

A remarkable final contribution is that Brigden demonstrates that the corridor is a contingent space built upon continuity and change. The migrant passage has been a historical experience within the Central American region since at least the mid-1980s, when Salvadorean and Guatemalan refugees traversed the corridor looking for protection. Migrants, smugglers, *enganchadores* and border agents were already shaping the corridor; yet, there have been unquestionable changes. New characters have appeared, like deportees, *mareros* (members of a gang called Mara Salvatrucha) or *zetas* (members of a cartel called Los Zetas), who have reconfigured the political economy of the transit corridor. Though risk and violence were always present in the clandestine passage, nowadays they are exacerbated. The leading regional migratory policies of control belts and toughness for deterrence, together with the proliferation of drug cartels and criminal gangs, have resulted in the increase in mass graves of migrants. Against this increasingly violent space, migrants' improvisations and performances turn out to be part of a daily political struggle deployed by women and men on the move to survive.

This book is a portrait of underground globalisation in action and hence a counter-hegemonic narrative of undocumented migration in the Americas. It is a definitive contribution to transnational migration scholarship, which has overlooked what long-distance transits entail and mean politically. Though focused on Central American experiences, this book speaks to a wider US, Latin American and global audience. Transit corridors, such as the one studied in this book, proliferate on a global scale. Yet, as Brigden concludes, they do not necessarily take migrants to their destinations, but to unimaginable violent ordeals. We should be receptive therefore to Brigden's call for a new understanding of sovereignty, beyond a border security approach. Her call for route studies means focusing on mobility and on the sovereignty that people have to set themselves into motion as a way to cope with layers of violence and to struggle for their lives. Her call to understand the power of social sovereignty materialised on the route must be embraced as a way to critically identify possible new spatial transformative paths in our violent times.

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**Lucía Suárez, Amélia Conrado and Yvonne Daniel (eds.),
*Dancing Bahia: Essays on Afro-Brazilian Dance,
Education, Memory, and Race***

**(Bristol and Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2018), pp. xv + 228, £25.00;
\$33.00, pb.**

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Dance, as Lucía Suárez suggests, is 'a place of translations' (p. 13). Translations that connect, that create, that restructure how we might see ourselves and others – in

space, in our communities and across difference. *Dancing Bahia* explores these conversations in the Afro-descendent dance worlds of Brazil's north-eastern state of Bahia, an area synonymous with African diaspora culture in Brazil and globally, where embodied practices have long occupied a central place in the cultivation of dynamic and evolving representations of African heritage. This wide-ranging, empirically grounded volume draws together the work of researchers, dancers, community activists and educators engaged in investigating, teaching and performing Afro-Bahian dance to consider how, in a context of pervasive prejudice and marginalisation, dance works to create and sustain critical spaces of education, memory and political possibility.

The eight main essays in the volume are set out under four headings: 'Bahian dance in action'; 'Memory, resistance, and survival through dance education'; 'Reflections: paths of courage and connections'; and 'Defying erasure through dance'. Interweaving theory, practice and personal reflection, chapters tell of experiences and memories from over four decades of dance in Bahia as well as offering artist life histories and conceptual work on dance as socio-political action. These are stories that deal with the complex space that Black dancing bodies inhabit in Bahia, at once part of essentialist touristic imaginaries of joyful tropical culture and central to projects of Black emancipation. Together they explore dance's hard labour in redefining Blackness in the state. Dance is shown to be a pivotal tool in social and community activism, becoming the grounds for transforming colonial educational systems (Pilar Echeverry Zambrano), for enacting social responsibility (Yvonne Daniel) and for cultivating collective memory (Suárez). Ultimately – through bodies moving with practices of candomblé, *samba de roda*, carnivalesque *blocos afros*, *marabaixo* and modern/contemporary dance, amongst others – we come to see dance as a site for making and perpetuating powerful forms of cultural citizenship.

Taken as foundational to understanding dance in Bahia, Black activism underscores many chapters' approaches to dancers' creative and pedagogical work. A number highlight the central role of bodily practice in 'African matrix' education, particularly since 2003 when national law made African and Afro-Brazilian heritage an obligatory part of primary and secondary education. In a process that entangles aesthetics and politics, dance educators work not only to dignify, reframe and make visible Afro-descendent knowledge and people, but to undo persistent essentialised imaginaries of Black bodies and reconceptualise the 'individualised' body as a site of collective historical, environmental and cosmic relations.

