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Reviews: “Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwinism,” “Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture,” “Dance in Anthropology (2nd edition),” “Dances of the Tewa Pueblo Indians (2nd edition)”

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**PERFORMANCE AND EVOLUTION  
IN THE AGE OF DARWIN: OUT OF  
THE NATURAL ORDER**

by Jane R. Goodall. 2002. London: Routledge. xi + 266 pp., illustrations, notes, index.

**ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE DANCE:  
TEN LECTURES**

by Drid Williams. Foreword by Brenda Farnell. 2004. Second Edition. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. xx + 303 pp., notes, index.

**DANCING AT THE DAWN  
OF AGRICULTURE**

by Yosef Garfinkel. 2003. Austin: University of Texas Press. xviii + 326 pp., photographs and illustrations, tables, maps, index.

**DANCES OF THE TEWA PUEBLO  
INDIANS: EXPRESSIONS OF NEW LIFE**

by Jill D. Sweet. 2004. 2nd edition. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, xxviii + 108 pp., photographs and illustrations, index.

In order to create a contextual basis for a discussion of these four titles, I connect them through the authors' uses of anthropological and archaeological methods and theories, and discuss how these have changed through time.

The first title, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin*, runs the performance gamut from freak shows, circuses, and wild west shows to dance and theater, with side trips to "ethnographic" displays in museums and world fairs. This book is useful to the scholar who wishes to fathom the ways in which Darwinian evolutionary schemes and models dominated so many dance history books and classes in dance history. Goodall sets out to demonstrate and analyze "the ways in which the major themes of evolution were taken up in the perform-

ing arts during Charles Darwin's lifetime (1809–1882)" (2002, 1). For the unwary dance scholar who thinks that a work like Curt Sachs' *World History of Dance*—which is only one of the better-known books constructed on an evolutionary model—is a quaint relic of the past, several recent dance books and articles quoting Sachs as an authority, should put that notion to rest.<sup>1</sup> Even though dance constitutes only a small portion of Goodall's study, this book can serve as an important resource for the dance scholar for the analysis and description of the development of evolution as a paradigm shift in scientific thinking in the nineteenth century and the concomitant effects in the performing arts as the intersection of shifting attitudes toward sex, gender, and race.

According to Brenda Farnell in the preface to Drid William's *Anthropology and the Dance*, the book is "firmly grounded in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology as the primary means to explore dances and dancing as semantically laden forms of human action" (2004, viii). Thus, in a sense, Williams confines her potential readership to those scholars wishing to study dance from her specific viewpoint. In this series of lectures (rather than chapters), Williams puts forth many common-sense suggestions regarding how dance can be profitably studied by graduate students. Her lectures cover such topics as "Why Do People Dance?," "Body Languages," and "Human Behavior" that generally follow a historical trajectory. In the final lectures she proposes her own theoretical concepts and models for students to follow.

I find much to admire in the anthropological stances she takes, for instance, her critique of Sachs and others still using evolutionary frameworks. And I find myself in agreement with many of her critiques of historical theoretical stances, particularly

of those authors and college dance courses based on evolutionary models that move from “primitive” dances to “civilized,” i.e., western ballet and modern dance.

However, I do not always agree with her. In her introductory lecture Williams states: “It is also necessary to say that to create a dichotomy between dance/non-dance is basically false and makes, in the end, for obscurity, for there is a sense in which dance possesses values, practices, and beliefs that are not all that different from those connected with ordinary human actions” (5). I would contest this statement. The radical emic distinction between religion and dance is very clear in many choreophobic Middle Eastern societies. Dance and non-dance patterned movement activities, even when similar, are conceptually and linguistically divided by Muslims, for many of whom dance constitutes a disreputable, even sinful, activity. Spiritual and martial arts activities that some scholars have attempted to call “dance” because of their patterned, rhythmic characteristics are not so regarded by the Muslim participants. They would be offended at the very notion of someone labeling these activities as “dance” (Shay 1995). Dance in both Iran and Afghanistan was successfully banned by powerful clerical figures, indicating what a powerful and negative symbol dance is in these societies.

I was frequently made uncomfortable by Williams’ harsh judgments of scholars, past and present. Williams acknowledges this: “My treatment of many authors on the dance is similar to Evans-Pritchard’s ‘severe and negative’” (11). In scholarly discourse a level of civilized demeanor is required in order to disagree with one another and exchange ideas. Still, if you can overlook this negative aspect of her presentation, those dance scholars who utilize anthropological models and theories will certainly wish to

look seriously at the new edition of Williams’ work.

Another volume with useful data but flawed conclusions, *Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture*, is archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel’s intensive data analysis of ancient iconography from the late ninth and early eighth millennium to the third millennium B.C.E., the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. According to Garfinkel, during these millennia, from Pakistan to southeast Europe, dancing figures appeared as a primary feature of iconographic sources from a large number of archaeological sites. He describes his data, which consists of pottery, seals, wall paintings, and other iconographic sources. Garfinkel’s claim that this is the largest assemblage of such materials ever gathered (99) may be justified by the very large number of iconographic items displayed in his copiously illustrated volume. Since at least half of his book consists of photographs, illustrations, maps, and tables, with detailed descriptions of the various assemblages of materials, and a useful description of the finds in each archaeological site, the sheer amount of data and the descriptions justifies its publication for future scholars to analyze.

