

DANCING on the FAULT LINES of HISTORY

Selected Essays



SUSAN MANNING

DANCING ON THE
FAULT LINES OF HISTORY

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Dancing on the
Fault Lines of History
Selected Essays

Susan Manning

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Acknowledgments

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Although it took me a while to find my place in the academy, I felt immediately at home in dance studies, even as a graduate student. Hence I am indebted to far more colleagues than are mentioned here by name. For commissioning this volume, I thank Rebecca Rossen. For reading drafts of what became the introductory essay, I thank Clare Croft, Susan Foster, Anthea Kraut, Lizzie Leopold, Tara Rodman, and Reggie Wilson. (Colleagues in English, Julia Stern and Ivy Wilson, also lent their critical eye.) For reading drafts of the final essay, I thank Kate Elswit, Hedwig Müller, Lucia Ruprecht, Emily Wilcox, Eike Wittrock, and Yukihiro Yoshida. Jessica Friedman was a superb editorial assistant from beginning to end. Among the many others who have contributed to my research are the editors, archivists, and photographers whose assistance is credited elsewhere in *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History*.

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Truth be told, there are only two worlds in which I feel entirely at home: dance studies and my family. My husband and sons, my siblings and their

families remain my anchor. As I was making the final edits to this book, my mother took her last breath. She and my father often joined me on dance outings, and I cherish the memory of their company.

Foreword

When Rebecca Rossen, then chair of the Editorial Board for the Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS), asked me in March 2016 to consider publishing with the society's book series, I immediately agreed. At that point, I was deeply engaged in the Mellon-funded initiative "Dance Studies in/and the Humanities," an initiative designed to invest in the emerging cohort of dance scholars. Keenly aware of the differences between my experiences as an aspiring university professor in the 1980s and the experiences of early-career scholars in the second decade of the twenty-first century, I wanted to explicate how the field had changed. I wanted to give younger scholars a sense of how far the field had come within the span of one career, not to script a progress narrative, but rather to reflect on the twists and turns that could not be foreseen. And I wanted to understand those twists and turns myself too, perhaps as a way of letting go or perhaps as a way to figure out how to keep going.

Within a year of discussing my own book project with Rebecca, I approached her to see if the SDHS series might publish the capstone for the Mellon project, *Futures of Dance Studies*, coedited by myself, Janice Ross, and Rebecca Schneider. It took us three years to pull together the massive volume, over 550 pages in length, showcasing the research of twenty-eight early-career scholars. By the time *Futures* appeared in print (2020), the Society of Dance History Scholars had merged with the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD) to create the Dance Studies Association (DSA), and a name change for the book series soon followed, from Studies in Dance History to Studies in Dance: Theories and Practices. Hence the field continued to move in new directions during the years I was compiling *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History*.

Selecting and editing twelve essays for publication—the earliest written nearly forty years ago and a few published here for the first time—I have added an opening essay that explores how and why my research has changed over time. That essay, "Writing and Rewriting Modern Dance History," recalls

how urgent it felt in the 1980s to move away from a formalist historiography and to make space for modern dance in the emergent canon of feminist modernism, and then how urgent it felt in the 1990s to acknowledge the whiteness of modern dance and to make space for dancers of color in its canon. Voicing my current concerns, the final three essays call for a collective scripting of a transnational and comparative historiography.

Finalizing this volume in 2022 and 2023, I attempted to capture how the election of Donald Trump, the global pandemic, and the epidemic of white supremacy impacted the field. The current board of DSA rightly demands a reckoning and critical revision of earlier protocols in order to advance social justice, equity, and antiracist praxis. I'm reminded of how my cohort of scholars demanded change more than three decades ago, responding to a different set of circumstances and imperatives. Today's leaders surely recognize the blind spots of my generation, just as my generation recognized the blind spots of our predecessors. Indeed, *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History* documents how I have revised my own thinking and writing in recognition of overlooked questions in my earlier research.

