

Spring 2013

Review of Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era by Matthew Krystal.

Christina Gish Hill
Iowa State University, cghill@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/language_pubs

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/language_pubs/150. For information on how to cite this item, please visit <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html>.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in World Languages and Cultures Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Review of Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era by Matthew Krystal.

Abstract

Considering how little research exists on indigenous dance, Matthew Krystal's new book is a much needed addition to the scholarship. He not only adds valuable ethnographic material to the literature on dance but also brings new insight to studies of identity as expressed and shaped through performance. Krystal skillfully navigates the subtle contradictions of dance as both an expression of traditional ethnic identity working against the homogenizing factors of globalization and a challenge to tradition through adopting new cultural elements. He uses four case studies to illuminate issues of authenticity and identity construction, drawing on extensive fieldwork among the K'iche Mayan, Midwestern Native American powwow dancers, Mexican folkloric dancers, and University of Illinois football fans. Krystal argues that dance expresses two basic human tensions, that of cultural conformity versus cultural change and that of individual expression versus group conformity. His research allows him to explore the ways these tensions get articulated among indigenous dancers in North America, as well as nonindigenous people who portray indigenous people through dance. The groups he chooses allow for some fascinating parallels while revealing important divergences for understanding identity and representation as

Comments

This review is published as *Review of Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era* by Matthew Krystal. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 2013 69(1):134-135. DOI: [10.3998/jar.0521004.0069.106](https://doi.org/10.3998/jar.0521004.0069.106). Posted with permission.

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era by Matthew Krystal

Review by: Christina Gish Hill

Source: *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (SPRING 2013), pp. 134-135

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24393666>

Accessed: 13-06-2018 21:25 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Anthropological Research*

t_{n+1} and, consequently, motion becomes the *trajectory* that goes from t_n to t_{n+1} while time is nothing but the interval separating these two immobile points. . . . [Senghor] would aim to be with change itself rather than isolate the positions of that which changes: we would embrace *flux* itself. . . . [Senghor's *embrace-reason*] places itself in the object, marrying its flux. We might say that it dances rather than thinks the object—*elle le danse plutôt qu' elle ne le pense*—the rhyming play on words in which Senghor sums up his notion of an *alternative* knowledge (pp. 99–101).

Diagne moves from rhythm in art to an epistemology of rhythm and finally to a creative rhythm of politics all in the name of an active and planetary humanism. While I maintain the skepticism of Senghor's Negritude expressed throughout my book, I shall continue to rethink it in light of Diagne's affecting, often brilliant interpretation.

It should be noted that Diagne's *Bergson postcolonial: L'élan vital dans la pensée de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de Mohamed Iqbal* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 2011) was the winner of Dagnan-Bouveret prize from the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, 2011.

Donna V. Jones
University of California, Berkeley

Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era.
Matthew Krystal. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012, 360 pp. \$70.00, cloth.

Considering how little research exists on indigenous dance, Matthew Krystal's new book is a much needed addition to the scholarship. He not only adds valuable ethnographic material to the literature on dance but also brings new insight to studies of identity as expressed and shaped through performance. Krystal skillfully navigates the subtle contradictions of dance as both an expression of traditional ethnic identity working against the homogenizing factors of globalization and a challenge to tradition through adopting new cultural elements. He uses four case studies to illuminate issues of authenticity and identity construction, drawing on extensive fieldwork among the K'iche Mayan, Midwestern Native American powwow dancers, Mexican folkloric dancers, and University of Illinois football fans. Krystal argues that dance expresses two basic human tensions, that of cultural conformity versus cultural change and that of individual expression versus group conformity. His research allows him to explore the ways these tensions get articulated among indigenous dancers in North America, as well as nonindigenous people who portray indigenous people through dance. The groups he chooses allow for some fascinating parallels while revealing important divergences for understanding identity and representation as well.

