

color) and a danger to society. Thoreau's views still resonate because it is commonplace to appreciate the culture of the ancient "East" and goods from the modern "East" and, at the same time, to be uneasy about actual people who inhabit that entire region. Bindis and temporary tattoos are easier to accept than those who wear bindis on a regular basis. If, however, those who would wear bindis choose not to, and simply work hard, they then become acceptable. That is the contradiction of U.S. Orientalism.

The analytical category "Orientalism" thus enables an analysis of the ambiguity of U.S. imperialism, which is driven by the twin goals of supremacy and liberation. The Iraqis and Afghans cannot liberate themselves, the logic goes, because they are supine, so the GIs must liberate them, especially Iraqi and Afghan women (Armstrong and Prashad 2005). So the U.S. army arrives as a force of liberation. At the same time, the army secures raw materials and creates markets for global corporations and for the dynamic of advanced capitalist states. The urge to liberate is as fundamental as the requirement to subordinate. What is forbidden in the Orientalism of our period is for the native to speak in its vital variety—and, because that voice is muted, the native might choose means that are unspeakable. That too is the price of Orientalism.

46

## Performance

Susan Manning

In many studies of the arts, "performance" is defined as the set of artistic choices an actor, dancer, or musician makes in realizing a preexistent text—whether that text comprises a dramatic script, choreographic design, or musical score. Over the last few decades, however, some scholars in American cultural studies have redefined performance as a mode of cultural production composed of events bound in time and framed in space. Whereas the traditional usage of the noun "performance" implies an opposition to text, the new usage understands it as a framed event that may well deploy textual elements, but cannot be reduced to the realization of preexistent scripts or scores. Like other modes of cultural production, performance takes the form of diverse genres that emerge, alter, and disappear over time. Indian ceremonial, jubilee and Jonkonnu, melodrama, minstrelsy, vaudeville, world's fairs, modern dance, the Broadway musical: all are distinct genres of performance that have circulated within and without U.S. culture.

American cultural studies has adopted a new usage for the verb "perform" as well as for the noun "performance." "To perform" generally means to carry out, to complete, or to accomplish as well as to act in a play, execute a dance step, or play a musical instrument. In its new usage, the connotation of the verb shifts from the achievement of an action to the

embodiment of an identity. This usage derives from theories in the social sciences and humanities. Kenneth Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1957), Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process* (1969), and Edward Hall's *The Hidden Dimension* (1969) all conceptualize social structure and communication in terms of theatrical imagery. Individuals take on roles in scenarios and, verbally and nonverbally, perform their identities for others in the scene. Adapting this language of theatricality, scholars today talk about how social actors perform race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, profession, region, and nationality. This usage of "perform"—and its synonyms such as stage, rehearse, dramatize, enact—implies a process whereby physical bodies accrue social identities. It also underscores how some bodies become legible as "masculine" or "black" or "mainstream," while other bodies become legible as "feminine" or "white" or "marginal."

Taken together, the new usages for the noun and verb constitute the field of performance studies and propose two interrelated critical projects for the field of American cultural studies. Consider the example of performance at the turn of the twentieth century in U.S. culture. As Lawrence Levine (1988) has demonstrated, the hierarchy of high and low culture emerged during this period. Levine's paradigmatic example is Shakespeare. Through most of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare's plays appeared regularly on U.S. stages, both as full-blown productions, often starring visiting British actors, and as subject matter for farcical afterpieces, burlesque, and even blackface minstrelsy. The-

aters during the antebellum period drew spectators from the immigrant working class as well as from established elites, and in these public spaces workers and business owners shared their pleasure and familiarity with Shakespeare. Toward the end of the century, however, Shakespeare migrated from cross-class venues to a newly created realm of high culture, as elites created distinctive venues—the art museum, the symphony hall, the independent theater—separate from the changing spaces for popular culture—the dance hall, the amusement park, the sports stadium. Attending one venue rather than another became a way for people to assert—to perform—their class identities in an era of mass urbanization, industrialization, and immigration.

Strikingly, the cross-class theater of the antebellum era was for men only. Although actresses appeared onstage, only a few women ventured into the theater as spectators, and these women carried the social stigma of "public women," or prostitutes, whatever their actual livelihood. Only after the Civil War, as theaters split along class lines, did women begin to attend in significant numbers. In fact, one hallmark of the newly respectable theater was its accessibility to white, middle-class female patrons, made possible in part by changing codes for audience behavior. Earlier, male spectators had engaged in rowdy behavior, becoming as much a part of the show as the stage action. But after the Civil War innovations in stage design and lighting accompanied new protocols for quietly attentive spectatorship. Thus middle-class female theatergoers extended the domestic ideology of the first half

of the nineteenth century into the public space of the theater, even as they challenged the strictures of that ideology by venturing out into the city. White, middle-class women's attendance at theaters performed changing conceptions of gender during an era when women first entered universities and the professions and began to organize for the vote.

