

21G.067J Cultural Performances of Asia
Prof. Ian Condry
Fall 2005

Essay 2 Topic: Authenticity, Performance and Culture

DUE Tuesday, Nov. 15 by 2 p.m.

Discussions of authenticity take many forms. What is “real hip-hop” or “real jazz”? Can women playing men’s roles really perform in a convincing way? Can men that play women’s roles capture an authentic feminine reality? Or are there limits to the persuasiveness of performance that we can identify in terms of authenticity? For example, people argue that ethnicity, gender, race are, to some extent, performed, but are there limitations on how persuasive those performances can be?

With these issues in mind, use the course materials (readings, films, lectures, outside events) to discuss one of the following questions:

- 1) How important is authenticity for understanding the power of cultural performances?
- 2) Is authenticity important for some performances and not others? If so, what’s the difference?
- 3) Do all expressions of identity depend on an idea of authenticity? Or does the quality of performative power, regardless of authenticity, the key factor in cultural influence?

Please make sure you deal with at least some of the arguments in Jennifer Robertson’s book. I would also like you to consider, to some extent, the materials on jazz and hip-hop, as well as Tak Toyoshima’s comments related to Asian-American and other identities. I can imagine ways to incorporate discussions of the Chineseness of the Beijing Film Academy’s anime shorts. Of course, Beijing Opera, King of Masks, and anime are relevant as well, though I would like these examples to take up less space.

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