

Offering a model of how to critically engage with interdisciplinary theater in its broader cultural contexts, Kurahashi's book will attract equally interdisciplinary audiences in theater and performance studies, dance studies, and broader readerships in the field of American Studies.

Diana Benea
University of Bucharest, Romania

Works Cited

Nguyen Donohue, Maura. 2016. "Ambivalent Selves: The Asian Female Body in Contemporary American Dance." In *Contemporary Directions in Asian American Dance*, edited by Yutian Wong, 191–212. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

DANCING INDIGENOUS WORLDS: CHOREOGRAPHIES OF RELATION

by Jacqueline Shea Murphy. 2022. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 392 pp., 50 photos. \$150.86 hardcover, ISBN: 9781517912673. \$35 paper, ISBN: 9781517912680. Free ebook, ISBN: 9781452967950. doi:10.1017/S0149767723000402

When does a dance begin and when does it end? Do we start a dance when we first step into the arena, onto the stage, or across the dance floor? When we take our first breath? When we first realize we are autonomous beings? When we remember that we are all connected? In her new book, *Dancing Indigenous Worlds: Choreographies of Relation*, Jacqueline Shea Murphy considers these questions, focusing on the dances and dance-making processes of several choreographers who identify as Indigenous in different ways, and how their matrices of relations are part of their work from before the moment of creative inception and what stays after the final bow. Highlighting her ongoing relationships with these dance makers, throughout the book Shea Murphy gleans common themes of reciprocity, responsibility, and refusal from their dialogues and contributions. Her book adds to scholarship that weaves together concerns of dance and Indigenous studies, describing artists and

their communities of care as beholden to each other and to the lands where they reside, respecting the centrality of sensory knowledge in both of these broad fields.

The book highlights work by Māori dancer and choreographer Jack Gray (Atamira Dance Company), Alutiiq dance-artist Tanya Lukin Linklater, Yup'ik dancer, writer, and choreographer Emily Johnson (Catalyst), and dancer and choreographer Rulan Tangen (*Dancing Earth: Indigenous Contemporary Dance Creations*). Shea Murphy contributes critical dance studies perspectives to work highlighting relational processes of knowledge making by Indigenous studies scholars, including Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Shawn Wilson (2008). She describes the fruits of creative work by these different artists as more ritual than performance, and more about attention than physical technique (135), integrating Indigenous protocols, values, and behaviors that extend beyond performance spaces into their dance making. Their creations include potlucks, collective walks through different urban or rural spaces, and invitations to all present to contribute to their artistic processes. These aesthetic choices embody "Indigenous sensate agency" (Robinson 2016) extending temporally and spatially beyond client-patron definitions of performance. The book includes a chapter with references to work by Linklater, Haudenosaunee Seneca dance-artist Rosy Simas, and Daystar Rosalie M. Jones (*DAYSTAR: Contemporary Dance-Drama of Indian America*), each accompanied by comments from and discussions among different artists and scholars. Included in this last chapter are reflection questions to guide viewers' attention beyond the book's pages to dances, dance artists, and dance experiences themselves, inviting readers to engage more deeply with themes presented in the book.

Building on political scientist Glen Coulthard's definition of resurgence as a "self-reflective revitalization" of Indigenous knowledge, values, and culture (2014), Shea Murphy coins "resurge-instances" referring to the transformative work that happens between people in and around dance class or performance, resonant flashes of relational ways of being that have the capacity to "reset the whole system" (7–8). Building her arguments alongside words and texts from the artists, she asserts that these resurge-instances are a part of dance

performance for the dance artists whose work she highlights. Including her relationships with these artists and their generous written contributions, the book offers transparency forging new paths into futures of relational recalibration driven by a deep desire for decolonial connection. Like the artistic work she writes about, Shea Murphy's book quilts together collective leadership (137), decentering a "single-author" genius model (151) weaving conversations, stories, and written correspondence throughout the book.

The vexed and difficult paths these artists have traversed in owning their identities as categorically Indigenous are described in the book as contributing greatly to their dance-making processes. Chapter 1 follows Gray's incorporation of spiritual knowledge gained from research into his family's genealogy and relationships with a place called Mitimiti. In chapter 2, Tangen's traumatic experiences researching her ancestry are described as an important part of her radically inclusive dance-making processes, basing artistic choices on practices of care. Chapter 4 refers to Johnson's embodied acts of refusal in response to settler-colonial desires for comprehension, displays of choreographic concepts her dance-making community work with that are not necessarily legible through outside observation. Shea Murphy describes these performances as feeling blurry, but charged with meaningful presence across time and space, so therefore not uncertain (233–235). Underscoring that Indigenous identities are grounded in painful histories of colonization, imperialism, genocide, forced relocation, land theft, human trafficking, slavery, structural illness, and decimation (181), she applies María Firmino Castillo's concept of "ontological complexity" (2016) to describe ways these artists' incorporation of personal experiences of ongoing colonial histories into their work adds fiber to their political matrices of reciprocity, relationality, "abun-dance" (217) and refusal.