The division between high and low culture carried racialized connotations as well. In fact, the terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow" derived from late-nineteenth-century phrenology, which differentiated "civilized" from "primitive" races according to the shape and size of the human cranium. Thus the new arena of high culture highlighted its connection with European culture and dismissed performance genres influenced by non-European cultures, most especially jazz music and jazz dance. Originating within African American subcultures during the early decades of the twentieth century, jazz soon attained a broad popularity among the urban working class and white middle class. Although high culture routinely borrowed the inflections of jazz, it disavowed the influence, even while the new technologies of recorded sound commodified jazz as a national sound. These dynamics continued to shape U.S. performance—and racial identities—for decades to come.

This brief case study demonstrates a type of inquiry made possible by new definitions of "performance" as a noun and "perform" as a verb. However, such cross-genre inquiry is not yet widespread in American cultural studies, most probably because it requires scholars to look across the disciplinary histories of

dance, music, theater, popular entertainment, and exhibition. Doing so enriches our explorations because we then can trace the complex relations between expressive forms, individual identities, and social formations. The potential for cross-genre inquiry in performance studies is not limited to U.S. cultures or even to the cultures of the Americas, but holds across diverse national and regional boundaries.

Far more widespread in American cultural studies is scholarship that redefines the verb "perform." It has become commonplace for scholars to discuss the "performance" of race, gender, class, and so on. These scholars are indebted to the theory of performativity that feminist philosopher Judith Butler derived from philosopher of language J. L. Austin (Butler 1990; Austin 1962). Attempting to understand gender as a socially constructed rather than biologically inherent quality, Butler described it as a "stylized repetition of acts," a set of "bodily gestures, movements, and styles" that signal masculinity or femininity, corporeal signs endlessly repeated and subtly modified over time (139–40). Following Butler's lead, scholars proposed that other axes of social identity and difference operate in similar ways.

The widespread acceptance of theories of performativity has come under critique from several angles. From one perspective, these theories do not give sufficient weight to material determinants of social identity. This holds especially true for subordinate racial and class positions. To describe middle-class status as the performance of consumer choice makes more sense than to describe the strata of the improv-

erished as a performance. A performance of what? one might ask. Using the term "performance" in this context implies an unimpeded agency that belies the realities of economic inequality and systematic discrimination.

From another perspective, theories of performativity do not sufficiently account for the varying dynamics of everyday life and framed events. This holds especially true for cases of impersonation across race and gender, both onstage and offstage. Scholars have used such cases to illustrate their theories of performativity, but in so doing they typically blur and confuse the distinction between theater and life. Butler, for example, has advanced a controversial interpretation of drag balls staged in Harlem by African American and Latino men, as documented in Jennie Livingston's film *Paris Is Burning*, arguing that the performers' citation of social norms of femininity ultimately reinforce those norms (Butler 1993). More sustained ethnographic research reveals a radically different set of meanings for the participants in the drag balls, whose offstage lives of homelessness, sex work, and subsistence wages counter their glamorous onstage personae (Jackson 2002). Butler's misreading in part results from her overemphasis on gender and her underestimation of race and class as categories for analysis.

That Butler relied on a film documentary to draw conclusions about a performance event is also telling. To borrow Raymond Williams's (1982) terminology, performance has become a residual cultural form over the last hundred years, displaced first by film and radio, then by sound recording and television, and now by

digital technologies. In retrospect, the emergence of the hierarchy of high and low anticipated the eclipse of performance and the rise of media as dominant cultural forms. This shift cannot be disentangled from contemporary usage of the noun "performance" and the verb "perform." The language of theatricality deployed by Burke, Goffman, Turner, and Hall in the 1950s and 1960s reflects the increasing mediatizing of culture evident during those decades, and the momentum has only intensified since then. Hence the seeming irony of our preoccupation with performance at precisely the cultural moment when encounters with live bodies bound in time and framed in space have become increasingly rare occurrences. Our fascination with physicality and embodiment reveals the underside of our mediatized age. Through its multiple intersections with American cultural studies, the interdisciplinary terrain of performance studies reflects an intellectual and institutional response to a larger shift toward media culture over the last century.

## 47

### Property

Grace Kyungwon Hong

Property is as central to discussions of culture as culture is to discussions of property. Property not only references the things that are owned, as in common usage, but also a social system in which the right and ability to own are protected by the state. Property is

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