

tween academics and nonacademics—all of these are integral to her project of “decentering Western epistemology” (p. 2). After presenting this ambitious roll-call of objectives, Harrison makes a variety of attempts to establish connections between her own field experiences in the U.S. American South, Jamaica, and Cuba and the experiences of “her” ancestors.

Outsider Within offers us a singular perspective on what Harrison labels “rehistoricizing anthropology”; that is, remaking historical narratives that are at once, and in equal proportions, nonhegemonic as well as based on a desire for genealogical lineages and continuities. In the first two chapters, Harrison highlights the lineage formed by a certain type of anthropological practice connecting the trajectories and experiences of W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), Zora Neale Hurston (1891 [1901?]-1960), St. Clair Drake (1911–90), Gordon Lewis (1919–91), and others. By “rehistoricizing” the relative or total effacement of these figures in anthropology, Harrison both creates and situates herself within a network of new connections, traditions, and legacies. She identifies the authors just mentioned as precursors of a positioning, an attitude, and a perspective vis-à-vis anthropology and anthropologists, which, in today’s Global Age, she fully shares. Like her, these ancestors are “outsiders within,” since they “manage to become critically creative within spaces of disjuncture in which conflicting perspectives and interests meet and clash and where critical social theory may come to be aligned with concrete opposition to social injustice” (p. 17).

The first two parts of the book trace the development of these marginal positionings within anthropology’s many histories based on their contemporary effects, including the ways in which they “unbury and reclaim neglected knowledges” (p. 37). Consequently, not only must the knowledges of the subjects studied by particular anthropological traditions be unburied, the categories used by different communities of anthropologists must also be rethought. In “Remapping Routes, Unearthing Roots: Rethinking Caribbean Connections with the U.S. South” (ch. 3), Harrison proposes extending a complex repertoire of analytic themes and categories about anthropology’s historical narratives to what she considers interregional linkages of history, culture, society, and political-economy. She reevaluates themes from past research and intellectual/political agendas by reexamining various studies that historians and anthropologists produced during recent decades and which resulted in a continuous adjustment of the colonial cartographies separating the

United States’ southern border from the Caribbean. Topics such as “Jonkonnu/John Canoe style” masquerades, the “migration of African Caribbean Orishas and Loas,” the cultural politics of representations of Africa, kinship, family, motherhood, and “the cultural politics of masculine sexual prowess,” and Black peasantry (p. 99) reaffirm the continuity and, simultaneously, the creation and transformation of shared themes and practices. Curiously, though, “reevaluate” seems to mean adopting in an entirely uncritical and uninnovative way firmly established versions of what Melville J. Herskovits and others dubbed “Afro-American anthropology” in the 1930s. By reproducing these agendas, Harrison renders her critical intention of “decentering Western epistemology” incomprehensible. What center, what epistemology, and what representation of the West are at stake when boundaries are traversed and such a wide array of contexts, dialogues and experiences, and different actors are brought into focus?

It is curious as well that, in precisely those passages where Harrison zooms in from her most broad and general objectives, her narrative ceases to be just one more critical history of the discipline. There, she describes her rich experiences as an anthropologist, woman and African American—with a lengthy involvement in working-class institutions, affirmative action policies, university teaching and administration, and professional service, as well as the fight for minority rights. *Outsider Within* becomes an ethnography of the tensions among and complex ramifications of this combination of three “perspectives” in the United States’ political and academic spaces. And the ethnography provides us with detailed insights into the intricate network of personal and political connections pervading anthropology and which were often silently subsumed within historical narratives by some of the authors Harrison dubs “ancestors.” Although Harrison’s revisionist historiographical project is an unfulfilled promise, the transformation of her narrative into an ethnography of the policies, dialogues, and multiple associations and networks that traverse a particular local terrain of anthropology makes reading *Outsider Within* an encounter with the discipline informed by commitment and attitude.

Danced Nations, Performed Identities: Ethnographic Perspectives on Power and Performance in Africa

Choreographies of African Identities: Négritude, Dance, and the National Ballet of Senegal. Francesca

Castaldi. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2006. x+246 pp. (Cloth US\$50.00; Paper US\$25.00)

Performance and Politics in Tanzania: The Nation on Stage. Laura Edmondson. African Expressive Cultures Series. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007. x+175 pp. (Cloth US\$65.00; Paper US\$24.95)

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How are performance, power, and identity related? Scholarly studies seeking to answer this question have steadily increased over the last three decades, and Africa has been among the most fruitful research areas. Laura Edmondson's *Performance and Politics in Tanzania* and Francesca Castaldi's *Choreographies of African Identities* are recent ethnographies that analyze different types of performances and their relationships to multiple identities, as well as issues of ethnicity, tradition, gender, and morality. I will examine the authors' key themes, research methods, and theoretical contributions using the analytical lens of an African American Africanist cultural anthropologist's analytical lens.