It is a truism that all critical approaches illuminate some dimensions of works or histories under discussion while obscuring others. Looking back, I see how my research in the 1980s and 1990s challenged the formalist historiography by introducing new critical variables—gender, sexuality, and race—while holding onto other variables—the centrality of the choreographic work and the frame of the nation-state. Only once the formalist historiography had broken down could my research move away from the frame of the nation-state and follow the pathways of practices in global circulation.

Such shifts are what make a field a discipline within the humanities, a conversation on what matters within and between cohorts of scholars, even a conversation with oneself over the course of a career. My hope is that this retrospective illuminates broader developments in dance studies, developments that my cohort could not have imagined when we started out.

• • •

In the mid-1980s I was part of a reading group in New York City with Susan Foster, Mark Franko, and Cynthia Novack. While Susan and Mark were drawn to the writing of French poststructuralists and Cynthia to the writing of post-modern anthropologists, the book that most spoke to me was Raymond Williams' *The Sociology of Culture* (1982). Williams' interest in the interplay of artistic form and social formation resonated with my thinking, and all my subsequent research has attempted to understand how the changing forms

of modern dance have intersected with the shifting sociopolitics of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Dancing on the Fault Lines of History takes my career-long interest in Raymond Williams in a different direction. Whereas my previous publications highlight how modern dances have enacted the complexities and messy realities of their time, this volume turns attention to how my research has responded to my own historical moment. Following the opening essay are twelve essays organized in relation to three pairs of keywords: gender and sexuality, whiteness and Blackness, nationality and globalization. Keywords are another reflection of my indebtedness to Williams, for in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976) he innovated a scholarly genre much imitated since, providing extended definitions of key terms that tease out the variant usages and connotations of, among other terms, “nature,” “culture,” and “art” in academic and everyday discourse. But rather than follow Williams’ model and script extended definitions of each keyword, *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History* shows keywords in action: coming together in varied combinations, shifting positions from foreground to background, illuminating modern dance histories from multiple angles.

Each section starts with essays published earlier in my career and ends with essays written more recently, several unpublished until now. Hence readers can follow how my research initially engaged with each keyword and then subsequently modified, nuanced, and combined critical concepts. All of the essays reprinted in *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History* have been edited, and in several cases, an altered title underscores the divergence from the original publication.

The second section starts with “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze” (1997), an essay that highlights gender as a primary category for analysis of early modern dancers from Loie Fuller to Martha Graham. The following essay, “Looking from a Different Place” (2001), intentionally foregrounds sexuality, attending to queer male choreographers from Ted Shawn to Matthew Bourne, while wondering what might distinguish queer from straight spectatorship of female choreographers. This essay marks an early attempt to think through the concept of cross-viewing, a theorizing and historicizing of how spectators from one social location may catch glimpses of perspectives from other social locations. The next essay, “Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence” (2015b), integrates the keywords gender and sexuality in analyzing works on classical themes from Isadora Duncan to Mark Morris. The final essay in this section, “Archives in Collision: Excursus on Method,” previously unpublished, outlines an approach to archival research that high-

lights gaps, contradictions, and discrepancies between sources. Illustrated by case studies of National Socialism at the Wigman School in Dresden and queer spectatorship of American modern dance at midcentury, “Archives in Collision” concludes by returning to the question of same-sex desire between women as an underresearched topic.

The third section opens with “Black Voices, White Bodies: Tamiris’s *How Long, Brethren?*” (1998), an analysis that brings together the critical categories of race and gender. This essay introduces the term “metaphorical minstrelsy” to characterize works by white choreographers on Black themes from the 1930s. The subsequent essay, “Watching Dunham’s Dances, 1937–1945” (2005), examines how critics and audiences in New York City engaged in cross-viewing Dunham’s dances across the axes of race and sexuality, arguing that social and artistic changes surrounding the Second World War rendered metaphorical minstrelsy an outmoded convention. This section then jumps forward to contemporary dance: “Reggie Wilson and the Making of *Moses(es)*,” an essay from 2019, historicizes Wilson’s choreographic method as a response to tensions between advocates of Black Arts and Black postmodernism evident in New York City during the 1980s. “Cross-Viewing in Berlin and Chicago: Nelisiwe Xaba’s *Fremde Tänze*” (2020) probes the spectatorship of a work by a South African artist in two local contexts, asking whether cross-viewing exacerbates or ameliorates social tensions during a period of heightened nationalisms.

