

Book Reviews

Public Performances: Studies in the Carnivalesque and Ritualesque. Ed. Jack Santino. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 298, introduction, about the authors, index.)

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Public Performances is a collection of essays from scholars who have presented at the annual Conference on Holidays, Ritual, Festival, Celebration, and Public Display, organized by Jack Santino, the editor of this volume. The first conference was in 1997; the gathering's 15-year anniversary in 2011 offered the opportunity to "pause and reflect on the field of ritual studies, and the role and influence of the conference" (p. ix) and to subsequently create this collection. *Public Performances* is the fourth volume in the Ritual, Festival, and Celebration series edited by Santino and published by Utah State University Press.

Santino's framework of the carnivalesque and the ritualesque gives this collection its subtitle and provides the volume's theoretical through-line. First explored in "The Carnivalesque and the Ritualesque" (*Journal of American Folklore* 124:69–73, 2011), Santino coined the term "ritualesque" as a counterpart to Mikhail Bakhtin's "carnivalesque" as discussed in *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984). Both terms describe essential elements of public performances that are distinct but far from mutually exclusive. The "carnivalesque" refers to the expressive, transgressive, and temporary inversions that characterize certain public festivities. The "ritualesque" describes the sacralized and instrumental aspects of public display that use the power of ceremonial performance to mark or make social transformations. Moving away from defining events as either carnival or ritual, Santino suggests that the terms "carnivalesque"

and "ritualesque" can be used to describe differing aspects within a particular event: often, both are present, and they interact in ways that are unique to each event and its social context. Santino also suggests that, rather than imagining a carnival/ritual binary, we can understand events as existing on a continuum between carnivalesque and ritualesque, depending on their social purposes (p. 14).

This collection offers the opportunity to see how different scholars are instrumentalizing these terms, which is one of its important contributions. Santino writes in the introduction that "it is hoped that the ensemble collection will help point the way, if not to a unified theory, then to a unified field of public display as emergent political popular culture," and to an understanding of the multiple expressions encompassed by the term "public performance" (p. xiii). In this spirit, the essays in this volume succeed as a stock-taking moment in the study of public performance within the field of folklore. The essays are arranged to progress from traditional carnival to ritual to the ritualesque, and, over the course of the collection, it becomes clear that ritual and the ritualesque are central to many of these studies. The ritualesque takes on this special importance for its compelling applicability to grassroots social phenomena, particularly when groups or individuals earnestly work to transform their social worlds in the face of destructive prevailing norms and powerful institutions. The term "ritualesque" captures the sincere feeling and desire for transformation in contemporary phenomena without collapsing them into the term "ritual."

Santino's first chapter stakes out definitions of the carnivalesque and the ritualesque and introduces public space as another crucial dimension of the field of public performance. Public space can be claimed through material assemblages (such as vernacular shrines) or performative forms (such as processions). In either case, Santino says, everyday people as-

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serting their right to public space convey a sense of popular sovereignty that makes officialdom nervous. Indeed, throughout these essays, we see several examples of institutional actors reacting negatively to these vernacular acts.

The carnival case studies of chapters 2 and 3 both involve the overlapping elements of European carnival traditions and public celebrations in the Black Atlantic. Samuel Kinser provides comparative case studies of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Nuremberg, Germany, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Port of Spain, Trinidad, which both experienced 70-year periods ("a two- to three-generational surge" [p. 39]) of expansive carnival activity. Roger D. Abrahams compares European- and African-derived festivities in places like New Orleans, Havana, and Rio de Janeiro. Abrahams notes that European carnival traditions originated in moments of agrarian seasonal bounty and often contained profane elements. Enslaved peoples' celebrations followed the European festive calendar by obligation but circulated different values through their own customary traditions, in which Abrahams observes significant continuities throughout the Black Atlantic. These celebrations were not about material bounty, but instead marked momentary relief from work; and in contrast to the inversive and transgressive nature of the European carnival, carnival traditions of the Black Atlantic often explicitly reflected community social hierarchies. Post-emancipation, festivities in metropolises of the Black Atlantic commonly incorporated themes of rebellion and liberation.