Performance and Politics in Tanzania focuses on the three major popular theater companies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, during 1996–97 when Edmondson conducted 16 months of fieldwork. Tanzania One Theatre (TOT), Muungano, and Mandela are performance troupes that combine dance (traditional dances known as *ngoma* and dances accompanying Congolese popular music) with acrobatics, singing, comedy sketches, skits, and theme plays in dynamic and engaging performances for audiences in open-air bars, clubs, and hotels throughout the city. As a theater studies scholar, Edmondson's main data-gathering method was observing the companies' various performance events, and analyses of the performances form the foundation of her book.

Choreographies of African Identities examines the roles of ballets (dance troupes or companies including the National Ballet of Senegal) and urban Senegal's everyday *sabar* dancing in shaping identities. The Wolof word *sabar*, Castaldi reports, refers to "a constellation of social events, drum rhythms, and dances" enacted around an ensemble of *sabar* drums (2006:76). Castaldi, a dance history studies scholar, utilizes a very reflexive writing style to describe her experiences in Senegal during ten months of field research. Her text is based on experiences

dancing in classes and clubs, performance observations, interviews with local dancers, and her own ethnographic descriptions.

One of the things that Edmondson's book does well is explain the local and global contexts in which performance companies emerged as icons of Tanzanian nationhood. These include the 1979 financial crisis that led to a proliferation of cultural troupes performing in bars for cash, the impact of structural adjustment programs on state funding and, finally in 1981, the official disbanding of the three national performance companies: The National Dance Troupe, Acrobatics Troupe, and Theatre Troupe. TOT, Muungano, and Mandela filled the void by exhibiting composite performances that incorporated the performance styles of the defunct companies and various other genres (2007:32). Although none of these newer troupes officially represents the Tanzanian state, each one is interdependent with the state. TOT most clearly exemplified this relationship, because its performances often occurred at functions of the then-ruling party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (Party of the Revolution) or CCM and the troupe had more extensive financial resources. However, Edmondson advocates a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the state and popular theater performances in Tanzania.

Pushing against a complicity/resistance binary, Edmondson conceptualizes a "poetics of nationhood," defined as "an umbrella phrase for . . . [the] multiplicity of practices, strategies, and processes that were marshaled in the composition of the nation on the popular stage" (2007:7). She fashions a typology of terms to capture the variety of processes and practices that define specific forms of "nationalism"—collaborative, alternative, strategic, and cosmopolitan—which can be seen in popular performance troupe/state relations. Her typology will prove quite useful to scholars trying to capture specific tensions and strategies that undergird these relations. In order to develop a more richly nuanced theory of performance and power, however, Edmondson might have improved the typology by engaging in critical dialogue with relevant studies of performance and power, such as Kelly Askew's *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (2002).

Castaldi's *Choreographies of African Identities* also helps to unravel complex relations between dance performances and their contexts by examining ethnicity's role in the construction of national and local identities. She juxtaposes the National Ballet's representation of Senegal to the external world through dance with the actual dynamics of Senegal's

internal group relations. For outsiders, the Ballet projects the image of a polyethnic dance troupe performing a polyethnic repertoire centered on “village” life. This image is consistent with the philosophy of *Négritude* articulated by renowned poet and cultural theorist Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001), Senegal’s first president. Yet particular groups shape many facets of Senegalese life, especially in cities. Muslim religious brotherhoods exert greater influence in national cultural politics, Castaldi shows, than ethnic cultural associations. Moreover, Wolofization, in the past a process that privileged Wolof language and culture over the languages and cultures of other Senegalese groups, also applies to performances.

Dakar’s most popular form of dance entertainment is the *sabar*, Castaldi observes, a public dance event with almost exclusively female dancers and organizers and male drummers. While the *sabar* dance complex was associated historically with the Wolof and the Serer, performing *sabar* now signifies urbanity and embodies being *Dakarois* (a resident of Dakar), regardless of ethnic background. Castaldi thus expands the definition of Wolofization to mean “a process by which the historically Wolof cultural complex is embraced by other ethnic groups” (2006:76). This analysis of the politics of ethnicity and performance—external representation and internal dynamics—is an especially illuminating aspect of Castaldi’s study.

