

wife upon his return. Lipset of course analyzes this constellation in terms of the perceived loss of the steersman's wife's desire for him: the alienatingly hopeless quest for the desire of the other as it manifests in archaic, modern, and Anthropocene cultures.

In the "Afterword," Lipset expands this analytical approach to several other ethnographic cases from around the Pacific islands, underlining the view that we humans spend much of our lives and cultures attempting to feel sufficiently loved by those whom we love. According to this view, we trick ourselves to feel more powerful or more satisfied under the power of others than we are, but are left with a haunting sense of alienation.

Roger Ivar Lohmann

**Meintjes, Louise:** *Dust of the Zulu. Ngoma Aesthetics after Apartheid*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 338 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6265-4. Price: \$ 26.95

"Dust of the Zulu" chronicles the lives and exploits of *ngoma* dancers from rural esiPongweni in South Africa, tracking their voices, bodies, and careers over the course of nearly three decades, and situating their performances in the context of South Africa's violent transition to democracy. The brutal legacies of colonialism and apartheid cast long shadows over contemporary *ngoma* practice and its commodification. This chronicle of *umzansi* – one of several distinct styles of *ngoma* danced in the province of KwaZulu-Natal – raises urgent questions about South Africa's impoverished rural communities and the status of migrant labor in its urban ghettos. Louise Meintjes's fluid ethnographic writing melds analytical precision with a depth of cultural insight gained through long immersion. The book's dialectical force is sustained by the richness and intimacy of Meintjes's collaborations. Zulu voices saturate the book's textures. This raises difficult questions about the ethics of representation and the nature of reciprocity in the reporting of highly sensitive information; especially for a society rent apart by moral conflict, disease, poverty, and violence. How to write reflexively within the boundaries of scholarship when confidantes become scholarly sources? Such challenges seem to be resolved only off the page.

The most important of Meintjes's collaborators is Siyazi Zulu. He is the dance leader, composer, choreographer, and entrepreneur who first invited Meintjes to esiPongweni in 1991. His voice and the voices of his dance team imbue the book with its distinct vernacular intonations, and help to bind its eight chapters into a tightly woven alloy. The nuanced polyphony of voices counters simplistic constructions of Zulu identity. For instance, the stereotyped image of the Zulu male "warrior" is subjected to a thorough critique. This is accomplished in part through the use of language. Meintjes's embrace of indigenous Zulu terms like *isigqi* (power) and *ulaka* (righteous anger) as aesthetic principles invigorates the writing without mystifying the culture. The transcription of song lyrics adds to the study of Zulu oral literature, but it is frustrating that some of the original isiZulu texts are not included in the book except in English translation.

Photojournalist TJ Lemon's photographs more than complement the text. The images record in arresting detail the cast of characters and their exploits in and around the dancing. Lemon's photos on pages 73 to 75 show men flying through the air in ways that capture the visceral power of *isigqi*. These are but a handful of the 142 illustrations illuminating the text. Meintjes's own images are an important supplement to Lemon's. Her video stills narrate the movement and shape of dance sequences. There are moments of great poignancy recorded here. The intimacies conveyed in these words and images imbue the book with pathos for, and resilience to, its themes of violence, disease, poverty, and exploitation. The prose itself is beautifully wrought. Meintjes employs contrasting registers to embody the hyperreality of *ngoma* aesthetics. Places, voices, and temporalities are combined in alternating discursive modes. The improvisatory quality of dance is evoked using mimetic writing whereas an analytic mode is used for reportage, commentary, historiography, and cultural analysis. By stitching these yarns to the rich visual narratives of dancers, singers, admirers, and politicians, Meintjes has succeeded in creating an enthralling piece of writing.

In chapter 1, "Turning to be Kissed," Meintjes writes about conceptions and projections of masculinity focusing on dance events at esiPongweni. The dialogue between dancer and community is a play of expectations in a socially sanctioned space for courting. Meintjes deftly conjures the sensuality and desire made manifest in the flirtation of the admired and the admiring. The aesthetic principle of *isigqi* is introduced here and sustained throughout the book as a leitmotiv. "Isigqi describes that magic moment when a groove absolutely works because its components coordinate tightly" (48). On page 50 there is a brilliantly fluid musical description of Siyazi's dancing that explains his artistry as a play of duration and movement. This type of close analysis will hold special appeal for ethnomusicologists.

Chapter 2 considers the importance of the "unwavering voice" as an aesthetic principle in *ngoma* competition. "Unwavering" refers to "the stressed quality of the techniques of the vocal production as well as the focus and commitment required of the singer to produce a powerful sound" (68). The voice must not break. "Sustaining one's control at the edge is a marker of steadfastness" (65). This analysis is tied to team organization and discipline. Dance captains manage factors of violence, politics, and disease by exerting strict yet careful control over their dancers. Violence is a recurrent theme explored in a study of military aesthetics and the politics of reconciliation in chapter 3. Dancers call themselves *amasosha* (soldiers) and are directed by an *igoso* or *ukaputeni* (captain). "The blend of military styles, sounded, gestured, adorned, personalized, and differently figured in various contexts, marks the soldiers' performance of violence as performance" (103). Terrifying details emerge on faction fighting in Msinga, but always *ngoma* performance is read as a means of managing this violence and its threat to the moral order (113).

