



# Cities of the Dead

By Joseph Roach

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## Cities of the Dead By Joseph Roach

The colorful handmade costumes of beads and feathers swirl frenetically, as the Mardi Gras Indians dance through the streets of New Orleans in remembrance of a widely disputed cultural heritage. Iroquois Indians visit London in the early part of the eighteenth century and give birth to the "feathered people" in the British popular imagination.

What do these seemingly disparate strands of culture share over three hundred years and several thousand miles of ocean? Artfully interweaving theatrical, musical, and ritual performance from the eighteenth century to the present in London and New Orleans, *Cities of the Dead* takes a look at a rich continuum of intercultural exchange that reinvents, recreates, and restores history.

Complemented with fifty-five illustrations, including spectacular photos of the famed Mardi Gras Indians, this fascinating work employs an entirely unique approach to the study of culture. Rather than focusing on one region, *Cities of the Dead* explores broad cultural connections over place and time, showing through myriad examples how performance can revise the unwritten past.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

This . . . exploration of Atlantic rim performance cultures restores the centrality of memory and gesture, profession and surrogation-the invention of a modern world out of the forcible destruction of the old-to the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa, the Americas, and Europe. . . .Roach pursues a pathbreaking version of cultural history.

### Review

*Cities of the Dead* is going to be one of the most important books of the decade. It will have a profound and significant impact on the areas of cultural studies, performance studies, and literary criticism and theory. It will be on the list of the dozen significant studies of race and culture in the West of the last fifty years.

(Emory Elliott, University of California, Riverside)

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(Eric Lott, author of *Love and Theft: The Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*)

### About the Author

Joseph Roach is professor of English at Tulane University. He is the author of *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*, which won the Barnard Hewitt Award, and coeditor, with Janelee Reinelt, of *Critical Theory and Performance*.

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