Krystal interrogates the notion of authenticity particularly well, demonstrating that it is fluid and dependent on both the producer and consumer of dance. He also reveals the political as well as the economic implications of proclaiming whether or not a dance is authentic. One important contribution this book makes is to the discussion of the impact of debates over authenticity on indigenous political movements, as well as control over constructions of ethnic identity. Indigenous communities manipulate constructions of authenticity when they portray themselves to outsiders to gain a political edge. Assertions of authenticity also allow indigenous people to form ethnic and even pan-ethnic identities in the face of transnationalism, impositions of state institutions, and marginalization, giving them visibility through dance. Krystal insightfully demonstrates how both pow-wow culture and Mayan dance undermine the efforts of nationalism to assimilate all peoples under one umbrella culture, while pushing Natives to the margins. He reveals that dance promotes cultural survival and an assertion of both tribally specific and wider indigenous identities in the face of the homogenizing forces of colonization and nationalism.

Journal of Anthropological Research, vol. 69, 2013

Krystal also smartly illuminates the flexible nature of indigenous dance as a tool of identity construction, not just for indigenous people but for non-Natives as well. He points out that authenticity as a cultural practice can be utilized by outsiders just as effectively for completely different purposes. He notes that a sense of alienation by elites often encourages them to seek a sense of authenticity through folkloric dance of indigenous peoples, and rightly suggests that “playing Indian” molds the American individual into the ideal citizen of the republic. This is an important theorization of why so many non-Natives in the United States cling so vehemently to American Indian sports team mascots.

At the same time, Krystal could further explore the connection between Euroamerican representations of Indianness and constructions of American identity, interrogating sports fans’ feelings that their identity as “Fighting Illini” is a primary part of how they see themselves and is intertwined with their own personal sense of Americanness. The author also could have expanded on the origins of American Indian dance and its association with the tourist industry to sharpen the connection between asserting a cultural identity for outsiders through dance and the appropriation of American Indian dance styles by those very outsiders, but his overall treatment of the issues of dance and identity through these four case studies is highly insightful. Anyone interested in indigenous dance, its use to construct and preserve identity, and the debates over authenticity has a valuable resource in Krystal’s book. Furthermore, he lays the trials and confusions of his fieldwork out clearly in his introductory writings for each chapter. This book could also be valuable to a student of anthropological methods because his own honesty about his methods, as well as his successes and failures, makes this book a useful resource to anyone who is preparing to go into the field or has ever wondered what it is like.

Christina Gish Hill
Iowa State University

Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-first Century.
Circe Sturm. Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2011, 280 pp. \$27.95, paper.

Circe Sturm’s second book, *Becoming Indian*, explores the phenomenon of “racial shifting,” the recent move made by many Americans from identifying as white to identifying as Native American—specifically, Cherokee. For some, this means checking a different box on a census form, whereas other individuals start or join independent, unrecognized Cherokee tribes and adopt social, material, and ceremonial practices felt to index pan-indigenous or Cherokee identities. With the goal of moving beyond instrumental explanations for why so many Americans are becoming racial shifters, and especially trenchant criticism of racial shifters in the casino era, she takes seriously the social work imagined and accomplished by identifying as Cherokee. In doing so, Sturm provides a rich, ethnographically based analysis of the reasons for this change as well as the implications for understandings of sovereignty in Native communities and racial ideologies in the United States. Her argument that race shifting (and other identification practices) are “always narrative acts” (p. 7) is illustrated by the numerous examples she includes of individuals engaging in or reacting to racial shifting.

Sturm begins by detailing the intellectual origins of her project and the methodologies she employs. A long-term, multisite study employing qualitative and quantitative approaches, her book is an example of how detailed ethnography is absolutely necessary to explain ostensibly straightforward demographic trends. Indeed, she succeeds in showing that racial shifting rarely results in any monetary gain for individuals who choose to identify as Cherokee but carries symbolic, explanatory, and emotional values both for self-identified Cherokees and members of the three federally recognized Cherokee tribes (the latter referred to as “citizen Cherokees”). Sturm builds both perspectives into the structure of her book: the first part is devoted to the stories of racial shifters, and the second section of the

Journal of Anthropological Research, vol. 69, 2013