha. Thereafter you appeared to enter a dim Chinese temple. In two great braziers at either side of the proscenium incense was burning. Chinese figures (prosaically only programme girls) moved silently here and there, while from a concealed orchestra came curious Chinese music.

Into this thickly orientalized environment came the performance as such:

Presently on the stage there appeared silent, slow-moving, shadowy figures pacing the steps of a mysterious semi-religious ballet. The atmosphere now created, the real life ballet resolved into the moving-picture life of Thomas Burke’s great tragedy.43

42. Curran Theatre, “David Wark Griffith’s Orchid Miracle of the Cinema. ‘Broken Blossoms’” [advertisement], San Francisco Chronicle, 7 September 1919; on this engagement, see also “Curran Theater” [photograph], San Francisco Chronicle, 7 September 1919. A concise sense of the language with which favorable reviews characterized the film in general may be gained from comments Griffith chose to quote in variants of a souvenir program distributed in major cities; e.g., “D. W. Griffith Repertory Season (Initial Offering: “Broken Blossoms’)” [program], New York: Geo. M. Cohan’s Theatre, beginning 13 May 1919; “D. W. Griffith Presents Broken Blossoms” [program], San Francisco: Curran Theatre, 24 August 1919.

When the film opened in London, the American *Motion Picture News* told of a live prologue (apparently given some new twists vis-à-vis the one staged in New York) that began with a hidden gong striking “three sonorous notes.”

Using the two songs published in connection with the film, private performance could bring some of its music into American homes. As one newspaper item put it, “Two charming ballads remain to revise memories of Griffith’s remarkable repertory season of cinema art. These are ‘White Blossoms’ … and ‘Broken Blossoms.’” A similar reminder in a longer article added that “Each of the compositions contains a melody from the delightful score that so added to the enjoyment of ‘Broken Blossoms.’” Offering a musical bridge back to personal memories of emotionally moving pictures and their racial meanings, this linked past spectatorial experience to newly (and often, one imagines, repeatedly) embodied acts of domestic singing.

Other live performances were more professional and more public. As Gaylyn Studlar has noted, the popularity of *Broken Blossoms* led some vaudevillians to perform their own takes on it. One of these consisted of a woman’s “brief imitation of Richard Barthelmess’ Yellow Man” along with “a lyric, ‘Limehouse Nights,’ based upon the Burke stories....” (That song crossed into other media, as heard in rec. 10.3.) Even as they recirculated the film’s racial tropes outwards into non-cinematic settings, these versions of reworked oriental difference also performed what we might call mimetic

45. PDWG reel 30, untitled clipping from unidentified newspaper.
47. “‘Limehouse Nights’ Again” [photograph], *Shadowland*, March–April 1920, 29.
involution—the mimesis of prior mimetic acts, embodying difference at
the second-order remove of a doubly-wrapped, performative mise-en-abîme.

Griffith’s adaptation of Burke’s story also could have been reworked
for the operatic stage. Inspired by the “magnificent” film (and mentioning
Geraldine Farrar as a reference), composer Henry Hadley wrote to Griffith
to ask about securing “the musical rights for an opera” based on Broken
Blossoms. Hadley foresaw the baritone Antonio Scotti in the leading role,
noting his “success in ‘L’Oracolo’” (an orientalist opera sung more often in
the teens and twenties than now).48 He told of Scotti’s “great enthusiasm” for
the idea of such a work, but it seems not to have progressed much further.49

The Broken Blossoms score, however, played on in other ways. A draft
script for a 1933 radio show featuring Griffith and Gish recounted a tale of the
film’s production. It included spoken re-enactments of such key moments as
Cheng Huan’s entrancement by Lucy. The script had Griffith verbally reprise
his directions to Barthelmess (or, for all we now may know, deliver new ones
concocted in retrospect):

That’s right . . . no gestures in this at all . . . . Watch, Barthelmess! You’ll have to
get it over with thought . . . and let the audience do the rest. All right, Miss Gish,
that’s it . . . come slowly on. Music there, Bonchi! The White Blossom theme....

(NOTE) (ORIGINAL SCORE MUSIC OF PICTURE . . BEGINS SOFTLY)
That’s right . . . that’s it. That will help get them into the feeling.

(MUSIC CONTINUES SOFTLY UNDERNEATH DIALOGUE)50

Two other scripts (probably from about the same time) offer variants of this
episode, one with scoring directions as above and one without them. Both

48. A dissertation not seen for this study examines L’Oracolo; see Choo (1998).
49. PDWG reel 4, letter dated 17 June 1919 from Henry Hadley to D. W. Griffith.
50. PDWG reel 19, WJZ Hinds Honey and Almond Cream script dated 28 March 1933 for air
at 10:00 PM 29 March 1933 (National Broadcasting Company), hand-corrected typescript.
had Griffith discussing Gish and Barthelmess with Mary Pickford and Frank Woods, the film’s assistant production director. In the former, an announcement before the script as such stated: “Through scenes, either descriptive or otherwise, concerning Lucy and Cheng, we have the original music score—‘White Blossom’ and the Chinese theme. Both themes associated with the picture and both having met with pleasing success when published.”51 In these ways, musical elements of Broken Blossoms occasionally sounded well after the film’s heyday.52

Returning to that time, though, it is clear how crucial music was to the film’s representation of orientality. By intensifying many white Americans’ responses to a vision of oriental difference which was at once exquisitely aestheticized and profoundly racist (despite the best of authorial intentions), the carefully crafted score of Broken Blossoms made the film’s potential social effects far stronger. Even if seen in silence, the story of Cheng Huan offered ready-made ideas about what it was to be Asian and male—received notions that were reductive and massively skewed. Those ideological conclusions could become even less escapable, and more lastingly felt, when reached in a theater filled with music. By deepening the emotional investment many people felt in the story and steering their interpretations of the raciologically mimetic “Chinese” man they saw on screen, the score could nudge them resolutely towards the idea that his pathetically embodied oriental essence must be a real thing. In this way, music worked as a kind of hegemonic catch-basin—not forcing anyone to make certain kinds of meaning from a cinematic experience, but rendering any attempt to think in other ways an uphill

51. PDWG reel 19, two undated and untitled variant scripts for radio broadcasts.
52. A British remake of Broken Blossoms would appear several years later, in 1936.
struggle far steeper than it otherwise would have been. Widely noted in regard to scores for sound film, these modes of musical hegemony could operate in “silent” cinema too. In Broken Blossoms, they supported raciological ideas that were common in U.S. culture and have been widely critiqued in the film as a visual narrative, but which music made seem more deeply credible.

Along with Broken Blossoms’ musical accompaniment (or better, its sounded musical elements, given their integration into the work as a whole), many of the film’s intertitles evoked sound. Heard by viewers in their minds’ ears rather than acoustically recreated in theaters, these parts of the film’s imagined soundscape included such texts as:

- It is a tale of temple bells, sounding at sunset before the image of Buddha...
- In this scarlet house of sin, does he ever hear the temple bells?
- Breathing in an amber flute to this alabaster cockney girl her love name—White Blossom.53

Projected ideas about oriental sound also figured in a later Griffith film, one in which similar metaphors were more belabored and received less favorably. Also based on Burke’s Limehouse fiction, Dream Street was released in 1921. The film offers a clear glimpse of how allegorical ideas of Music with a capital “M” could be played out in visual aspects of silent cinema. This is the focus here.54 Allegories flew throughout the film, which was something of a

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53. These are non-sequential intertitles as presented in the DVD version cited above, and thus presumably reflect the precise language used in the final print. Slightly variant forms appear in typescript continuities for the film, some of them evidently working versions; see PDWG reel 4, two undated continuities. For a specifically situated reading of how the bell intertitles function in their precise narrative contexts, see M. Liu (2003, 210–12).
54. Gillian Anderson lists the score of Dream Street as also being in the Museum of Modern Art collection and on permanent loan to the Library of Congress (1988, 38). The following discussion, which focuses on cinematic figurations of characters’ musicality rather than on notated music, is based on a VHS transfer of the film (Itasca, IL: Critics’ Choice Video, 1997).
melodramatic morality play. Many of them were centered on three of this study’s central dyads: music/race, voice/body, and authenticity/mimesis.

These concerns were played out in three characters whose true inner natures were made visible through, to a significant degree, musical acts.55 One article described two of these figures (in language derived in part from promotional materials) in this way: “Sway Wan, prince of Old China and as mysterious as the Orient, itself, is in the dominating role, while the masked violinist, slyly tempting to evil by his playing to those susceptible to sin, is an augmentative rival.”56 Another offered these comments:

Throughout the play are seen the forces of Evil, gathered about a masked man playing sensuous airs upon a violin, and the forces of Good, represented by a street preacher, with a strong face and impressive manner. There flashes upon the screen a picture of the tragedy on Calvary, and, at another point, a representation of an Oriental palace, described by a Chinaman who tries to make a white girl believe that he was a prince in his own land and that she might share his glory.57

Ideas about musicality as a sign of group essence were central to how the film, and many of its viewers, constructed its raciological meanings.

The violinist (ethnicized as Jewish?) was figured as evil in part by the musical sign of his instrument; the sensuous danger it posed is clear above. His mask rendered mimetic practice a sign of a threatening inauthenticity which could conceal evil aims—and thus a quality opposed to widely valued

55. Specific aspects of the film’s narrative were derived variously from Burke’s text or from its adaptation into cinematic form; those authorial distinctions are glossed over in this quick reading of how the film presented U.S. audiences with images of racialized musicality. 56. PDWG reel 30, “‘Dream Street on Trial’: Crowded Stratton Sees Griffith Play for First Time,” Middletown Times [NY], 17 March 1921. 57. PDWG reel 30, “D. W. Griffith’s ‘Dream Street’ Opens at Central Theatre,” Women’s Wear [per hand inscription; possibly a section title in an unidentified newspaper], 29 April 1921. Read now in a time of public debate over Mel Gibson’s Passion, it is difficult not to surmise that the adjacent mention of Calvary and a Chinese palace (one envisioned as a means of interracial seduction) implied some underlying equivalence of orientalities linked to Jewishness and (East) Asianness, with sensuousness and its dangers made central to both.
notions of American sincerity and plain-spokenness. Using physiognomy as a sign of character, a “glimpse behind” his mask to a grotesque face confirmed his true nature, which his visible musical acts already had shown. Musical associations could do this in part because of the figure’s similarity to others in diverse media. A contextual example was seen in Chapter 6’s quotation from a 1920 Victor educational catalog. Promoting Cui’s “Orientale,” it included:

One sees as through an atmosphere laden with the smoke of tobacco and burning incense, a motley crowd of Russian moujiks. In their midst is a strange fiddler, now playing an indolent pizzicato accompaniment to the curious reedy instruments of the others, now taking up the sensuous, honey-sweet melody himself. Surely a strange, dreamy vision for modern Americans.58

Similar images, verbal and pictorial, appeared in many other contexts.

Another character, the preacher, sang from his heart. In that way he personified a prototypical construction of white Christian honesty by demonstrating music’s power to indicate who people “really are” inside.

The Chinese figure, Sway Wan, was a musically embodied sign of duplicity, one like but unlike the fiddler. He could spy upon, and “even” could hear the voice of, a white woman he desired. Using audibility as a sign of proximity, this portrayed a Chinese man’s subjection (both desired and involuntary) to the tempting sound of a white woman. His presumed unacceptability as a suitor—and a resultant thirst for revenge—left him dangerously close to the object of his desire. Intertitles represented Sway Wan’s “Malay” song as a repeated “eee-awa,” “love is kind to the least of men,” in some instances as he celebrated the (only apparent) success of his evil acts. An important shot of him singing and playing followed one of the

fiddler. This tacitly equated their dishonest performances both on their respective stringed instruments and, less allegorically, in social interactions.

The focus above on three male figures nearly elides the presence of the white woman mentioned as an object of men’s desire. Her subjective agency consisted largely of making desirability visible in her dance and audible in her voice, and of rebuffing unwanted advances. Objectified status was more central to the role, and she enacted it also in regard to a white man who sang of his attraction to her. Both men’s songs of heterosexual desire were made threatening, but in different ways. The threat of the white man’s lay in the possibility that he might act forcibly in the moment. That of the Chinese man’s arose from the impossibility that he could fulfill his desire within the bounds of the narrative, and from the dangers arising from its displacement into vengeful action of sneakier sorts. Sway Wan’s song was the sound of a raciologically inevitable frustration, one that would become perilous through his role as an unseen danger to all “pertaining” to her.

In these ways, images of music in Dream Street marked racial and other kinds of character, served as signs and instruments of social danger, and frequently did both. Woven through these strands was the idea of music’s power to change people who heard it. While prominent characters made music in ways that expressed their fixed identities, anonymous masses in the streets were susceptible to serious transformation by hearing the sounds those individuated figures produced. An example of this is the degradation of small crowds attending the fiddler’s performances in the street and tavern, where his playing led them astray into vice. This idea, that music has the power to precipitate defining kinds of personal change, intersected with racial
ideology in many contemporary social contexts. As seen in previous chapters, this could lead to everything from linkages of Tomijiro Asai’s musical and (implied) religious conversion, to the targeted use of music in such social projects as the “Americanization” of immigrants’ children, to fearful visions of what “jazz” would do to young (white) Americans, and so on. In many such moments, musical orientality was one of the notions in the cultural mix. *Dream Street* shows how these ideas could play in moving pictures.

Many of the film’s promotional materials invoked its score. Some did so in general terms; an advertisement targeted to exhibitors pulled a quote from the *New York Globe*: “The witchery of the very beautiful scenes is increased by the musical scoring.”59 Some brought ideas of visible music and race into evocative conjuncture. One advertisement told its readers to “SEE:” things including “—the great carnival scene in romantic Limehouse . . . costers singing, happiness, Lascars, Malays, Chinese, romantic adventurers gathered from the corners of the earth.”60 The centrality of music to this later film, however, could not save it from unfavorable contrasts to *Broken Blossoms*.

Many press accounts of *Dream Street* referred back to its director’s earlier Limehouse work. “To Thomas Burke Mr. Griffith can do justice when he wants to, as he did in ‘Broken Blossoms,’” the *Brooklyn Eagle* observed. “But the singer of sacred songs and the masked violinist who tempts people to

59. PDWG reel 7, *Dream Street* advertisement hand-inscribed “Exhibitors Herald April 30/21”; the same quotation appeared in advertisements in newspapers for general readers, as seen in PDWG reel 30, “David Wark Griffith’s ‘Dream Street,’” unsourced clipping. Favorable but unspecific comments on the score were common in such reviews as PDWG reel 30, “Griffith Picture at Fox’s Liberty, *St. Louis Star*, 16 May 1921. The associated song “Dream Street” was sung at times to promote showings of the film; for an announcement of one such performance, see PDWG reel 30, “‘Dream Street’ Coming. Will Open Here on May 29 with Special Musical Programme,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, 22 May 1921.

60. PDWG reel 7, *Dream Street* advertisement dated 15 May 1921, clipped from unidentified newspaper.
wickedness, both of whom do their worst throughout the [later] film, are products of a shoddy imagination.” As well as responding to other differences between the films, critiques of this sort may have reacted to the experiential distinction between hearing musically sounded aspects of cinema and seeing visual representations of music-making. The former, as the chief way in which Broken Blossoms used music to underscore its racial narrative, could evoke profoundly felt emotional responses by often unnoted means; the latter, while appealing to the same beliefs about racialized musicality, often did so in overt ways that came off as forced or heavy-handed allegory.

The 1921 exhibition of Dream Street also constituted one of the more visible early attempts at commercial film presentation with synchronously reproduced recorded sound. When the technical means of doing so became more effective and reliable later in that decade, the ability of film to offer finely tuned simultaneities of musical and visual experience would require vastly fewer performative resources than before. To present its most fully realized version of oriental character, Broken Blossoms had relied on Griffith’s painstaking attention to what many musicians—four ensembles of them!—would do night after night in theaters, and to precisely when they would do those things. Once synchronized sound came into play, musical figurations of race in cinema no longer needed performers to be present once a score had been recorded. This may have diminished certain dramatic effects, including

61. PDWG reel 30, “‘Dream Street,’” Brooklyn Eagle, 14 April 1921.
62. Widely noted in certain cinema-studies works cited above, the film’s use of (more or less) synchronized audio recordings in some sequences also was a topic of much contemporary comment; see PDWG reel 30, “Audible Words Come from Celluloid Lips: Griffith First to Utilize Marvellous Invention of O. E. Kellum,” New York Evening World, 29 April 1921; “Dream Street ‘Talkies’ Is Only a Dream,” New York Telegram, 3 May 1921; Karl E. Kitchen, “Demonstration Is Failure at ‘Dream Street’ Showing,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, 8 May 1921.
those evoked by such unusual presentations as showings of *Broken Blossoms* with Chinese ensembles. But more broadly speaking (and noting that exhibitors still could, and sometimes did, hire local Asian Americans to work as “authentic” window-dressing for showings of orientalist sound films), the advent of the “Talkies” opened up more possibilities for linking music, race, and the body—and most of all, the voice—than it closed.

*Synchronizing the Sound & Sight of Orientality*

The field of film music studies has blossomed in recent decades, and many such works are apposite to any examination of these topics. Taking that literature as a useful backdrop without engaging it in close theoretical ways, this section presents a few examples of how concerns and practices central to this study figured in cinema in later decades. As a fleeting glance forward in time through the lens of one medium, it is meant less as a real analytical contribution to film music studies than as a bridge from this text to that field.

The views of two writers active also as film composers suggest how orientalist score production could be caught up in contending ideas about authenticity (seldom the driving concern), authorial creativity (important to many composers), and easy intelligibility to white American audiences.

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(generally trumping all other matters). Roy Prendergast invoked most U.S. audiences’ unfamiliarity with Asian musical traditions as the reason for their necessary translation or re-invention, as it were, in film scores:

Musical color can be achieved in a variety of ways. One is to use musical material indigenous to the locale of a film…. A related technique is the use of musical devices that are popularly associated with foreign lands and people: for example, using the pentatonic idiom to achieve an Oriental color. The “Chinese” music written for a studio film of the 1930s and ‘40s is not, of course, authentic Chinese music but rather represents our popular Occidental notions of what Chinese music is like. The Western listener simply does not understand the symbols of authentic Oriental music as he does those of Western music; therefore, Oriental music would have little meaning for him. (1992, 214)

Within this metaphor of linguistic communication, “authentic Oriental music” was unsuitable for cinema scoring because its semantic coding was unintelligible to Americans. From other perspectives, ideas of authenticity were more important, at least until they bumped into those of originality. Irwin Bazelon critiqued Lost Horizon (1936) as a film set “in Tibet, an exotic land filled with sounds strange to the Western ear, and yet not one single note of Tibetan musical language appears on the sound track.” He disdained the stock use of gongs and pentatonicism as offering too easy a way out for a real composer to deploy; but he wrote of one of his scores: “Immersing myself in the instrumental resources of the Orient and avoiding conventional Chinese sonorities, I invented my own world of sound. Included in the score are Kabuki instruments, gamelans, assorted gongs, chimes, bells, marimbas, cymbals, and drums.” Bazelon did hear some scores as using stereotypes effectively; one example of this was the dramatic alternation of “ominous oriental sounds” and “Glenn-Miller type dance music” in the 1970 film Tora, Tora, Tora (Bazelon 1975, 26, 109).
Moving from film composers’ general concerns back to the century’s earlier decades, two cinematic adaptations of the durable tale of Butterfly show how the same narrative tropes could span silent and sound film. A 1915 Famous Players version starred Mary Pickford (fig. 10.8). Due to legal wrangling over copyrights and music licensing, exhibitors had to make a point of not using Puccini’s music to accompany the film and of disclaiming any relationship to Belasco’s stage drama. This shows how deeply invested (artistically and financially) in their works orientalist producers could be.

“The management begs to announce that on account of copyright difficulties and legal complications, Puccini’s ‘Madame Butterfly’ music can not be played during the presentation of the picture,” Strand Theater programs apologized; and a newspaper stated: “David Belasco having announced that the ‘Madame Butterfly’ of the films is not his ‘Madama Butterfly,’ and Daniel Frohman having agreed with Mr. Belasco, Miss Mary Pickford is to portray her idea of John Luther Long’s heroine in the screen version.”64 Puccini’s music went unheard at showings of this film, but a later version that used it in various ways will carry us past this study’s general terminus of 1930.

Starring Cary Grant and Sylvia Sidney, Paramount’s 1932 Madame Butterfly presented the usual tale of power and subservience drawn along lines of race and gender. In its prominent yellowface roles and its marking of race through language about the body ("little," etc.) and other linguistic markers (e.g., honorifics), the film used methods of representing orientality that also were common in silent cinema. Synchronized sound, however, enabled spoken language to convey a deeper sense of difference. Although many silent films’ intertitles used nonstandard spellings to suggest racialized speech, recorded dialogue offered the actual sounds of pseudo-dialect and accented delivery in this and many other post-1927 orientalist films.

