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Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico. By Deidre Sklar.

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Author

Storey, Ann

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property of the United States, held in trust for future, prospective allottees to harvest. Almost as soon as the court's opinion was printed, the allotment surveyors came to Oneida, and though implementation was delayed, the reservation was allotted by executive order. Trust patents were converted wholesale to fee patents in 1907, and soon enough, the Woodland Oneidas were a landless, treeless, and near-destitute people.

Hauptman and McLester deserve praise for bringing to life the accomplishments of a Native political leader who used the skills of an Iroquois runner to practice politics within and outside the tribe. About seven generations have passed since Daniel Bread defeated the removal proponents of 1838 and kept the Oneida Nation's hold on the Duck Creek homelands. That achievement remains worth celebrating today.

James W. Oberly

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico. By Deidre Sklar. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 241 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$16.95 paper.

Tortugas, New Mexico stages a momentous three-day annual fiesta dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe. It brings together people of diverse ethnicities for a religious event from December 10th through December 12th that includes a pilgrimage, ritual dancing, Mass, meals, a *velorio* (wake), and processions. The scale and importance of this fiesta that has been celebrated since 1914 reflects the significance of the Virgin as the beloved and preeminent patron saint of Mexico. Since Tortugas, a suburb of Las Cruces, is only a few miles from the border, it's no surprise that this feast day and its principal aspects are clearly Mexican in origin and development. However, the fiesta also has characteristics that demonstrate the cultural complexity of the peoples who settled Tortugas circa 1851, a mixture of Tiwa-Piro, Spanish-American, Anglo-American, and Mexican Indian peoples. This makes Tortugas a complex borderland community that mediates between north and south—between Pueblo and Mexican traditions.

The fiesta is officially sponsored by a nonprofit organization founded in 1914, Los Indígenas de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (The Corporation). Although the community initiated research into the possibility of getting tribal status, they eventually chose not to pursue this path, deciding that they could remain more autonomous without it. Deidre Sklar, assistant professor of dance at the University of California in Irvine, researched the fiesta for her dissertation and did additional field work to write *Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico*. Having dance as a principal focus brings a novel perspective to this book. Sklar's primary goals were to conduct movement analyses of the dances and ethnographic research into all aspects of the fiesta. She gives lengthy descriptions of the dances, processions, pilgrimage, and "backstage" work needed to produce such an ambitious annual

undertaking. She strove to understand the Tortugas people in terms of their religious commitment, community spirit, and ceremonial activities. Besides several diagrams of the choreographic patterns, Sklar includes some music notation, numerous black and white photographs of the fiesta, and several maps. More importantly, she is passionate in conveying her belief that “Ways of movement are ways of thinking” (p. 4). Since Sklar understood that readers probably wouldn’t be as interested in the plotting of the dance movements as in their cultural meaning, she endeavored to convey these deeper issues. Furthermore, she does not hesitate to share her own very different background—her Jewish heritage—and her anguished personal search to understand ritual and its place in creating community, as well as her impatience “with show business and its paucity of mythopoetic images” (p. 2).

Sklar successfully expresses the deep, personal, and passionate nature of the community’s devotion to the Virgin, especially as revealed through its ongoing commitment to keep the fiesta alive. Sklar is also adept at expressing some of the reasons for this commitment, such as the *promesa*, the petitions for help and the promises made in thanksgiving that include a personal sacrifice such as dancing in the fiesta (p. 47). For several years, she worked alongside community members to prepare for the fiesta and she creates empathetic portraits of key individuals. The fervent presence of women in maintaining this tradition is also examined. Sklar can be eloquent in finding domestic metaphors to describe the women’s communal work and talk while preparing the traditional meatball stew, for example, their “filling the spaces between thought, sifting memories like flour” (p. 168). She discusses the complex matter of the two almost disparate communities who maintain the Guadalupe tradition that the *indio* families brought from El Paso del Norte. One is the “Corporation,” whose members are typically not of Puebloan descent, while the other are families who are of native descent. Sklar sympathetically describes each contingent through her word portraits of relevant community members.

A little more research into central iconographical motifs would have saved Sklar from error, as when she wrote that the Virgin was standing on “cow horns” (p. 173), when she is actually standing on the crescent moon. As every attribute is rife with meaning, this is a serious oversight. Sklar should have given a much fuller explanation of the Matachines dance—especially since it is the key dance that she was researching. Although the dance is called Los Danzantes in Tortugas, it “closely resembles its relatives to the north,” according to Sylvia Rodríguez (*The Matachines Dance: Ritual Symbolism and Interethnic Relations in the Upper Rio Grande Valley*, 1996, 133). Sklar gives the current Tortugas interpretation, which links the dance to the story of Juan Diego’s three encounters with Guadalupe and in endnotes referred the reader to Matachine sources.

Although Sklar’s frequent habit of commenting on her own background and personal responses gives a disarming honesty to the book, I wish that she had kept these comments to a preface or acknowledgments section. This was especially the case when discussing her fears during the pilgrimage up Tortugas Mountain, melding that event with personal anxieties arising

because of her Jewish background so that the voluntary community excursion became likened to “the road to a concentration camp” (p. 96). Finally, Sklar’s rambling, discursive style made the task of understanding where the Tortugas dance and fiesta tradition fit into the larger picture of colonial dance dramas quite difficult. A much more inclusive view of New Mexican ritual and theory can be found in the already cited Rodríguez’s *The Matachines Dance*. Another fascinating recent study focusing on Mexico’s festival of Christians and Moors/Aztecs is Max Harris’ *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Rituals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain*.

There is significant contemporary interest in the Virgin of Guadalupe as a nationalist symbol, embodiment of *mestizaje*, mother goddess, and paramount Catholic saint. Feminist scholars, as well as champions of Native peoples, give nuanced interpretations that position the Dark Virgin within their camp. For example, Jeanette Rodríguez’s *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* shows how the symbol of Guadalupe is both a symbol and agent of positive change for Mexican-American women in their social and religious roles. Other recently published books explore aspects of Mexican and Chicano art history with a quite different approach than that assumed by scholars of an earlier generation. *The Road to Aztlan, Art from a Mythic Homeland*, edited by Virginia M. Fields and Victor Zamudio-Taylor, asserts that Native peoples were not passive victims of colonial oppression—they responded creatively and intelligently to the terrible events and injustices of conquest and colonization. This is an important theoretical shift. However, Sklar does not touch on any of these issues, remaining solely within the boundaries of the Tortugas community and its fiesta.

These problems aside, Sklar seemed to approach the Tortugas community with sincerity and sensitivity. Although an outsider, she gained the trust of key community members through her willingness to work alongside them and to be touched by the Virgin personally. Sklar’s study, highly effective in conveying how a deep, individual response to a beloved saint can at the same time echo throughout an entire community, also adds new information about dance movement and ethnography to the accumulating literature on colonial dances and fiestas of contemporary New Mexico.

Ann Storey

The Evergreen State College

Father Francis M. Craft: Missionary to the Sioux. By Thomas W. Foley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 195 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

It would be an understatement to describe Father Francis M. Craft as a colorful figure in the history of American Catholic Indian missions. His biographer, Thomas W. Foley, provides a sympathetic portrait of Father Craft, although the study lacks a critical understanding of the underside of Christian missions within the context of Lakota history. At the same time, this biography provides a window on Catholic missionary efforts among the Lakota people and