unfurled

I recall the initial struggle of opening my fan as a child.
Closed, the fan was stick-like and strong. It seemed unwilling to unfold.
My teacher's arms enclosed me and her hands guided mine into position.
She showed me how to push my right thumb against the outer "bone"
to pry the fan open,
unfurling each panel.
We repeated this over and over—
a dance we privately shared within the lesson.
Though I have witnessed many students' first fan lesson over the years, I know it is a
duet that will never be performed in public.

one

introduction—sensual orientations

"Know with your body," headmaster Tachibana Hiroyo said during my dance lesson, as she gently drew her hand to her chest. In this fleeting moment she succinctly imparted a cultural sensibility, a Japanese way of knowing, that moved beyond these few words and gesture. Curious about my own understanding of such moments, and the embodiment of such sensibilities conveyed during lessons, I was drawn to research how culture is passed down, or embodied, through dance.

This book is an ethnography that focuses on dance transmission and how cultural knowledge is embodied. I strongly believe that an observation of how dance is taught reveals a great deal about that culture as well as the individual dancers practicing the tradition. This ethnography is based on my fieldwork and experiences studying Japanese dance (*nihon buyo*) for over thirty years. I do not intend this book to be a comprehensive introduction to *nihon buyo* or its history, nor is it a record of specific dances. It is about process. I employ *nihon buyo* lessons at the Tachibana School in Tokyo as a case study to shed light on transmission and embodiment. For most performing arts traditions around the world, the general public sees only staged, or "finished," performances. Rarely does one have a chance to witness behind-the-scenes activities such as lessons or rehearsals. Compared with *kabuki*, *noh*, and *bunraku*, the genre of *nihon buyo* remains relatively unknown outside Japan. Further, outside *nihon buyo* dance studios, it is rare to have the opportunity to observe the process of dance training, where culture flows.

framing sense

I find that an ethnographer's academic discipline often imposes a privileging of one sense—"blinding" (deafening, numbing, muting, etc.) the ethnographer's experience of the lush sensory environment. Our academic disciplines in the arts appear to be organized by the specialization of sensory mode (departments of art, dance, and music, for example), but at the expense of a holistic analytic and experiential perspective. What theoretical, metaphoric sieves do we carry when we go to the field?[1] What slips through the sieve because we are screening for "answers" on a specific issue or our attention is keenly focused on a specific sensory/artistic practice?

For this very reason, and because dance transmission is a multisensory experience, I have drawn from a number of disciplines for theoretical and methodological guidance—most prominently, ethnomusicology, dance studies, anthropology, performance studies, and Asian philosophies of the body. Each offered a different approach for unfolding the complex process of dance transmission.

I use the word *transmission* in this book for several reasons. First, this word calls up the well-established scholarly history of transmission systems, such as oral/aural transmission in ethnomusicology, dance studies, and oral history. Second, I view transmission as a process that spans the practices of both teaching and learning. To study transmission is to view a process that instills theory and cultural concepts of embodiment. In this book, transmission concerns the information flow between teacher and student—the sender and receiver cycle—and embraces the personal relationships that evolve.

As is generally known, philosophically, theory and practice are not separated in Japan—the mind and body are not considered to be separate entities but are instead regarded as interdependent (see the work of Yuasa 1987, 1993; Nagatomo 1993b). Theory thus arises from practice. We embody the essence of theory when presence and thematic articulations of physical movements arise through practice. This approach contrasts with other methodologies in which theoretical concerns initiate the work and practice is a vehicle for "proving" certain theories. As dance scholars have long argued, the body does not intellectualize theory before it learns—rather, theory arises from engagement in body practices (Foster 1997; Bull 1997).

When I observed and experienced corporeal lessons during field-

work, the senses emerged as the vehicles of transmission and the connection to embodied cultural expression. The senses reside in a unique position as the interface between body, self, and the world. They are beautiful transmission devices, through which we take in information, comprehend the experience, assign meaning, and often react to the stimuli. Not only do the senses orient us in a very real, physical way; they enable us to construct parameters of existence—that which defines the body, self, social group, or world. Simply, we are situated by sensual orientations. In my eyes, transmission systems are valuable to observe as processes of embodiment, effectuated via the senses, that encode and convey cultural meaning to reveal a particular (sub)culture's sensual orientation in the world.

