

commodities? Too much weight is granted to a few isolated mentions of American products in a vast and complex poem, which are always interpreted by Mayers as signs of a self-conscious ideological Creole shift. *Visions of Empire* does not elaborate enough on these lines, failing to give evidence that would support its claims.

An additional issue with Mayer's thesis is that not all of the innovations that she identifies in these writers find their main source of inspiration in Góngora. For instance, in Camargo there are several cases of prosopopoeia, with various vegetables entertaining a fight amongst themselves (75-76), which seem very likely to be a direct imitation of Quevedo's ballad "Boda y acompañamiento del campo" ("Don Repollo y doña Berza"). The same could be said in several of the poems by Sor Juana studied in chapter five, which are linked with the European Petrarchan tradition, and not merely with Góngora. Thus the net of literary discourses is wider and more complex than *Visions of Empire* suggests.

This monograph is, however, a valuable contribution to the study of colonial poetry. Mayers proposes a very healthy revision of some of the binaries and entrenched positions that have characterized a large number of publications produced in the field of Spanish American Colonial Literature. In that sense her work is an important step towards a more nuanced and balanced approach to these complex sources. Mayers's book is written with clarity and acumen, her scholarship is solid and offers much food for thought for future approaches to Camargo, Medrano and Sor Juana.

RODRIGO CACHO CASAL

*Clare College, University of Cambridge*

MARILYN G. MILLER, ED. *Tango Lessons: Movement, Sound, Image, and Text in Contemporary Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. x + 282 pp.

TANGO is one of those master tropes of a culture, deeply embedded in a societal imaginary and its language such that whole spheres of semantic meaning, literal and metaphoric, are built around it. As one well knows, tango has its origins in the Río de la Plata region, on the riverbanks on both sides of the delta (it is of little consequence whether Uruguay or Argentina claim historical preeminence). It was profoundly rooted in immigrant culture, most characteristically recognized for its Italian roots, but also African-slave origins (the modest African community survives with greater evidence in Uruguay than it did in Argentina, a topic of much controversy), and, as we are beginning to document more today, with Jewish immigrant

connections as well. Since tango, which in the Argentine Uruguayan imaginary is elevated to a much vaunted “way of life” in its 125-year history, in an ingenious combination of dance, music, and song lyrics, in various combinations, it is both a practice of daily folk life and a highly sophisticated artistic display text of theatrical, concert, symphonic, and festival dimensions. Tango has become imbricated with so many dimensions of Río de la Plata life, and Latin American life beyond (especially in times of exile), that there can be little more than an archeological interest in attempting to define so-called authentic tango and putatively good and bad commercial manifestations of it. This is no more evident than in *lunfardo*, the allegedly privileged Argentine Spanish dialect of the tango, as it is both the incorporation and adaptation of elements from the Italian vernacular dialects of the immigrants as it is a “poetic” creation containing elements forged *ad hoc* for the lyric texts. *Lunfardo* is much more than simply a vocabulary inventory (although it is often studied only in this way): it is a discourse style with codifiable rhetorical patterns every bit as rich, complex, and distinctive as the “language of the signifyin’ monkey” that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. identifies for Afro-American cultural expression.

One of the annoying – or charming – features of the vast tango bibliography, depending on how one wants to see these things, is the preponderance of a mythificational base, complemented by generous amounts of anecdotal, self-serving, mystificational commentary. Individuals specialize in the matter of tango lore and detail with all of the obsession and passion of a theoretical physicist. However, tango has attracted much legitimate scholarly attention, and Miller’s collection is a superb example of some of the topics we need to be talking about, not just to grasp the extensive history of this cultural trope, but to sense adequately why tango matters so much as a major segment of Latin American cultural studies.

My own particular interests lie first and foremost with the language question, because this is the most evident face of tango (not everyone can sing or dance tango, but everyone can recite lyrics, if not always with native-speaker cadence) and because it is where tango intersects with a huge literary archive, as Adriana Bergero’s brilliant work has shown us. Of interest are both essays on *lunfardo* (Oscar Conde, an outstanding linguistic professional) and on the relationship of the tango to literature, such as Alejandro Susti’s essay on Borges’s, per usual, controversial positions regarding tango and its close relative that he preferred, the *milonga*.

Because of the way in which tango is a display text, there is much to research with regard to the visuals of the tango. Marilyn Miller herself, in

"Picturing the Tango," provides fascinating analyses of the graphic representations of the tango, including both historical dimensions like illustrative material from its origins, along with commercial art for purposes of publicity and advertising (such as the iconic image of Claudio Segovia and Héctor Oreziolli's immensely successful international spectacle from the mid-1980s, *Tango argentino*). Miller offers a generous sample of the representation of tango motifs in art, even including one of Marco López's hilarious "pop latino" photographic montages that touches on all of the cultural primes of the tango.

Argentine cinema is easily the most dynamic production program in Latin America today, and the many ways in which that post-1983 production has undertaken to reinterpret Argentine history in very deep ways has brought the tango into the thematic mix. Fernando Rosenberg discusses "The Return of the Tango in Documentary Film," although a parallel study could certainly devote itself to the return in narrative film as well (the Argentine Fernando Solanas; the Spanish Carlos Saura; the English Sally Potter). A chapter devoted specifically to photography is much missed.

Photography relates to my other personal interest in the tango, which has to do with gender issues: the photographic archive allows us to see what is otherwise a not very analyzed dimension of tango history (although it is routinely mentioned in passing): the way in which the tango could be a dance of two male partners. This does not necessarily establish a direct line between such a practice and the all-important dimension of queer tango, which does get touched on in several essays here. After all, Buenos Aires is now the most queer-friendly city in Latin America, and the emotional and physical intensity of tango lend it to evident and rich queerings. But the two sides of the same coin, homosociality and homoaffectivity, are as much integral to the tango as hegemonic masculinity was to the immigrant, marginal, brothel worlds where the tango thrived. Carolyn Merritt's essay on sexual domination in the tango does allude to this queer dimension, but it needs to be taken as a starting point for the queer analysis of the tango we still require.

In sum, a very useful and provocative book, especially with the excellent illustrative material. There is much here for teaching about the tango, and much here for sustained distinguished scholarly work.

DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER  
*Arizona State University*