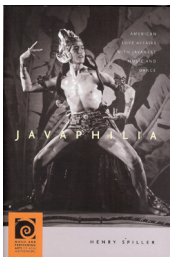

Henry Spiller, *Javaphilia: American Love Affairs with Javanese Music and Dance*

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. 278 pages. Cloth, $42.00. ISBN: 978-0-8248-4094-5.

Falling in love with exotic cultures—including their sounds, aesthetics, foods, belief systems, and people—is not for everyone. In fact, for some "exotic lovers," the fact that they are in the minority, running against the populist tide, is exactly part of the appeal. Difference captivates them, and even becomes their calling card of just who they are or imagine themselves to be, such that their taste for the exotic can be seen as but one part of a generalized psyche built on self-fashioned distinctiveness. Ethnomusicologist Henry Spiller's 2015 book, *Javaphilia: American Love Affairs with Javanese Music and Dance* addresses this phenomenon, focusing on four American aficionados ("javaphiles," as Spiller calls them) of the music and dance of Indonesia: singer Eva Gauthier (1885–1958), dancer/painter Hubert Stowitz (1892–1953), ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1918–2005), and composer Lou Harrison (1917–2003). Spiller's book tackles the big questions not only for ethnomusicologists, but also for anthropologists and (non-Asian) Asianists, as well as others more loosely espousing consumerist appetites surrounding exotica. The big questions are these: what is the appeal of the exotic? For whom? Under what sociopolitical conditions? How? And with what kinds of repercussions, not so much in the place of origin, as in the place of newfound reception? Those repercussions include individual lives, careers, creative arts, and serious scholarship.

Spiller focuses on the "-philia" nature of the attraction. These are more than passing interests, but abiding passions that create professional and personal identities for

those involved. By calling this attraction a "love affair," Spiller gets at not only the headiness of the thing, but also its structural positionality: the exotica—here, gamelan, the traditional metallophone-based orchestra of Java—as a temptress, a seductress, a feminine bundle of brown wiles that lures the masculinized, white adventurer. This love affair is overdetermined in racial, class, national, and gendered terms. Spiller goes one step further; he suggests that the encounter is not by happenstance, but part of a personal quest: the adventurer seeks that which is missing or deficient in his regular life. Gauthier was an unsuccessful operatic mezzo-soprano; Stowitts grappled with his homosexuality; Hood harbored conflicting interests in spirituality and scholarship; Harrison faced criticism from the field of "serious" avant-garde music for his predilection for "pretty music." In short and concrete terms, gamelan music and dance provided these four javaphiles with the missing puzzle piece in their personal, artistic, and professional lives.

Spiller analyzes a basic tripartite trope in each of his case studies: disenfranchisement by and from mainstream American society—"discovery" and personal reinterpretation of Javanese arts as a means of filling the disjuncture—reincorporation into mainstream American society through a newly reconfigured self, based in part on Javanese arts. In this way, the javaphiliac approach is far less concerned with Java itself, and far more concerned with cultural appropriation for personal ends, coalescing in what Spiller calls "self-fashioning"—that is, the creation and assertion of a public identity of one's own making. This trope sounds highly critical, asking scholars, artists, and "exotica" aficionados alike to turn the mirror of analysis upon themselves. To his credit, Spiller does this in a section entitled "Javaphilia and Me," analyzing his own involvement with gamelan music and dance, from his days as an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Cruz, through his professional career as a specialist in Sundanese dance.

In many ways, this book's strength is also its weakness. Challenging Asianists (and others) to unpack their motives, interests, and even passions regarding "Asia" is a complex endeavor. Spiller brings insightful analytical tools to bear, such as "dicent authority" (borrowed from ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino), the external credibility that derives from direct contact with a source culture. Dicent authority gives these javaphiles the veneer of authenticity outside of Java, in particular within the context of a relative lack of widespread knowledge in America of Indonesia and its people and culture. Note, however, the need for an authenticating filter from the javaphiles' very outsider status. In short, by this external construction, people indigenous to "exotic" cultures need not apply. Their authority is typically mounted on the backs of biology, even if they have never touched a gamelan instrument or attended a *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet play).

The category of Javaphile, then, automatically sets up a racialized binary: outsider versus insider, foreigner versus native, lover/fan versus indigene. It is the external status of the javaphile that assumes the internal as already-knowing, as if gamelan music and dance coursed through their blood. Spiller's analytical scheme does not attend to the anomalies in this binary: for example, the foreigner who has long "gone native," living in Indonesia for decades, perhaps marrying a Javanese musician, perhaps giving birth to children whose lives are interwoven within Javanese social threads. What happens when javaphilia captivates an outsider so thoroughly?

Spiller astutely notes the doubled position of javaphiles: on the one hand, they identify with the exoticized Javanese in contesting mainstream Euro-American culture; on

the other hand, they participate in the very project of imperialism in exoticizing Javanese culture itself. Further, dicent authority positions them to fashion not only themselves, but Javanese culture itself, as presented to Euro-American audiences. Java's very remoteness, its lack of familiar presence in Euro-America, allows these javaphiles to manipulate "Java" at will, for their own purposes.

These are all important insights and teach us a lot about this set of case studies. Spiller meticulously documents the details of these javaphiles' lives and activities, and builds a convincing argument. (In fact, some of those details may well be lost on the non-javaphiles among his readers. But for those who occupy the world of diasporic gamelans, this book contains tantalizing details with familiar names, incidents, and concerts.) Notably, this book was honored by the Society for Ethnomusicology as the 2016 recipient of the Bruno Nettl Prize, awarded annually since 2012 for contributions to the history of the field of ethnomusicology.

Yet, a reader is left with the impossibility of the task of asking, why? How to truly know motivations? How to fully understand the why of a person's proclivities, including one's own? This sounds more like the stuff of deep psychology, well beyond the training of most scholars. As any ethnographic researcher can tell you, just taking people by their words or actions is certainly not enough. Nor is it enough to examine the social conditions and contexts of –philias. What draws some people—and not others—to exotica? This may be an impossible task. How to know beyond conjecture? What draws certain people to particular exotica? Answering this question may be more feasible, but ultimately still an enigma. Some people credit past lives with their present proclivities. This only points to the enigmatic quality of the "why" endeavor.

However, even if this book is not able to truly answer its own questions, Spiller should be credited with addressing this large issue in a thoroughgoing manner. By provoking the discussion, Spiller's book challenges us to spin that mirror upon ourselves and pay heed to the self-fashioning from "exotic" materials that has become naturalized as part of many of our selves and scholarly careers.

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