The work of Cynthia Bull (Novack) has been influential in my conceptualization of the socially, sensually situated body in dance. She concludes her article "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures":

> I am proposing that the particular characteristics of each dance form and its unique manner of transmission and performance encourage priorities of sensation that subtly affect the nature of perception itself. Dance finely tunes sensibilities, helping to shape the practices, behaviors, beliefs, and ideas of people's lives. (Bull 1997: 284–285)

Considering the senses as the vehicles of dance transmission, I began to ask: How does culture shape our attendance to various sensoria, and how does our interpretation of sensory information shape our individual realities? How are cultural systems of teaching bound to sensoria and the constructedness of awareness? Can some transmission practices incite transformative effects? Further, how does the culturally constructed process of transmission influence our sense of self?[2]

My basic framework for how dance transmission processes orient the body/self stems from the research on the anthropology of the senses, particularly the collections of articles edited by David Howes, *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (2005) and *The Varieties of Sensual Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (1991), Constance Classen's (ed.) *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures* (1993), and Anthony Synnott's *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Society* (1993). These works propose fascinating models for the sensoria in culture, not only the idea of the cultural construction of the senses, but the existence of a hierarchy of the senses in each culture

that reflects their worldview, cosmology, or "world of sense." Running with this basic premise, I propose that an investigation of how art is sensually transmitted within its cultural context can reveal how the senses shape our understanding of what exists outside the body (and its relationship to the interior body), and can foster the construction of sensible worlds of shared cultural meaning.

Performance studies provided one of the most diverse perspectives for performance analysis, and offered me a range of insights. For example, Richard Schechner wrote:

> Performances are actions. As a discipline, performance studies takes actions very seriously in four ways. First, behavior is the "object of study" of performance studies. Although performance studies scholars use the "archive" extensively—what's in books, photographs, the archaeological record, historical remains, etc.—their dedicated focus is on the "repertory"—namely, what people do in the activity of their doing it. Second, artistic practice is a big part of the performance studies project. A number of performance studies scholars are also practicing artists working in the avantgarde, in community-based performance, and elsewhere; others have mastered a variety of non-Western and Western traditional forms. The relationship between studying performance and doing performance is integral. (Schechner 2003: 1)

For my work I would add "sound" to Schechner's first two sentences above, to clarify that sound is a part of the "object of study," although it is certainly clear in subsequent passages that he includes this sensory parameter. Schechner's substantiation of the values of the practitioner-scholar relationship reinforces participant-observer methodologies long practiced in ethnomusicology and anthropology.

Transmission via the senses instills profound cultural beliefs in the body, and contexts of dance transmission are rich settings for observing culture in action, especially the shaping and orienting of the body/self for artistic expression. I believe performance provides a special metaphoric space often revealing how people make sense of their lives and community (Schechner 2003; Fine and Speer 1992). Through fieldwork we are offered a glimpse at a subculture's performance practice and "techniques of the body" (Mauss 1979; Foster 1997) as shared cultural knowledge. Susan Leigh Foster underscores what observations of such techniques might uncover:

> Any standardized regimen of bodily training, for example, embodies, in the very organization of its exercises, the metaphors used to instruct the body, and in the criteria specified for physical competence, a coherent (or not so coherent) set of principles that govern the action of that regimen. These principles, reticulated with aesthetic, political, and gendered connotations, cast the body who enacts them into larger arenas of meaning where it moves alongside bodies bearing related signage. (Foster 1995: 8)

As a window to embodied expression, fieldwork in music and dance can reveal how a community attends to the world and constructs its identity and art from shared sensibilities, shared sensual orientations. Fieldwork can be a dance of disorientation. In the field ethnographers immerse themselves in another culture's world as an attempt to comprehend how that culture constructs and makes sense of what's "out there." Fieldwork experiences often directly reveal contrasting constructs of reality that challenge our core sensibilities, changing the way we orient ourselves in the world.

In this book I hope to reveal how a culture's transmission processes prioritize practitioners' attendance to certain sensoria (even particular qualities of sensory experience), and how the transmission of sensory knowledge can shape dancers' experiential orientation. Through practice, systems of transmission structure experience so that, within the social group, the world appears similarly constructed and members know how to interact within it. I will illustrate how the entire setting and ritual of dance lessons conveys a Japanese sensibility—from bowing, to where one stands during a lesson, to attire, interactions, voice, gaze, spatial negotiations, and even touching.

inscribing sense

I have been fascinated by the presence, or absence, of the body in dance scholarship. Curiously, in many texts the body has been left entirely off the page. Scholarship before the 1970s primarily focused on contextualizing the dancing body, dance history, theory, and on documenting choreography. But specific cultural references to, and analysis of, the body itself were few. I believe this is in part due to the difficulties of analyzing movement, as recording technologies for moving images

were not accessible or affordable for the general public to document dance in a format that enabled repeated viewings for detailed analysis. While film was available, it was costly. Video technology changed dance scholarship. Although several notation systems existed (such as Labanotation, developed by Rudolf Laban in the early twentieth century), dance has primarily been an art form passed from body to body, and not inscribed in a universally accepted standard notation system.

