

Book Reviews

Paul A. Scolieri, *Dancing the New World. Aztecs, Spaniards, and the Choreography of Conquest*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013, xii + 205 pp., with 11 poly- and 40 monochrome illustrations. £39.00, h/b. ISBN 9780292744929.

Paul A. Scolieri's *Dancing the New World* offers a fascinating and original look into the meaning of 'dancing' to European and indigenous authors during the eras of discovery, conquest and colonization of the Caribbean and Mexico. This book is not so much about dance or choreography per se, but uses the trope of dance as the lens through which to view the diverse ideologies that structure historical writings about the European invasion of the New World and the conquest of Mexico. Rather than lump these perspectives into a single worldview of dance, Scolieri explores the distinctions among various authors, while at the same time suggesting that a dominant theme is the use of dance as a metaphor for death. The temporal focus is on performances dating to the early years of contact; however, the author analyzes how the representation of these dances evolved over the course of the colonial period.

The book begins with an examination of early terminology, focusing on how the early European writers' use of the Arawak term *areito* reflected their own interests as historians and chroniclers. This idea is further developed in the second chapter, which focuses on the writings about native Mexican performances by the sixteenth century missionary Friar Toribio de Benevente ('Motolinia') and how these texts reflect the friar's desire to create a Christian utopia in Mexico. Through careful reading of primary sources, Scolieri demonstrates not only that the friar's work was heavily drawn upon—even 'plagiarized'—by later writers, but that, through this process of imitation, historians of the conquest have both perpetuated the friar's views on dance, as well as transformed them to express their own agendas. The third chapter of the book contrasts these European perspectives on dance to the representation of dance in Friar Bernardino de Sahagún's encyclopedic *Florentine Codex*, a hybrid work which may present more of the indigenous perspective, though still heavily mediated through its bi-cultural production and context.

The fourth chapter—which I view as the focus of the book—provides a rich and fruitful comparative analysis of accounts of a single dance, performed on May 16, 1520 in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, which began as a ritual performance in honor of the Aztec patron deity but ended in the killing of thousands of participants by Spanish soldiers. Because this event was subsequently viewed by numerous authors as a pivotal event in the narrative of the conquest, its telling is saturated with political and ideological content, which is admirably analyzed here. In chapter 5, Scoleri shows how the contested meanings of dance during the early years of contact and conquest continued to inform the meaning of later practices in which colonial officials and missionaries harnessed indigenous dancing as a tool of cultural domination and religious conversion.

Overall, I am highly impressed by Scoleri's scholarship, which examines textual sources using rigorous historical methodologies. The analysis is detailed and incisive and the commentaries are penetrating. The book is well written, with numerous signposts and carefully crafted summaries throughout. The book is also well designed and presented, with excellent illustrations, mainly images of dance performance taken from colonial Mexican manuscripts and European printed books. Of great utility are the appendices, consisting of translations of primary sources discussed in the book. I envision using these appendices in classes on colonial Latin American culture and history, though the book as a whole is directed at a wider scholarly audience. *Dancing the Conquest* is not only of interest to dance historians, but it is highly recommended to historians of Latin America in general.

Matthew Looper

DOI: 10.3366/drs.2014.0109

Linda E. Dankworth and Ann R. David (eds.), *Dance Ethnography and Global Perspectives. Identity, Embodiment and Culture*, England and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, x + 196 pp. with 6 monochrome illustrations and 1 table. \$90.00 (cloth). ISBN 9781137009432.

Dankworth and David bring together the work of nine authors whose research examines various kinds of dance in diverse geographic regions, in differing contexts, and from varied perspectives. Geographic regions and kinds of dance represented are as far ranging as dances of Hindu Gujarati groups in the United Kingdom, discussed by Ann R. David; Japanese dancers in their home country learning flamenco, reported on by Yolanda van Ede; a dance of West Africa presented by Elina Seye; and dances of Taketomi, a southern Okinawan island in Japan described by Chifang Chao. Contexts and perspectives extend from psychosocial work among war-affected children, discussed by Allison Singer, to issues of revival and improvisation, examined by Linda Dankworth.

Despite this diversity, the essays share the methodology of participant-observation, now referred to by some as embodied ethnography and long