The final section follows the shift in my research from histories of modern dance premised on the nation-state to histories attentive to global circulation. “An American Perspective on Tanztheater” (1986), the earliest essay reprinted in this volume, posits American and German modern dance as independent traditions that nonetheless share more of a common origin than commentators at the time acknowledged. “Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic” (2007) demonstrates how German modern dance widely influenced American modern dance during the foundational decade of the 1930s. “Nation and World in Modern Dance” (2019a) historicizes the shift from national(ist) histories during the years of the Cold War to the transnational historiography now taking shape. The final essay, “Mary Wigman and Asia: Between Cultural Appropriation and Transnational Encounter,” not published in its entirety until now, unfolds an extended case study of multidimensional exchange between Wigman and dance artists from Indonesia, India, China, Korea, and Japan.

Like the previous two essays, “Mary Wigman and Asia” ends with a call for a comparative and transnational history of dance modernisms. In this way, the sequence of essays selected for *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History* per-

haps leaves readers with a misleading impression that the critical concept of globalization has superseded other variables for analysis in my research. On the contrary, histories based on the nation-state necessarily coexist with histories premised on global circulation, and transnational histories demand continued inquiry on the interplay of dancing bodies and embodied social identities. As my essay on “Cross-Viewing in Berlin and Chicago” asks, how do the racialized meanings of bodies shift across national borders? The same question could be asked about the meanings of gender and sexuality across national borders. (How) did the feminist meanings of Isadora Duncan’s dancing or the queer meanings of Vaslav Nijinsky’s dancing register on their tours of Latin America? (How) did the meanings of Michio Ito’s or Harald Kreutzberg’s or Uday Shankar’s or Kazuo Ohno’s masculinity alter from one country to another on their international tours?

As Jill Lepore writes, “*History* is the art of making an argument about the past by *telling a story* accountable to *evidence*” (2012, 15). Each of the selected essays tells a different story about modern dance, bringing together different critical concepts and evidence to generate its argument. Headnotes provide context for each essay, briefly noting the circumstances of research and/or publication and tracing my deployment of the highlighted keywords. Although each essay can stand on its own, they together demonstrate how and why my research has changed over time, plotting a multidimensional journey.

I. Writing and Rewriting Modern Dance History (2025)

Much has changed since I began investigating modern dance history as an undergraduate during the mid-1970s. Starting out, I used a manual typewriter, went to the library to flip through a card catalogue to find relevant bibliography, traveled to what was then called the Dance Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts to view 16 mm films or video cassettes. Now I can download a wealth of primary and secondary sources on my laptop, access an unending stream of recorded dance via YouTube, and use my iPhone for any number of purposes, from recording interviews to posting updates on my research.

The name of my academic discipline has changed. Starting out, I declared my field as “dance history” and saw my inquiry as distinct from the fields of “dance anthropology” and “dance aesthetics.” Now I call my field “dance studies,” a change in appellation that came about around 1990 as distinctions blurred between archival, ethnographic, and theoretical methods for dance research. My essays selected for this volume deploy all three methods, often in combination.

Above all, my research questions, starting assumptions, and critical concepts have changed. Entering the field in the 1970s, I encountered a formalist historiography of modern dance, and its tenets shaped my earliest publications. In the 1980s I broke from this historiography and over the subsequent decades have continued to revise and rewrite modern dance histories. As the second-wave feminism I had embraced coming of age in the 1970s transmuted into the feminist theory of the 1980s, I engaged its critical concepts of gender and then sexuality. Impacted by the dancing and writing of Black postmodernists in the 1990s, I probed the whiteness of the modern dance canon and the interrelations of Blackness and whiteness in modern and contemporary dance. In the twenty-first century, I recognized the limitations of the nation-state as a parameter for modern dance history and followed younger colleagues in developing local and transnational approaches.