Since the 1970s scholars have written meticulously about the body, culture, and embodiment. The study of the body in society has received increased attention in such diverse theoretical disciplines as feminist theory, social psychology, cognitive psychology, anthropology, philosophy, performance studies, communication theory, medical anthropology, politics of the body, and aesthetics. This interdisciplinary interest, alongside rapidly advancing computer and video technologies, and developing dance and performance studies scholarship, fueled a diversity of exciting research on the body. Joann Kealiinohomoku's landmark article "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance" (1969) spoke volumes, critiquing previous dance scholarship without a grounding in culture or the body. Then, in 1974, Allegra Fuller Snyder proposed dance as a "way of knowing"—a concept that significantly changed dance scholarship, specifically, notions of embodiment.

From the mid-1980s dance ethnologists took a momentous leap, presenting movement *as* culture (Novack [Bull] 1990; Cowan 1990; Ness 1992; Sklar 2002) and bringing the moving body to a central position in their critical analysis. *Sensational Knowledge* continues on this historical path. With its fleeting presence, the dancing body has turned out to be an elusive informant to research. I crave specificity and a semblance of physical presence in dance scholarship. Limbs. Breath. Shoulders. Muscles. Gaze. I notice that the body appears in text when particular aspects of dance are considered, such as detailed descriptions of movement, choreography, learning, and personal accounts. When I read passages narrating the dancing body, a kinesthetic sensation comes over me, even though my eyes alone are moving from line to line. For example, in *Samba*, Barbara Browning brings the reader to the body in motion. An excerpt from Browning's description of the Brazilian orixa (Yoruba god) Oxossi dance ushers forth the feeling of movement quality: "When the right foot is stepping, the body is directed crosswise on a left diagonal, and vice versa. On the lifting beat just before the change in direction, the dancer often spins around full circle,

to the back, such that her feet and the angle of her body are already in preparation for the next step" (Browning 1995: 62). Even though I am unfamiliar with this dance, the text provides a depth of kinesthetic information so that I can imagine the moving body, perhaps somewhat empathetically. Browning's theoretical offerings are only richer as a result, because the theory is embodied in the dances she describes. Dance scholars have found marvelously playful ways to push the boundaries of inscribing dance. Who can forget Julie Taylor's magical flipbook imagery in *Paper Tangos* (1998)? The moving body emerges in tiny photographs, her graphic tales of dancing in Buenos Aires, and passionate poetry.

Scholars of dance have chosen their themes, or conceptual frames, to stage dance in text. Sometimes the description of movement and embodiment of theory is not the primary concern. For example, in *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Marta Savigliano ingeniously composed unusual text formats to narrate her multivoiced commentary on tango. Several sections are organized to resemble theatrical scripts, complete with stage directions. Dividing the page into two columns enables multiple voices to simultaneously speak to the reader. I found her text brilliantly creative, especially her challenge of paradigms for academic texts. However, with each page I turned I longed to read about the intimacies of moving bodies and the specificity of embodying tango. But this is not the point of her book. I am certain some readers will be frustrated at the conceptual frames that I have chosen to focus on—the embodiment of culture via sensual orientations and lived experiences of transmission, rather than historical or theoretical matters. Each writer, each dancer, is inclined to reveal the nature of dance from a particular perspective. My impulse is to contribute to dance scholarship by writing what I know, what I have embodied, inspired by ethnographic practices.