In chapter 4, Beverly J. Stoeltje moves us from carnival to ritual and takes the reader through a concise theoretical exploration of essential terms and their relations: ritual, identity, transformation, liminality, form, communication, and authority. Stoeltje then provides several short contemporary cases to illustrate the inseparability of ritual and politics, which nevertheless reside in distinct scholarly realms, she notes, due to the association of politics with rationality and ritual with superstition.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 look at three processional traditions. John Borgonovo's essay on brass bands in Cork, Ireland, during the Irish Revolution concretely demonstrates the cen-

trality of the brass band as an expressive community form and how bands harnessed the ritualesque (in their formal alignment with military bands and state symbolism) to stake political claims in local and national registers. Elena Martínez demonstrates how people and institutions have used the Puerto Rican flag (and its variations) to resist, celebrate, and turn a profit. The flag was flown and reproduced with particular enthusiasm in 1990s Puerto Rican Day parades in New York City, and Martínez' essay traces the flag's relevant history and its place among other Puerto Rican cultural symbols in New York. David Harnish provides a detailed account of processions on the Indonesian islands of Bali and Lombok that blend plural religiosities (Hinduism and Islam) and regional politics. Special attention is given to the Lingsar Temple festival on Lombok, where processions dramatize the tensions and harmonies between Hindu Balinese migrants (and former colonizers) and Sasak Muslims. Each group claims the site as essential to its cosmology, and each has distinct roles in the shared ritual festivities.

Laurent Sébastien Fournier's chapter 8 is a second theory-based essay that articulates essential shifts in the anthropology of festivals, which can also be mapped onto manifestations of the carnivalesque and ritualesque. The "carnival model" considers festivals rooted in agrarian and cosmological cycles, which often use excess and extremes to set themselves apart from everyday life. In contemporary times, however, the "heritage model" of festival is more observable, where festival becomes a cultural and economic resource. With this model, festival becomes more regulated and also open to wider publics to enable diverse participation in a pluralistic social field. When the festival becomes an agent of legitimation and change, it moves toward the ritualesque on the carnivalesque/ritualesque continuum.

Chapter 9 is Lisa Gilman's case study of political legitimation via festival in the Umthetho Festival organized by the Mzimba Ngoni in Malawi. Gilman gives a detailed and balanced treatment of the festival's political implications and concludes by asking public sector cultural workers to recognize their potential roles in contributing to ethnic and political tensions. In

the case of the Mzimba Ngoni, the Umthetho Festival both helped the Ngoni people forge a stronger cultural identity in the face of globalization and also had the effect of contributing to the politicization of ethnic identity in a country where ethnic identity had not typically been politically divisive.

Chapters 10, 11, and 12 describe three ritualesque public performances earnestly aimed at sociopolitical change. Pamela Moro looks at what she calls “activist spectacle” in the form of LGBT choruses and at a particular case in which the Oregon chorus, Confluence, traveled to Carnegie Hall in New York City to raise awareness around AIDS and breast cancer. Moro describes the ways in which the trip and performance were personally meaningful to the participants and also notes that spectacular activism like LGBT choirs should be considered among examples of marginalized actors performing “deservingness” (p. 200) and softening their messages over time. Dorothy L. Zinn’s chapter recounts and analyzes “The Days of Scanzano,” a massive and efficacious community antinuclear protest in Basilicata, Italy. Zinn carefully describes both carnivalesque and ritualesque aspects of this 2-week event and introduces the useful concept of “bending” ritual to describe how folk Catholicism was used politically to sacralize elements of the gathering. This process helped the protesters assert a powerful “moral economy” against outside forces. Scott Magelssen writes from the worlds of contemporary theater, theatrical activism, and ecocriticism, exploring protest events in theaters and in the streets that mobilized theatricality as ritual for the purposes of ecological activism. Magelssen shows how activists transgressed cultural expectations around public spectacle and decorum to call attention to their causes, and he helpfully discusses the complicated notions of success and efficacy in performative politics.

The volume concludes with two studies of material culture as ritualesque public performance. Barbara Graham’s chapter looks at roadside memorials in Ireland as contested public spaces. These memorials often consist of permanent-looking structures erected by families of those who died in car accidents. Opposition to these memorials tends to frame them as sa-

cred “intrusions” into secular public spaces; however, they are never interfered with or removed. Daniel Wojcik’s chapter presents the work of Tyree Guyton of Detroit, Michigan, who is often classified as an “outsider artist.” Wojcik pushes back against the term, offering folklore’s more “humane and accurate” understanding of expressive culture that exists outside the institutional art world (p. 255). Creating massive assemblages, Guyton used discarded objects and paint to adorn vacant houses on Heidelberg Street in a distressed Detroit neighborhood. Wojcik calls Guyton’s work “ritualesque display” because it has been personally transformative for Guyton and has changed the social world of the neighborhood. Painted vacant houses drew peoples’ attention and became less attractive to drug dealers, and neighbors brought Guyton objects to incorporate into his projects; many reportedly also began taking a more active role in community maintenance. In the 1980s and 1990s, several of Guyton’s displays were destroyed without warning by the city. Wojcik points out that despite the demonstrable positive effects of his creations, Guyton was deliberately calling attention to institutional ills that many city officials wanted to remain invisible. Thirty-some years later, the Heidelberg Project has grown into an established community organization centered around Guyton’s outdoor art environment.