This sonic production of difference was leveraged by a score mixing standard orientalist elements, some Puccini material, and passages in a style which then was becoming established as standard practice. Here the latter, broadly generic practices were orientally inflected with pentatonicism, woodblocks, and such other sounds as that of a gong struck as Butterfly unsheathed her knife. The Puccini references could play to many Americans’ aural familiarity with several decades of reworked music from the opera. These included songs such as “Cho-Cho-San” (cf. rec. 9.59 above), which paired melodic and harmonic material from the opera with new orientalist lyrics, and popular orchestral arrangements. An example of the latter is a 1918 recording (rec. 8.6 above) that foreshadowed the use of Puccini-esque tonal and orchestration techniques in Hollywood scores (and later string-orchestra “Easy Listening” LP records). Along with operatic quotations, other musical intertextuality helped to construct the film’s defining structures of race,

65. Michio Ito’s credit as a consultant also hearkens back to earlier theatrical moments; see Chapter 2 for citations to some of the literature on his work in a wide range of U.S. settings.
nation, and gender. Grant sang popular songs with such lines as “my flower of Japan” and “my dream world, / a picture off a fan”; in a scene of cocktail drinking, jazz-inflected popular music underpinned the words “back to the U.S.A.”; and a New York restaurant scene used “Poor Butterfly” as instrumental background (cf. recs. 9.58–9.60).

Many films of the 1930s used orientalist music to establish a sense of place. The score for *China Seas* (1935), set aboard ship in the waters off Southeast Asia, used gongs, woodblocks, open fifths, pentatonic melodies, string glissandi, and so on. These sounds functioned chiefly as aural scene-setting without serving any more precise narrative functions. Music helped to construct the story’s overall geographical site as well as a local Asia-in-microcosm created on deck by the ship’s (diegetically Chinese?) passengers. This use of scoring to create a sense of Asian place, in large or small scale, was common; but certain other films integrated this basic function with more complex moves linking musical narrative and racial representation.

Based on Pearl S. Buck’s best-selling novel of 1931, *The Good Earth* (1937) illustrates this. Half a century ago, Dorothy Jones observed that the film:

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66. MGM, 1935; this discussion based on 1986 MGM/UA video reissue. Directed by Tay Garnett; music by Herbert Stothart.
67. MGM, 1937; this discussion based on 1985 MGM/UA Home Video reissue. Directed by Sidney Franklin; music by Herbert Stothart. The novel, which made extensive use of language about music, the spoken voice, and environmental sound, is Buck (1931); her other novels set in China include Buck (1933, 1939). In a radio play, Buck called for such effects as music segueing “to a Chinese motif” and a “Chinese voice” to be performed as “rather high and of a distinctly different timbre from the American voices” (1944, 141). She also published such non-fiction works as Buck (1932). For studies of Buck, *The Good Earth*, and her other work, see Graham (1983); Ramsdell (1983, 8–10); Lipscomb et al. (1994); Conn (1996, 1999, especially 121–62, 191–96); K. Liao (1997, especially 64–81); Lian (1998); K. Leong (1999, 57–113, 268–340), Yoshihara (2003, 149–69). The film figured prominently in the career of actor Chingwah Lee, on whom see Chinn (1989, 220–27). It could have done so in that of Anna May Wong (see Chapter 2 for biographical references), who was passed over for the leading role of O-Lan; on her response to its being cast as a yellowface part, see K. Leong (1999, 146–64); Hodges (2004, 150–56); Leibfried and Lane (2004, 88, 112). The film received massive attention.
...has probably done more than any single work in any medium toward shaping world-wide images about China and the Chinese people, for this motion picture has played continuously over a period of over eighteen years throughout the world, and has been seen in 184 countries and territories by an estimated 65,500,000 people. (1955, 85)

Composed by Herbert Stothart (who also had scored China Seas), the film’s score blurred any boundary between marked scene-setting music and unmarked nondiegetic underscoring. Much of its music marked as Chinese was diegetic, but its nondiegetic music also used pentatonic scales and other such musical elements, and not always in establishing ways. The film’s most “oriental” music established an exotic mise-en-scène and located its characters there, and the score shifted to relatively unmarked sounds when underscoring protagonists’ states of mind. This enabled viewers to conclude that people are just people, and that the Chinese people on the screen felt things just like the viewers did themselves. Music fundamentally enabled this move from Otherness to common humanity, from spectatorship to a belief in universal experiences of love and loss. But while true in certain broad senses, those universalist meanings were played out in the score through musical moves that offered a preferred hearing of Eurocentric assimilation.

A few examples will show how this worked. About eighteen minutes into the film, exotic metallophones sounded as two characters began a romantic interaction; by the end of the scene, standard scoring invited the audience to identify with them. Another segment of the narrative involved a second wife who played a yueqin lute. Many aspects of this part of the story were told musically. By association, yueqin music came to signify the

decadence of the second wife (on- or off-camera) and the threat she posed to familial harmony. Intricately articulated to images and dialogue, that music did represent her as an individual; but rather than reflecting her subjective experience, it sounded the (third-person) danger she posed to others. When the score did need to represent subjectivity, it used more familiar means. To emphasize the lead character’s inner turmoil in one scene, the score reverted to Romantic-style piano; as his torment grew, the orchestra kicked in. In these ways, marked music still positioned characters as spectacular objects, while unmarked (European) music encouraged subjective identification.

Before leaving the 1930s, one major thread of cinematic orientalism needs noting: the long run of “Charlie Chan” films. While that character continues to be an icon of racist media culture or an object of retrospective celebration, many Chan films made remarkably little use of music to mark orientality.68 As a popular trope, however, the figure of Chan crossed over into U.S. musical culture. A 1937 song titled “Chinkee Chinee Charlie Chan” began its chorus with that same phrase, and various musicians recorded Cab Calloway’s “Chop, Chop, Charlie Chan” in 1940 and 1941.69

Returning to film scores as such, another mid-century moment mingled music and race in deeply vitriolic ways. This is heard in certain commercial and government-sponsored U.S. films from the early 1940s. As Anthony

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68. For critical invocations of the figure in Asian American creative works, see Hagedorn (1993); F. Chin (1994, 1998, 95–99); for a reference work on the films, see Hanke (1989); see also Huang (2002, 114–37). In 2003, debates over the Fox Movie Channel’s plans to present a Chan festival on cable television evinced the range of opinions now held about the character.
Sheppard has shown, musical scores functioned as anti-Japanese propaganda in works including *Know Your Enemy—Japan*. Related streams of cultural production included such War Department records as “Know Your Ally: China.” Other musical representations of oriental character in this wartime setting circulated in feature films, recordings, radio, and other media. The words and iconography (more than most notation) of anti-Japanese songs offer a widely noted example. Unlike the junior-Yankee tropes in those celebrating Japanese military victories over Russia with lyrical and pictorial images of noble soldiers in 1904–1905, many 1941–1945 songs characterized

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71. “Know Your Ally: China” (War Department), War Department Orientation Series HD3-MC-6084-1, HD3-MC-6085-1, HD3-MC-6086-1, HD3-MC-6087-1 (78 rpm records), ca. 1943.

72. The classic work on this representational moment is John Dower’s essential *War without Mercy* (1986); see also Anthony Sheppard’s work in progress on these topics, Shindler (1979, 33–46, 76–77, 83–85), and general works on wartime U.S. culture (e.g., Perrett 1973, 241–45). Several of the many such recordings are F. Carson Robison, “Get Your Gun and Come Along (We’re Fixin’ to Kill a Skunk), Bluebird B-11415, 1942; Orrin Tucker, “Goodbye Mama (I’m off to Yokohama): Fox Trot / You’re a Sap, Mister Jap: Fox Trot,” Columbia 36502, 1942; F. Carson Robison, “’Here I Go to Tokio,’ Said Barnacle Bill, the Sailor,” Bluebird B-11460, 1942; F. Carson Robison, “Remember Pearl Harbor / We’re Gonna Have to Slap the Dirty Little Jap (And Uncle Sam’s the Guy Who Can Do It),” Bluebird B-11414, 1942; Art Jarret, “We’ve Got to Do a Job on the Japs, Baby: Fox Trot,” Victor 27781, 1942; Carl Hoff, “You’re a Sap, Mister Jap,” OKeh 6556, 1942; Dick Robertson, “You’re a Sap, Mister Jap: Fox Trot / Remember Pearl Harbor,” Decca 4144, 1942; The Song Spinners, “Johnny Zero: Vocal Fox Trot,” Decca 18553, 1943; Freddie “Schnickelfritz” Fisher, “Taps for the Japs: Fox Trot,” Decca 4450, 1944; Don Baker, “There’ll Be a Little Smokie in Tokio,” Continental C-1157, 1944; Louis Prima, “I Want to Go to Tokio—Fox Trot,” Hit 7123, 1945 (Prima’s “I Want to Go to Tokio” recast the lyrics of that 1914 song into anti-Japanese form). On the etymology and usage of historically specific language used in these songs, see A. M. Taylor (1944). The prevalence of songs identified on these records as fox trots shows that even with their intensely political lyrics, they still were meant for dancing.
“the Japanese” as a verminous peril. Geopolitical imagery in sheet-music cover art from those two historical moments contrasted in analogous ways.

A related cinematic moment concerns the figure of “Tokyo Rose,” the subject of a 1945 Paramount film invoking the voice as the audible sign of a dangerous female orientality. The text on a promotional photograph warned that “BEHIND HER SOFT, SEDUCTIVE VOICE” was “THE MOST DANGEROUS WOMAN IN ALL THE PACIFIC!”:

The drama of the woman behind the voice that played on the emotions of lonely men…and made them want…and want…until they recklessly paid with their lives…until one man braved all Tokyo to stop that voice forever.

As a recasting of language familiar from such earlier writing as reviews of “Japanese sopranos,” this shows how tropes of the female oriental voice were repurposed in wartime—transposed into the key of a yellow peril. With its essence and aim reframed as dangerous, such a voice’s aurally perceived surface could mask a racial threat. In this and other Tokyo Rose promotional materials, and in the film itself, the old trope of a unitary Japanese female vocality became the perceived sound of a Dragon Lady of the airwaves.

73. A few examples of relevant sheet music are (in abbreviated form) “Honorable Moon,” 1941; “Remember Pearl Harbor,” 1941; “We’re Gonna Have to Slap, The Dirty Little Jap (And Uncle Sam’s the Guy Who Can Do It),” 1941; “We’ve Got to Suppress the Japs in Tokyo,” 1941; “You’re a Sap, Mister Jap,” 1941; “Tell Them All in Tokio We’re Coming,” 1942; “They Started Somethin’ (But We’re Gonna End It),” 1942; “We’re Off to Tokyo,” 1942; “Cleanin’ My Rifle (And Dreamin’ of You),” 1943; “Dear Old Uncle Sam,” 1943; “From Broadway to Tokyo,” 1943; “Johnny Zero,” 1943; “The Yanks Are Over Japan,” 1944; and many more.


75. On the radio propaganda at issue, the racist postwar singling-out of Iva Toguri d’Aquino to stand trial as a singular “Tokyo Rose” whom many white Americans held responsible for broadcasts made by various speakers, and various U.S. representations of Tokyo Rose, see Duus (1979), Bow (2001), Simpson (2001, 76–112), W. Ho (2002).

Scoring Hollywood’s Orient: “Standard Practice” & Later Figurations

By the 1950s, classic Hollywood scoring style was firmly established. Five films from the later 1950s and early 1960s will show how those later years’ cinematic musical practice accommodated orientalist representation. All of these films—*Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*, *The World of Suzie Wong*, *Sayonara*, *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, and *My Geisha*—have been examined in mostly non-musical studies of race and gender in U.S. cinema. All five used music in ways that fundamentally shaped preferred readings of their characters as typical signs of identities defined by race, nationality, and gender, often in narratives of interracial romance set against a tacit (or not so tacit) backdrop of Cold War-era U.S. geopolitical power in Asia.

Many films used music to construct distance between an Asian woman and a white man as romantic protagonists, and then to bridge that divide in ideologically meaningful ways. Music at the beginning of a romantic scene could mark both its exotic locale and a woman known by narrative context and physical appearance to “belong” to that place, establishing her racial difference from the white man in the scene and from the implicit “we” of the film’s primary U.S. audience. As the scene progressed, the music lost its orientality, suggesting that heterosexual romance could transcend all boundaries (at least temporarily, depending upon the specific narrative).

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77. Many works cited above analyze these films in various ways. Two key studies are Gina Marchetti’s *Romance and the “Yellow Peril,”* which addresses narrative aspects of all five, and Robert G. Lee’s reading of *Sayonara* in relation to “war bride” history, Cold War ideology, and later model minority discourse (Marchetti 1993; R. G. Lee 1999, 161–72); on these and related cinematic narratives, see Kang (2002a); on *Sayonara*, see also D. K. Lee (2002, 151–64). Because glosses of these films’ plots are widely available in narrative-centered works, and these stories may be familiar to many readers, they are not recapitulated here. Succinct critiques noting such films include C. Choy (1993), Tajima (1993).

78. A key work on related aspects of these cultural moments is Klein (2003).
including musically constructed ones. Music metonymically defined this
transcendence as the assimilation of a female Asian “love interest” to a white
man’s world. These narratives of appropriation have been widely critiqued;
the importance of music to them has been less often noted, but the scores
enfolding these scenes offered scant room to construct any oppositional or
nuanced understanding of whose world the couple was in—despite their
Asian geographic location within a film’s narrative.

These musically assimilative processes were enacted clearly in Love Is a
Many Splendored Thing and The World of Suzie Wong. After considering those
films, listening to Sayonara will show how such practices could be integrated
with prominent use of diegetic Asian (in that film, Japanese) music, and
Teahouse of the August Moon will demonstrate how a related narrative could
rely almost solely on contextually similar musical materials. My Geisha then
illustrates another kind of musical intertextuality, one that partnered the
narrative’s embedded tale of making a Madame Butterfly film on location.

Love Is a Many Splendored Thing (1955) made intricate use of music to
demarcate time and space; often it cut abruptly along with picture edits.79 At
times, diegetic music continued over spatial or temporal disjunctures in the
narrative, becoming non-diegetic; at other points the reverse happened. This
musical structuring of a cinematic world was woven together by the score’s
nearly constant variations on the theme song, all of which constituted a long
build-up to the end of the film, when the song was actually sung.80

79. Twentieth-Century Fox, 1955; this discussion based on 1993 Fox Video reissue. Directed
by Henry King; music by Alfred Newman; song “Love Is a Many Splendored Thing” by
Sammy Fain and Paul Francis Webster; orchestration by Edward B. Pavell.
80. This and most of the films noted below were linked to cross-media marketing of various,
often highly coordinated, sorts; for example, sheet music and LP records for theme songs and
soundtracks were common; due to space limitations, these are not cited specifically here.
Two examples show how music signified orientality here. About 35 minutes into the story, several Chinese and American people are socializing on a Hong Kong patio overlooking the water. The men are talking politics. One of the women reaches for the radio and says, “Let’s forget China—Have some music!” Chinese music immediately sounds. The female lead (Jennifer Jones, playing Han Suyin) laughs and says, “You see, you can’t escape. We forget that China lies just across a hill.” The first woman hurriedly retunes the radio, and the track changes to a jazz-influenced arrangement of the theme song. That music continues across a cut to a shot of the romantic leads alone together in a small boat, and thus becomes a non-diegetic means of locating them in a private psychological space—one musically removed from China and constructed on American terms. Another scene illustrates the use of music to mark space as oriental. Han’s would-be husband has followed her on a family visit into the People’s Republic of China, and her family is not thrilled at the prospect of their marriage. The protagonists and Han’s relatives converse tensely in her family home. When the couple steps outside, the orchestral theme swells up, celebrating an escape from Chinese familial strictures into romantic transcendence. A further correspondence of space, musicality, psychology, and culture is heard when they re-enter the house; as they do, music re-establishes that interior as physically and socially Other.

_The World of Suzie Wong_ (1960) used multiple musical codes.81 In addition to music indicating Asianness, musical styles from the Americas evoked other positions of race, class, and gender. The score’s orientalist

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81. Paramount Britain, 1960; this discussion based on 1989 Paramount video reissue. Directed by Richard Quine; music scored by George Duning; orchestrations by Reg Owen. Much Asian American feminist cultural critique notes _The World of Suzie Wong_ as an iconic and troubling document of racist ideology (e.g., Cho 1997b; see also Kwan 1998, Feng 2000).
moves worked in typical scene-setting ways. Some shifted from diegetic to nondiegetic roles via melodic hand-offs from instruments on screen to the underscore’s invisible orchestra. One scene began with a high-angle shot of a yangqin player in the street below a hotel room. The camera tilts and pans up to the hotel, and the film cuts to an interior shot, in which Suzie Wong poses for Robert Lomax in his room. Wong sings along with a melody wafting through the window. As she explains the song’s meaning, the orchestra picks up its melody, completing its move from diegetic, locale-establishing foreground to nondiegetic, universalized background. Music characterized physical and social locations in other ways as well. In one scene, Lomax follows Wong through crowds into a poorer part of Hong Kong. As he travels farther and farther into that exoticized space, the music becomes increasingly marked by such things as the ever more frequent sounding of gongs.

The film’s focus on the city’s American residents (and compatriot sailors on shore leave) led it to intersperse musical constructions of Chinese space with U.S. nightclub music. In Suzie Wong’s world, ethnic American styles signified not so much race as class. The divey bar in Lomax’s hotel played (by the film’s standards) fairly raucous jazz and Latin-influenced dance music. Scene in a more toney restaurant was scored with polite background music of sweet clarinets, unison vibes and guitar, etc.; Wong and Lomax’s visit to the restaurant showed how race is bound up with class. The musical styles used in the film to mark social space varied in their emphasis on those categories. Chinese and orientalist music marked space as culturally Chinese and often as poor. Energetic African American-influenced dance music marked space as lower class, and thus as hospitable to Chinese prostitutes, U.S. sailors, and
stray artists. Toned-down, jazz-influenced dinner music demarcated elite white territory. This oversimplified characterization suggests how the score implicated race and class; it also marked gender, as seen in the divey bar’s clientele; characterized by African American musical materials, it was patronized almost exclusively by Asian women and white American men.

_Sayonara_ (1957) presented a score that used brief bits of diegetic music during performances of kabuki, _nō_, _bunraku_ (with _jōruri_ performers on camera), and revue-style singing and dancing—not to mention Ricardo Montalban as a _kabuki_ actor.82 (Figures 10.9 and 10.10 suggest how advertisements for the film offered slight variations on a consistent theme.)83 Aside from those episodes, however, the score worked in familiar ways. _Koto_ music with a restaurant scene established exotic context for a potentially romantic conversation between a Japanese woman and white American man; as soon as the couple stepped outside, the soundtrack changed to pizzicato strings and flute. As in

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82. Warner Brothers, 1957; this discussion based on 1985 CBS/Fox Video reissue. Directed by Joshua Logan; music by Franz Waxman; orchestrations by Leonid Raab. Another Japanese tradition was represented less directly in music under the opening credits, which featured at one point a quasi-_gagaku_ ensemble texture. Many passages in James Michener’s novel, on which the film was based, invoked music, the voice, or the body, or used other language bearing on this study’s main concerns (1954, e.g. 29, 36–43, 70–72, 94–97, 108–109, 192–93, 198, 222–27, 238). The U.S. occupation of Japan, the fact of which must have been a recently remembered historical backdrop for many of the film’s viewers, is the topic of numerous studies useful in contextual ways (e.g., Kawai 1960; K. Hirano 1992; Koshiro 1999).

83. The consistent and almost infinitely reworked variations of promotional imagery for these films reflect highly coordinated Hollywood marketing practices played out in large part through pressbooks. These offered all manner of printed materials as well as ideas for local publicity efforts; the _Sayonara_ pressbook includes examples of the latter in a long list of suggestions: “…EVERY DEPARTMENT OF THE BIGGEST DEPARTMENT STORE CAN TIE-IN WITH A JAPANESE-STYLE DISPLAY . . . DRESS USHERS IN JAPANESE KIMONOS . . . SEND PRETTY JAPANESE GIRL AROUND TOWN WITH HERALDS . . . INVITE EX-GI’S WHO SERVED IN ORIENT TO ENTER PHOTOS-OF-JAPAN CONTEST . . . IS THERE A COUPLE IN TOWN WHO MARRIED IN JAPAN? USE THEM FOR PERSONAL INTERVIEWS ON RADIO, TV, NEWSPAPERS…” “...PRETTIEST JAPANESE GIRL CONTEXT BASED ON PHOTOS OF EX-GI’S...” and “…THE TITLE SONG IS A BIG HIT! HELP PLUG IT! IT PLUGS THE PICTURE! . . . AND HERE’S A LIST OF THE RECORDS OUT ON THE SAYONARA MUSIC…” (Warner Brothers Pictures Distributing Corp., 1957).
Love Is a Many Splendored Thing, their interpersonal drama was enacted against an Asian backdrop, but it was known by its musical accompaniment to be about people like (or who might possibly become like) Hollywood’s “us.” Later in the film, minor pentatonic strains accompany female protagonist Hana Ogi as she lies down beside the U.S. serviceman, Gruver; as they begin to talk, the music becomes diatonic. When Gruver informs one of his superiors of his plan “to marry a Japanese girl,” the general’s reaction is scored with a blaring, open-fifth brass hit. When the general’s daughter lets it be known that she, too, has made plans with someone and that “oddly enough he’s Japanese,” a xylophone glissando reinforces her point. In these and other ways, Sayonara marked orientality by conventional musical means.