This essay frames my research journey by reflecting on not only how but also why my research changed over time. The why lies in the interplay of lived experience, larger artistic and intellectual trends, and sociopolitical forces.

Scholarship does not originate in a vacuum, but as a reflection of the historian's own preoccupations and responses to her historical moment. Hence this retrospective of my career narrates how and why these keywords became central to my writing of modern dance histories.

. . .

When I first entered the field in the 1970s, the history of modern dance was premised on a Greenbergian definition of modernism as medium specificity. That is, dance critics viewed the history of modern dance as successive attempts to reveal the essence of the genre—movement in time and space—much as art critics followed Clement Greenberg in viewing the history of modern art as successive attempts to reveal the pictorial plane. In a Greenbergian view of art history, Pablo Picasso and the Cubists made crucial steps toward abstraction that Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists then realized in their paintings. In the dance historical version of this narrative, Merce Cunningham and the members of Judson Dance Theater moved beyond earlier generations of modern dancers in their revelation—and reduction—of dance as and to movement.

I first encountered this scripting of modern dance history in a class that I took as a junior at a progressive boarding school in New England. It was spring 1973, and the dance instructor assigned a recently published book by *New York Times* critic Don McDonagh, *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (1970). McDonagh traces the rise of modern dance from the “pioneers” Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Ruth St. Denis to the “historic generation” of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman, who established modern dance in the 1930s and 1940s as a legitimate art form both on the concert stage and within the curriculum of US higher education. The success of the “historic generation” engendered its fall, in McDonagh's account, as the generation's “advocacy for something outside of the self” (36) became outmoded. In reaction, the generation that came of age in the 1940s and 1950s “simply wished to be rather than to be for something” (36), an aesthetic and ethic first fully realized by Cunningham. To illustrate this history, the instructor screened as many 16 mm films as she could rent on the artists profiled in McDonagh's volume.

My senior year the dance instructor invited Selma Jeanne Cohen, an independent scholar and editor, and Deborah Jowitt, dance critic for the *Village Voice*, to give guest lectures on campus. Showing slides, Cohen differentiated varied styles of modern dance and ballet, while Jowitt recalled how she had taught herself to closely describe movement by keeping a list of action verbs

next to her typewriter. At the time I had no idea that Cohen had published an essay in 1961, titled “Avant-Garde Choreography,” that lucidly analyzes the work of Cunningham, Alwin Nikolais, Paul Taylor, and their peers as “a new group of choreographers who share the conviction that the proper subject of dance is dancing” (16). Four years later, Jill Johnston built on Cohen’s analysis in her essay “The New American Modern Dance” (1965), heralding the artists of Judson Dance Theater as heirs to the innovations made by Cunningham, whom Johnston explicitly compared to Pollock. In effect, McDonagh’s *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* popularized the historiography scripted by Cohen and Johnston.

As a high school student, I understood none of this context. What I did take from Cohen’s and Jowitt’s lectures was the idea of researching and writing about dance as a possible vocation. Having fled my provincial Midwestern hometown for an elite East Coast education, I was seeking a future that had little to do with my past. The arts culture available in large cities appealed, and on weekend trips to New York City I spent hours at the Museum of Modern Art. When I told my art history teacher that I was interested in a museum career, she tactfully told me that I did not come from the right family background to secure a position in the field. The modern dance that I had seen on those same weekend trips also intrigued me, and since the field was still in formation, there seemed fewer gatekeepers.