Scholars who research any type of performance in Africa must eventually contend with “tradition.” Both authors dare readers to reexamine their thinking about “traditional” African performances. For example, Edmondson noticed vast differences among the three Tanzanian companies when they perform “tradition” in dances, theme plays, or other genres. Muungano self-consciously and respectfully evokes tradition, while TOT mocks tradition by humorously portraying characters that represent “backward” ways and beliefs, as well as by dancing to electronic beats rather than actual drums. Edmondson’s observation that performances of Tanzanian nationhood can be seen as Janus-faced, both forward and backward looking (2007:112), greatly enhances Africa-based performance studies by emphasizing the variability, even ambiguity, of performance troupes’ engagements with tradition.

Variable ideas about tradition also emerge from Castaldi’s description of the slippage between outsiders’ misconceptions of Senegalese traditional dances as static cultural practices and actual performances. Senegalese perform the same dance steps in multiple settings, she reveals, from theater halls to

tourist shows and discotheques (2006:127). Thus, dances viewed as “traditional” by outsiders are not limited to rituals in rural settings or on elevated stages, but animate Dakar’s streets. Disputing notions of static Senegalese dances that reflect unchanging traditions, Castaldi points to moments of choreographic agency, *griots* producing musical products for commercial consumption, and the constant evolution of “traditional” dances.

Morality emerged as a key theme in Edmondson’s analysis of TOT, Muungano, and Mandela stage performances. Drawing upon *ujamaa* (familyhood) as a fundamental principle of Tanzanian morality since 1961 under first president Julius Nyerere (1922–99), Edmondson notes that older *vichekesho* (slapstick comedy) sketches of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s usually ended by restoring the social order and reinforcing *ujamaa*. Contrastively, skits of the late 1990s often disrupted this harmonious resolution, ending in total chaos or with bad characters triumphing over good ones (2007:53–55). Edmondson then insightfully connects these changes in performances to broad shifts in Tanzanian ideas about and standards of morality.

Edmondson’s analysis of gender, closely tied to morality, contrasts what she considers Tanzanian women’s “hyperpersexualized” performances in certain *ngoma* dances that feature “erotic” hip rotations (*kukata kiuno*), with generalized female subservience in the traditional dance form. The association of *ngoma* with sexuality is so pervasive, Edmondson claims, that unlike male spectators who sometimes join the dance, female spectators do not participate, because doing so would be considered shameful and inappropriate, and because female *ngoma* performers face social stigma (2007:72–79).

Highlighting gender, chapter 4 of Castaldi’s ethnography examines the *sabar* as a space for celebrating “an explicitly sexualized feminine identity” (2006:82). Her analysis centers on the “kinesthetic”—a concept relating ethics to aesthetics and kinetics (2006:80). She identifies a hegemonic kinesthetic, featuring docile, subdued, modest, and usually Muslim women, which dominates imagery in popular religious television programs and songs (2006:80, 85–86). She juxtaposes the subaltern kinesthetic of women in *sabars*, which is loud, bold, and unrestrained (2006:80, 84), thus outlining multiple ways of performing womanhood in urban Senegal.

Curiously, neither Castaldi nor Edmondson interviewed women extensively, and gaining these perspectives would have improved their studies. Edmondson might have presented Tanzanian women’s ideas about morality and respectability in *ngoma*

performances with the nuance she displays for other topics. Likewise, Castaldi might have explored more fully Senegalese women's views of the kinesthetic, particularly how they reconcile its dominant and subordinate forms.

Although these two authors adopted different research methods and writing strategies, their ethnographies complement one another and complicate our understandings of the performance/power relationship in Africa from contrasting perspectives. Edmondson's detailed, historically contextualized analysis of Tanzanian troupes and their performances troubles superficial understandings of tradition and morality in performances of nationhood, while coherently classifying complex power relations between performers and the state. Castaldi's study reflexively engages the changing meanings and uses of dance in Senegal—ballets and the *sabar*—to reveal how performance shapes urban, ethnic, and gender identities.

Both ethnographies will interest anthropologists, theater and dance studies specialists, and

scholars in other disciplines. Nonanthropologists have recently published many scholarly studies of performance in Africa. This leads me to sound a clarion call for cultural anthropologists, who can deploy the full range of ethnographic methods, to renew our discipline's involvement in this research area, not only by building on previous anthropological studies, but also by critically engaging with scholars from other disciplines. Together, we can fashion theories and methods that improve our understandings of interrelationships among performance, identity, and power—and act on those understandings.

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