Teahouse of the August Moon (1956) was more unusual its absence of standard orchestral underscoring. The music all seems to be arrangements of Okinawan or Japanese songs for Okinawan or Japanese instruments; with one exception, there is no nondiegetic scoring. Setting aside questions of traditionality, this indicates its constantly “marked” character vis-à-vis U.S. cinematic norms. The music may be grouped into three functional categories. The first, and most common, was diegetic scoring with on-screen enactments of music-making or dancing (with presumed off-screen accompaniment). The second comprised similar music over credits (with a European-sounding modulation in the opening ones). The third is the one instance of nondiegetic scoring. At a pivotal narrative juncture, the teahouse apparently has been

84. MGM, 1956; this discussion based on 1990 MGM/UA Home Video reissue. Directed by Daniel Mann; no “music” composer credit per se; musical supervision: Saul Chaplin; Okinawan songs composed or arranged by Kikuko Kanai; choreography by Masaya Fujima. Critical comments on the film’s representations abound; a few are found in Tajima (1993), Ito (1997), A. Jay (1997), T. Yamamoto (1999), Alquizola and Hirabayashi (2003). For a sense of how studios tied in such films to other media products with related imagery, see fig. 10.11.
destroyed; Lotus Blossom is taking leave of the American Fisby, who has proposed marriage to her. Throughout the scene, a non-diegetic koto rendition of “Sakura” represents his (perhaps their) memories of happier times. By not opposing unmarked to marked music as signs of a divide between white and Asian characters, this film’s absence of standard orchestral scoring seemed to enable what ordinarily would have been heard as generically oriental timbres and melodies to suggest specific psychological affects—while still exoticizing the story’s mise-en-scène in unusually unleavened ways.

*My Geisha* offers an example of an overtly intertextual orientalist score. As a film about the making of a movie version of Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, it used standard devices to mark orientality (e.g., xylophones and gongs as the protagonists’ aircraft lands in Japan), but it also interwove music from Puccini’s opera in diegetic and nondiegetic ways. This led to seamless elisions of boundaries between three distinct relationships of music to picture. One example occurs toward the end of the film, when a location crew filming the movie-within-the-movie is shooting the finale of *Madama Butterfly*. As Puccini’s music plays in the soundtrack, the film shows a single-camera crew shooting the dramatic dénouement of the opera, in sync with the track. As the scene progresses, visual edits cut to views from diegetically inexplicable camera positions; here, we seem to be watching a subsequently edited version

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86. In Prendergast’s view, Puccini was one of the main four stylistic forebears of standard Hollywood scoring (1992, ix). This may have helped to enable Franz Waxman to craft such seamless aural continuity between diegetic music for images framed as part of the movie-within-the-movie or as portraying location production scenes from the making of the former imaginary film, and more standard nondiegetic music functioning only in relation to the primary narrative of *My Geisha.*
of the Madama Butterfly movie still being shot (but now somehow by multiple cameras), and the soundtrack seems to be diegetic to that film-within-the-film. After Butterfly’s suicide, the camera pulls back to reveal the (magically repositioned) production crew finishing the take; at this point, we’re back to watching My Geisha. Music welds together these radical shifts of perspective. The opera track runs continuously, functioning apparently as (1) nondiegetic underscoring at the beginning of the scene, (2) a production playback track to which the actress playing Butterfly lip-syncs in the “production” shot, (3) the actual diegetic sync track in the film-within-the-film, and (4) once again, non-diegetic scoring when it continues under the scene after the “director’s” “Cut!” By thickly infusing these layered stories, the operatic material enabled ideas of Butterfly and Japan to seem more deeply equivalent to one another.

The narrative structure of My Geisha includes another story, one in which the story of the making of the opera film is, in turn, nested. This involves the female lead’s masquerade as Japanese, unbeknownst to her husband, the director. Music signifies the nature of this mimetic act. Early in the film, as the picture dissolves from a poster of Lucy (Shirley MacLaine) as her white American self to a similarly framed shot of her in geisha makeup, the music undergoes a parallel transformation. For the first shot, a clarinet plays a jazz-inflected, minor pentatonic melody. As the transformed Lucy becomes visible, a koto plays a similar phrase. In that moment, a change in timbre characterized her change in makeup, while close melodic similarity reassured viewers of her intact identity. With timbre signifying changeable

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87. Mark Slobin has noted that this may be a klezmer-like gesture, perhaps linkable to European Jewish emigrés’ presence as Hollywood composers (personal communication, 1995).
surface and melody marking true (fixed, racial) identity, music made the
story one of cultural drag, not of a deeper transformation—one that could
have been seen as threatening to destabilize the character’s “real” whiteness.

In the 1950s and 1960s (and more broadly, from the 1930s to 1990s), most
U.S. films’ musical means of signifying Asian characters’ orientality were
logically opposed to unmarked scoring that fostered audience identification
with white characters. This positioned white figures and film viewers as
sharing an American identity defined in part by its non-orientality. As seen
above, some films used this distinction not in a binary compositional logic
(with all passages belonging only to one of two pure practices) but by
operating along a continuum of relatively more or less marked sound. By the
1980s, however, even that model offered a poor fit for understanding certain
films. Two examples will show how newer scoring techniques broadened
the range of timbres and styles commonly heard in nondiegetic scoring that
did not index racial essences. In this way, the potential scope of “unmarked”
music has grown as non-European instruments and musical languages are
used to signify subjective psychological affect, not just objectified difference—
although “exotic” sounds still routinely do the latter kinds of work as well.

Released in 1985, Year of the Dragon used non-European instruments
in ways that had little to do with evoking their specific cultural origins.88
Exemplifying this is the sound of what seems to be a berimbau under the
opening credits. Nonetheless, this score also deployed moves heard above.
It used neo-romantic orchestral scoring (more often with synthesized than
acoustic strings) under love scenes, diegetic drumming to establish exotic

88. MGM, 1985; this discussion based on 1985 MGM/UA Home Video reissue. Directed
by Michael Cimino; music by David Mansfield.
Chinatown atmosphere, and other scene-setting exotic timbres (e.g., bells as a character arrived in Thailand), to name a few old strategies. Its dialogue also used music as a metaphor for other kinds of difference; a policeman driving impatiently in New York says: “D’ja ever notice how these Chinese guys are always blocking traffic? They drive like their music—from right to left.”

*The Last Emperor* (1987) also blurred what once would have been marked and unmarked scoring, and its internationally collaborative scoring raises other issues. Nonetheless, its music has much in common with earlier scores. These commonalities include the use of open fifths, and musical continuity from diegetic exotic scene-setting to nondiegetic underscoring. Aural foregrounding of Chinese instruments is associated with pre-Revolutionary scenes, demarcating that period. The score gives emotional resonance to the film’s interfolded stories of Pu Yi’s post-1949 re-education and of his life from his imperial early years to the Japanese military’s postwar departure from Manchuria. A general absence of music from scenes in the

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89. The film’s mise-en-scène and racist dialogue raises the topic of the 1980s cultural milieu in which it was released. *Year of the Dragon* was greeted with a great deal of richly deserved criticism from many Asian Americans, who saw it as yet another highly visible means of propagating egregious stereotypes of Asianness. For a poetic critique, see Janice Mirikitani’s “Slaying Dragon Ladies” (1987, 43–45). A trace of production-side response to this reception is a statement appended to the beginning of the film, shown in silence for twelve seconds. It reads: “This film does not intend to demean or ignore the many positive features of Asian-Americans and specifically Chinese-American communities. Any similarity between the depiction in this film and any association, organization, individual or Chinatown that exists in real life is accidental.” This disclaimer was, of course, absurd; emblematic of its “accidental” similarities were several dialogue references to Mott Street, for over a century a widely recognized sign of New York’s Chinatown in nationally disseminated print media. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci; music by Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Byrne, and Cong Su. The issue of the cultural backgrounds of composers of scores for U.S.-produced orientalist films also arises in such other cases as Takemitsu’s score for *Rising Sun* (1993).

90. Columbia, 1987; this discussion based on 1988 Nelson Home Entertainment video reissue. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci; music by Ryuichi Sakamoto, David Byrne, and Cong Su. The issue of the cultural backgrounds of composers of scores for U.S.-produced orientalist films also arises in such other cases as Takemitsu’s score for *Rising Sun* (1993).

91. Also evoking certain earlier scores is a linkage of Asian to Scottish music (heard in other films not treated here), as a Scotsman is escorted through a Beijing train station by a Chinese ensemble playing “Auld Lang Syne” (with reedy-timbred *sheng* prominent).
People’s Republic contrasts with musically supported episodes from his younger years. In later scenes (when his childhood is in the past in both of the film’s dual narratives), similar music recollects his happiness in less austere days. Understated scoring at the beginning of one such scene evokes imperial nostalgia through the music’s subtlety—its tenuous appearance in brief segments, and its generally lower volume than in depictions of earlier times themselves; reverberation sometimes heightens this effect. In this film, music evoking China did not just mark exotic mise-en-scène. Signifying personal affect as well as place, it evoked Pu Yi’s own history and his states of mind, coaching U.S. audiences to assume particular psychological stances towards the narrative as a whole—in a sense, sadness over the “loss” of an old China.

A few comments will wrap up this consideration of musical orientality in film by relating it to representational moves and reception processes encountered in regard to other media, and then by thinking about how people’s various means of apprehending film may have enabled music to open up a specific kind of interpretive space—and to lend hegemonic weight to the ideological understandings that space welcomed.

The Chinese/Japanese orient much twentieth-century American film music evoked was extremely general. As in sheet music and recordings, many scores’ timbral, rhythmic, and tonal signs of orientality collapsed vast expanses of culture and geography into a coherent ideological space. (The chief exception here is some films’ on-camera performances of Japanese or Chinese music.) Heard with visual and narrative tropes that often conveyed a specific sense of national location, these scores tended stubbornly to locate Asian characters’ categorical identities as still more racial than cultural ones.
As signs of racial difference opposed to often more nuanced elements of unmarked scoring styles, the conventional sounds used in U.S. films to represent this preconceived and continually remade orient frequently did not offer any cues regarding characters’ subjective states of mind. This can only have left most viewers unable to decode any specific emotional valences from those sounds (aside from those they invested into them on other grounds). Like utterances in a tongue one doesn’t understand, those sounds could mean whatever a listener’s imagination could supply: exotic danger, sensual pleasure, escape into a safely touristic unknown, or just plain strangeness.

Here lay much of orientalist music’s power in cinema. By directing people’s attention towards the fictive space of a unitary (East) Asia but not offering a preferred affective stance towards it, these musical gestures were contingently open signifiers. Fostering attentiveness to a site lacking any more precise musical meaning in these interpretive contexts, they could offer a fairly blank screen upon which filmgoers could project whatever came to mind. Into that often emotionally charged interpretive space, people could invest meaning based on more semantically referential codes of images and narrative, personal associations, and pervasive ideas about race and place. With raciological beliefs never far below the surface of these films, their scores could create a particularly efficacious imaginary space, one in which music could give emotional weight to racial ideology.

In these and other ways, Hollywood cinema was a key medium through which musical representations of orientality carried on through the century. Radio and records also would offer white Americans abundant grounds for believing in that essence as something they could hear compellingly and map
onto Asian Americans in the real world.\textsuperscript{92} In the second half of the century, television, too, would offer music and images similar to those of cinema, but would carry them into more domestic settings. This is not the place, however, to survey those media and social processes; so with a general sense that the end of this study’s period in 1930 did not even remotely mark the end of such intersections of music and race, some concluding comments are in order.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{92} Many radio shows broadcast yellowvoice; among them were the “Mr. Moto” series about a Japanese detective and several “Fu Manchu” series. Two compilations present 28 orientalist early rock songs, many featuring vocal mimesis that echoed earlier acts \textit{Chop Suey Rock: Songs about the Orient Vol. 1} (Hot & Sour HS-001); \textit{Chop Suey Rock Volume 2: More Songs about the Orient} (Hot & Sour HS-001), both n.p. and n.d. [1990s?].

\textsuperscript{93} Television shows from the 1950s to the present offer abundant examples of orientalist musical representation, but these cannot be addressed here; for related critiques not focused on music, see Hamamoto (1994), Zia (2000a, 252–54); see also Paik (1976), M. Williams (1998). The sheet music for one show’s theme song exulted that: “Striking musical background has…been provided to match the mood and excitement of each episode. … Here is the lush feel of the Orient, a fine suggestion of romance, the clashing interplay of intrigue…” (Lionel Newman, “Theme from ‘Hong Kong’,” New York: Twentieth Century Music Corp., 1960).

Working documents show how timbral figurations of orientality were written into TV shows. An example from 1971 is A. J. Carothers’ script for “The Princess Lotus Flower,” an episode of the series \textit{Nanny and the Professor}; it evoked orientality with the sound and sight of a gong and drum (Twentieth Century-Fox Television, unpublished typescript).

Conclusion/Epilogue

Findings, Echoes, Contestations

Dialogical knowledge...is the building of a precarious discourse that never fully displaces the other discourses around it. It is unsettling precisely because it works against our natural impulse to be settled in the complacency of our own rules and terms. It threatens because it relinquishes the comforting idea of mastering a fully cleared space with open horizons in order instead to scrutinize uneasily the mysterious others crowding in on it. Mastery is no doubt the easy route to follow. But mystery, if steeper, will surely lead to more human rewards.

—Gary Tomlinson (1992, 93)

...the ambiguity of music makes a mockery of any snapshot philosophy, clean categorization, neat nesting of levels, or sense of analytical closure...

—Mark Slobin (1993a, 114)

Texts are not finished objects.

—Edward Said (1993, 259)

This study has shown how performance and its reception offered seemingly compelling grounds for belief in dominant U.S. racial ideology. Experienced in live or mediated form, embodied practices gave many white Americans opportunities to construct and confirm dominant ideas about orientality—about what it was, to whom they might ascribe it in their social worlds, and how their own lack of it more firmly situated their senses of themselves.¹

Heard and seen in theaters as seemingly authentic signs of exotic difference, or as expert mimetic embodiments of an imagined essence, professional acts of orientality offered spectatorial pleasures from which mostly white audiences could make racial meaning. Millions of amateurs enacted orientality with their own bodies in schoolroom pantomimes,

¹. As discussed in the Introduction (see also a supplementary text noted there), this analytical focus should not elide Asian American agency regarding the cultural, historical, and political moments implicated here. Rather, this study of dominant practice may be complementary in some ways to certain work on Asian and Asian American representations of self-identity.
municipal pageants, operettas, martial arts, social dances, singing at home, and other practices. These acts and interpretations used sound in manifold ways that often gave specifically musical weight to raciological experiences and ideas. Often this involved the media of sheet music, recordings, or film.

Many sources examined above, in contexts of contemporary histories and discourses, also provided reciprocal frames within which people could interpret less musical events (how many times must white Americans have seen a yellowface performance one evening and then recalled that experience while reading news of China or Japan in the next day’s paper?). But rather than focusing on those other aspects of pre-1930 experience, these concluding comments look at disjunctures and conjunctures between earlier and later twentieth-century moments. They move from tropes of authenticity to acts of mimesis, listen to mediated traces of musical difference, note interventions against (unwittingly) racist musical productions and some broader ways in which orientalist “culture” and “politics” converge, and tentatively consider certain dialectical aspects of orientality and Asian American performance.

**Durable Modes of Authenticating Orientality**

In the decades after 1930, U.S. audiences saw various touring performers of Asian traditions. Often these were framed and perceived as exotic displays of authentic orientality. Among the performers who undertook U.S. tours by the early 1930s were such diverse musicians and dancers as the Chinese actor Mei Lanfang and Indian dancer Uday Shankar. Other Asian dancers toured the

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United States as well; two who did so in the late 1930s were Sai Shoki (Ch’oe Sŭng-hŭi) and Devi Dja.\(^4\) In that and later decades, many other performers were presented and received in orientalizing ways.

Another persistent mode of orientalist reception was evident in many white Americans’ interpretations of Asian and Asian American performers of European concert music. Often this involved hearing musicians, especially singers, as performing their own assimilation to a Eurocentric ideal, one thus made to seem all the more universal. In some cases, this constituted a kind of

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musical model minority discourse—a perceived assimilation at once praised and subject to raciological constraints. Throughout the century, several threads were woven through many such hearings. Frank H. Wu has noted one of these, the trope of skill without feeling, in present-day discourse:

Asian Americans who are native-born Americans as the children of immigrants and who have played Bach on the piano since the age of five may still be criticized as having only staggering technical prowess on the keyboard without the heartfelt soul of an artist. They do not have the Western repertoire in their blood. (2002, 241)

Two other persistent moves are the promotion of Asian sopranos under such rubrics as “Japanese Nightingale,” and the often racialized, gendered, and sometimes racially sexualized promotion of Asian women musicians. Derek B. Scott has noted one such case in regard to musical orientalism’s:

…facility for encouraging notions not simply of ethnic difference, but of racial difference. Singaporean violinist Vanessa Mae, for example, was presented at fifteen years old as sexy and sensual. It would have been impossible to market a teenage, white, all-American female violinist like this without outrage.5

While some Asian and Asian American performers of European music are able to avoid being framed in these ways, many still are marketed in the United States by these and other racialized means.

The matter of agency is central here. While musicians tractable to any kind of marked or unmarked racial categorization exert varying degrees of influence over how they are presented in the media, none can control the meanings people (journalists, audiences) make from them. In dominant U.S.

5. D. Scott (1997, unpaginated online article). Several scholars are engaged in projects bearing in part on these issues; two major works underway are Mari Yoshihara’s current research and Grace Wang’s dissertation in progress (as of this writing). In “Cross-Racial Identifications: Forging Asian American Identities through Musical Practices,” a paper given at the 2002 American Studies Association conference, Wang addressed identity formation by Asian American musicians studying and performing European music, intersections with model minority discourse, ideas about assimilation, and dominant U.S. ideas about the universality of elite European music (unpublished work paraphrased here with Wang’s permission).
contexts of representation and meaning construction, the public images of musicians seen as racially Asian remain susceptible to orientalizing moves that bore down on performers early in the last century. Now as then, many performers negotiate their way through these fields of raciological belief.

Attending to these modes of white presentation and spectatorship of Asian and Asian American musicians raises questions of who the audience is in such moments of performance and reception. As also was true in earlier decades, many Asian American musicians active in recent years performed (and still do) not to satisfy white audiences’ expectations, but to fulfill their own subjective artistic desires, serve ethnic communities, or do both of these things. Some were and are deeply engaged with social projects that foster community solidarity, interethnic progressive politics, or both. A prominent example is *A Grain of Sand*, a record that was a key musical document in the Asian American movement. While this study’s focus on dominant practices and ideology leads it to attend chiefly to white audiences, their experiences offer, of course, only some angles from which these histories were heard.

**Persistent Re-Creations of Mimetic Orientality**

White spectatorship of performance heard as authentically oriental still complements, in ideological and practical ways, practices of bodily mimesis. A wide range of performances hearken back to, reinscribe, or otherwise evoke earlier embodiments of imagined orientality. These acts use the body as the locus of racial identities temporarily assumed for entertainment or other ends.

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6. On earlier such moments, see studies including M. Yang (2001), Rao (2002).
Some recent mimetic acts, such as Madonna’s appearance at the 1999 Grammy Awards in kimono and quasi-geisha makeup, have been presented by star performers in highly visible settings. Related moments of amateur dress-up, in some ways like those that were popular a century ago, are enabled by recurrent surges of orientalist chic in high fashion and more affordable clothing. Other embodied acts echo the community-building sensibilities of municipal pageants, but reenact specific twentieth-century histories in diverse ways. Two examples are 1990s Texas performances (with aircraft) of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and a 2002 reenactment of the internment of Japanese American residents of Pajaro Valley, California—complete with “vintage costumes, sedans and a police car,” as well as “uniformed guards in watchtowers.” Other practices involve finely tuned kinesthetic learning. Conspicuous here is the popularity of Asian martial arts not only as cinematic spectacles but as participatory activities.


10. The Pearl Harbor reenactments are discussed in an October 1997 thread on the H-Amstdy e-mail discussion list; one useful contribution was posted 3 October 1997 by John Baky. On the Pajaro Valley event and some local opposition to it, see Ken McLaughlin, “Internment Re-enactment to Teach Historical Lesson,” *San Jose Mercury News*, 1 April 2002, online at http://www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/news/local/2976198.htm.

11. On somatic and spectatorial aspects of this engagement, see S.-m. Ma (2000, 53–75). For a reading of white actors’ television performances of Asian martial arts (taking as one example Chuck Norris in *Walker, Texas Ranger*) under the theoretical sign of yellowface regardless of their actual facial makeup, see Won (1996, 121–206). In social analyses focused more on Asian
way, the somatic experience entailed in such forms of instructed embodiment has a long history; the jiu-jitsu books by Irving Hancock (1904a, 1904b) that were discussed in Chapter 7 were published exactly 100 years ago.

As in earlier years, a special category of bodily practice comprises vocal mimesis. The eye and ear continued to give many white listeners experiences of mimetic orientality, investing that essence with the credibility of live or mediated embodiment; later decades were rife with yellowvoice. Performed in recording studios, many of those acts worked purely through sound; others combined yellowvoice and yellowface in film or television.