The politics of South Africa's political transition is discussed in chapter 4. "The relationship of the world of

competitive camaraderie in performance to the tensions of the world around the dance arena, specifically national political violence, hinges on the experience, expressivity, and agency of the singing dancing body as a warrior figure" (127). The margins of politics and performance blur. Dancers explore and imagine violence through performance without this practice devolving into violent conflict; violence is the spur for performance, not its actualization.

Chapter 5 engages in a different kind of politics by focusing on the South African music icon, Johnny Clegg, and his contributions to *ngoma* at esiPongweni and its performance on the world stage. "Sikeyi," as he is popularly known, is recognized as a musician, activist, businessman, anthropologist, teacher, friend, linguist, and culture hero to the community. This is the most comprehensive and culturally sensitive appreciation of Johnny Clegg's contributions to *ngoma* and his post-Juluka work. "To understand the course *ngoma* has taken around Keates Drift, the values it has come to encapsulate for its participants, and the promise it holds for them, one must understand the development of Clegg's career and creative work" (153). Clegg and his collaborators made *ngoma* "a form of global Afropop" that "ngoma singer-dancers hope" will benefit them (171). Clegg also wrote pioneering scholarly texts on *ngoma*, and so it is fascinating to read its trace in Meintjes's work.

Clegg's apparent public silence on HIV and AIDS opens the debate in chapter 6. Disease afflicts dancers and their families in ways that complicate *ngoma* aesthetics. "Well-being is noticed and monitored, always, and with heightened trepidation and verbal evasion in the presence of HIV and AIDS" (183 f.). In this chapter, Meintjes charts a shift in dancers' attitudes that are complexly related to the catastrophic denialism of the Mbeki-era government, and then to the subsequent treatment campaigns of the Zuma presidency. "I wish to understand how silence comes to feel necessary and how community members, especially soldiers, friends, fathers, and brothers, organize around it or through it in order to cope with the reduced physical capacity of men, especially of men who perform *ngoma*" (184). Factors of masculinity and *hloniphala* (norms of respect) play an important role in explaining this silence. Meintjes records how men learn to care for themselves and their friends and families even as "the heavy stigma of HIV pushes their relationships to the limit" (185). Dancers seem to manage by employing a "poetics of ambiguity" that she repeats like a mantra in the words of a dancer: "We know, but we can't say for sure" (187).

In "The Digital Homestead" (chap. 7), Meintjes reports on the making of two studio recordings by Umzansi Zulu Dancers, the group lead by Siyazi Zulu. She describes how these artists are negotiating a precarious existence on the fringe of impoverished regional markets, and equates their position to "the many wage laborers who have become expendable to the South African state" (213). The creation of a "homestead" aesthetic is a dynamic musical response to the constraints of working in semiprofessional city studios with inexperienced producers. This strategy works by densely layering sounds and emphasizing the timbres characteristic of the rural home-

stead. In chapter 8, "Brokering the Body," Meintjes charts *ngoma*'s moves from local to global once again, this time focusing on the role of cultural brokers who "wager on the warrior" (241). Zulu men continue to struggle with and against representations hardened in the popular imagination and exploited by the market. "As labor fails," she says, "commodified culture prevails" (242). *Ngoma* is simultaneously a site of struggle and a means of transacting in the world.

"Dust of the Zulu" crafts together the work of its dancers without denying the complexity of their shattered worlds. The technique of juxtaposing images, texts, and voices in time and space exposes a fractured canvas. Meintjes carries with her visions of the past and present ripe with ambiguity. It is a measure of her steadfastness that she maintains a reasoned critical balance in respect of her subject, and in the face of the untold deprivations and personal tragedies afflicting those about whom she writes with such gentleness and care. In the end, her commitment to the esiPongweni community wins out in a book that is replete with revelations that are by turns tremendously moving, frightening, disconcerting, and inspiring.

Thomas M. Pooley

**Plemons, Eric:** *The Look of a Woman. Facial Feminization Surgery and the Aims of Trans-Medicine*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 192 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6914-1. Price: £ 19.99

"The Look of a Woman" is based on an ethnographic study in the United States (US) about Facial Feminization Surgery (FFS) and its impact on trans-(women's) therapeutics, and on the performativity/materialism of the aesthetic body. The monograph has six chapters that chart the development of the surgical techniques, the material approaches to patients in the clinics, and the phenomenological experiences of people who have undergone FFS. The book argues that our understanding of "sex" has departed from the genital-centric model constructed in the early days of transsexual therapeutics. Other characteristics of the body have become central in recognising a (trans-) sexed body. The book considers the facial aesthetic (of trans-women) essential for being recognised and treated as women in society. As such, being recognised as women is possible through performative bodily morphologies beyond the genitals in everyday life. By extension, Plemons argues, FFS is a result of integrating a facial performative model of sex/gender into trans-medicine procedures, and, although it has not supplanted genital surgery for many (due to costs), for those who can afford it, it is another (important) way of articulating an alternative view of the sexed body.

The book makes contributions to the area of trans-aesthetics. Chapter one characterises the emergent practice of FFS in the life of surgeon Oosterhout in the US. It describes the ways that science was used by Oosterhout to augment and realise facial binary sex differences in more precise metric terms. The book leads the reader to reflect on the role that the face has in social relations for trans-women. The (surgically changed) face for trans-women is