For me, theory unravels in moments of experience—in music, dance, and in fieldwork. In lived experience we find the essence of our humanity, of our varied cultures, and individual desires. I have been influenced by ethnographies that intimate the personal and transformative experiences of fieldwork (among them Shelemay 1991; Kisliuk 1998; Ness 1992; and Sklar 2001). I find that these works strategically expose the ethnographer, clarifying gaze and identity within lived moments. They also challenge ethnological discourse, including personal experience as a dialogical, and very real, part of the theoretical framework. They are bold works. For example, in *Seize the Dance!* Kisliuk

even included her personal poetry, offering us her creative writing from the field to expose emotions and a broader sensibility of the BaAka people. Similarly, in *A Song of Longing* Shelemay revealed her more personal, emotional ethnographic journey. Shelemay wrote:

> I began working on *A Song of Longing* in 1986, at first planning to write a more accessible account of my controversial findings about the Falasha religious tradition. But almost as soon as I began to write, other issues began to surface. To speak honestly about my Falasha research, I realized, I had to explore the relationship between my personal and professional experience in the field and the manner in which the two were inseparable.
>
> From the start I struggled with the fact that I wanted to write a book that would not fit into an established literary or scholarly category. The problem had implications for both publication prospects and my career. (1991: xii)

Texts such as these encouraged me to experiment, writing about the moving body in an attempt to offer a way for the reader to vicariously "know with the body" through text and other media. Have you ever had the feeling of vicariously moving around in an author's shoes? When ethnography is written from a reflexive voice, this type of experience can arise. I do not believe that writing reflexively is always appropriate, but for my aim of conveying dance transmission as physically close to the reader as possible, I knew I needed to narrate *sensational knowledge.*

sensu—unfolding site

Nihon buyo dancers spend countless hours moving with fans. This personal object has inspired the organization of this book. Let me explain. Splayed across the floor, my field notes, letters, and sketches appeared fanlike and moved me to employ its familiar structure. The word for the common dance fan is *sensu.* These fans are an extension of dancers' bodies and essential to our expressive art. "Dancers live through *sensu,*" I heard Iemoto say to a new student as she held out an open fan. Snapping it closed, she continued, "As the *samurai* has a sword, this [fan] is our weapon." *Sensu* spring to life in dancers' hands. Through daily practice we learn to manipulate *sensu* to tell stories. Amusingly, *sensu*

is the word for dance fan and the loanword for "sense."[3] Though the character for *sensu* is written differently to convey the different meanings, the coincidental wordplay offers a meaningful metaphor for this book's structure and how embodying dance is a gradual unfolding process. Also, the aesthetic of folding, or wrapping, has been a thematic thread in Japanese culture (see Joy Hendry's book *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power* [1995] for insights into real and metaphoric wrapping in Japanese culture).

Fans have been a part of Japanese dance history for over four hundred years. While fans vary in shape, size, and material, there is a standard *sensu* that dancers are most familiar with—constructed of paper, bamboo, and metal.[4] It is a simple object. Like two hands held together with fingers outspread, ten blond bamboo *hone* (bones) radiate from an intersection to expand nineteen folds of paper facets. The paper is glued to the bones and, on the outermost bones, secured with thread. A metal finding fastens the bones tightly at their point of crossing—the *kaname* (pivot point)—and lead weights are discreetly tucked within the outer bones for balance. Often the paper folds display beautiful designs, ranging from abstract shapes to intricate depictions of scenes. Like the individual sections of a Japanese screen or scroll, panels or sections of the fan's artistic design can be appreciated as complete units when the fan is partly closed or, with the entire fan unfolded, can be viewed from the larger context of the nineteen-panel composition. Similarly, small vignettes on individual leaves of this book can be appreciated as a peek into a very personal scene—but when these vignettes are viewed in the context of the full panorama, the composition reveals social dynamics of the group. My hope is that this ethnography unfolds much like *sensu*, with vignettes drawn from my personal lessons and fieldwork to unfurl intimate panels that contribute to my analysis and the larger picture of embodied cultural knowledge in the context of the Tachibana community.

reflecting bodies

Because *nihon buyo* has been a part of my life since childhood, it was a clear candidate for a case study on the transmission of cultural sensibilities. I decided to write this ethnography with a reflexive voice because my body physically experiences and informs my perspective on transmission, and ignoring this embodied voice would have been

disingenuous. An author's voice always provides point of view. I believe each research project sits in a different location on the continuum of qualitative versus more objective research methodologies. Reflexivity will arise in varying degrees in our ethnographies, and I believe that each project calls for a unique approach, or methodology of reflexivity. If appropriate for the project, reflexive presentation, or display, of identity in ethnographic narrative can utilize the researcher's self, the complex process of comprehending the relationship of self to other, and the embodied knowledge of the participant-observer-researcher, as a resource within the research. But, as a practice, reflexive writing leaves us exposed and vulnerable. It can be difficult and often painful work. Each ethnographer has a different level of comfort with reflexive disclosure.