Professional yellowvoice acts included comedian and sometimes-singer Buddy Hackett’s “Chinese Rock and Egg Roll” and “The Chinese Waiter,” both from the 1950s. He performed some lines in the latter piece with an accent broadly reminiscent of Uncle Josh’s Chinese interlocutor of 50 years before; for its sheet music cover, Hackett posed with a rubber band over his eyes (a technique used in the teens by some film actors in yellowface roles). As well as showing how yellowvoice continued on into the century, these acts served a narrative that was part of a more specific tradition. A long lineage of white American vocal performers told of racialized social conflict in fictive encounters with stereotyped Chinese workers. Around the turn of the century, those imagined characters often had been laundrymen; by the mid-1950s, this recording’s comparable figure was a restaurant worker. Either way, racialized labor and oriental vocality were fair game for laughs.

Hackett’s sheet music enabled people to perform their own versions of his yellowvoice act at home (and offered a model for amateur rubber-band cosmetology); but while it and other published texts mattered in these ways, related streams of unschooled mimesis also flowed. Probably transmitted by intermingled means, these included schoolyard insults and racist utterances such as those Helen Zia recalls hearing as a child: “Ching chong Chinaman sitting on a rail, along came a white man and snipped off his tail. / Ah so. No tickee, no washee. So sorry, so sollee. / Chinkee, Chink. Jap, Nip, zero…” and on and on. “The most common taunting,” she writes, “didn’t even utilize words but a string of unintelligible gobbledygook that kids—and adults—would spew as they pretended to speak Chinese or some other Asian language. It was a mockery of how they imagined my parents talked to me” (Zia 2000a, 109–10).

In those ways, yellowvoice was and is far more than a performative means of constructing racial categories and categorically deprecating whole groups of people (even when doing so unwittingly). It also was—and is—a verbal weapon, one which Americans who are not ethnically Asian can aim intentionally and precisely at people who are. A high-profile instance of this took place near the end of the century. In a widely noted moment on a 1994 radio show, Senator Alfonse d’Amato shifted into an imagined fabrication of a Japanese accent as a means of ridiculing Judge Lance Ito. If there may be any positive aspect to such a dismaying event, it was the speed and clarity with which public critique demonstrated that, at least in those contexts, yellowvoice modes of ascribing orientality would not go unchallenged.

13. For one discussion of this moment, see Tuan (1999, 1–4, 181n1); Tuan cites several newspaper sources, and many more may be found via Lexis-Nexis and other indexes.
Print media also represented orientality as an audible kind of difference. Mid-century magazine and newspaper articles often invoked music as a sign of exotic orientality, and sometimes of constrained assimilation. And while sheet music for adults never again would be as popular as it had been in the century’s first few decades, the means by which it enabled adult amateurs to sound orientality were redisseminated in works for young piano students.

Some such pieces had introductions that instructed children in racial hierarchies they could use to invest meaning into musical activities. The preface to “Swinging Lanterns” (1932) asked students to imagine themselves looking “down” on “little almond-eyed boys and girls” when playing the piece. The composer of “Dancing Coolie Shoes” (1957) enthused:

Let’s say goodbye to beautiful Thailand with the ‘Dancing Coolie Shoes.’ The wooden shoes of the coolies go clippity, clop along the streets as the coolies carry their fruits and vegetables to market in baskets tied to the ends of long bamboo poles, which they balance across their shoulders. The shoes make a gay, cheerful sound.

Regardless of the intentions of composers, teachers, parents, and students themselves, these pieces’ young performers would have been hard-pressed not to learn raciological lessons from their own daily musical practice.

The works framed in these ways used such conventional musical signs as open fifths and pentatonicism. Some highlighted the latter trait with text such as a note at the beginning of a 1955 “Chinese Lullaby”: “Mostly on the black keys; singing tone, sonority.” Making these sounds gave children


\textit{Musical Figurations of Orientality in Audio Media}

Adults also continued to have abundant opportunities for making oriental meaning from musical experiences. Many of these arose from recorded sound in feature films and in audio media. Ellie Hisama has shown how long-lived tropes of geisha/lotus blossom/butterfly figures recurred in some late twentieth-century popular songs; many recorded performances from mid-century decades also trafficked in quasi-butterflies, or sang yellowvoice nonsense syllables in lyrics set in gong-filled Chinatowns.\footnote{Hisama (1993). For a Korean-war era song based on a “Boy from the West, girl from the East” narrative of parting (with an eternally waiting woman singing Arirang, interspersed with such lines as “He hushed her with a kiss and he shook his head ‘No’”), see Norma Douglas, “Ah Ri Rung” (Kauderer), Gudyen 703 (78 rpm record), 1954. A Chinatown example is The Five Keys, “Ling Ting Tong” (Godwin), Capitol 2945 (78 rpm record), 1954. On intersections of Indian music and rock, see Reck (1985), Farrell (1999 [1997], 168–88), Bellman (1998a), Shankar (1999 [1997], 178–230); also bearing on that topic is unpublished work Gordon Thompson has presented in his conference paper “Orientalist Rock,” chiefly on}


19. Hisama (1993). For a Korean-war era song based on a “Boy from the West, girl from the East” narrative of parting (with an eternally waiting woman singing Arirang, interspersed with such lines as “He hushed her with a kiss and he shook his head ‘No’”), see Norma Douglas, “Ah Ri Rung” (Kauderer), Gudyen 703 (78 rpm record), 1954. A Chinatown example is The Five Keys, “Ling Ting Tong” (Godwin), Capitol 2945 (78 rpm record), 1954.

20. On intersections of Indian music and rock, see Reck (1985), Farrell (1999 [1997], 168–88), Bellman (1998a), Shankar (1999 [1997], 178–230); also bearing on that topic is unpublished work Gordon Thompson has presented in his conference paper “Orientalist Rock,” chiefly on
Alongside longer-standing processes of mimesis or of presenting Asian musicians as signs of nativized authenticity, collaboration also figured in some projects framed by rubrics of “world beat” or “world music.” Certain usages of the latter term denote recordings thought to present pure authenticity from afar; as Paul Gilroy observes, “Some of Europe’s oldest romances with primitives and noble savages are being rekindled. What is euphemistically called ‘world music’ supplies this moment with a timely soundtrack” (2000, 253). Marketplace distinctions between “world music” (framed as indigenous or traditional) and “world beat” (marked by self-conscious fusion or other acknowledged involvement by white musicians) reinforce this ideological split. On the one hand are primitivized bearers of authenticity from afar; on the other are cosmopolitan adventurer/musicians with the capital and technology needed to capture, rework, and redisseminate signs of an authenticity they are thought to lack, and sometimes to jam with the “local” folks they visit. An unspoken and partial criterion for assigning performers to these categories often is whiteness, but this is complicated by categorizing traditions such as Cajun music under the rubric of world music. The underlying logic of such moves can reinscribe the folk, the primitive, and the oriental as a triumvurate of musical difference (cf. Slobin 1993a, 4).

Both “world beat” and “world music,” however, often encompass the same wide range of musical efforts and products. Some of the ways in which many white Americans market and consume music through these categories echo earlier cultural moments. One of these comprised 1950s and 1960s U.S. constructions of Tiki and enjoyment of recordings often called “exotica.” Some records from the teens and twenties may be heard in timbral, tonal, rhythmic, and structural ways as precursors to some 1950s–1960s exotica, which in turn constitutes a later musical-archaeological stratum beneath certain post-1980 world beat recordings. A future work may examine these historical strata of recorded difference, but here the point is that the musical signs by which U.S. listeners recognized the novel orientality of certain early twentieth-century records did not simply fall out of use. Rather, they continued to circulate in recordings framed by different, quasi-successor genres, in which many (white) American listeners still heard orientality.

To unpack the specific meanings more recent consumers heard from these sounds would be a different project, one requiring close attention to interpretive contexts spanning from Cold War discourse to anti-globalization activism. A key aspect of many people’s consumption of music situated in these ways, however, is the depoliticizing force of commodification. As Paul Gilroy has written on Bob Marley’s international marketing:

> The glamour of the primitive was set to work to animate his image and increase the power of his music to seduce. That modern magic required Bob to be purified, simplified, nationalized, and particularized. An aura of

authenticity was manufactured not to validate his political aspirations or rebel status but to invest his music with a mood of carefully calculated transgression that still makes it saleable and appealing all over the planet. Otherness was invoked and operates to make the gulf between his memory and his remote “crossover” audiences bigger, to manage that experiential gap so that their pleasures in consuming him and his work are somehow enhanced. (2000, 132–33)

Read out from Gilroy’s example and applied to other social moments, the idea of packaging not just distant authenticity, but also a safely measured semblance of transgression, for consumption at home underlies many ways in which Americans tend to sell and hear “world music” as such. 23

This raises questions of cultural appropriation, hybridity, and other issues that have been discussed in these and such other domains as that of South Asian British dance musics. 24 Despite often radically different contexts of production and use (and degrees of political engagement), certain sonic elements—e.g., looped samples of South Asian vocal or instrumental performance—of those genres overlap in audible ways with a wide range of electronic dance music genres including trance, ambient, and ethno techno. 25

One apposite feature of this is the tendency for sonic traces (or synthesized


24. E.g., on ideas of hybridity and appropriation in regard to 1990s musical activity including the work of South Asian British rap musicians, see Hutnyk (1999); on South Asian American and British dance musics, see also T. Taylor (1997, 148–72), Maira (2002); on South Asian music in the “West” vis-à-vis “World Music,” see Farrell (1999 [1997], 189–200). Cf. Maira (2000) on the use of henna in a New England college town. Also relevant here are writings on multiculturalism (e.g., D. Chin 1992, Middleton 2003, 3–9, Rasmussen 2004) and on such related cultural moments as those involving primitivism of many sorts (e.g., as discussed in Torgovnick 1990, 1997).

simulacra) of Asian musical sounds to summon up, in the ears of many white Americans, a diffuse air of oriental mystery in diverse reception contexts.26

In regard to compositional practice and tools, an interesting aspect of such genres is their frequent use of digitally sampled sounds marketed to composers as “World” or “Asian” collections, showing how categorical rubrics developed in the language of marketing can loop back into musical production. One example is an expansion (circuit) board advertised by the Roland Corporation for certain musical synthesizers. “World Collection ‘Asia’” featured “distinctive Asian instrument sounds carefully sampled with cooperation from local musicians in China, Indonesia, India and other Asian countries.” It included “Asian string instruments with a variety of distinct ‘weeping’ sounds, as well as a vast collection of rhythm instruments,” in a collection of “over 100 waveforms perfect for film composers, musicians and ambitious techno/dance producers.”27 Along with such hardware for making translocated versions of Asian sounds, many compact disks containing longer (but still short) snippets of actual recorded sound offer similarly categorized audio samples for use in the same processes of musical construction.

These multiply layered, technologically mediated distancings of sound from its tangible sources may lead us to certain techniques used in sound production for film and video. Distinct from “classic” feature-film scoring practices, sound design often entails profoundly transformative manipulation of audio that may originate from any acoustic or electronic source, but which is made to suggest all manner of emotional states, narrative positions, and

27. Advertisement in Roland Users Group, Fall 1998 (Los Angeles: Roland Corporation).
social referents. This can be true, for instance, in sound for historical documentaries.

In those media contexts, the widely perceived association of Asian musical traditions with profound distance from U.S. society (a relationship built in part through discursive and performative means noted in this study) can provide an aural base for present-day representational moves and interpretations. This enables documentaries to use “sound design to evoke times and places that no longer are accessible graphically”; in Becoming American: The Chinese Experience, according to one of its producers, one function of sound design was “to reinforce the familiar versus the alien”:

“Nineteenth-century Chinese music and sounds, dissonant to the modern Western ear, are designed to reinforce a sense of distance and alienation and the fear experienced by white Americans who encountered the Chinese. We used the interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar sound as a method to convey our story, an immigration story, which is at its core a story of a clash between the familiar and the foreign.”

Describing what sound design brings to a documentary as “hyper-reality,” Lennon utilized a reductionist approach …by recording…classical Chinese period instruments, such as the erhu, …then stripping away its musicality, reducing it to an effect—but one which retains the essence of the sounds, …evoking the past without specifically denoting it. “We recorded it into a Pro Tools system and then manipulated it over and over until we created a ‘hyper-erhu,’” he explains. “We wanted to draw from the natural sound, but not use it too literally. We stripped away its tonality of pitch and notes but not its essential timbre. It’s not music anymore, and it’s not a sound effect placed in a specific location. It’s a sonic environment. Its logic is a logic of emotion, but it’s not literal. That place—the cusp between sound effects and music—is what sound design is and it’s a sweet and ethereal place to work in for documentaries.”

While certain language (e.g., “reductionist”) used above to describe audio processing has pejorative connotations in cultural analysis, here it conveys

28. Thomas Lennon, quoted in Dan Daley, “Reality Never Sounded so Good: Raised Audience Expectations Drive Documentary Sound Designers to Keep It Hyper-real,” Film & Video, July 2003, 36–37, 51. The documentary aired in three episodes on National Public Television in March 2003. Asian American communities’ involvement in documenting ethnic history has long been played out in diverse projects and institutions, but has become more widely visible in some ways in recent decades; see also A. Cooper and Liu (1991).
how specific aspects of musical sound long heard as representing orientality in U.S. media may now do related but differently inflected representational work. In that project, a mediated history in which some white Americans heard orientality in erhu timbre, and a parallel one in which some Chinese Americans may have heard it as an audible trace of an ancestral home or of cultural heritage, could enable that isolated parameter of sound to signify distance in different ways within listeners’ various interpretive frames.

Established sonic means of representing orientality also circulate in such newer media as computer games, which often are far less attuned to the ethics and cultural politics of representation. A 1998 review, for example, critiqued “Shadow Warrior” as a game “full of racist stereotypes,” noting that its “soundtrack is high-quality; it’s a pity it’s used mostly to transmit Lo Wang’s inane ‘Japanese’ accent.”29 In the decades between that use of sound and earlier ones examined in this study, many other media products used audio recordings in too many ways to summarize. One last example shows how sound could market Asian tourism to Americans. Produced by Japan Air Lines, the LP record Songs and Sounds of the Orient presented a carefully edited audio montage of location music, effects, and voiceover narration that played to ideas of exotic orientality made accessible by jet travel and the tourism industry (fig. CE.1 shows part of a transcription for a study in progress).30

Performative Interventions: Contesting The Mikado & Miss Saigon

In the 1990s, certain musical productions for the stage catalyzed public opposition to—and countervailing support for—practices that long had mostly gone unchallenged. While sound recordings could elicit critical commentary in print media, often in publications with fairly few readers, these interventions against live enactments of yellowvoice and yellowface brought critique into the streets. They were rooted in part in the knowledge that Asian Americans have “profound stakes…in representations of Asia” (Kondo 1997, 255), and that acts of staged orientality tear more generally at the fabric of society in raciological ways that can motivate interethnic alliances. Two moments which brought these critical linkages into local or national public focus were spurred by The Mikado and by Miss Saigon.

In the decades after 1930, professional and amateur productions of The Mikado continued apace. Some of these used the play as a leaving-off point for various transformations; one was the novelty jazz fusion of The Hot Mikado performed at the 1939 New York World’s Fair; another was The Red Mikado (recs. CE.1, CE.2), also of that year.31 Most, however, played it straight, as many do today. Dorinne Kondo has discussed an intervention that brought

into public discussion the issues implicit in a 1990s production at a California liberal arts college (Kondo 1997, 194, 228, 251–57). Although *The Mikado* went on, the surrounding debates, protest, and teach-in had useful effects. Looking back, Kondo notes that “interventions are always partial and positioned, and pristine separation or liberation from the dominant is illusory at best”; but that they still can have socially progressive results (256).

The most widely noted interventions regarding yellowface in a musical production were those spurred by *Miss Saigon*. Without delving into their details, it may suffice to note that they responded to the casting of a white actor in a Eurasian role and to the play’s reinscription of tropes of Asian female and male character. The casting issue was problematic, due to its conflicted bearing on acting opportunities and on complicity in orientalist representation. In Jessica Hagedorn’s words, “The protests were confounding to me. We’re fighting for the right to be in these plays? But it was an instance where Asians and Asian Americans were not seen as just taking shit. We went out there and we gave people headaches and that’s good.”

The musical’s politics of representation evoked little ambivalence among people critical of the play. An anecdote recounted by Karen Maeda Allman suggests how its reception nonetheless could vary in other ways:

> When a touring production of the lavish musical “Miss Saigon” rolled into town some years ago, a Japanese American friend and I took advantage of my student status, bought some tickets and went to the show. After all, I’d read the text of the play and joined the picket line on opening night, but I hadn’t seen it

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so how could I write about something I hadn’t truly experienced? We sat through the whole thing, and as the lights came up, I could hear the quiet sobbing of a well-dressed, white American couple behind us. My friend and I looked at each other. “Now that,” she said, “was a real piece of work.”

How is it that this “hyper-real” version of the lives of Asians and Americans becomes more real than our real lives? Why do so many Americans find “Miss Saigon,” Shogun and Memoirs of a Geisha more satisfying, compelling, authentic and true than Asian or Asian American authored stories? (1999, 13)

The white couple’s response may recall to mind the comments of a San Francisco woman after hearing Tamaki Miura as Butterfly some 80 years previously: “Well, I saw Mary Pickford as Butterfly, and she was so good I cried. But, my goodness, this Jap lady beats Mary a mile, and I know I’ll cry all night over the awful time she’s had with that Pinkerton.” These patterns of response could be as durable as the tropes that evoked them; but in the century’s later decades, more deeply critical assessments became increasingly visible not just in print but also, at times, on picket lines.

As well as offering examples of intervention against such productions, the social trajectory of Miss Saigon illustrates other aspects of how people can make heterogeneous meanings from performances of orientalist works. Especially interesting in this regard is Christi-Anne Castro’s finding that many Filipinas and Filipinos hear Lea Salonga’s appearances in its leading role not only as acts of singing the part, but also as performances in which that character becomes a semi-transparent vehicle for Salonga herself as a Filipina on the international stage. While it raises familiar issues of reinscription, this goes to matters of subjective agency not just in performance

34. “Dainty Miss Miura Wins Heart of Big Audience…,” San Francisco Chronicle?, 15 March 1916; see Chapter 1 for further quotation and notes on the poorly-identified source clipping.
or intervention, but also in acts of making meaning—and here, enjoyment and national pride—from musical performance. Those ways of hearing and claiming certain enactments of even a profoundly orientalized role evoke a crucial point, one this study of white Americans’ constructions of orientality could seem to elide: Asian and Asian American listeners’ agency regarding the performances treated here (and all others). Elucidated in such works as Deborah Wong’s article on one Japanese American man’s musical world, these processes of creative reception corroborate this study’s assertion that much, often most, musical meaning is made by listeners during and after acts of hearing. This also reminds us that dominant modes of interpreting musical experience, which have been this study’s topic, do not remotely define the universe of meanings people may hear in any one such musical text or act.36

Cultural Racism & Political Yellow-Perilism

Dominant ideologies do, however, weigh heavily on many constructions of meaning from cultural practice, including orientalist musical acts. Many streams of public discourse in the last ten years show how strong yellow-perilist beliefs remain in the United States. As Helen Zia writes, “if baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet were enough for us to gain acceptance as Americans, then there would be no periodic refrain about alien Asian spies, no persistent bewilderment toward us as ‘strange’ and ‘exotic’ characters, no cries of foul play by Asian Americans”:

> Instead, Asian Americans have been caught in a time warp that, every decade or so, propels us back into the nineteenth century, when congressional hearings debated whether we were too corrupt, too untrustworthy, too uncouth to be Americans. Only in the late 1990s the discussion was about campaign donations and alleged espionage. (Zia 2000a, ix–x)

In day-to-day experience of U.S. media, accounts of such fears routinely are interwoven with those of orientality framed as entertaining. This suggests how both openly political and ostensibly amusing representations can enact and reinforce the same raciological ideas. In these ways, meanings people make from musical experience can help support structures of belief which also figure centrally in cultural moments that have little to do with music.

A few such moments since the mid-1990s include overflows of Japan-bashing into anti-Asian American acts; investigations into fundraisers at Buddhist temples and political donations from Americans with Chinese names; a magazine cover depicting Bill and Hillary Clinton in yellowface; the *Memoirs of a Geisha* spawning fantasized Japans and critiques of "geisha chic"; the Wen Ho Lee case; racial profiling in high-security government work; an orientalized body and voice in the Web cartoon "Mr. Wong"; a survey finding that 32 percent of Americans thought Chinese Americans likely to be less loyal to the United States than to China; radio disk jockeys performing yellowvoice and anti-Asian speech at a time of U.S.-China tension, and efforts by the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium to counter that surge in racist broadcasting; a white comedian’s use of the word “ch*nk” on a late-night talk show; T-shirts depicting stereotyped Asian figures, spurring public outcry and retail sales; the TV game show “Mr. Banzai” and calls for a boycott against its network; and a spate of Hollywood films set in Japan and widely seen in 2003–2004, eliciting familiar questions about representation.37

37. These moments were extensively reported upon, and numerous articles may be found about each by searching Lexis-Nexis or other online resources. *Memoirs of a Geisha* is Golden (1997); one useful critique is by Noy Thrupkaew, "Going Geisha," email essay dated 13 April 2001; see also Middleton (2003, 45–64). Another sign of popular entrancement with geisha may have been the republication of Liza Dalby’s *Ko-Uta* under the title *Little Songs of the Geisha* with a new cover reproducing a nineteenth-century hand-tinted photograph of a
Along with these and many other cultural moments entailing public ascriptions or performances of an orientality vested in the voice, the body, or both, the specter of anti-Asian violence remained. Hate crimes are the extreme enactment of the idea that Asian Americans are not American—a belief to which, in less vicious but still totalizing forms, many musical acts have given credence. Without reinscribing the trope of Asian Americans as passive victims of white agency, recalling this racist violence reminds us that, in fact, death is one potential result of even seemingly light-hearted anti-Asian acts. This is not to suggest that a song itself, or the singing of it, may be sufficient cause to motivate a murder; but as noted in Chapter 8’s comments on the song “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong,” a social environment in which some people’s musical recreation includes dehumanizing representations of others, in racial or any terms, can make more deadly acts seem that much more conceivable.