Starting college in 1974, I still intended to major in art history. But again I was dissuaded, this time by my first-year advisor at Harvard, herself a graduate student in art history, who advised me to declare a more capacious humanities major such as English. In the Ivy League, dance was an extracurricular activity, so to test the idea of a vocation in the field, I started writing dance reviews for the student newspaper while also taking modern dance classes in the wood-floored gymnasium. The dance instructor had trained in the 1940s and 1950s with Hanya Holm, Graham, José Limón, Alvin Ailey, and Cunningham, and her pedagogy included elements from all her teachers. Thus I was able to experience corporeally the movement principles of mid-century modern dancers while also reviewing many of their successors on tour. Nikolais Dance Theater, Murray Louis, Paul Taylor, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Laura Dean, Meredith Monk, and Twyla Tharp all came through Boston, thanks to NEA-funded tours at the height of the dance boom.

Although I wrote dance reviews all through college, my aspirations lay elsewhere. I wanted to write longer critical studies of dance, comparable to scholarship in literary studies, musicology, and art history. Sophomore year I took a course for nonmajors on Listening to Music, and I approached the

professor, Luise Vosgerchian, to see if she might support a student-initiated major in dance history and criticism. She agreed, and so I was free each semester to select courses in adjacent fields—musicology and ethnomusicology, art history and aesthetics, literary criticism, theater history—that provided possible models for dance studies. At some point during college, I made contact with Selma Jeanne Cohen, and she urged me on.

As an aspiring dance historian, I was essentially self-taught, reading the existing literature in the field. Hence I absorbed the Greenbergian historiography of dance modernism and a descriptive mode of criticism practiced by Jowitt and her peers, approaches that accorded with the New Criticism that dominated the humanities during my college years. I did want to push further, to develop a formalist analysis not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to address “larger questions concerning meaning, context, and function,” as I wrote at the time. That phrase comes from the syllabus of a course that I developed and taught in 1978–1979 with the support of a NEH Youthgrant. Looking at Dance was modeled after Luise’s course on Listening to Music, and teaching the course affirmed my aspiration to join the professoriate.

From the perspective of the present, the limitations of the Greenbergian historiography are so clear that it is hard to fathom how profoundly the paradigm shaped the field. Taken together, the writings of Cohen, Johnston, and McDonagh script a historiography for modern dance that obscures the broad-based European modern dance movement of the early twentieth century, equates “American modern dance” with “dance in New York City,” and largely erases the contributions of choreographers of color. Although there are differences between their writings—for instance, Johnston and McDonagh are more polemical than Cohen—all focus on the transition from the “historic generation” to the postwar generation as a set of artistic choices rather than as a complex response to the shifting contexts of dance making from the Depression years to the Cold War.

Over the past three decades, historians of modern dance have largely dismantled the Greenbergian narrative, although its values still linger. During the Cold War, American art making implicitly and explicitly contrasted art making in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; this contrast positioned abstraction as the antithesis of Soviet socialist realism and as an exemplar of American freedom. Although McDonagh penned his dictum that postwar dancers “simply wished to be rather than to be for something” within a US context, the phrase could also be read as the cultural opposition defining the Cold War. It is this geopolitical context, I contend, that gave the Greenbergian historiography such power.

In retrospect, I recognize how the Cold War value of “simply [wishing] to be”—and its amplification during the counterculture of the 1970s—informed my dance viewing. In summer 1977, between my junior and senior year in college, I enrolled in an intensive workshop in Cunningham technique and repertoire, and during my senior year the Cunningham company spent a month in residence in Boston, enabling me to see much of their repertoire and to write an extended review. Senior year I wrote my honor’s thesis on Humphrey’s *Passacaglia* (1938) and a few years later my master’s thesis on Balanchine’s *The Four Temperaments* (1946) and *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* (1972), works that anticipated and paralleled Cunningham’s richly textured formalism. All three choreographers’ complex intertwinings of abstraction and referentiality enthralled me. Sitting in the theater or in the screening room, I experienced the suturing of perceptual pleasure and intellectual challenge, an affect that still informs my sense of choreographic value.