If we are able to reveal and monitor our vulnerabilities, the dynamics of power and control issues that play out in ethnographic practice can be incorporated as part of the work. In her book of essays *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, Ruth Behar reveals the diversity of vulnerabilities encountered by anthropologists and writes:

> Anthropology . . . is the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century. As a mode of knowing that depends on the particular relationship formed by a particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability. (Behar 1996: 5)

In the ten pages following this quote Behar provides examples of vulnerable moments exposed by reflexivity, and then cautions, "Vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes. The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake" (15). There have been many vulnerable moments for me during fieldwork and in the writing of this ethnography, revealing a deeply physical, personal process of embodiment. I feel exposed in these pages, yet desire to convey the transmission process from this embodied place of understanding. That said, I hope that my reflexive presence in this ethnography sheds light on embodied transmission practices (for more on reflexivity see Hahn 2006a).

While my embodied field site inspired this research, it would also position obstacles before me to contend with. Several dualities run through my life—I am biracial (Eurasian); a performer and researcher; a dancer and musician. These dualities have influenced my perspective and relationship to my work. Nearly all ethnographers face issues of negotiating multiple identities in the field and at home that heighten their cross-cultural understanding and in turn affect their work. While the dualities in my pursuits exist by choice, the physical nature of my biracial identity poses an inextricably embodied duality that inherently shapes how I comprehend the world and how the world sees me.

I am perceived contextually by others—an identity situated by how I sound, my attire, actions, the surroundings, or the performance style I practice. These issues have surfaced through my ethnographic experiences and growing up biracial.

embodying fields

My parents, both visual artists, took my sister and me to live in Tokyo for a year in 1964. My father, a German American born in Milwaukee, studied Asian art, and produces Asian-influenced art. My mother was a Japanese American *nisei* (second generation) whose parents immigrated from Hiroshima to work on a Maui sugarcane plantation. Living in Japan was far from my mother's own desire. In the United States she strove to fit into American culture, which was difficult during the war. As she said to my father when we traveled to Japan, "You brought me back to everything [Japanese] I spent most of my life escaping from." In Tokyo my mother was faced with the duality of looking Japanese but being Japanese American. My sister, Kimiko, and I were placed in a public school in Setagaya-ku. We both studied *nihon buyo* each week for that year.[5]

I have vivid memories of our Tokyo experience—interesting sights, foods, smells, sounds, friends, and family. I also recall people pointing at me and calling out in boisterous voices, "*gaijin*!" (foreigner, or outsider). Sometimes small children would wander over and try to touch me or stroke my brown hair.

Upon returning to New York my parents placed us in Japanese school on Saturdays at the New York Buddhist Academy in New York City, where we studied calligraphy, Japanese language, and dance. We lived in Pleasantville, a town sixty miles north of the city, and attended

the public school there on the weekdays. In the sixties and seventies few people of color lived in Pleasantville. Kimiko and I were taunted with name-calling—"Jap," "Chink," "Nip," or "Ching Chang Chong," to name a few. Classes in school focused on Western history, literature, and sports and only occasionally ventured to the "exotic" East.

On Saturdays at Japanese school we were among Japanese and Japanese Americans who "looked" Japanese and who attended the Buddhist services on Sundays. Dance lessons were special weekly events. I felt a focused attention from my dance teacher Tachibana Sahomi, a sensibility so different from my public school week. It is difficult to nail down the exact essence of that sensibility—perhaps it was the way she sang the music while we danced, or how she would slightly adjust my fan position.

In hindsight I see that both communities were important to my well-being and understanding of my mixed-heritage identity. The survival tools I developed in my childhood included codeswitching abilities for smooth navigation between communities. Wearing tattered, embroidered, bell-bottom blue jeans and listening to rock and roll during the week contrasted with the *yukata* (cotton *kimono*) and *obi* (sash) I would wear while dancing to *nagauta* (music for *kabuki*-style dance) on Saturdays. However, these two sides of my life never intersected. The parsing of my week starkly juxtaposed my biracial halves. At that time I believe I appreciated this compartmentalization of my identity—the two halves were clear and separate.

I studied *nihon buyo* at the New York branch of the Tachibana School (at the New York Buddhist Academy). I met my teacher, Tachibana Sahomi, when I was nearly six. Each Saturday I danced by her side, imitating every gesture. I recall her saying—"When you're dancing you can be anyone." In context she meant that I needed to focus on embodying a particular character for the dance I was learning, but also hinted that dance could enable me to experience a variety of identities. Even within dance, abilities to switch between characters and styles were honed and honored. Shifting between identities was an activity I learned both in and outside the dance space.