The research and theorizing in this volume is varied and strong; however, one topic stood out as deserving more rigorous treatment, and that was the notion of the “sacred,” which is frequently invoked but rarely defined. Some cross-disciplinary work with fields like religious studies may reveal connections that will strengthen our attempts to develop theory and productively share ideas. As one example, in both Santino’s and Stoeltje’s essays, Barbara Babcock’s evocative characterization of carnival as possessing a “surplus of signifiers” (*The Reversible World*, Cornell University Press, 1978) is referenced. Alongside this, I would direct folklorists’ attention to the work of David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal in *American Sacred Space* (Indiana University Press, 1995), where the editors offer a well-considered treatment of the sacred that includes the idea that sacred spaces are powerful (and often con-

tested) because they contain “symbolic surpluses that are abundantly available for appropriation” (p. 18). The idea of symbolic surpluses pervades the carnivalesque, the ritualesque, the sacred, and possibly other relevant categories. These shared themes could be further explored in the work that follows this volume.

The absence of a strong unifying claim perhaps makes *Public Performances* too episodic for scholars not explicitly interested in comparative public performance. However, the variety of methods and approaches, which are presented in short essays (generally 10 to 20 pages), makes this a potentially valuable resource for those teaching performance-oriented folklore to undergraduates or early-career graduate students. Its global scope is another important asset; it furnishes research from various US sites, Trinidad, Germany, Ireland, Indonesia, Malawi, Italy, and the UK. And in addition to treating the carnivalesque and ritualesque in various cultural contexts, many of the essays also engage intelligently with other genres and scholarly themes that are important to folklorists, such as vernacular art and architecture, ecocriticism, sound studies, aesthetics, spectacle, organizations, heritage, public space, and identity.

Black Fox: A Life of Emilie Demant Hatt, Artist and Ethnographer. By Barbara Sjöholm. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. Pp. vii + 373, list of illustrations, acknowledgments, notes on sources and language, notes to chapters, selected bibliography, index.)

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Black Fox is a comprehensive biography of a rather unknown ethnographer, whose collaborative works with the Sámi, the Indigenous people of Northern Europe, have been a key resource for knowledge about the historical, political, and ideological contexts of Sápmi. Through notebooks, correspondence, drawings, and other materials left by Emilie Demant, Barbara Sjöholm accounts for the life and work of one of the first female ethnographers of Sámi culture in the early 1900s.

The volume is divided into three parts that describe various phases in Demant's life and career. In the first section, “Nomad,” Sjöholm reconstructs Demant's first journey to Sápmi and how it became a turning point in her life. A determining factor in becoming an ethnographer was Demant's encounter with Johan Turi in 1904. The title of the biography reveals the prominent role of this Sámi author and storyteller in Demant's life as well as in Sjöholm's narration; Black Fox was the name Turi gave Demant as a sign of affection.

Turi introduced her to Sápmi and to his friends and relatives, providing Demant with contacts that remained valuable to her throughout her life and career. Demant supported and assisted Turi in writing his memoirs and other stories in *Muitalus Sámiid birra* (1910; *An Account of the Sámi* [2011]), and it is due to their collaboration that Demant established herself as an ethnographer.

Sjöholm considers the academic and research contexts that played a significant role in Demant's life in the second section of the volume, “Ethnographer.” Sjöholm approaches Demant's work here in relation to the developing field of anthropology. Sjöholm discusses Demant's contacts with other researchers, such as her husband, Gudmund Hatt; Franz Boas; and other academics from North America. Anthropology was only an emerging field in the US context when Emilie and Gudmund lived there in 1914. Sjöholm importantly notes that Demant conducted participant observation well before either Malinowski or Boas, through her early fieldwork in Sápmi. At a time when ethnography was shaped and dominated by men, contributions by female ethnographers like Demant were of major importance in order to provide descriptions of activities conducted by women that were not documented by male ethnographers and archivists. In Sjöholm's words, Demant “broke the gender barrier” (p. 117) as one of the first female ethnographers.

The chapters in the third section, “Artist,” focus on Demant's later contributions, for example, *By the Fire* (University of Minnesota Press, 1922), a collection of tales Demant recorded in various areas of Sápmi, and in which she included several of her own drawings as story illustrations. Later in her life, she shifted