Looking back, I now recognize how the affective power of Greenbergian modernism was so compelling that it blinded me to what was a divided historiography. There appeared to be consensus on a formalist history, whereas there were, in fact, two parallel histories: the whitened history of what became known as “mainstream modern dance” and the history of Black dance. Emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s from the currents of the Black Arts movement, Black dance brought together artists of African descent across genres, from the innovators of Black musical theater—Bert Williams, George Walker—to the virtuosos of tap—Bill Robinson, the Nicholas Brothers—to the pioneering concert dancers—Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, Ailey—to the advocates of Black ballet—Janet Collins, Arthur Mitchell. Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer’s *Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the African-American in the Performing Arts* (1967), Marshall and Jean Stearns’ *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1968), Lynne Fauley Emery’s *Black Dance from 1619 to Today* (1972), Richard Long’s *The Black Tradition in American Dance* (1989): all highlight how Black artists across generations developed a range of strategies for self-representation, social protest, racial uplift, and diaspora consciousness.

During my years in college and graduate school, I was not unaware of the historiography of Black dance. Yet I did not fully recognize its significance for the history of modern dance. To be sure, I knew that Dunham and Primus had contributed to modern dance, mostly because I had read about them in Margaret Lloyd’s *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance* (1949), and I certainly knew that Alvin Ailey’s American Dance Theater had popularized modern dance on its many tours across the country and abroad. In fact, Ailey was the first

professional dance company that I had seen in my Midwestern hometown before escaping to the East Coast. Yet, however thrilled I was by Ailey as a young teenager, by the time I had moved to New York for graduate school, my dance viewing was attuned to the values of Greenbergian modernism. Hence I managed to see Satoru Shimazaki's revival of Michio Ito's solos at the Theatre of the Open Eye in 1979, Annabelle Gamson's recreations of Isadora Duncan's dancing at Carnegie Hall in 1981, and Debra McCall's reconstructions of Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus dances at The Kitchen in 1982, but not the recreation of Asadata Dafora's *Ostrich* staged as part of Dance Black America, a multiday festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1983.

Like my dance viewing at the time, the Greenbergian historiography did not exclude artists of color altogether. Rather, their inclusion was predicated on artists' participation in the formal revolutions that structured the historiography. Hence Limón, a Mexican American immigrant of Indigenous and European descent, invariably appeared in histories of modern dance, since he had trained and performed with Humphrey-Weidman and extended his mentors' movement styles and compositional principles in his well-regarded postwar choreography. That is how both Johnston and McDonagh present Limon, printing his name without diacritics. Only after scholars in the 1990s began to address the elements of Indigeneity and Latinidad in his choreography did diacritics appear in the typography of Limón's name (Seed 2008, Moreno 2020).

. . .

As I headed to graduate school in 1979, tenets of the Greenbergian historiography still informed my thinking, and it took me more than a decade to fully articulate a critique of its assumptions. My embrace of an alternate methodology, which I first called "ideological critique" (1993, 2nd ed. 2006) and later called "cultural materialism" (2004b), did not happen overnight. Rather, a confluence of influences came together over time, pushing me to revise the narrative that McDonagh had popularized in *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* and to expand the canon of modern dance. Deciding to write my dissertation on Mary Wigman and Ausdruckstanz ("dance of expression"), seeing the debut of Butoh and Tanztheater ("dance theater") on the New York stage, reading Raymond Williams' *The Sociology of Culture* all made an impact. Equally impactful was the lived experience of the 1980s, a decade that saw the ascent of Reaganism and the decline of the countercultural ethos of the 1970s.

Coming of age in the mid-1970s gave me a sense of what felt like nearly infinite possibilities. The end of the Vietnam War and the abolition of the

draft in 1973 had calmed the campus protests of the preceding few years. The Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* that same year, and the widespread availability of contraceptives on college campuses, made sexual experimentation feel safe. A sense of corporeal freedom underlay the fashions of the decade—not needing to dress up or wear makeup—and popular dance styles, improvising to rock and roll rhythms without any thought of needing a male partner. For daughters of mothers shaped by what Betty Friedan (1963) had termed the “feminine mystique,” there was a plethora of new opportunities: courses in women’s studies (I took the first women’s history course ever offered at Harvard), female professors as mentors (Had it had been a few years earlier, there would not have been any tenured women on the faculty), the prospect of entering graduate school and the professions alongside a cohort of female peers rather than with just a few exceptional women, as had been the experience of my mother’s generation. There was a sense that my generation, especially my generation of women, had options that were foreclosed to our parents.