My formal initiation into the Tachibana dance family in the late 1980s marked yet another level of symbolic duality. From the moment of my *natori* (stage title) ceremony, only my performance name—Tachibana Samie—would be known in the *nihon buyo* world. Acceptance into this dance family changed my life. However, because of the hierarchical (*iemoto*) guild system, it also excluded me from re-

searching and studying at other dance schools. In discussing ethnography, Clifford notes the problems and advantages of studying one's own culture: "Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways" (Clifford 1986: 9). I found myself situated in an interesting, yet often frustrating, state of betweenness that offered multiple perspectives, advantages, and disadvantages.

I am an insider and outsider to Japanese culture and *nihon buyo* tradition—not "native" yet not a stranger. While this peripheral existence deeply influenced my ethnographic research, it also problematized the emic/etic research dichotomy. I found that, in order to convey embodiment in dance and the situated body in fieldwork, I would need to comprehend and voice my multiple "other" perspectives as scholar/dancer, musician/dancer and biracial woman (Motzafi-Haller 1997; Mendoza 2000). Yet the intimacy of my embodied field site often encumbered the research. When I wore the hat of dancer, the scholar's analysis interrupted the flow of movement. Conversely, as I analyzed dance transmission I was frustrated that my body "knew" a movement yet I could not articulate it in text. Much like investigating whether the light remains on when a refrigerator door is closed, stopping to examine my embodied data rudely disrupted the continuity of my realizations.[6]

I have seriously taken heed of Lila Abu-Lughod's reflections on ethnography, particularly since I am one of the "halfies" writing ethnography that she refers to, defining them as "people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage" (1991: 137). She notes the problematic nature of halfie and feminist ethnographic perspectives—"when they present the Other they are presenting themselves, they speak with a complex awareness of and investment in reception. Both halfie and feminist anthropologists are forced to confront squarely the politics and ethics of their representations. There are no easy solutions to their dilemmas" (142). Directly confronted by this predicament in writing, I realized that my challenge would be to actively disorient my very insider, outsider, and "different" perspective in order to articulate embodied, sensory knowledge. Abu-Lughod proposed strategies in which to purposely write "against culture," or disturb the problematic construct of anthropological discourse built on cultural difference—through creating "ethnographies of the particular." "By focusing closely on particular individuals and their changing relationships, one would necessarily subvert the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity,

coherence, and timelessness" (154). The backbone of this ethnography reclines upon a "particular," personal, approach—in hopes of avoiding those generalizations that breed stereotypes. Moving forward from Abu-Lughod's strategies on writing against culture, I have purposely written some text to disorient readers. I juxtapose different kinds of texts and voices to playfully suggest new ways to perceive relationships, similar to the way that uncommon juxtapositions chaotically appear in our daily lives and challenge our understanding of associations.

The works of Cynthia Novack (1990) and Zoila Mendoza (2000) provided insights into balanced involvements in dance, music, research, and writing—inviting me to draw from my sensory knowledge to inform the writing and, in turn, allowing the writing to inform my body. I found that this stance blurred my notions of interior/exterior, insider/outsider, ethnographer/dancer dualities, yet drew together personal experience, fieldwork, and analysis. Because of this complex dialect of particular bodies, field sites, and identity, I have chosen to write this book from multiple voices—from a body that knows several worlds and appears in the text in different roles to convey how we learn and sensually orient our bodies/selves at Hatchobori.[7]

fanning stereotypes

The vignettes appearing in this book are meant to resemble scenes on paper fans, revealing private moments at Hatchobori drawn from my field notes, conversations, and dance experiences. I find that the detailed minutiae of dancers' daily lives are held fast to the *sensu* "bones" supporting the structure—the transmission of dance.

Nihon buyo repertory is filled with dances in which the fan must, in the mind's eye, continuously transform into various objects or scenery throughout a performance—a *sake* (rice wine) cup, a pine tree, or a leaf in the wind. Fans also impart intangible aspects of dance, such as emotions or atmosphere. The prop can playfully obscure, highlight, and reveal images of the dance narrative and, literally, the dancer's body—covering a smile, partitioning off faces in conversation, or framing an exposed neck. Metaphorically I employ this same unfurling of the context, dancers' movements, and bodies to show how we embody dance at Hatchobori. I simultaneously wish to reclaim the trope of the fan as a lure—to reappropriate the exotic mystique of the "fan dance" stereotype of the demure "Oriental lady" who entices the onlooker's gaze

by revealing and concealing her body. Yes, the performing body commands attention with its presence, yet the fan trope I aim to present in practice reveals the tough, flexible reality of women practicing Japanese dance.