Modeling what she has learned about Indigenous cultural priorities of respect and inclusion, Shea Murphy introduces herself in the book's preface, contextualizing her voice within a story of her origins and what informs her. She presents what she knows about her own ancestry and her positionality as a white settler dance scholar in long-term relationships

of care with those she writes with and about as a written gesture of solidarity reflecting her methodologies. Her findings are based on what she has felt Indigenous dance doing, saying, and enacting over decades of research, blurring epistemological lines that separate personal experience from academic scholarship. In her description of a workshop led by Tangen at UC Riverside, she refers to herself in the third person as "dance-scholar" in various modes, including "in-sweat-tights," "in-responsible-caregiver-mode," and "in-OK-to-be-gutsy-mode" (134). Her kids are present with her through many of the stories in her book and contribute to her meaning-making process in different ways and in nonchronological stages of childhood as they traverse the globe together conducting her far-reaching research.

Writing across worlds as an intercultural ambassador between academic confinement and kinesthetic connectivity, the transparency of Shea Murphy's writing challenges dualities of yes/no, belonging/not belonging, right/wrong, shifting from the seat of a scholarship rooted in expertise and analytic assertion to a way of working constituted in not knowing and in trying out and seeing what happens. She includes moments of vulnerability in which she considers giving up the whole project, curses, and confesses how hard it is to write about Indigenous dance artists as a white academic woman questioning the academic institutions of which she is a part. Avoiding perpetuation of colonial hierarchies predicated on "getting it right," she includes ways she has gotten it wrong, enacting different ways those of us descended from settlers can help "undo the vampiric terms of our ongoing residence on the lands where we live in big and small ways" (17).

Theoretically, this book takes a deep dive into concepts of choreographic relationality, building on Shea Murphy's first book *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (2007), which focused on histories of Native American dancers' and choreographers' engagement with the stage despite dance oppression and criminalization, appropriation of Native American cultures by North American choreographers of the twentieth century, and the exoticification of what has been considered Indigenous aesthetics. Her new book responds to this previous research by foregrounding Indigenous futurities

and ways the dance artists she works with choreographed Indigenous knowledge and experiences within neocolonial capitalist systems of ongoing epistemological oppression by asserting relationality as a core way of being. Shea Murphy bridges the fifteen years since the publication of her first book with ontological depth as an important contribution to critical dance studies highlighting Indigenous contemporary artistry and revealing problematic projections of state-sanctioned Indigeneity in new ways.

As a self-reflective response to her introduction of herself and her background at the beginning of the book, in chapter 4, Shea Murphy removes herself as part of her textual performance of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. Decentering herself as “colonial privilege entitled scholar” (261), a term coined by Costanoan Ohlone-Mutsun Chumash leader and artist Kanyon Sayers-Roods, she writes about her experience of being forbidden from participating in a Closed Cultural Protocol Ceremony as a non-Indigenous expert invited to the National Indigenous Dance Forum in Melbourne, part of the Yirramboi First Nations Arts Festival. She describes a conversation she had with a friend acknowledging how usually colonial privilege-entitled people are afforded entry to structures that ground and orient while colonized people have been refused. Arguing for the importance of “generative refusal” (Simpson 2014) as part of “dancescapes” of Indigenous resurge-instances, a term borrowed and translated from Kanaka scholar-surfer Karin Amimoto Ingersoll’s “seascape epistemology” (2016), she highlights how different artists incorporate refusal into their work and suggests that the best way to participate in these resurge-instances is by honoring refusals. Shea Murphy removes her voice from a critical section of her book, performing an act of textual listening and witnessing through the absence of her own authorship.

The world governed by liberal-capitalist modernity has been heading in dangerous directions of self-annihilation for a long time. Work that choreographs worlds of relationality, reciprocity, abundance, inclusivity, and generative refusal, based on value systems that prioritize relationships of care, living systems of the earth, and clean water, contributes to projects

of world shifting within a world that needs shifting. Those who have been dancing their dances and singing their songs in old and new ways all along as part of communities of care that honor ancestors and ancestral relationships with the land contribute to the Indigenous present as a pathway to renewal. In these worlds, it does matter what we do and how we do it. Knowing that does not make it any easier to navigate the current global crises, but points towards horizons of relational futurities.

Ana Flecha

University of California, Santa Cruz

Works Cited

- Castillo, María Regina Firmino. 2016. “Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis.” *Dance Research Journal* 48 (1): 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767715000480>.
- Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ingersoll, Karin Amimoto. 2016. *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Robinson, Dylan. 2016. “Intergenerational Sense, Intergenerational Responsibility.” In *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, edited by Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin, 43–66. Waterloo, CA: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Shea Murphy, Jacqueline. 2007. *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Smith, Linda T. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. Dunedin, NZ: Otago University Press.
- Wilson, Shawn. 2008. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax, CA: Fernwood Publishing.