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Bigenho, Michelle. *Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan*. 230 pp.

Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2012.

Michelle Bigenho's second monograph has seven well-linked and fluid chapters. The author masters a personal and self-reflexive narrative, yet maintains theoretical rigour, making this book not only a helpful addition to anthropological and ethnomusicological literature, but also appealing to the non-specialized reader. Bigenho, as an anthropologist and violinist, takes the reader on an ethnographic journey of music performance through her own participation in a three-month tour of Japan with Bolivian folkloric group *Música de Maestros*. This inter-area study allowed her to use participant observation and interviews with Japanese and Bolivian musicians to explore an 'intercultural nexus' (p. 8) drawing on imagined identities, indigeneity and race thinking. She examines the Japanese musicians' desire to learn and perform Bolivian music, a desire rooted in imagined similarities of ritual, language, music (pentatonic scales), and, above all, the feeling of a shared common race and blood with indigenous Andeans. How do these Japanese musicians negotiate the pull towards difference and their embodiment of the Other while maintaining rigid nationalisms? This 'intimate distance', arising from nationalistic paradoxes and the limits of performing indigeneity (gender, body, ethnicity) through music performance is the primary concern of the book.

Bigenho avoids getting caught up in the interpretative frameworks of cultural appropriation, exoticism and commoditisation that continue to dominate anthropological and ethnomusicological literature. She focuses on the musicians' racialised identity connections with a foreign Other and the contradictions these connections produce, as they feel emotionally connected yet distant. Moreover, this Intimate Distance extends to the detachment between the Bolivian mestizo performers and the indigenous subjects – fellow Bolivians – whom they represent on stage. This leads to the striking contradiction that making the music of the Other your own does not necessarily mean engaging with this Other's political or social world.

Both the Japanese and Bolivians identify with what Alcida Ramos (1994) calls the 'hyperreal Indian', who does not exist, but, nevertheless, generates real work, inspires real journeys and traps musicians in an essentialised repertoire. Bigenho discusses the work and value involved in performing musical otherness, exploring the negotiations between meeting audience expectations and resisting essentialised conceptions of 'Andean folklore music' (p.84). The author deconstructs the inflexible premise of economic difference and dichotomised distance between the represented and the transcultural audience, placing more emphasis on the intimacy of cultural work. Bigenho, however, does not explicitly engage with Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' (1987), which would provide another potential perspective on neo-liberal negotiations of indigenous representation in what Bigenho calls 'Andean music for global consumption' (p.33).

As these Japanese musicians seem attracted to Bolivian music via notions of ancient common heritage, Bigenho explores both Bolivian and Japanese historical colonial experiences, in order to understand their transcultural connection. Furthermore, she touches on historical race thinking and how both Japanese and

Bolivians appear disconnected from indigenous people, each in their own national context. In doing so, Bigenho boldly brings race to the forefront of music-centred research, a much needed approach in today's social science and ethnomusicological research, which still seem to avoid addressing race directly.

The book closes with an intriguing discussion about inter-area studies as a methodological critique of area studies itself. The fact that Bigenho was an American Latin Americanist on a tour bus together with Japanese and mestizo Bolivians playing indigenous Bolivian music broke the usual post-colonial dichotomy of colonized – colonizer, creating a methodological triangulation that allowed her to observe the Other's Otherness (p.151).

A range of Intimate Distances were scrutinized in this book, but Bigenho's focus lies primarily on the transnational 'intercultural nexus'. This left me wanting to know more about the Intimate Distance between indigenous Bolivians and mestizo Bolivian musicians, who struggle to make a living from their music while competing in an international market that thrives on essentialisms. Bigenho also limits her discussion to the behaviour and thoughts of music performers and is relatively silent about the role that audiences undoubtedly play in mediating Intimate Distance, through their active listening participation.

Overall, Michelle Bigenho combines a rich, intimate, and theoretically rigorous ethnography with a brave methodological approach. In critiquing area studies and arguing for the inter-area ethnographer to recognise the 'unevenness in her own area of expertise' (p.151), Bigenho shows us that what matters in ethnography is not the holistic understanding of the culture under scrutiny, but choosing and using methodological tools to match the objectives of the project. Finally, I would like to highlight the author's sharp critique of nationalism as an ideology and the fresh

analytical focus on the affective economies involved in playing ‘someone else’s music’.

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