The recent flow of popular books on *geisha* (Yoshikawa Mako's *One Hundred and One Ways* and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, for example) has been astounding. Each text provokes discourse on the entire trend, particularly the depiction and exoticism of women performers. Feminist, Asian, and Asian American writers critiquing these books, as well as the fashions that they launched ("*geisha* glam," revealed by the popular use of chopstick hair ornaments and white makeup), have mourned the reinforcement of "exotic" and erotic stereotypes of Japanese women and have loudly questioned the authority of voice and character portrayed in text. *Geisha* stereotypes extend onto the big screen as well. Many Asian Americans and Asians living in America mobilize when films depicting Asians with Orientalist stereotypes debut. In an article titled "The Mystique of a Geisha Packaged, Available for Sale" in the October 21, 2005, issue of *The Pacific Citizen, The National Publication of the Japanese American Citizens League*, Lynda Lin writes, "Two months before the film version of 'Memoirs of a Geisha' is scheduled to open in theaters nationwide, studio executives and retailers are already making it possible to dress, look and even smell like a geisha" (Lin 2005: 1). Lin is referring to Sony Picture Entertainment's marketing deals with Fresh, Inc., for the product "Memoirs of a Geisha Eau de Parfum" and Banana Republic's "Memoirs of a Geisha" clothing line. Lin quotes John Tateishi, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League: "What strikes me is a curiosity that the producers of these products seem to want to reflect admiration for Japanese culture and those things that exemplify its beauty and serenity . . . But in reality, what they've done is to bastardize those qualities by a kind of stereotyping that pretends to capture the essence of beauty in Japanese culture" (4).

Though this book is not solely about gender, one of my aims has been to reappropriate the fan, *kimono*, and hair ornaments to tell a very different story of Japanese performing women.[8]

arranging folds

My hope is that the text unfolds and enfolds an array of sensual elements—personal moments interspersed with analysis, orientations,

and video documentation—displaying an expansion of embodiment grounded in the everyday experience of movement and sound. There are five chapters, fanning out as fingers. The first is here, in the opening of the outer ethnographic bone—"sensual orientations"—an introduction to the characters in the folds of stories to come. The second, "moving scenes," supplies a basic overview of early *nihon buyo* history and the social structures supporting transmission. "Unfolding essence," chapter 3, approaches the energetic qualities of dance, including Japanese concepts of the body/spirit and examples of aesthetics.

Chapter 4, "revealing lessons," occupies the largest amount of space and is itself composed of five sections, creating folds within folds. We begin at Hatchobori with an introduction to lessons, including a typical day and the modes of sensory transmission. Section two is focused on the primary mode of teaching—visual transmission. Next we move to tactile transmission in section three, and the impact of touch on learning. Oral/aural transmission is presented in section four, then section five turns to notation and video media as a means for transmission. In these five sections of chapter 4, I showcase the minutiae of everyday transmission at Hatchobori with case studies (and DVD examples) to offer concrete examples of how dancers come to embody *nihon buyo.* Individual dancers and lessons appear in this section, providing a rich source of information to experience and analyze the practice of dance.

I must stress that the segmenting of the senses into discrete units in this section is for my analytic purposes only—within actual lessons the senses are not disjointed from one another in such an orderly and separate fashion but are wholly interrelated. However, through this analytic dissection I hope to reveal the complexity of one subculture's multisensory transmission structure. Chapter 5, "transforming *sensu,*" draws the disconnected senses together again. This chapter explores presence in performance as an embodied sensibility that is transmitted. I also present transformative experiences in fieldwork as a means for comprehending varying perspectives of "knowing," or situating, the body. In the outer bone of this book-as-fan I close as I began, with reflexive thoughts on my personal experiences studying *nihon buyo* and dancing fieldwork.

dis-Orient

> It is through culture patterns, ordered clusters of significant symbols, that man makes sense of the events through which he lives. The study of culture, the accumulated totality of such patterns, is thus the study of

> the machinery individuals and groups of individuals employ to orient themselves in a world otherwise opaque. (Geertz 1973: 363)

The irony of "flattening" embodied experiences of dance and fieldwork by transliterating lived experiences into text inspired me to consider ways to sensually outfit readers through inciting interactivity. If we were in the same room, talking about embodiment, dance transmission, and the ethnographic experience, I imagine the nature of our discussion would be quite active—passionate even. In fact, it would be much easier for me to show you a gesture, a video, or to sing a musical passage than to write a text about the practice of this lively, sensuous art and my ethnographic engagement. My aim is to playfully arouse understanding through activity—in the text and the DVD—to pose a sensual *dis*-orientation through presenting another subculture's practice of sensual orientation.