The survey results (based on sampling conducted in March 2001) were widely reported on 26 and 27 April 2001 in online newspapers including the *San Francisco Chronicle* (http://www.sfgate.com) and the *Los Angeles Times* (http://www.latimes.com); for a marketing study of white consumers’ responses to Asian models in advertisements, cf. J. Cohen (1992); see also C. Taylor and Lee (1994), C. Taylor and Stern (1997).

Dialectics of Orientality & Asian American Performance

Beyond the scope of this dissertation, but crucial to note in parting as a counterweight to the dominant cultural practices it has examined, is the vast domain of Asian American musical and other artistic production. Any summary here of such practices would be absurdly reductive, and to survey only those that critique orientalist representations could suggest equally wrongly that all Asian American artists are beholden to make creative works determined, even if in partial or oppositionally responsive ways, by dominant cultural forms. This would write out the work of artists who choose not to engage these issues, and would more subtly undermine the sense of agency exerted by those who do.38 That being said, it is reasonable and necessary here to stress the fact that huge numbers of Asian American works offer non-(sometimes anti-) orientalist alternatives to the representations treated in this study; that they reflect tremendously diverse practices of self-representation, critique, contestation, transcendence, setting-aside, and so on; and that they take musical, visual, cinematic, dramatic, literary, and many other forms.39

38. Authorial stances, performance, and audience identities all figure in these matters, as seen in Frank Chin’s comments on the reception of The Chickencoop Chinaman in the mid-1970s: “That this play…is the first play by an Asian-American to, in any sense, make it, that people should be surprised at our existence, is proof of the great success white racism has had with us. America might love us. But America’s love is no good. It’s racist love. I don’t want it” (1976, 557). Many works, some of which are cited elsewhere in this study, address various tensions, negotiations, and other relationships between orientalism and Asian American identities or cultural production; a few of these are R. G. Lee (1999), Tchen (1999), T. Yamamoto (1999), S.-m. Ma (2000), Ngai (2000), J. T.-C. Wu (2000), Chuh and Shimakawa (2001b), H. Yu (2001), Su (2002), P. Ho (2003), M. Liu (2003), Middleton (2003).

Especially apposite to musical embodiment are discussions of how authenticity and mimesis figure in the meanings people make from Asian American performance. Deborah Wong has located certain acts of mimesis outside dominant representational practice in ways that go to subcultural and oppositional alliance-building more than to the hegemonic processes central to this dissertation. She discusses “the mimesis that characterizes the Asian American/African American interface” (2002, 10). Unlike white performers enacting orientality, people on both sides of those relationships have racial identities that are openly marked (ascribed and sometimes embraced) within dominant systems of racial categorization and hierarchies of power. This social positioning has major effects on the meanings people make from mimetic performance. In a longer essay on these topics, Wong writes:

As Asian American jazz musicians and rappers move toward Blackness, their self-conscious movement away from Whiteness is unequivocal. Passing and impersonation are, after all, performatives of privilege and longing. Impersonation takes place from the top down, and passing from the bottom up. When Asian Americans explore African American performance traditions, they describe their transit as lateral. Moving toward color can be a reclamation of race and labor; the laboring body instead discovers that it is engaged in the class-conscious cultural work of social and political transformation. (2000a, 88)
In ways that were grounded in textual production, offstage identities, audience demographics, and so on, the practices on which this dissertation has focused were generally, and necessarily, complicit with social power—even if not by intention, in many of the meanings people made from them. In performative moments such those Wong examines, however, mimesis can assume less hegemonic (or even counter-hegemonic) forms.

Another key point of articulation between certain Asian American cultural productions and orientalist performance, media, and reception centers on the body, specifically on its social use as a means of voluntarily performing nonessentialist identities or as an involuntarily racialized sign of alienness. This can arise from lived experiences that locate Asianness and Americanness as in fact commensurable conditions, or from white nativist ideologies that forcibly would separate them. Enacting the former positions, some Asian American theater companies have staged productions that feature Asian and Asian American actors together as embodied signs—or better, as performative agents—of diaspora and transnationality.

Attending to those strategies risks’ of orientalist reception and their potential for effecting “a radical resignification of” what has been seen as “the Oriental body as Asian American,” Karen Shimakawa has found that:

...despite over twenty years of resignification on the stages of Asian American theaters, the “other” body that cannot be experientially or visually differentiated from it, the Asian body, has continued to shadow it. If the possibility of successful differentiation is smaller than ever (if in fact such possibilities ever existed), perhaps [there may be] ...another alternative: a resignification of the body in global/diasporic terms that nevertheless resist the pull of biological-racial essentialism and that call into critical question the ways in which we read “raced” bodies in terms of their perceived positions within national, international, or (post)colonial frameworks. The very fact that audiences are presented with Asian bodies and Asian American bodies sharing the same theatrical space, making visible aspects of sameness and difference, poses a challenge to any construction of national (foreign and/or domestic)
bodies in terms of biologically raced essentialism—even when it seems to offer those bodies up to such an enterprise.42 (2001, 55)

Musical performance can embody other simultaneities of Asianness and Americanness in performers’ somatic experiences and in audiences’ ears and eyes. One example of this is taiko. U.S. ensembles playing that Japanese-based form of drumming can musically construct pan-Asian American identities, transnationality, or both; and for some Asian American (and Asian Canadian) women, playing taiko is a counter-orientalist practice that flies loudly and happily in the face of dominant notions of quiet oriental femininity.43 Some Asian American musicians working in musical forms less—or not—connected to Asian traditions express equally strong anti-orientalist positions.44

In the conclusion to her book Immigrant Acts, Lisa Lowe has laid out a theoretical frame for understanding some of the relationships between certain acts of contemporary Asian American cultural production and the political histories against which many of them figure:

…since the mid-nineteenth century, Asians have been admitted into the U.S. nation in terms of national economic imperatives, while the state has

estranged Asian immigrants through racialization and bars to citizenship, thus
distancing Asian Americans, even as citizens, from the terrain of national
culture. Because it is the purpose of American national culture to form subjects
as citizens, this distance has created the conditions for the emergence of Asian
American culture as an alternative cultural site, a site of cultural forms that
propose, enact, and embody subjects and practices not contained by the
narrative of American citizenship. While I have suggested that an “aesthetic”
characterizes the works of racialized oppositional cultures such as Asian
American culture—one that is different from American modernist and
postmodernist aesthetics—I have insisted on de-aestheticizing dominant
understandings of Asian Americans in order to present a model for
interpreting literature and culture as social forces, as nodes in a network of
other social practices and social relations. (Lowe 1996, 176; cf. N. Wong 2000)

Read through the lens of Lowe’s italicized (and here redirected) term, this
study may be seen as an effort to de-aestheticize acts of musical orientality.

Closing Notes & Open Questions

This dissertation began by asking three large, interlinked questions about
where and how musical meaning is made, how meanings linked to music do
ideological work in people’s social worlds, and how the body figures in those
processes. It ends here with two hopes. The first is that it may add to our
cumulative understanding of how musical meaning arises through complex
conjunctures of text, performance, media, and reception; how the meanings
people make from music in moments of aural experience and interpretation
are their own, but how each act of hearing may be framed by intense and
subtle ideological contexts that offer persuasive hegemonic guidance; and
how, as the foundational instrument and sign of both musical and raciological
ideas, the body weds the two together with relentless ease. The second hope
is that, as a text unfinished as all texts are, this study may spur further work
from other perspectives on these cultural moments and concerns, and so may
come to have its own findings resituated in unforeseen and useful ways.
Sources & Methods

This study arises from an attempt to understand certain dominant U.S. performance practices in relation to racial ideology, historical contexts, and reception processes. Approaches useful to it included the reconstruction of events’ and publications’ microhistorical contexts; analysis of theater programs, other ephemera, musical notation, and song texts; interpretation of sound recordings and of visual images related to performance; and often-experimental strategies for viewing documents and processes as situated in social microclimates, subject to heterogeneous processes of reception in which individual people made meaning, and connected to wider flows of music, money, people, ideas, and technologies (cf. Appadurai 1996, 27–65).

Because an extraordinary—but significantly ordinary—diversity of meanings may be constructed from almost any moment of cultural practice, the most useful (hypothetical) research tool here would access concrete histories of popular reception during times too far in the past to be tractable to interviews; but no such tool really exists. Bearing on the moments and acts most central here are a wealth of sources, albeit of types more often ancillary than central to ethnomusicological research.

These sources may be understood in diverse ways. As does the fact “that the age of unitary models and satisfying systems is past,” this also requires methods and theory to embrace “multi-angled vision and plural perspectives” (Slobin 1993b, 268).

There is nothing new in using multiple methodologies or in situating one’s subject in social contexts and individual sources’ micro-environments. Some studies of intercultural processes enlist these approaches to serve more unified explanatory intentions, but that may risk assimilating truly contradictory pictures of music and culture to unified master perspectives governed by the single vanishing point of an author’s intentions.1 Such aims may betray a desire to celebrate a narrative hero, or an animus for cultural impersonators; often, though, they enact a more abstract desire for closure. That love of conclusive conclusions can lead to analyses that write out the heterogeneous inconclusivity endemic to performance, reception, and cultural meaning. What is most needed in this case, then, is not a specific research

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1. Playing here with Mark Slobin’s (1993a) metaphors for some scholars’ preference for unambiguous findings and rhetorical closure; the following sentences rework ideas from the same passage to fit them to the case at hand.
tactic but a strategic state of mind: an openness to contradictions in sources and a willingness to elucidate rather than “resolve” ambiguity in thinking and writing about them. To whatever degree it may or may not have managed to do this in useful ways, this dissertation is the result of one attempt to maintain that openness.

While the potential sources for a study of early twentieth-century American orientalist musical performance and reception are limited in a logical sense by the temporal bounds of several decades and the spatial limits of the United States, their still staggering number and scattered distribution would allow the vast majority of them to elude any researcher even over a lifetime. Beyond their sheer quantity, some of these documents’ non-canonical status as accidentally surviving traces of entertainments performed and experienced in non-elite contexts enabled many to evade systematic collection, arrangement, or indexing by institutions. The chief exceptions to this concern specific repositories and types of material noted below.

In a fairly unusual strategy, many primary sources for this study were gathered from 1994 to 2003 in the course of ten years of perusing dealers’ stocks of old and often dusty things—records, sheet music, programs, books, postcards, stereo views, and so on—in shops and at ephemera shows in various parts of the United States. The results of this decade of hands-on searching and sifting were supplemented since 1997 with records and sheet music from mail-order auctions and, from 1999 through 2003, with items listed on the auction website eBay. In those commercial domains for the traffic in media artifacts, focused seeking often grew from initial moments of serendipity (cf. Glassberg 1990, xv). For example, while glancing early on through a San Francisco used-book store’s one tiny cabinet housing a few forlorn paper ephemera, I ran across an old photograph of someone named Tamaki Miura, who had autographed the print and inscribed it “Chicago Opera Co.” (see fig. 1.3). It seemed an intriguing trace of the U.S. career of a musician of whom I had never

2. A kind of networked academic consumerism which may constitute one of eBay’s early roles in dissertation research methodology—or at least one of its earlier acknowledged ones. At first the idea of relying heavily on a corpus of ephemeral cultural artifacts serendipitously found and purchased here and there was a disquieting one, due to its processual kinship with the less theoretically grounded activities of many collectors. To admit this unease and point out this general distinction of aims and methods is not to posit a spurious hierarchy placing scholarly projects above those enjoyed by people who collect similar documents for other reasons; it simply is to air the issue of this coincidence of often similarly enacted collecting activities oriented towards different ends, locating this study in regard to a conjuncture of aims and methods which might at first strike some academic readers as being oddly askew.
heard, a document that might lead to traces of her reception in U.S. print media. In learning later about Miura’s public life during her years in the United States, it became clear that a rich body of journalistic writing offered fascinating traces of the ways in which many Americans had made racial meaning from her performances of Butterfly, and this led to a search for documents of her career in other media.

A broader instance of movement from serendipitous to targeted strategies drew upon the chronological scrapbooks of newspaper clippings at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum. Paging sequentially through those binders yielded specific sources and a general sense of Bay Area performative contexts; but most invaluably, it offered leads to histories of performance of which more traces then could be tracked down. These paths followed a flexible sort of triangulation among a growing constellation of referential points. Each source often gave an incrementally better understanding of practices it documented, their ideological and historical contexts, and the media-specific ways in which they took form, and each often led to related representations in other media. Two cases in point are the connections of sheet music to recordings and of theatrical programs to newspaper reviews. Common to many projects, this recursive process of discovery took unusual form here due to the natures (and modes of preservation) of this study’s sources, and thus the means of locating them. In looking through thousands of dealers’ stocks of ordinary people’s once-treasured but now long-forgotten or purposely abandoned traces of early twentieth-century cultural practices, this process also fostered a sense of which documents were so popular in their own time that they routinely survived as common objects in the ephemera trade,3 and of other representations of difference or (racially unmarked) whiteness which also circulated in these sources’ public and private spheres of production, distribution, and consumption.4

While an especially fruitful approach to harvesting sources consisted of innumerable hours spent riffling physically through dealers’ stock and scanning visually through their catalogs (and later, searching on eBay), more conventional

3. Framed, of course, by the awareness that other items may have been equally popular in their time but failed to pass through downstream filters of later collectors’ and dealers’ tastes.
4. Although for reasons of space this study cites few such comparative examples, I hope that the analytical backdrop of these contexts for performance and reception does not fade entirely from view between brief moments of attention to its presence, and that this visibility is of a measured degree that grounds local interpretations in their historical contexts without veering tangentially too far afield.
tactics also served this project by locating references that seemed likely to yield
traces of intersections of music and white Americans’ ideas about Asia and Asian
America. Some such resources included chronological clippings files, and others
organized by artists and venues, at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and
Museum; artist files in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; sheet
music collections at those two institutions and others including the Chicago Public
Library; online sheet-music resources at the Johns Hopkins University, U.C.
Berkeley, and other universities (as well as online databases at ASCAP and BMI);
and such Internet resources as WorldCat. Especially useful during initial research in
the early to mid-1990s were such printed works as the Reader’s Guide to Periodical
Literature, the Dramatic Index, the New York Times Index, and similar resources;5
reference works on U.S. popular song (cited in Chapter 8); discographies (cited in
Chapter 9), about 50 contemporary record catalogs, and many recent record-auction
catalogs; theatrical chronologies by authors including Gerald Bordman;6 and time
spent paging through runs of such magazines as The Theatre (especially) and Asia.

Bearing on this study’s topic are many more bodies of primary sources (and
secondary studies of them) than those listed above—more than any one person ever
could consult. I have two hopes in this regard: first, and with a sense that it is in fact
the case, that the materials gathered for this analysis do constitute a critical mass of
sources able to serve as a valid sample from domains of practice whose documentary
traces are not fully preserved, systematically known, or concretely bounded enough
to support any non-illusory kind of rigorous sampling or quantitative analysis; and
second, that the profusion of scattered and yet-to-be-discovered of traces of these
acts and ideas may offer a trove of material for interpretation by other writers.

Most of the various sources gathered for this project (except for many of its
visual media documents) are indexed in a research database containing just over

5. After most of this study’s sources were assembled, Internet resources began to offer such
key primary materials as digitized collections of newspapers, especially the New York Times
(which became available in that way after this study’s sources from that paper had been
found in older media). The efficiency such tools afford may be seen by searching for such
terms as “ta tao” or “Tamaki Miura.” While these means of locating certain sources are faster
and less prone to oversight than were similar tasks executed with printed references and
microfilm, older approaches have their rewards—not least the greater chances of making
unsought-for discoveries while riffling or cranking, and of gaining a sense of broad contexts
of history and publication, something that lists of search results do not so readily supply.
6. E.g., Bordman (1994). Useful in related ways were such works as Stubblebine (1996).
13,000 records for items located or yet to be found.7 As of April 2004, the database’s records broke down roughly (including contextual non-orientalist materials) as representing 3,500 primary-source articles or advertisements (2,800 consulted / 700 yet to locate); 600 primary-source books (500 / 100); 1,800 sheet music publications (1,600 / 200); 2,700 disk and cylinder phonograph records (1,600 / 1,100); 400 event programs (400 / 0); 700 printed images (700 / 0), along with many unindexed stereo views and postcards; and various numbers and kinds of later or secondary sources.

Database records for sources associated with a specific date or range of dates are coded for chronological searching and sequencing. All records are indexed to varying depth with a keyword system comprising roughly 1,740 three-letter codes for such things as performers and other actual people, ensembles, organizations, pseudonyms, and stage names; floating, persistent, or serial names given to characters in multiple texts; dances; songs, arias, and other musical compositions; other texts, dramatic vehicles, theatrical productions, plays, films, and fictional works; specific notated, recorded, or textually described musical signs; broad kinds of artistic practice in specific geocultural areas; cultural genres, traditions, practices, artistic products, or categories of performance; ethnicities, nationalities, religious identities, language communities, and other social categories; physical locations as referenced places or actual sites of events or experiences; functional, situational, or experiential categories of people or characters evoked in primary sources; thematic, topical, linguistic, or iconographic descriptors regarding content, tone, rhetoric, or psychological affect; and other attributes of sources.8 This coding and tagging made it possible to manage a fairly large body of material and to discover within it certain historically suggestive conjunctures and disjunctures—as well as to see intriguing coincidences among, for example, unrelated events that happened to take place in close temporal and geographic proximity to one another. Moments of the latter sort clearly did not reflect causal relationships linking the intentions of their producers or performers, but still they may have offered otherwise-undocumented contexts of experience within which some people could make meaning from what they heard.

7. The unknown significance of the thousands of additional citations and leads noted down but not even entered into the database as sources to find is worrisome; but while some would lead to materials that could correct, refine, or flesh out many small points, I hope that they might be unlikely to lead to anything that would undermine the main sense of this study’s findings about general discursive tendencies or processes of representation and reception.
8. A supplementary text available from the author lays out this local system of keywords.
List of Recorded Examples

In hopes of conveying a sense of the cultural moments, discourses, representational practices, interpretive frames, and source media on which it focuses, this study offers fairly many media examples. Because of the impossibility of presenting sound in printed form and the impracticability of offering many color images in that way, all recordings and figures are presented in digital form. The lists in Appendices 2 and 3 also appear as links to media files on a CD-R disk deposited with the dissertation at the Wesleyan University library. The disk is available as well from the author via email to <dissertation@humansound.org>, and its contents may be available in the future at www.humansound.org.

Information given below is sufficient to identify the recordings, without pretending to offer thorough discographical descriptions. Years of issue are based on various dating references, and reflect years of recording, issue, or both (many matrices were used for years of reissues, so some dates below reflect just one point in a recording’s long career).¹ In some instances, these sources diverge by a year or two, and some years given here reflect that degree of uncertainty. Because the focus here is on how a sustained repertoire of musical practices represented orientality, not on precise chronology, this imprecision does not undermine its findings (which it would do if this were a work of discography, not a cultural interpretation of racial discourse and music). Future work with a larger number of records in the collection from which these examples were drawn may follow more rigorous cataloging guidelines.² All examples are from disk records unless otherwise noted.

The selected examples listed here represent about 200 recordings out of some 540 initially digitized for this project; those, in turn, were chosen from about 1,600 records of orientalist or contextually relevant performance gathered for this study (as does orientalist sheet music, these records tend more often to invoke Chinese than Japanese referents; this is reflected below). The selection was made primarily with attention to certain practices to be illustrated and secondarily to the sound quality of any given candidate (after excluding those too noisy or distorted to be usable). It also was designed to include different arrangements of certain works. This reduced the number of compositions represented, but it affords a performance-centered sense of how any one notated piece could change when sounded in different sessions either

². E.g., as proposed in Mudge and Hoek (2000), or as set out and followed in Laird (1995). In order to make this appendix optimally easy to use, it lists only catalog (not matrix) numbers.
by one ensemble (sometimes under pseudonyms) playing variant arrangements, or
by different groups presenting what may be precursor and derivative arrangements
(with the sequence of such creations and appropriations less relevant to this study
than their joint contribution to racialized musical discourse). Among such examples
are the versions of “Chinky Butterfly” in 9.78 and 9.121, those of “Sing Song Girl” in
recs. 9.102 and 9.116, and recordings of “Good-bye Shanghai” and “Japanese Moon.”
The latter two are among the works represented by especially many records found
for this project (some of these may be heard here; others may be presented in future
work with these materials).3

Most of these examples are presented in full. This is useful because many of
these recordings illustrate relevant practices beyond the specific one in connection
with which they are cited, and all of these practices gained meaning from their
contexts within any given performance. It is made practical by these recordings’
short length and by their delivery in digital form, which makes it easy either to go
instantly to especially relevant performative moments within examples that focus
on such things (by proceeding to a location such as “0:41”), or to listen in more
richly contextualized ways to entire performances.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Geraldine Farrar (soprano solo with orchestra accompaniment), “Madama
Butterfly—Un bel di vedremo” (Puccini), Victor 88113, 1908.