However, seemingly unaware of current dance scholarship, Garfinkel makes several unwarranted assumptions and presuppositions that he posits in his interpretations of the data. Specifically, he claims over and over in different wordings that the stylized figures which he analyzes are performing religious dances. He bases his conclusions on Judith Lynne Hanna’s article in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*:

The dance medium has communicative efficacy as a multidimensional phenomenon codifying experience and directed toward the sensory

modalities—the sight of performers moving in time and space, the sounds of physical movement, the smell of physical exertion, the feeling of kinesthetic activity or empathy, the touch of body to body or to performing area, and proxemic sense—has the potential of going beyond many other audio-visual media of persuasion. (Hanna quoted in Garfinkel, 59)

From Hanna's description, Garfinkel concludes that: "the dance experience is therefore a religious experience" (59). From the foregoing quotation it might be equally possible for an individual to experience the same sensations in a discotheque with thumping rhythms, sweaty bodies, and upraised arms, in which many of Hanna's sensory elements are present. Many professional dancers have also experienced this type of "magical sensation" or altered consciousness in public dance productions or even in marching band performances (as I have frequently done in both contexts). To be sure, Garfinkel cites R. Kraus, who stated that "it was a mistake to assume that all forms of dance have a common core or purpose of meaning," but Garfinkel continues to insist that these figures represent religious or cultic dances (65).

He correctly points out that "trying to understand the contribution of dance to the social structure of prehistoric communities is totally different from the study of this subject in contemporary communities" (66). Nevertheless, Garfinkel proceeds to analyze three contemporary preliterate societies from southern Africa, North America, and Papua-New Guinea from which he extrapolates parallel "meanings" in his analysis of prehistoric dance practices (66–67).

Throughout Garfinkel's account there

is an essentialization of individuals in prehistoric societies as if they are all the same, mechanistically moving lockstep through these preliterate societies both prehistoric and contemporary. I think that it is crucial to remind future scholars that Said's *Orientalism* attempted to challenge the essentializing of people from other cultures, now no longer politically correct. But, as classics scholar Andrea Deagon points out: "The past, however, whose actual inhabitants are not around to trouble us, is still available for colonization" (2005). People in all times and places were individuals with different mental capacities, talents, and skills within their societies; it is at our own peril that we treat individuals in other societies, literate or preliterate, historic or prehistoric, as if they were all the same. Garfinkel has painted an orientalist image with his conclusions, suggesting a vision of an essentialized primitive man or woman dancing in "cultic" ritual dances at the dawn of time.

A major weakness of Garfinkel's interpretations proceeds from his use of dubious, and now discredited, dance scholarship to bolster his arguments, particularly the use of Curt Sachs. I think that the time has come to question the constantly repeated notion, put forth by many authors, both popular and scholarly, that dance in preliterate and ancient societies centers only on religion. This shibboleth leads to the conclusion that upraised arms always constitute gestures of supplication or prayer. One need only think back to the 1970s in discotheques throughout the Western world in which large rooms full of sweat-drenched dancers swayed to the thumping rhythms of disco music with enthusiastically raised arms; it gives one pause when interpreting the stylized figures of prehistoric periods, of which we know nothing other than stylized figures on potsherds, through the vi-

sual preconceptions of twenty-first century eyes.

Problems also arise with his interpretation of stylized figures as dancing in contrast to other activities. Garfinkel points out in several places that earlier researchers had not interpreted the stylized figures as dancing, but as engaged in other types of activities (15-16; 155). This book illustrates all of the pitfalls that dance historians encounter if they attempt to speculate about what ancient dance was like eons ago, or the multiple reasons that people danced, through the analysis of static, often poorly drawn, iconography. This is particularly true when we do not know the languages, religious practices, or other aspects of their lives.

On the plus side, Garfinkel includes wonderful illustrative materials and describes the movement directions of the dancing figures. Too, he supports his more interesting conclusions with linguistic analysis and other, less controversial, data.

The last work under review demonstrates how outstanding anthropological studies can be carried out when the researcher exhibits sensitivity and utilizes the latest theoretical concepts. One of the most pleasurable reading assignments during my graduate years was the first edition of Jill Sweet's *Dances of the Tewa Pueblo Indians*, in which she surveyed the dance repertoire of this southwestern group, providing ritual and social contexts for their performances in the pueblos, and showing how the dances functioned in new ways in the dual world of Tewa/Anglo America as performances for tourists, for example. She managed all of this with remarkable and commendable brevity. In this second, updated edition, Sweet chose to incorporate the full text of the first book, adding a new preface and epilogue for updating the original material.

What Sweet has added demonstrates how scholars can enhance their knowledge and presentational skills by opening their minds to new intellectual currents. Sweet does this in several ways. In the preface and epilogue, she updates the reader about changes in the lives of the people in the pueblos with the addition of such new elements as casinos and how these affect people's lives.

In her epilogue, following current anthropological practice, Sweet seeks to remedy what she considers a serious omission in the first edition: "In many respects I had obscured or omitted the names and voices of the Tewa people" (87). She accomplishes this goal by returning to the pueblos and tracking down and identifying the individuals in the numerous stunning photographs she used in the first edition and inserting their names in the photo captions of the second edition. In addition, she provides those voices space in her book through more recent interviews. On a more personally poignant level, Sweet offers a vulnerable portrait of herself enduring the pain and frustration of one who copes daily with the debilitating symptoms of multiple sclerosis while pursuing research. This book is truly a monument to outstanding dance scholarship.

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## Notes

1. See Garfinkel, 4, 24, 26, 27, 47, 60.

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