The text and accompanying DVD might seem experimental at times. This is my attempt to see if there are ways within ethnography to convey the experiential, ineffable aspects of fieldwork by inciting interactivity. Throughout this book there are short sections titled "orientation" that are meant to stimulate activity and provide a "mindful," visceral quality to the text.[9] For example, at the close of this section you will find the first "orientation." Here I invite active involvement to directly raise questions considering the situated body in performance and in text. Similarly, in "orientation—a virtual lesson" I encourage readers to take a lesson by following the video footage of headmaster Tachibana Yoshie teaching dance. Since the footage was shot from a student's perspective (behind the teacher), this simulated gaze attempts to capture the feeling of participating in a lesson at Hatchobori. Although nothing compares to the lived experience of a dance class and a fully embodied engagement of the senses in a new experience, these orientations are meant to inform through practice, and to perhaps trigger active associations for the reader.

I consciously employ the word *orientation* to reference sense and embodiment but, simultaneously, to strategically reappropriate "Orient." My reappropriation is in the spirit of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s, play on Standard English "Signification" (1988). For some readers the word *orientation* may create an association with *Orientations: The Magazine for Collectors and Connoisseurs of Asian Art*. I hope to redirect any such association. If anything, this is another case of reappropriation, taking the word from its art-collecting and connoisseurship realm to one of comprehending the situated body within culture. James Clifford, citing

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), speaks to the power dynamic in the ethnographer's gaze: "This Orient, occulted and fragile, is brought lovingly to light, salvaged in the work of the outside scholar. The effect of domination in such spatial/temporal deployments . . . is that they confer on the other a discrete identity, while also providing the knowing observer with a standpoint from which to see without being seen, to read without interruption" (Clifford 1986: 12). The entire passage is interesting, as Clifford presents the Orient as a performance site:

> The Orient functions as a theater, a stage on which a performance is repeated, to be seen from a privileged standpoint. (Barthes [1977] locates a similar "perspective" in the emerging bourgeois esthetics of Diderot.) For Said, the Orient is "textualized"; its multiple divergent stories and existential predicaments are coherently woven as a body of signs susceptible of virtuoso reading. This Orient, occulted and fragile, is brought lovingly to light, salvaged in the work of the outside scholar. The effect of domination in such spatial/temporal deployments (not limited, of course, to Orientalism proper) is that they confer on the other a discrete identity, while also providing the knowing observer with a standpoint from which to see without being seen, to read without interruption. (1986: 12)

My ever-present voice and body throughout the text and DVD aims to expose Clifford's "to see without being seen" dynamic. Said has directed us to acknowledge the domination of the Orient by the West. I embody both geographies. In this text I deploy my biraciality as an embodied subversion of fixed East-West boundaries, distinctions of "other," and to give voice to a reorientation of artistic expression.

Stories about learning, dance, fieldwork, the body, and dance narratives are folded into the text to connect vital narratives as they are superimposed on the everyday experience at Hatchobori. The disorienting sensibility of this organization is intentional. In a way, orientation is gained through a process of "making sense" of disorienting experiences. This kind of structure poses mindful "groundlessness" in everyday experience that is revealed "in knowing how to negotiate our way through a world that is not fixed and pregiven but that is continually shaped by the types of actions in which we engage" (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991: 144). I hope the juxtaposition of stories, voices, and senses encourages active orientation through disorientation, or the appearance of order within chaos.[10]

folded in

When I was ten Sahomi told me about Saho, her childhood teacher in Fukushima.
I did not realize at that time that I would later bear the name Samie—
a name built on "Sa" that would tie me forever with both women.
I would never meet Saho.
Years later, dancers would say my movements bore certain tendencies,
certain qualities of Saho, passed down through Sahomi.
I wondered about inscriptions—not messages written and handed down—
but inscriptions folded into the body through experience.
Artful moments, tucked into every leaf of the body, like bookmarks
placing experience and time.