1.2 Geraldine Farrar (soprano solo with accompaniment by Victor Orchestra),
“Madama Butterfly: Entrance of Butterfly” (Puccini), Victor 87004, 1907.

1.3 Geraldine Farrar (soprano solo with accompaniment by Victor Orchestra),
“Madama Butterfly—Butterfly’s Death Scene (Finale ultimo)” (Puccini),
Victor 87030, 1909.

1.4 Tamaki Miura (soprano with orchestra), “Madam Butterfly: Un bel di
vedremo (One Fine Day)” (Puccini), Columbia 49260, 1917.

1.5 Tamaki Miura and Theodore Kittay (soprano and tenor duet with
orchestra), “Madam Butterfly: Duet Act 1 (Love Duet)” (Puccini),
Columbia 49265, 1917.

3. A 1995 compact disk, Oriental Illusions (Memphis Archives MA7018), presents fifteen
dance-band renditions of orientalist works recorded in the 1920s and 1930s; it offers a further
sense of context for some of these examples (the one recording presented both here and there
is Sleepy Hall’s “Sing Song Girl,” this study’s rec. 9.116; other records reproduced on that CD
were given lower priority as examples here, since they already are available by that means).

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Efrem Zimbalist (violin with piano accompaniment by Emanuel Bey), “Kuruka Kuruka (Japanese Lullaby)” (Yamada), Columbia 2110-D, 1930.

2.2 Yoshie Fujiwara (tenor solo with piano accompaniment), “Oki-no-Kamome (Fisherman’s Song),” Victor 4104, 1930 or earlier.

2.2 Yoshie Fujiwara (tenor solo with piano accompaniment), “Kojō-no-Tsuki (Moon on Ruined Castle),” Victor 4104, 1930 or earlier.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Pickard’s Chinese Syncopators, “Stay Out of the South—Fox-Trot” (Dixon), His Master’s Voice B 5528, 1928.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 George Parker (baritone solo with orchestral accompaniment), “The Cobbler’s Song (‘Chu Chin Chow’)” (Norton), Zonophone 2046, ca. 1920?

4.2 Stellar Mixed Quartette (mixed voices with chorus), “Mikado: Medleys” (Sullivan and Gilbert), National Music Lovers 1027, 1922?

4.3 Prince’s Orchestra, “The Geisha: Selections” (Jones), Columbia A5475, ca. 1912.


4.5 Helen Newitt (soprano with piano accompaniment by E. Gaylor), “A Geisha’s Life—The Geisha” (Jones), Edison 80571, 1921.

4.6 Yerkes’ S.S. Flotilla Orchestra, “The Mikado: Aeolian Symphony Dance (Fox-Trot)” (Sullivan, arranged by Schubert), Vocalion 14415, 1922.


4.9 Prince’s Orchestra, “Chinese Wedding Procession (Descriptive)” (Hosmer), Columbia A5684, 1915.


CHAPTER 6


CHAPTER 7


7.2 Conway’s Band (directed by Patrick Conway), “Lotus d’Or—Ta-Tao” (Lefort), Victor 17627, 1914.

7.3 Prince’s Band (under the supervision of G. Hepburn Wilson), “Hong Kong ‘Jazz’ One-step” (Von Holstein and Sanders), Columbia A5967, 1917.


7.5 “Chinese Dance (Mohrentanz),” Marinoff 301, ca. 1920s?

CHAPTER 8


8.2 The Watson Sisters (Misses Kitty and Fanny, soprano duet with orchestra accompaniment), “China, We Owe a Lot to You” (Ager and Johnson), Columbia A2375, 1917.

8.3 James Doherty (tenor), “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong” (Rose and Conrad), Edison 51299, 1924.

8.4 Morey Pearl and His Orchestra, “Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong—Fox Trot” (Rose and Conrad), Brunswick 2586, 1924.

8.5 Corona Dance Orchestra (Original Memphis Five), “Since Ma Is Playing Mah-Jongg, Fox Trot” (Rose and Conrad), Regal G 8159, 1924?

8.6 Victor Herbert’s Orchestra, “Madame Butterfly—Fantasie” (Puccini), Victor 55094, 1918.

8.7 Joseph C. Smith’s Orchestra, “Oriental—Fox Trot” (Rose), Victor 35676, 1918.

CHAPTER 9


9.3 Chinese Novelty Orchestra, “Chinese One-Step, Part I,” Columbia E4506, 1921 or earlier.

9.4 “Chinese Vocal Record Recorded in Canton, China: Issued as a Novelty (Parts 1 & 2),” part 2, Pathé 40136, 1918?


9.6 American Quartet (male quartet with orchestra), “Chinatown, My Chinatown” (Schwartz and Jerome), Victor 17684, 1915.

9.7 Ritz Quartet (male quartet with oboe, lute, and piano), “Shanghai Dream Man” (Davis and Akst), Brunswick 3525, 1927.

9.8 Ritz Quartet (male quartet with oboe, lute, and piano), “Oriental Moonlight” (Seaman and Smoley), Brunswick 3525, 1927.

9.9 Fritz Kreisler (violin solo with piano accompaniment by Carl Lamson), “Tambourin Chinois” (Kreisler), Victor 6844, issued in this form ca. 1928?


9.18 Van Eps-Banta Trio, “Chong (Medley), Intro: ‘Anything Is Nice If It Comes from Dixieland’: Fox Trot” (Weeks, Clarke, Meyer, and Ager), Emerson 1023, 1919.


9.22 Cal Stewart (comedy monologue; with the Columbia Quartette for “Barn Dance”), “Uncle Josh’s Barn Dance,” Columbia A697, 1909.


9.29 Mimetic vocal transitions (three successive excerpts from rec. 9.25).

9.30 Mimetic vocal transitions (three successive excerpts from rec. 9.26).


9.36 Gene Greene (baritone solo), “From Here to Shanghai” (Berlin), Little Wonder 541, 1916. The “Hock-a-my, Hock-a-my” at 0:54 was printed in the song’s sheet music; the longer mimetic interpolation at 1:07 was not.

9.37 Gene Greene and Peerless Quartet (comic song with orchestra), “From Here to Shanghai” (Berlin), Victor 18242, 1917. A brief vocal interpolation of “Ching-a-ling, Ching-a-ling,” not printed in the sheet music, occurs at 0:22; the composed “Hock-a-my, Hock-a-my” is heard at 0:53 and 1:35; three more quick phrases were interpolated in the singers’ arrangement from 1:58 to 2:05; and a more sustained mimetic passage, probably with some impromptu vocalizing guided by common practice in orientalist performance, begins at 2:08.

9.38 Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan, “From Here to Shanghai” (Berlin), Edison 50978, 1922. The main episode of mimetic interpolation begins at 2:20.
9.39 Gene Greene (vocal with piano accompaniment), “Chinese Blues: Character Song” (Gardner and Moore), Emerson 7140, 1917. In this different song, mimetic vocality much like the same performer’s practice in recs. 9.35 and 9.36 begins at 1:30.

9.40 Premier Quartet (male voices with orchestra), “Chong (He Come from Hong Kong)” (Weeks), Edison 50538, 1919. The mimetic interpolations are at 0:19 and 0:29.

9.41 Premier Quartet, “Down in Chinatown” (Meyer and Hulten), Edison Blue Amberol cylinder 4185, 1920 or later (excerpt). Mimetic treatments of vocal pitch occur at 0:19 and 0:29.


9.43 Peerless Quartet with orchestral accompaniment, “Chin Chin Chinaman” (Hanley, Goodwin, and MacDonald), Pathé 20201, 1918. A mimetic vocal introduction begins at 0:07; other vocal mimesis occurs at 1:09, 2:08, and later moments.

9.44 Sam Lanin and His Orchestra (vocal chorus by Arthur Fields), “So Does Your Old Mandarin: Fox Trot” (Henderson, Lewis, and Young), Perfect 14579, 1926. A pseudo-dialect sung/spoken passage starts at 0:56.


9.46 Albert Campbell and Henry Burr (tenor duet with orchestra), “Underneath the China Moon” (Brockman), Victor 18365, 1917. Mimetic vocality punctuated with a stroke on a gong (or a large cymbal as proxy gong) is heard at 1:25.


9.48 Nora Bayes (comedienne with orchestra accompaniment), “Sing Song Man” (Friend and Conrad), Columbia A3592, 1922. The melodic gesture first occurs at 1:56, apparently having been saved until that point for added effect.


9.50 Irving Kaufman (tenor solo with orchestra accompaniment), “Chong (He Come from Hong Kong)” (Weeks), Columbia A2714, 1919. Kaufman’s upper-neighbor embellishment is first sung at 1:01 in this rendition of the song.


9.53 Frances Alda (soprano with orchestra), “Poor Butterfly” (Hubbell and Golden), Victor 64653, 1917 (later pressings from the same matrix were issued for years, e.g. Victor 530 in 1923). The “to love” line begins at 1:00.


9.55 Ernest Hare and Billy Jones (The Happiness Boys; male vocal duet with novelty accompaniment), “So Does Your Old Mandarin” (Henderson, Lewis, and Young), Banner 1737, 1926.

9.56 Carroll & Grady (The Eleven-Eleven Boys; popular vocal accompanied by tenor guitar), “Shanghai Honeymoon” (Shockley, Hausman, and Melrose), Gennett 6094, 1927. (The speed and pitch pull-up at the end of this record is apparently an artifact of the recording phonograph’s spring winding down as the take finished; why it wasn’t re-recorded seems a mystery.)

9.57 Orpheus Trio (vocal trio with orchestra accompaniment), “The Japanese Sandman” (Whiting and Egan), Operaphone 21185 (excerpt). The parallel-fifths vocal pickup is heard at 0:26 in this excerpt.


9.60 Anglo-Persians (directed by Louis Katzman), “In an Oriental Garden” (Hayes), Brunswick 3727, 1927.

9.61 Manhattan Dance Makers, “In an Oriental Garden: Fox Trot” (Hayes), Harmony 590-H, 1928.


9.63 Ray Miller and His Orchestra, “Shanghai Lullaby—Fox Trot” (Jones and Kahn), Brunswick 2575, 1924. The “Miya Sama” interpolation begins at 2:54.

9.64 Arthur Fields (baritone solo with orchestra accompaniment), “Ragging the Chopsticks” (Frankl and Gottler), Edison 50584, 1919.


9.66 Roger Wolfe Kahn and His Orchestra (vocal refrain by Frank Munn), “In a Bamboo Garden—Fox Trot” (Donaldson), Victor 21675, 1928. Musical allusions to “Miya Sama” and “Chinatown, My Chinatown” are heard respectively at 2:20 and 2:25.
9.67 Leo Reisman and His Orchestra, “Chinese Moon: Fox-trot” (Nussbaum and Bronfin), Columbia 673-D, 1926.


9.69 Coon-Sanders Original Nighthawk Orchestra (vocal refrain by C.A. Coon and J.L. Sanders), “Hong Kong Dream Girl—Fox Trot (Mi Muchacha de Hong-Kong)” (Barris and Springer), Victor 19754, 1925.

9.70 Virginia Thatcher (contralto solo with orchestra), “Chinese Lullaby from ‘East Is West’” (Bowers), Pathé 22096, 1919 or later.


9.73 Band, “From Here to Shanghai: One Step” (Berlin), Little Wonder 640, 1917. Brief mimetic ensemble interludes begin at 00:47 and 00:54.


9.76 Carl Fenton’s Orchestra, “Good-bye Shanghai!—Fox Trot” (Meyer and Johnson), Brunswick 2190, 1922. The mimetic ensemble passage begins at 2:02.

9.77 Club Royal Orchestra under the direction of Clyde Doerr, “Good-Bye Shanghai—Fox Trot” (Meyer and Johnson), Victor 18857, 1922. The mimetic ensemble passage begins at 1:50.


9.79 Imperial Dance Orchestra, “Mandarin: Fox Trot” (James), Domino 3454, 1925. The mimetic ensemble passage begins at 1:36.

9.80 Premier American Male Quartet (with orchestral accompaniment), “Chong” (Weeks), Pathé 22113, 1919 (excerpt). Combined vocal and instrumental mimesis is performed from 0:45 to 1:00 in this excerpt; it is foreshadowed by such brief moments of purely vocal mimesis as that heard here at 0:19.

9.81 Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan (baritone and tenor with orchestra), “All Aboard for Chinatown” (Brookhouse and Davis), Edison 50350, 1916.

9.82 Radio Dance Orchestra, “Limehouse Blues, One Step” (Braham and Furber), Columbia 3161, 1922. This one English example also illustrates the trans-Atlantic scope of some of these mimetic practices.
9.83 Green Brothers Novelty Band, “My Cherry Blossom: Fox Trot” (Snyder), Odeon 20053, 1921.
9.84 Melody Kings Dance Orchestra, “Hi Lee, Hi Lo—Fox Trot” (Schuster and West), His Master’s Voice 216435 (Canadian pressing), 1923.
9.85 Sam Lanin’s Dance Orchestra, “Limehouse Blues (Nostalgias arrabalescas): Fox Trot” (Braham and Furber), Banner 1351, 1924.
9.86 Six Black Diamonds (vocal chorus by Arthur Hall), “Hi Lee Hi Lo: Fox Trot” (Schuster and West), Regal 9512, 1923?
9.87 Regal Jazz Syncopators, “Ping Sing” (Bernard), Regal 9132, 1921.
9.88 Jack Hills and His Orchestra, “Chinky Charleston: Fox-Trot” (Fuller), Madison 8117, 1927. As one example among many of such dissemination, pressings from the same matrix used for this record also were issued under the name of Paul Bolognese and His Orchestra as Grey Gull 1472.
9.89 Casino Dance Orchestra, “Tokio Blues (from ‘Music Box Revue’): Fox Trot” (Berlin), Perfect 14385, 1925.
9.91 Isham Jones Orchestra, “My Cherry Blossom—Fox Trot” (Snyder), Brunswick 5061, 1921. One countermelody of the sort noted in the text begins at 1:04.
9.92 Paul Ash and His Granada Orchestra, “A Japanese Sunset—Fox Trot” (Deppen), Brunswick 2517, 1923.
9.93 Casino Dance Orchestra, “Lonesome Little China Doll: Fox Trot” (Boisclair and Meskill), Perfect 14279, 1924. Some representative whole-tone material is played starting at 1:32.
9.94 Atlantic Dance Orchestra, “Mah Jongg Blues: Fox Trot” (Dunbar and Stevens), Edison 51102, 1923. One illustrative chromatic line occurs at 1:02, where it acquires oriental meaning by being heard in its pentatonic context.
9.95 International Novelty Orchestra, “Chinese Billikens (from ‘Chauve-Souris’)” (Archangelsky), Victor 18979, 1922. A wide array of exoticist moves include chromaticism, e.g. at 1:01.
9.97 Isham Jones Rainbo Orchestra (with violin passages by Leo Murphy and piano passages by Alfred Eldridge), “The Japanese Sandman” (Whiting and Egan), Brunswick 5026, 1920. An embellished burst of “tom-tom” rhythm is played starting at 0:06.
9.98 Raderman’s Orchestra, “The Japanese Sandman: Fox Trot” (Whiting and Egan), Gennett 9086, 1920. Drum phrases similar to those in rec. 9.97 appear here at different structural points in another arrangement of the same song (e.g., at 0:05).


9.102 Ben Pollack and His Orchestra (with vocal chorus by Ted Bancroft), “Sing Song Girl (Chinita de la cantilena): Fox Trot” (Hanley and McCarthy), Banner 32074, 1931.

9.103 Arthur Fields (baritone solo with xylophone and piano accompaniment), “Ragging the Chopsticks: Novelty Song” (Frankl and Gottler), Emerson 9209, 1919. The “tick tick tick” line is at 0:49.


9.106 Paul Biese Trio, “In the Land of Rice and Tea: Fox-trot” (Straight and Biese), Columbia A2975, 1920. The main vamp as such is played four times from 0:06 to 0:12.


9.110 Yerkes S.S. Flotilla Dance Orchestra, “Goodbye Shanghai: Fox Trot” (Meyer and Johnson), Banner 1037, 1922.

9.111 Glantz and His Orchestra, “Good-bye Shanghai! Fox Trot” (Meyer and Johnson), Emerson 10520, 1922.

9.112 The Columbians (Dance Orchestra De Luxe), “Tokio Blues (From ‘Music Box Revue 1925’): Fox Trot” (Berlin), Columbia 313-D, 1925.

9.113 The Playboys, “Shanghai Dream Man: Fox-Trot” (Davis and Akst), Pathé 6996, 1927 or later. A typical fill is heard at 0:49.

9.115 Cleartone Dance Orchestra, “Good-Bye Shanghai: Fox Trot” (Joseph Meyer, and Howard Johnson), Cleartone P 125, 1922? Orchestrated reinforcement of melodic rhythm occurs, for example, at 0:42.

9.116 Sleepy Hall and His Collegians, “Sing Song Girl (Little Yella Cinderella): Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus” (Hanley and McCarthy), Melotone M-12022 1930. A variety of percussive reinforcement bubbles recurrently throughout this arrangement.

9.117 Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, “Japanese Mammy” (Donaldson and Kahn), Columbia 1701-D, 1929. Marked ornamentation is heard in violin parts at the beginning and in a section starting at 1:35.

9.118 Wisconsin Roof Orchestra, “Shanghai Honeymoon: Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus” (Shockley, Hausman, and Melrose), Paramount 20529, 1927.

9.119 Eddie Elkins Orchestra, “Tea Cup Girl” (Wilson), Columbia A3509, 1921. Illustrative fills are heard at 0:04 and 0:44.

9.120 American Republic Band, “Flower of the Orient: Waltz” (Savino), Pathé 20357, 1918 (excerpt).

9.121 Gene Rodemich’s Orchestra, “Shanghai Shuffle—Shimmy Fox Trot” (Rodemich and Conley), Brunswick 2760, 1924.


9.124 Yerkes’ S.S. Flotilla Orchestra, “Sing Song Man: Fox Trot” (Friend and Conrad), Vocalion 14318, 1922. The closing gong stroke is at 2:45.


9.126 Joe Samuels and His Master Players, “Japanese Moon (Fox Trot)” (Huntley and Terriss), Gennett 4998, 1922.


9.128 American Republic Band, “Hong Kong: One or Two Step” (Von Holstein and Sanders), Pathé 20190, 1917 (excerpt).

9.129 Kaplan’s Melodists, “Hoptown Chinatown Hop—Fox Trot” (Baskette, Dealy, and Hunsbedt), Edison 51054, 1923. Illustrative percussion is heard in passages such as that at 1:04–1:13.


9.132 The Melody Sheiks, “Tokio Blues (From ‘The Music Box Revue 1925’): Fox Trot” (Berlin), Okeh 40279, 1925. The small gong is first sounded at 0:05.


9.134 Art Kahn and His Orchestra, “Shanghai Lullaby: Fox Trot” (Jones and Kahn), Columbia 45-D, 1924. Woodblocks are prominent at locations including the beginning, at 0:33, and at 2:40.


9.136 Rega Dance Orchestra, “Ti-O-San: Fox Trot” (Traveller and Case), OKe 4418, 1921. Woodblocks and pentatonic melody are to the fore starting at 0:11.

9.137 Emerson Military Band, “Hong Kong: ‘Jazz’ One Step” (Von Holstein and Sanders), Emerson 7204, 1917.

9.138 Casino Dance Orchestra, “Hi Lee Hi Lo: Fox Trot” (Schuster and West), Perfect 14152, 1923.

9.139 Oriental Dance Troupe, “Chinese Rose: Fox Trot with Vocal Chorus” (Remsen), Van Dyke 71777, 1929. Other pressings of this recording were issued under the name of Crystal Dawn Players as Madison 5081 and on other labels.

9.140 Jack Denny and His Orchestra, “Song of Shanghai—Fox Trot (Canción de Shanghai)” (Rose, Whiting, and Egan), Brunswick 3400, 1927. Typical mimetic reed-playing occurs in the introduction (at 0:01–0:07) and at 2:38–2:46.

9.141 Harry Reser’s Syncopators, “Sing-Loo: Fox Trot” (Norman and Ruby), Columbia 366-D, 1925. Clearly mimetic timbre is heard in nasal overtones and wide vibrato from 0:05 to 0:09; less clear-cut practice is heard later in the performance.

9.142 Nathan Glantz and His Orchestra, “When Buddha Smiles: Fox Trot” (Brown and Freed), Banner 1024, 1922. The clarinet phrase is played at 3:00, immediately following a less ambiguously orientalist line.


9.144 The Happy Six, “Good-Bye, Shanghai! Medley Fox-trot (Introducing: ‘Call Me’)” (Meyer and Johnson; Stanton), Columbia A3542, 1921. The melodic gesture noted in the text is heard at 0:54 and several later points.


