FROM EXOTICISM TO INTERCULTURALISM: COUNTER-FRAMING THE EAST/WEST BINARY

Yayoi U. Everett (SMT Plenary Lecture 2019)
As part of the White Racial Framing (WRF), most whites were taught Christian morality and a liberty-and-justice framing, yet were also taught how to implement and rationalize racial oppression (Feagin 165)

Against this dominant frame, blacks cultivated a counter-frame by immersion into their own culture. Today, this counter-frame “contains ideals, language, emotions, and images of freedom, equality, and justice, which are often envisioned for all people [of color]” (Ibid 181).
MY SCHOLARLY JOURNEY
MUSIC THEORY?

WESTERN ART MUSIC/POPULAR MUSIC

NON-WESTERN MUSIC
Exoticism is not about the earnest study of foreign cultures; it is about drama, effect, and evocation (Bellman 1998, xiii).

The exotic equation is a balance of familiar and unfamiliar; just enough ‘there’ to spice the ‘here’ but remain comprehensible in making the point (ibid).
ORIENTALISM

◦ Orientalism can be used interchangeably to refer to an academic field of study, a world view that draws on an ontological distinction between East and West, and/or a political instrument of domination.

◦ [Orientalism] has become a term that can refer to any world population…that differs from whatever a work of art constructs as its mainstream European or white-American persona or viewpoint. (Locke 2009, 37).
TWENTIETH-CENTURY REPERCUSSIONS

- In 1920, Bartók used Orientalist jargon in his racialized view of gypsy music as “bad hybridity” and peasant music as “good hybridity”; (Brown 2000, 129).

- At the 1932 Congress of Arab music in Cairo, Bartók begged the Arab musician not to “modernize” (Middleton 2000, 62).

- In his 1942 article “Race Purity in Music,” Bartók expressed a lack of interest in the dynamics of change or any kind of cultural transfer among ethnic groups within Eastern Europe (Trumpener 2000, 422).
TWENTIETH-CENTURY REPERCUSSIONS

- Boulez, in his 1967 article “Oriental Music—a Lost Paradise?,” wrote: “the music of Asia and India is to be admired because it has reached a stage of perfection, and it is this perfection that interests me. But otherwise the music is dead” (1986, 421).

- John Corbett refers to John Cage and Steve Reich as Experimental/Conceptual Orientalists who appropriate non-Western music and philosophy as a strategy for disrupting Western preoccupation with structure and intentionality (2000, 170).
COUNTER-FRAMING DISCOURSES

*Transculturation*: A transcultural analysis “aims to reveal new cultural forms both in the peripheries and at the center” despite the fact that these forms often work against dominant power structures (Loya 2011, 6).

• Taking cue from Loya, Ralph Locke refers to American experimental composers like Partch and Cowell as “transcultural” composers, who incorporated East Asian musics and philosophies against dominant compositional trends (2009, 239).
COUNTER-FRAMING DISCOURSES

◦ **Interculturalism**: composers who levelled the playing field by doing away with lingering stereotypes associated with Orientalism in the process (Everett 2004).

◦ **Intercultural** “suggests an exchange or a middle ground (eine Mitte) between two distinct cultural entities. The question of how we can define such cultural entities is at the heart of the current debate on cultural identity and authenticity” (Utz 2014, 18).
INTERCULTURAL STRATEGIES (Everett 2004, 16)

**Borrowing/Transference**
- Draws on aesthetic principles or formal systems without iconic references to Asian sounds (Messiaen)
- Evokes Asian sensibilities without explicit musical borrowing (Yun, Yuasa, Stockhausen, Saariaho)
- Quotes culture through literary or extramusical means (Britten)
- Quotes preexistent musical materials in the form of a collage (Tan Dun)

**Syncretism**
- Transplants East Asian attributes of timbre, articulation, or scale onto Western instruments (Cowell, Chou, Yun, Ung)
- Combines musical instruments and/or tuning systems of East Asian or Western musical ensembles (Hovhaness, Harrison, Tan Dun, Zhou Long, Chen Yi, etc.)

**Synthesis**
- Transforms traditional musical systems, form, and timbres into a distinctive synthesis of Western and Asian musical idioms (Mayuzumi, Yun, Takemitsu, Chou, Cage)
FRAMING AND COUNTER-FRAMING ANALYSES

PITCH/RHYTHM/CONTOUR/FORM

- Onishi (2004) on Takemitsu
- Deguchi (2005) on Takemitsu
- Arlin on Chou (2017)
- Lai (2018) and Pan-chew (2018) on Chou
- Miller and Edwards on Chen Yi (2020)

GESTURE/SEMIOTICS/EAST-ASIAN AESTHETICS

- Everett on Takemitsu (2004, 2010); and on Chou (2007)
  - Toru Momii (2017, 2019)
  - Gavin Lee (2019)
An intercultural approach….

- Reframes music analysis by incorporating indigenous cultural perspectives and by privileging the multiple subject positions of composer, performer, and/or analyst.
- Negotiates the composer’s ideology for merging cultural elements with other cultural perspectives that may include one’s own.
ANALYTICAL VIGNETTE #1a: Chou, String Quartet No. 2/I (2005)

Mountain/Thunder:

Sun: [E, G#, C]

Wind: [G#, E, C]

(Pan-Chew 2018, 242)
“The 2nd movement is an elegy, set as a canon in two pairs, based on the yin/yang forms of the fugal theme. The Chinese subtitle, Zhaohun (招魂), refers to a millennia old poetic form, meaning literally ‘calling for the spirit of the deceased.’ It was also inspired by “the extraordinary a capella polyphonic singing of villagers from an isolated locality in southwest China” (Chou Wen-chung, Notes to String Quartet No. 1 ”Streams”)}
COUNTER-FRAMING ANALYSIS: Chou, String Quartet No. 2/ii

- Chromatic dyads are given freer agency

(Everett 2006)
ANALYTICAL VIGNETTE 2: CHEN YI, SYMPHONY NO. 2 (1993), Conclusion

Woodwinds and brass

Strings

Small Temple Block
Small Beijing Gong
COUNTER-FRAMING ANALYSIS: Chen Yi, Symphony No.2

- Rao traces Beijing opera rhythmic topoi of luogu dianzi (锣鼓点子) in works by Chen Yi: these are percussion patterns that introduce and accompany arias, punctuate speeches and dramatic movements (Rao 2007, 511).

- In Symphony No.2, Rao locates the topoi of ji-ji-feng (急急風), shifan luogu (十番锣鼓), and chongtou (沖頭), among others. Chongtou, she explains, evokes a stately character heading off to a grave mission with grace and poise, which infuses a sense of dignity at the close (523).
Peking Opera: Black Dragon Residence

Ensemble led by Liu Yue (National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts)
CONCLUDING REMARKS:

◦ **INTRODUCE** analytical methods and modes of interpretation that reflect the multicultural subject positions of the composer, audience, and/or analyst.

◦ **IMPLEMENT** systems for allowing scholars, not limited to Persons of Color, to develop primary and/or secondary areas of specialization in non-European musical cultures.

◦ **ENCOURAGE** publication of music theoretical writings on non-western music and include translation of indigenous sources wherever relevant.
But there is neither East nor West,
Border, nor breed, nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
Tho’ they come from the ends of the earth.
Thank you! Please direct your questions and comments to yeverett@uic.edu