Intersecting with discussions on education, the volume also offers some fascinating work on dance as memory, including reflections on racial self-making through personal danced histories (Deborah A. Thomas), intergenerational relations in the *samba de roda* following its designation as UNESCO intangible heritage (Danielle Robinson and Jeff Packman) and the wide-ranging practitioner-activist networks that have been central to dance's creative cultivation and survival (Suárez). These essays raise critical questions on belonging, ownership and intergenerational knowledge-making in dance practice. Importantly, they also discuss danced memory not just as history but as dynamic translocal dialogue, drawing out the complexities that governmental and institutional frameworks so often negate. Suárez suggests that Afro-descendent traditions and practices in Bahia are

'fraught between remembrance and forgetting, honoring African heritage and assimilating to Brazil's larger visions of modernisation, salvaging of memory by the elders and disparagement of this memory by local circumstances' (p. 188). The book does much to elucidate these tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that dance-makers must navigate in Bahia. It offers some valuable discussions on danced authenticity, for example, as practitioners work with dance both as a site of memory/tradition and ongoing dynamic reinvention in the making of danced futures.

In showing how dancers move within (and often in spite of) precarious institutional support structures, volatile social contexts and a society where Afro-Bahian culture is at once celebrated in the national image and subject to daily denigration, all chapters together make clear the complexity of what it might mean to 'dance Bahia'. Where some may dance with commercialised stereotypes as part of Bahia's 'survival economy', practice is also a vital site for the claiming of 'danced dignity' – as education, as paid work and social mobility, as critical cultural agency. In exploring multiple and diverse experiences here, *Dancing Bahia* challenges unified ideas of 'Blackness' and the ways practitioners might engage with its politics. It also shows Afro-Bahian dance and its activism as constantly evolving, foregrounding the adaptability and creative reinvention that, authors argue, have made it a key source of cultural resilience and survival.

Like the dances it explores, *Dancing Bahia* emerges from acts of translation – between bodily practice and page, between Portuguese and English, between activist, practitioner and scholarly worlds. In these crossings there is much to value. The book is rich in place-based knowledge and experience, and in Brazilian scholarly work, some of which is made available here for the first time in English. The volume also makes space for a plurality of voices in thinking critically with and through dance practice in Bahia. This in turn can present interesting challenges: chapters vary in style, literatures and points of reference, and it is often down to the reader to bridge the gaps. This also, however, made me think about the voices that I am most familiar with hearing in text and reflect, once again, on what that might mean for how my own understandings are constructed. Some readers unfamiliar with Bahia might wish for further context in some chapters and, as a book that works across Brazilian and Euro-American literatures, a clearer sense of where these debates intersect, diverge or feed into one another might have been a useful additional contribution. However, these points are minor compared to the value of the book in exploring dance's work as a practice of performance, pedagogy and politics that moves – critically, subtly and enduringly – with both colonial legacies and ongoing violences in the making of possible futures. It will be of interest to dance scholars, scholars of Brazil and others looking to think about race, memory and education from a postcolonial, bodily perspective.

The book also resonates as a testament to the love and power of dancing. The volume ends with a call for building connection, collaboration and a sense of shared struggle. With current developments in Brazil, where Afro-descendants face rising institutionalised violence and racism denial, such arguments are even more urgent for the country's artistic and social worlds. In scholarship too, as we turn to the challenge of decolonising the academy and look to cultivate plural and dialogic

forms of knowledge, it seems to me that volumes like this – that move between languages, practices and perspectives – are what is needed to further that project.

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Oscar de la Torre, *The People of the River: Nature and Identity in Black Amazonia, 1835–1945*

(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), pp. xiii + 225, \$34.95, pb.

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The historical depths of Amazonian Maroon descendants turn current Brazilian politics into a tiny accident, a negligible – and let's face it, stupid – blip on the centuries-long struggle against racism, colonialism and imperialism in Latin America. *The People of the River* is a thin book, but reading it in this moment can stir up deep emancipatory feelings. Oscar de la Torre combines social and economic historiography with on-site ethnographic conversations, mythical exegesis and environmental history to recast the past and present of Amazonian Afro-descendants in their full entanglement with the forest.

Unlike most histories of slavery and maroonage, this is a book about crucial alliances between humans and non-humans. The West African slaves who ran away from plantations, formed communities beyond the waterfalls, and finally fought for their rights to citizenship and land tenure were never alone. In their quest for freedom, rainforest Maroons and their descendants – locally known as *quilombolas* – were not only accompanied by Amerindian peoples and other Amazonian peasants: as this study shows, Maroons were also strategically allied with manioc tubers, banana trees, Brazilian nuts, giant snake spirits, the intricate rivers of the lowlands and other non-human entities that could never be subjugated by colonial oppression and its blind projects of natural exploitation.

This book uses two major conceptual devices to reinterpret the transition from slavery to – free – Black peasantry in Amazonia. The first is the notion of 'environmental creolisation', which captures the 'process of acquaintance with the opportunities and constraints of local environments' (p. 7). The interpretive innovation consists in addressing the changing landscape of the Amazon basin not only as the green and passive backstage where runaway slaves found refuge, but as a living historical archive with rich environmental inscriptions. In attending to how Maroons came to understand and use Amazonia's seasonal rhythms, forest products and horticultural potential, the notion of environmental Creolisation reflects how African descendants adapted to this nature-cultural context, fusing with