9.146 Glantz and His Orchestra, “Song of India: Fox Trot” (Rimsky-Korsakov), OKe 4515, 1922.
9.147 Arthur Pryor’s Band (military band), “Home Sweet Home (As it might be played in Germany, Spain, Hungary, China, Ireland and America)” (Lampe), Victor 35240, 1912. The “China” section starts at 2:36.


9.149 Billy Murray and Ed Smalle (vocal duet with orchestra), “Hi Lee Hi Lo” (Schuster and West), Victor 19095, 1923. Mimetic vocal timbre is added to the words “velly velly nice” at 0:22 and is used in many other phrases.

9.150 Arthur Hall and the Gregorians under the direction of Dan Gregory, “Hi-Lee-Hi-Lo (Which Means in Chinese I Love You)” (Schuster and West), Olympic 1523, 1923?


9.152 Irving Kaufman (tenor solo with accompaniment by Selvin’s Orchestra), “Hi-Lee Hi-Lo: Comedy Song” (Schuster and West), Vocalion 14655, 1923. The fiddle-to-tuba exchange sounds from 2:56 to 3:01.


9.158 Shannon Four with Rega Orchestra (vocal quartette with orchestra), “Ching-a-Ling’s Jazz Bazaar” (Bridges and Johnson), OKeh 4094, 1920.

9.159 Mack & Miller, “Ching-a-Ling’s Jazz Bazaar” (Bridges and Johnson), Edison Blue Amberol cylinder 4074 (the speed and pitch variation is an artifact of a warped cylinder).

9.160 Honey Duke and His Uke, “Chinky Charleston” (Fuller), Globe 2256, 1926.


9.162 Olive Kline (soprano solo with orchestra accompaniment), “Japanese Moon” (Huntley and Terriss), Victor 45332, 1923. Brief jazz-referential passages juxtaposed with orientalist material are heard at 2:00 and 2:08.
9.163 Green Brothers Novelty Orchestra, “Ti-O-San: Fox Trot” (Traveller and Case), Clarion 1108, 1921. One juxtaposition of ensemble rhythm mimetic of orientality and “jazz” is heard respectively at 0:11-0:20 and 0:21-0:30, with a “raggy” sixteenth-to-dotted-eighth-note figure preparing the transition at 0:19.

9.164 Arthur Collins (baritone solo), “The Dance of Sing Ling Foo: Song” (Alphin), 2-minute Albany Indestructible cylinder 902, 1908 (the speed and pitch variation is an artifact of a warped cylinder; the rhythmic contrasts at issue are audible despite it).


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10.2 Joe Phillips (baritone solo with orchestra), “The Red Lantern (Shine on Red Lantern)” (Fisher), OKeh 1195, 1919 (the audible disjuncture at 1:12 is a moment of mistracking that could be only partially repaired due to missing material in a skipped groove).


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IN.8 Thomas Nast, “A Paradox. ‘A Chinaman has declared his intention to become an American citizen’—the consequences,” wood engraving from Harper’s Weekly, 22 May 1880.


IN.14 Hamilton, “Ah Sam Randall, the Heathen Chinee,” color lithograph from Judge, 28 April 1888.

IN.15 Vincent, “Poor Civil Service Reform Humbug: It Is Nicknamed ‘Chinese’ and Has No Friends,” color lithograph from Judge, 10 May 1890.


IN.18  “Act IN. Me Dancree Too. —Allee Samee Likee Melican Man” (Charles T. Parsloe as Wing Lee in My Partner), color lithographic advertising card for theatrical production, ca. 1880s.


IN.33 B. W. Kilburn, “Asia at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Mo.,” photographic stereo view. Littleton, NH: B.W. Kilburn, 1904.


IN.41 “Yours Resp., Sam Wong” (anonymous yellowface performer), gelatin silver print photographic postcard, 1913.

IN.42 “Fein & Tennyson in ‘A Revusical Musicale’,” gelatin silver print photographic postcard promoting theatrical act, early 20th century.

IN.43 “Don’t fail to see the Famous Osaka Troupe of Japanese Marvels...,” color lithographic postcard promoting vaudeville performers; mailed 20 January 1906 in Concord, NH.


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1.3 “Tamaki Miura / Chicago Opera Co.,” gelatin silver print photograph, ca. 1918–1926.


1.5 Back of photograph in fig. 1.2, stamped in purple ink: “TAMAKI MIURA, / the Japanese Lyric Soprano” … “BOSTON GRAND / OPERA CO. / IN CONJUNCTION WITH / PAVLOWA BALLET RUSSE”; ca. 1915–1917.


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2.2 MS, sheet music cover for Two Little Songs from Japan, “harmonized and idealized by” Charles Wakefield Cadman with lyrics translated by Tomijiro Asai. Boston: White-Smith, 1912.

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3.2 Tan Araki, “Araki’s Troupe,” lithographic two-sided business card, Cincinnati, OH: Tan Araki, ca. 1915. Text printed on the back includes “TAN ARAKI / MANAGER ARAKI’S JAPAN’S MARVELOUS ARTISTS.”

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4.1 “Jack and Daisy (a la Chinee)” in 12-page souvenir program for Fitz & Webster’s A Breezy Time, 1900 (printed in Detroit).


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4.7 Starmer, sheet music cover for “Chin-Chin Fox-Trot (On Melodies from Charles Dillingham’s Successful Musical Fantasy ‘Chin-Chin’ with Montgomery and Stone)” (Ivan Caryll), New York: Chappell & Co., 1914.


4.9 “East Is West with Fay Bainter,” color lithographic advertising die-cut (front and back), New York: Astor Theatre, ca. 1921.


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5.2 “Blanche Bates in The Darling of the Gods: A Drama of Old Japan” (front cover of souvenir program). St. Louis, MO: [David Belasco], 1904


5.4 Walker Whiteside as Tokeramo in “‘The Typhoon’: A Dramatization of the Yellow Peril,” halftone lithograph with part of accompanying text. Current Literature, May 1912, 571.


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6.1 White family in Chinese costume, gelatin silver print photograph mounted on board. Chicago: Holgerson studio, late 19th or early 20th century.

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7.1 Cover of The Yellow Peril: A Solution of This Most Vexing Problem (Comic Operetta in Three Acts), Annie Laurie Name and Alice Brandon Caldwell. New York: Edgar S. Werner & Co., 1906.


7.3 Sloan & Woodward Co., “Look Like a Jap” from the False Face Series, color lithographic mask published as the Art Supplement to the Boston Globe, 20 November 1904.

7.4 Mask of Japanese woman, color lithograph from perforated sheet; maybe published as a newspaper supplement, ca. 1900–1910? (possibly a later facsimile).

7.5 De Takacs, sheet music cover for “Ta-Tao Novelty Chinese Dance or One-Step (The International Dance Sensation),” William H. Penn. New York: Penn Music Co., 1914.

7.6 First notation page of “Ta-Tao Novelty Chinese Dance or One-Step (The International Dance Sensation),” William H. Penn. New York: Penn Music Co., 1914.


7.11 “Clash at Dance Meet Halts Some New Steps” (cartoon), Cleveland Press, 10 June 1914.

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8.2 Anonymous amateur photographer, domestic scene with piano, gelatin silver print photograph, late 19th or early 20th century.


8.16 Frederick S. Manning, cover for “Down in Midnight Town,” Harry Von Tilzer (music) and Andrew B. Sterling and Edward P. Moran (lyrics). New York: Harry Von Tilzer, 1921.
8.17 Edgar Keller, cover for “My Little Hong Kong Baby (My Little Cup of Tea),” John W. Bratton (music) and Paul West (lyrics). New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1902.
8.18 P. M. Griffith, cover for “Tea Cup Girl,” Weston Wilson. San Francisco: Daniels & Wilson, 1921.


8.30 LPN, cover for “Cherry Blossom,” Harry Raymond (music) and Gus Kahn (lyrics). New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1917.


8.43 Crigler, cover for “Chan: Song of China,” Helen Lewis (music) and Richard A. Whiting (lyrics). Detroit: John S. Finck, 1928.


8.45 Starmer, cover for “My Lady from Japan,” from The Good Old Summertime (musical comedy), George Evans (music) and Ren Shields (lyrics). New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1903.


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8.172 Rose monogrammist, cover for “The Jazz One-Step Adapted from the Oriental Song Success ‘Hong-Kong’,” Hans Von Holstein and Alma M. Sanders. New York: Leo Feist, 1917.


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9.1 Columbia Graphophone Company, “Columbia Grafonola,” color lithographic magazine advertisement, ca. 1918?


9.20 Sonograph of an excerpt from “All Aboard for Chinatown” (Brookhouse and Davis) as performed by Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan (baritone and tenor with orchestra) for Edison record 50350, 1916 (cf. rec. 9.81). This excerpt begins at 0:50 (explanatory notes may be found on media disk).

9.21 Sonograph of an excerpt from “All Aboard for Chinatown” (Brookhouse and Davis) as performed by Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan for Edison 50350, 1916 (cf. rec. 9.81). This excerpt begins at 1:28.

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10.4 “‘I Speak Only Dignified American Language; Get Me, Steve?:’ Joseph M. Schenck Presents Constance Talmadge in ‘East Is West’” [magazine advertisement]. Saturday Evening Post, 11 November 1922, 117.


10.8 “Madame Butterfly” with Mary Pickford in “Strand Theater” (program). New York: Strand Theater, week beginning 7 November 1915.


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CE.1 Music, effects, and voiceover narration in an excerpt from p. 25 of a transcription of Sounds of the Orient LP (Japan Air Lines, 1966). Time flows from left to right along three temporally aligned paths. These divide sound into voiceover narration recorded in a studio; location recordings of music; and location recordings of other sounds. This is an analytic application of a synthetic typology used in sound-for-picture audio production, in which sounds often are categorized as dialogue, music, or effects.
Sheet Music Subcorpus for Lyrics Content Analysis

This appendix lists the 244-song sample (selected from this dissertation’s corpus of orientalist works) used in Chapter 8’s quantitative analysis of lyrical contents. A far from complete list of relevant songs, it reflects only those that matched the criteria explained there and were in hand in 2003. Many more such pieces were published in any one of the years represented below, as may be seen by comparing this list with related studies, catalogues of sheet music in public collections, and related resources.

Ordered by year and then title, the list marks with (C) and (J) songs counted as pertaining to Chinese or Japanese referents. Years below are those of editions used for this study; a few reflect songs found in republished variants from two or fewer years after their earliest copyright (here in brackets below edition year). For songs of which multiple editions were found, earliest issues were used except in the case of “Oo Lee Long” (published 1899, republished as a newspaper supplement in 1900).

1900 Oo Lee Long: A Chinese Love Song (C)
[1899] Music and lyrics by George Evans; New York World

1900 Wing Lee’s Rag-Time Clock (C)

1900 Japanese Love Song (C,J)
Music by Clayton Thomas; lyrics not credited; New York: Boosey & Co.

1900 My Almond-Eyed Boy (C)
Music by Alfred E. Aarons, lyrics by Edward S. Abelles [Abeles?]; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1900 Sweet San Toy: A Japanese Love Song (J)
Music by Adam Geibel, lyrics by Richard Henry Buck; Boston: White-Smith

1900 Little Japanese Baby (J)
[circa] Music and lyrics by Gustav Luders; Bijou Opera House?

1901 A China Heart (C)

1901 Ching a Ling a Loo (C)
Music and lyrics by Max Hoffmann; Chicago: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1901 In a Tea Garden: A Chinese Ballad (C)
Music and lyrics by Christine Wood Bullwinkle; No place: no publisher

1902 My Little Hong Kong Baby (My Little Cup of Tea) (C)
Music by John W. Bratton, lyrics by Paul West; New York: M. Witmark & Sons
1902 Pinky Panky Poo: Chinese Love Song (C)
Music by Andy Lewis, lyrics by Aaron S. Hoffman; Chicago: Sol Bloom

1903 In the Land of Far Cathay (C)
Music by J. Arndt Morris, lyrics by Mary Wood; Chicago: Chicago American

1903 My Japanese Baby (J)
Music by A. Baldwin Sloane, lyrics by Arthur Ambrose; New York: Sol Bloom

1903 My Lady from Japan (J)
Music by George Evans, lyrics by Ren Shields; New York: Chas. K. Harris

1903 My Little Japanesee (J)
Music and lyrics by Max Hoffmann; Chicago: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1903 My Sweet Ki-Yi (J)
Music and lyrics by J. Adrian [cover has “Adrain”]; Pittsburg [sic]: Walrus Co.

1903 We’re a Scientific Band (J)

1903 Whoa San (J)
Music by Ben M. Jerome, lyrics by Matt C. Woodward; San Francisco Sunday Examiner

1903 Yo-San, The Darling of the Gods (J)
Music by Byrd Dougherty, lyrics by Ernest Hanegan; New York: Sol Bloom

1904 The Falling of Port Arthur: A Descriptive Song (J)
Music and lyrics by W.H. Woodward; Toledo, OH: Woodward

1904 Fighting for the Cause of Old Japan (J)
Music by Thomas R. Confare, lyrics by Morris S. Silver; Chicago: Victor Kremer Co.

1904 Happy Jappy Soldier Man: Japanese War Song (J)
Music by John W. Bratton, lyrics by Paul West; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1904 The Jap’s Farewell (J)
Music by Russell A. Dickinson, lyrics by Herbert Earle Munroe; Providence, RI: Westminster

1904 Karama: A Japanese Romance (J)
Music and lyrics by Vivian Grey [pseudonym of Mabel McKinley]; New York: Leo Feist

1904 Little Japan (J)

1904 Moon Eyes: Chinese Serenade (C)
Music by Howard A. Winburn, lyrics by George A. Norton; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1904 My Belle of To-Ki-O: Japanese Love Song (J)

1904 My Japanee: You Darling of the Gods (J)
Music by S. Gibson Cooke; lyrics by Donald Smedt; Boston: Walter Jacobs
1904 My Little Kokomo (J)
Music by Shepard Camp, lyrics by Sam Rice; New York: Howley, Dresser Co.

1904 One Little Soldier Man (J)
Music by Neil Moret [pseudonym of Charles N. Daniels], lyrics by Edward Madden;
New York: Shapiro, Remick & Co.

1904 Ting Ling Foo: Song (C)
Music by George Lowell Tracy, lyrics by William Henry Gardner; Boston: White-
Smith

1905 A Tale of Tokio (J)
Music by James M. Fulton, lyrics by Gerald Kelley; No place: no publisher

1905 Little Fighting Soldier Man (J)
Music and lyrics by Lillian Coffin; Chicago Sunday American

1905 The Maid in the Jappy Kimona (J)
Music and lyrics by Marian Lee Patterson; Washington, DC: Sanders & Stayman Co.

1905 My Lu Lu San: Japanese Love Song (J)

1905 A Ragtime Jap: A Genuine, Up-to-Date Novelty (J)
Music by Harry O. Sutton, lyrics by Jean Lenox; New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co.

1905 Tokio (J)
Music by William Frederick Peters, lyrics by Richard Carle; New York: M. Witmark
& Sons

1906 Plinky Plunk: A Chinese Elopement (C)

1906 Pretty Little Japanesee Lady (J)
Music and lyrics by Charles Alphin; New York: Shapiro

1907 My Lotus Flower (C)
Music by Seymour Furth, lyrics by Edgar Selden; New York: Maurice Shapiro

1908 Lotus San: A Japanese Romance Song (J)
Music by Dolly Jardon, lyrics by Edward Madden; New York: Jerome H. Remick &
Co.

1908 My Japanee (J)
Music and lyrics by Louis L. Comstock; Chicago: Will Rossiter

1909 Chee Wee: A Chinese Novelty (C)
Music and lyrics by Thomas S. Allen; Boston: Jos. M. Daly

1909 Chinese Love Song: Duet (C)

1909 Ching Foo (C)
Music by Raymond Walker, lyrics by Joseph H. McKeon and William Tracy;
New York: Atlas Music House

1909 Meet Me Where the Lanterns Glow (J)
Music and lyrics by Manuel Klein; New York: M. Witmark & Sons
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Underneath the Japanese Moon (J)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>E. J. Murray</td>
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1915  Poppy Time in Old Japan (J)  
Music by Will E. Dulmage, lyrics by E.J. Meyers; Chicago: F. J. A. Forster

1915  Towsee Mongalay (Good Luck, Good Bye): Chinese Love Song (C)  

1915  Won’t You Be My Little Fan-Tan Girl (C,J)  
Music and lyrics by P. Hans Flath; Dayton, OH: Bee-Bee Confection Co.

1916  All Aboard for Chinatown (C)  
[1915] Music by Win Brookhouse, lyrics by Frank Davis; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1916  Fan Tan Man (C)  
Music by Oscar Gardner, lyrics by Herman Rose and Fred D. Moore; New York: Joe Morris

1916  Frisco’s Chinatown: Song (C)  
Music by Isham Jones, lyrics by “Ole” Olsen; Saginaw: Michigan Music Publishing Co.

1916  Hurry Back to My Bamboo Shack (J)  

1916  My Dreamy China Lady (C)  
Music by Egbert Van Alstyne, lyrics by Gus Kahn; New York Jerome H. Remick & Co.

1916  Poor Butterfly (J)  
Music by Raymond Hubbell, lyrics by John L. Golden; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1916  When He Comes Back to Me (Japanese Song) (J)  
Music by Dave Stamper, lyrics by Gene Buck; New York: T. B. Harms & Francis, Day & Hunter

1916  When Sing Lo Chin Plays His Mandolin (C)  

1917  Hong Kong: The Chinese Love Song (C)  

1917  Cherry Blossom (J)  
Music by Harry Raymond, lyrics by Gus Kahn; New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co.

1917  Chin-Chin Chinaman (C)  
Music by James F. Hanley, lyrics by Joe Goodwin and Ballard MacDonald; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1917  China Dreams (C)  
Music by Egbert Van Alstyne, lyrics by Raymond Egan and Gus Kahn; Detroit, MI: Jerome H. Remick & Co.

1917  China, We Owe a Lot to You (C)  
Music by Milton Ager, lyrics by Howard Johnson; New York: Leo. Feist
1917  Ching Chong (C)
Music by Lee S. Roberts, lyrics by J. Will Callahan; Chicago: Lee S. Roberts

1917  Chu-Chin-Chow (C)
Music by Dave Stamper, lyrics by Gene Buck; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1917  Come Back to Bamboo Land (To Your Lonely Little Mi Moi San) (J)
Music by Paul Biese and F. Henri Klickmann, lyrics by The Loos Brothers; Chicago: Frank K. Root & Co.

1917  From Here to Shanghai (C)

1917  Good-Bye Cherry Blossom (J)
Music and lyrics by Charles Forrest Wilkins and Edward Allen Stickney; Chicago: Forster

1917  I'm Coming Back to You, Poor Butterfly (J)
Music by Raymond Hubbell, lyrics by Andrew Donnelly; New York: T. B. Harms & Francis, Day & Hunter

1917  I'm Goin' to Peek in, in Pekin (C)
Music by Frank Pepe, lyrics by Murray B. Tannenholz; Coney Island, NY: Harmony House

1917  In Old Japan (J)
Music and lyrics by Walter Smith; San Francisco: Sherman, Clay & Co.

1917  Inari: Japanese Song — Fox Trot (J)
Music and lyrics by Vivian Burnett; New York: McKinley

1917  Let's Go Back to Dreamy Lotus Land (C)

1917  Mister Butterfly (J)
Music by Leo Edwards, lyrics by Ballard MacDonald; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1917  My Little China Doll (Oriental Serenade) (C)
Music and lyrics by Gus Van, Joe Schenck, and Jack Yellen; New York: Chas. K. Harris

1917  My Little Sing Song Girl (J)

1917  My Princess of the Willow Tree (J)
Music by Carey Morgan, lyrics by Will J. Harris; New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co.

1917  My Yokohama Girl: Song (J)

1917  Suki San (Where the Cherry Blossoms Fall): Japanese Novelty Song (J)
Music by Walter Donaldson, lyrics by J. Keirn Brennan; New York: M. Witmark & Sons
1917 When It’s Cherry Time in Tokio (J)
Music and lyrics by Ivan Reid and P. De Rose; New York: F. B. Haviland

1917 Where the Yang-tze Ki-ang Flows (Way Out In China) (C)
Music by Arthur Lange, lyrics by Bernie Grossman; New York: Joe Morris

1917 Yock-a-Hilo Town: Novelty Song (C)
Music by Walter Donaldson, lyrics by Monty C. Brice; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1917 Garden of My Dreams (J)
Music by Louis A. Hirsch and Dave Stamper, lyrics by Gene Buck; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1917 My Pretty Poppy (J)
Music and lyrics by Robert Levenson and Jack Mendelsohn; Boston: Jack Mendelsohn

1918 Pipe Dream Blues (C)
Music and lyrics by Spencer Williams, Marguerite Kendall, and J. Russel Robinson; Chicago: Lee S. Roberts

1918 When the Cherry Trees Are Blooming in Japan (J)
Music and lyrics by Charles K. Harris; New York: Chas. K. Harris

1918 You’re a Broken China Doll (C)
Music by Robert Allan, lyrics by Dave Allan; Chicago: Milton

1918 Allee Samee (Can You Blame Me for Loving You?): Chinese Novelty Song (C)
Music by Peter De Rose, lyrics by Sam Coslow; New York: F. B. Haviland

1919 Buddha (C,J)
Music by Lew Pollack, lyrics by Ed Rose; New York: McCarthy & Fisher

1919 China Dragon Blues (C)
Music by Will Donaldson, lyrics by I. Caesar; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1919 China Lily: Think of Me (C)
Music and lyrics by Bob Chamberlin; Chicago: Bob Chamberlin

1919 Chinaland (C)
Music and lyrics by Ick Ogden; Buffalo, NY: Eberle

1919 Chinese Lullaby (C)
Music and lyrics by Robert Hood Bowers; New York: G. Schirmer

1919 Chinwah: Song (C)
Music by Peter De Rose, lyrics by Ivan Reid; New York: F. B. Haviland

1919 Cho-San (From the Land of Japan): A Japanese Orientale (J)
Music and lyrics by Frederick Seymour and Fred W. Pike; Toledo, OH: Waldorf

1919 Chong (He Come from Hong Kong) (C)
Music and lyrics by Harold Weeks; New York: Leo. Feist
1919  East Is West (C)
Music by Silvio Hein, lyrics by Hassard Short; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1919  Fan Tan: Oriental Fox-Trot (J)
Music by Patsy Raymond, lyrics by Ed. Plottle; Scranton, PA: Whitmore

1919  Fan-San (C) [cover has title as “Fan San”; this as first notation page]
Music by Alex Sullivan, lyrics by Lynn Cowan; New York: Armusic

1919  Fast Asleep in Poppyland (C)
Music and lyrics by Byron Gay; Chicago: Will Rossiter

1919  Fu-Ji (J)
Music by Oliver G. Wallace, lyrics by Arthur Freed; Seattle: Musicland

1919  The Geisha Girl in Tokio (J)
Music and lyrics by Kerry Mills; New York: Kerry Mills

1919  Goodbye Shanghai: Song (C)

1919  I’m Sneakin’ to Peek In Pekin (C)
Music by Monte Carlo and Alma M. Sanders, lyrics by Richard W. Pascoe; New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co.

1919  In China (C)

1919  Lo-Ki (My Chinese Sweetheart) (C)
Music by Irving Bibo, lyrics by Ed Rose and Henry Bergman; New York: Irving Berlin

1919  Ming Toy (C)
Music by Bert Grant and Cecil Arnold, lyrics by Roy Turk; New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co.

1919  My Pretty Little China Maid (C)
Music by James (Slap) White, lyrics by James Altiere and Oliver J. Franke; Boston: James S. White Co.

1919  My Rose of Old Japan (J)

1919  My Sing Song Girl (C)
Music by Raymond Hubbell, lyrics by R. H. Burnside; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1919  Night Time in Old Japan (J)
Music and lyrics by Joe Solman, Bernard Eyges, and Maurice Solman; Boston: Lang

1919  Pan Yan (And His Chinese Jazz Band) (C)
Music by J. Russel Robinson, lyrics by Al. Bernard; New York: Frederick V. Bowers
1919  Poor Little Butterfly Is a Fly Girl Now (J)

1919  Poppy Blossom (J)
Music by Abe Olman, lyrics by Jack J. Yellen; New York: Leo Feist

1919  The Red Lantern (Shine on Red Lantern) (C)
Music and lyrics by Fred Fisher; New York: McCarthy & Fisher

1919  Rose of Japan (J)
Music and lyrics by Moe Thompson and Norman Herbert; New York: Joe Morris

1919  Say-Yoh (C)
Music by Vernon Eville, lyrics by Avery Werner; New York: Boosey & Co.

1919  Shanghai (C)
Music by Dave Stamper, lyrics by Gene Buck; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day & Hunter

1919  Shantung: Chino-Japo Novelty Ballad (C,J)
Music and lyrics by L. Wolfe Gilbert and Dan Caslar; New York: Gilbert & Friedland

1919  Sing Me to Sleep (With a Chinese Lullaby) (C)
Music and lyrics by Charles K. Harris; New York: Chas. K. Harris

1919  Singapoo (Song of the East) (C)
Music by Neil Moret [pseudonym of Charles N. Daniels], lyrics by Maude Fulton; San Francisco: Daniels & Wilson

1919  Sya Nara (That Means Good-Bye) (J)

1919  That Shanghai Melody (C)
Music by J. Russel Robinson, lyrics by Al. M. Kendall; New York: Joe Morris

1919  Ting Ling Toy: Song (C)
Music and lyrics by Mary Earl [pseudonym of Robert A. King]; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1919  Under the Golden China Moon (C)

1919  When the Lotus Flowers Bloom in Chinaland (C)
Music and lyrics by Charles K. Harris; New York: Chas. K. Harris

1919  Where the Lanterns Glow (J)
Music by Charles L. Johnson, lyrics by J. Stanley Royce; Chicago: Forster

1919  Yo-San (J)
Music by W.C. Polla, lyrics by Jean Lefavre; Hartford, CT: C. C. Church & Co.

1919  Yokohama Love (J)
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<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
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<th>Publisher(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>China Moon (C)</td>
<td>Music by Frank Thornton, lyrics by Don Everett; New York: Carl Fischer</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>The Chinaman’s Song (C)</td>
<td>Music by Percy E. Fletcher, lyrics by Oscar Asche; New York: T. B. Harms and Francis, Day &amp; Hunter</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Ching-a Ling’s Jazz Bazaar (C)</td>
<td>Music by Ethel Bridges, lyrics by Howard Johnson; New York: Leo. Feist</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Down in Chinatown (Au Quartier Chinois) (C)</td>
<td>Music and lyrics by Joe Meyer and George P. Hulten; New York: Leo. Feist</td>
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<td>Fan Tan (C)</td>
<td>Music and lyrics by Carroll Loveday; Boston: Brewster</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Hi-Lo: Chinese Fox-Trot (C)</td>
<td>Music and lyrics by George Fairman; New York: George Fairman</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>In an Oriental Garden: Song (C)</td>
<td>Music by Nat Goldstein, lyrics by Gus Kahn and Bud De Sylva; New York: Jerome H. Remick &amp; Co.</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Jazzie Jazz in Chinaland (Jazzy Jazzy Sound in All Chinatown) (C)</td>
<td>Music by Louis F. Borromeo and Al. Heather, lyrics by Herman Bush; New York: Fred Fisher</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>The Lantern Song (J)</td>
<td>Music by R.L. Harlow, lyrics by L.S. Bitner; Boston: Atlas</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>My China Man (C)</td>
<td>Music and lyrics by Hal Ehrig, Lou Breau, and Chas. Byron; Chicago: Central Music Publishing Co.</td>
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<td>Pekin (C)</td>
<td>Music by Norman Wilbur, lyrics by J. Brandon Walsh; New York: Broadway Music Corp.</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Pretty Ming Toy (C)</td>
<td>Music by Sigmund Romberg, lyrics by Alex Gerber; New York: M. Witmark &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Rose of China (C)</td>
<td>Music by Paul Biese and Charles Tyler, lyrics by Rex Lardner; Chicago: Riviera</td>
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1920  Where the Jack O'Lanterns Grow (J)
      Music by Neuman Fier, lyrics by Mitchell Parish; New York: Jack Mills

1920  Yan-Kee (J)
      Music by George Gershwin, lyrics by Irving Caesar; New York: T. B. Harms
            and Francis, Day & Hunter

1920  Yo San (C)
      Music by Jean Hazard, lyrics by May Tully; New York: Huntzinger & Dilworth

1921  Ching Ching Chan (The San Pan Man): Novelty Fox Trot Song (C)
      Music and lyrics by Raphael Clifford; [first notation page has “Cliford”]; Los
            Angeles: Jackson-Lee

1921  Cho-Cho-San: Song Fox-Trot (J)
      Music by Giacomo Puccini, arranged by Hugo Frey, lyrics by Jesse Winne;

1921  Chow Mein: Novelty Fox Trot Song (C)
      Music by Jimmy Clark, lyrics by Bert Norman and Mort Van Moppes; New York:
            Belmont

1921  Down in Midnight Town (C)
      Music by Harry Von Tilzer, lyrics by Andrew B. Sterling and Edward P. Moran;
            New York: Harry Von Tilzer

1921  Glow Little Lantern of Love (J)
      Music and lyrics by Fred Fisher; New York: Fred Fisher

1921  Good-Bye Shanghai! Chinese Fox Trot Song (C)
      Music by Joseph Meyer, lyrics by Howard Johnson; New York: Leo. Feist

1921  Hi-Yo: A Chinese Romance (C)
      Music by Edgar Fairchild, lyrics by Bud Green; New York: Goodman & Rose

1921  Ishki Choo (J)
      Music by Chas. Bauer, lyrics by Edward C. McCormick; Palestine, IL:
            Edward C. McCormick

1921  My Cherry Blossom (J)
      Music by Ted Snyder, lyrics by Harry B. Smith; New York:
            Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co.

1921  My Little Rose of Tokio (J)
      Music and lyrics by Jack Stern, Clarence J. Marks, and Norah Lee Haymond;

1921  Santu: Fox Trot Song (C)
      Music and lyrics by W.H. Schellbach; Los Angeles: Southern California Music Co.

1921  Tea Cup Girl (C,J)
      Music and lyrics by Weston Wilson; San Francisco: Daniels & Wilson

1921  Tea Leaves (C)
      Music by Richard A. Whiting, lyrics by Raymond B. Egan; New York: Jerome H.
            Remick & Co.
1921  When Bhudda [sic] Smiles (C,J)
Music by Nacio Herb Brown, lyrics by Arthur Freed; New York: Harms

1921  Yokohama Lullaby (J)
Music by James V. Monaco, lyrics by Grant Clarke; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1922  Blinky Winky (C)
Music and lyrics by Jack Caddigan and Chick Story; Boston: Caddigan & Story

1922  China Boy: An Oriental Lullaby in Fox Trot Rhythm (C)
Music and lyrics by Dick Winfree and Phil Boutilje; New York: Leo. Feist

1922  China: Oriental Fox Trot (C)
Music and lyrics by Harry Lee Miller; Seattle: Harry Lee Miller

1922  Down Along the Ho Hang Ho (C)
Music by Jack Raher, lyrics by Ed. Plottle; Philadelphia: Harry J. Lincoln

1922  Dreamy Chinee (C)
Music by Harold C. Berg and Howard Simon, lyrics by Richard W. Pascoe; New York: Chamberlain Co.

1922  I Can Hear the Temple Bells: An Oriental Love Song (C,J)
Music by Marx E. Oberndorfer, lyrics by Lloyd Garrett; Chicago: Forster

1922  Incense (J)
Music by James L. Shearer, lyrics by Thomas A. Payton; New York: Tom Payton Corp.

1922  Japanese Moon: A Quaint Song of Old Japan in Fox Trot Rhythm (J)
Music by Austin Huntley, lyrics by Dorothy Terriss; New York: Leo. Feist

1922  Japanese Sailor (J)
Music by Thomas Hughes, lyrics by C. P. McDonald; Williamsport, PA: Vandersloot

1922  Kimono (J)
Music and lyrics by Eugene West and Mary Earl [pseudonym of Robert A. King]; New York: Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.

1922  Mah Jongg Blues (C)
Music by Lester Stevens, lyrics by Stuart B. Dunbar; San Francisco: J.M. Tees

1922  My Chinese Butterfly: Chinese Love-Song Fox-Trot (C)
Music by Vincent Dattilo, lyrics by G. Cullinan and T.R. Murray; New York: Ansonia

1922  Oh Sing-a-Loo, Whad’Ya Do with Your Que? (C)

1922  Queer Old Chinkotown (C)
Music and lyrics by Elmer Olson, George Getsey, and Moe Thompson; Saint Paul, MN: W. J. Dyer & Bro.
1922  Rose of the Underworld (C)
Music and lyrics by Billy Baskette, Jack Denny, and George S. GilFillan, Jr.;
New York: Edward B. Marks

1922  Sing Song Man (C)
Music and lyrics by Cliff Friend and Con Conrad; New York: Jerome H. Remick &
Co.

1922  When the Lights Go Down in Chinatown: Fox-Trot Song (C)
Music by Malvin M. Franklin, lyrics by Alex Gerber; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1923  China (C)
Music and lyrics by Raymond DeLano and Leon DeLano; Chicago: Knox

1923  China: Oriental Fox Trot (C)
Music and lyrics by Raymonde L. Morley; San Francisco: Major Keys

1923  Ching, Ching, Chinaman: Song (C)
Music by Louis F. Gottschalk, lyrics by Eve Unsell; New York: Jerome H. Remick &
Co.

1923  Chinky: Fox Trot–Tango (C)
Music and lyrics by Percy Wenrich; Chicago: Forster

1923  Dear Old Chinatown (C)
Music by Vincent C. Plunkett, lyrics by Earl Comyns; Los Angeles: Angelus

1923  Half Past Ten (Sop-Tim-Bom): Chinese Waltz (C)
Music and lyrics by Paul Ash and Neil Morèt [pseudonym of Charles N. Daniels];
New York: Leo. Feist

1923  Hi Lee, Hi Lo: Chop Suey a la Fox-ee Trot-ee (C)
Music by Ira Schuster, lyrics by Eugene West; New York: Leo. Feist

1923  Hoptown Chinatown Hop (C)
Music by Billy Baskette, lyrics by James Dealy and “Doc” Hunsbedt; New York:
Waterson, Berlin & Snyder Co.

1923  Japanese Lullaby: Oriental Fox Trot (J)
Music and lyrics by Lloyd Kidwell; Cincinnati, OH: Circle

1923  Lotus Flower (J)
Music by Sigmund Romberg, lyrics by Cyrus Wood; New York: Harms

1923  My China Doll (C)
Music and lyrics by Charles George; Chicago: Forster

1923  Sayonara: A Japanese Farewell Song (J)
Music by Richard A. Whiting, lyrics by George J. Moriarty and Raymond B. Egan;

1923  Shanghai Lullaby (C)
Music by Isham Jones, lyrics by Gus Kahn; New York: Irving Berlin

1924  Limehouse Blues (C)
Music by Philip Braham, lyrics by Douglas Furber; New York: Harms
1924 Sing Loo (C)
Music by Theo. V. Norman, lyrics by Herman Ruby; New York: Irving Berlin

1924 China Girl (C)

1924 China Rose (C)
Music by A. Baldwin Sloane, lyrics by Harry Cort and George E. Stoddard; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1924 Dream Maker of Japan (J)
Music by Rudolf Friml, lyrics by Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young; New York: Henry Waterson

1924 Hong Kong Dream Girl (C)
Music by Harry Barris, lyrics by George E. Springer; New York: Robbins-Engel

1924 The Mah-Jongg Nightmare (C)
Music by C.A. Brodeur, lyrics by Neal H. Barker; Boston: Barker-Brodeur

1924 Shanghai Shuffle (C)
Music and lyrics by Gene Rodemich and Larry Conley; New York: Gene Rodemich

1924 Since Ma Is Playing Mah Jong (C)
Music and lyrics by Billy Rose and Con Conrad; New York: M. Witmark & Sons

1925 Chinky Butterfly (C)
Music by Lee David, lyrics by Billy Rose; New York: Irving Berlin

1925 Rose of Japan: A Japanese Love Song (J)
Music by William B. Kernell, lyrics by G. Marion Burton; New York: Leo. Feist

1926 Chinese Moon: Oriental Fox-Trot (C)
Music by Joseph Nussbaum, lyrics by Ben Bronfin; New York: Frazer-Kent

1926 The Girl I Know in Tokio (J)
Music and lyrics by William J. Robertson; Joliet, IL: William J. Robertson

1926 On a Chinese Honeymoon (C)
Music by Charles J. Hausman, lyrics by William L. Shockley; Chicago: Melrose & Montgomery

1926 Shanghai Honeymoon (C)
Music and lyrics by William L. Shockley, Charles J. Hausman, and Lester Melrose; Chicago: Melrose & Montgomery

1926 So Does Your Old Mandarin: A Chinky China Fox Trot (C)
Music by Ray Henderson, lyrics by Lewis and Young; New York: Leo. Feist

1926 Song of Shanghai (C)
Music by Vincent Rose and Richard A. Whiting, lyrics by Raymond B. Egan; New York: Irving Berlin

1926 Sweet Maid of Tokio: An Oriental Love Song (J)
Music by James C. Osborne and Francis J. Allen, lyrics by Jack Edwards; Philadelphia: Columbia
1927  Chen, My China Girl: Oriental Fox Trot (C)
      Music and lyrics by Jack E. Slattery; Seattle: Slattery & Suess
1927  China Lady o’ Mine (C)
      Music by Leon Close, lyrics by Lew Farris; Chicago: Forster
1927  Chinese Jazz: A Phantom Dream (C)
      Music and lyrics by Wendell Hall; Chicago: Wendell Hall
1927  In an Oriental Garden (C)
      Music and lyrics by John E. Hayes; New York: John E. Hayes
1927  Japansy: Waltz Song (J)
      Music by John Klenner, lyrics by Alfred Bryan; New York: Harms
1927  Shanghai Dream Man (C)
      Music and lyrics by Benny Davis and Harry Akst; New York: Harms
1927  Singapore Sorrows (C)
      Music and lyrics by Jack Le Soir and Ray Doll; New York: Broadway Music Corp.
1928  In a Bamboo Garden (C,J)
      Music and lyrics by Walter Donaldson; New York: Donaldson-Douglas & Gumble
1929  Chinky Chinee Bogie Man (C)
      Music and lyrics by Haven Gillespie, Richard Whiting, and Neil Morét [pseudonym of Charles N. Daniels]; San Francisco: Villa Morét
1929  In a Japanese Garden (J)
      Music by Wilbur Chenoweth, lyrics by Marian Gillespie; New York: Carl Fischer
1929  Najimi (J)
      Music and lyrics by “Red” Hawk and Joe Macario, Jr.; Honolulu, HI: Bergstrom
1929  Pearl of Old Japan (J)
      Music and lyrics by Con Conrad, Sidney D. Mitchell, and Archie Gottler; New York: De Sylva, Brown & Henderson
1929  Shanghai Rose (C)
      Music and lyrics by Owen Fallon and Woolf Silverman; Los Angeles: Martell
1930  San Toy (J)
      Music by William C. Polla, lyrics by Norman Clark; New York: Harms
1930  Sing Song Girl (Little Yella Cinderella) (C)
      Music by James F. Hanley, lyrics by Joseph McCarthy; New York: Red Star
Appendix 5

Approximate Historical Dollar Equivalents

This appendix is intended to provide a baseline idea of how prices of performance tickets, sheet music, records, and other media were situated in their socioeconomic contexts, and how they might be roughly compared to the cost of such things in recent memory. Inflation indices and measures of change in the cost of living are useful in this regard, but their contribution to understanding what a given expenditure meant to someone in a certain socioeconomic position in a specific year (and place) is limited. The figures below enable one to “convert,” in a contingent sense, the value of a dollar in each year to its equivalent in 2003. Conversions of this sort cannot factor in all sorts of major changes in work and remuneration, the social contexts in which people earned and spent money, and other things affecting the cultural meanings vested in a given number of dollars by any person in any year; but with this cautionary framing, the table below may be helpful. In order not suggest more precision than is meaningful, all figures are rounded to even-dollar amounts.

$1 in each year was roughly equivalent to the listed amount in 2003 dollars:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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Equivalents from 1913 through 1930 are derived from an online calculator at the American Institute for Economic Research (http://www.aier.org). Those for 1900 through 1912 are based on combined use of that calculator with tabular data presented by the University of Michigan Documents Center (http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/historiccpi.html) and conversion factors offered by Robert Sahr of Oregon State University’s Political Science Department (http://oregonstate.edu/Dept/pol_sci/fac/sahr/sahr.htm); each pre-1913 year’s whole-dollar amount above is rounded from the mean average of those two resources’ slightly different equivalents. The underlying data are derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index (available for years beginning in 1913) and other resources; more information is available at the BLS’s CPI website (http://www.bls.gov/cpi/).
References

Because of the diverse types of primary sources this study cites, for clarity’s sake its citations and reference list use a hybrid format based on the Chicago Manual of Style (15th edition). Sound recordings, sheet music, visual print media, films, event programs, newspaper articles, and most magazine articles are cited only in notes, since to carry them here would lead to confusing masses of unconventional entries.1 References in this list support the text’s author-date citations to journal articles, books, and related types of sources.2 A very few works not located for this study are included due to evident connections; these are noted as “not seen” where cited.3


1. Because variant titles do not affect the usability of footnote citations, each title there has been left intact per its source—e.g., those citing records issued with variant titles for the same song have neither been made uniform nor conformed to sheet music titles (this may in fact make it easier to locate any given record). Footnotes for some magazine articles give page numbers in consistent form by citing all pages (to support interlibrary loan requests) and then the page cited (chiefly for quotations), leading to such citations as “124–35, this at 128.”
2. Entries for several early twentieth-century authors known by variant names are listed under the most common or the later one consistently used. This was done with reference to Library of Congress name authorities where possible, but where it was not it was based on local sources. In one instance, entries for one author’s publications under two different names are listed separately to avoid confusion when seeking any one specific cited work.
3. Along with supplementary texts (not part of the dissertation) available from the author is a longer reference list that offers leads to further works relevant in topical or theoretical ways.


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