During the 1980s, Ronald Reagan’s presidency threatened the sense of promise I had felt during the previous decade. Evangelicals and others organized to challenge *Roe v. Wade* and to decry homosexuality in the name of “family values.” White applicants denied university admission challenged affirmative action policies in the courts. Conservative legislators debated the validity of NEA and NEH funding, along with a host of social supports instituted in the mid-1960s as part of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. The emergence of HIV/AIDS decimated the arts community, as the sexual revolution became a conduit for mortal illness. My experience of living in a world of progressive political change came to an abrupt halt, and rather than take to the streets in protest, I redirected my disillusionment into my academic research.

In the countercultural milieu of the 1970s, to declare a student-initiated major in dance history and criticism seemed just one more way to experiment, to leave the beaten path. But once I decided to apply to graduate school, it seemed time to hedge my bets. After all, the career that I envisioned—as a professor with research expertise in dance modernism—didn’t actually exist. To be sure, there were tenured professors in dance departments, some of whom had doctorates in Dance Education, many of whom had considerable reputations as professional artists, and all of whom could teach technique and composition in the studio. I had neither the competence nor the confidence to teach studio dance, despite the many hours I had spent in the college gym. Moreover, I sensed that dance departments, focused as they were on studio training, were isolated from the currents of thought animating the

humanities. Hence I decided to pursue a PhD in an adjacent field and adapt the methods of that field to dance studies, a strategy pursued by many of my predecessors, peers, and successors.

Moving to New York City was a priority. My choices came down to the Department of Performance Studies at New York University, which had begun to accept students with research interests in dance, and the Doctoral Subcommittee on Theatre and Film at Columbia University, which offered a more traditional course of study in Western dramatic literature and theater history. I chose the latter, partly because Columbia offered more funding than NYU, but mostly because it seemed time to master an established discipline. My hope was that someday I could combine teaching dramatic literature and theater history with dance history, although I was far from confident that such a position would ever materialize.

At Columbia I learned to read the Western dramatic canon—from Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides to Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, and David Mamet—as blueprints for performance, not as self-sufficient literary texts. (My mentor Martin Meisel later summarized what he had taught in *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance*.) In nearly all my seminars, I wrote research papers on theatrical dance during the period under discussion, and in this way built a timeline of Western drama and theatrical dance. For my qualifying exam, my major field was modern drama, as represented by Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, August Strindberg, George Bernard Shaw, Bertolt Brecht, Luigi Pirandello, Eugene O'Neill, and Samuel Beckett. As a graduate instructor, I taught composition, introductory literature, and Literature Humanities, one of the core courses at Columbia that started with Homer and ended with a token female author, either Jane Austen or Virginia Woolf. In other words, the disciplines that I mastered during the early 1980s were based on canons of predominantly white male authors.

Yet these canons did not go unchallenged during my years at Columbia. Particularly contested was the question of whether and how to include female authors and authors of color in Literature Humanities. For my part, I considered my research on modern dance as part of a broader effort to bring female artists into the canons of artistic modernism. As my peers in theater studies were unearthing and publishing the work of overlooked female playwrights—from Hrotsvitha and Aphra Behn to Elizabeth Robbins and Susan Glaspell—and engaging the work of contemporary female authors—Maria Irene Fornes, Ntozake Shange, Wendy Wasserstein, Caryl Churchill—I saw my contribution as writing the dances of Duncan and Graham, among others, into the new feminist canon. At this point in my career, gender was a

more central category for analysis than race, although I was well aware of the racism voiced by early modern dancers like Duncan and St. Denis.

During graduate school, my coursework focused on play texts, supplemented by readings in theater history and in dramatic theory. Hence my encounter with critical theory happened outside the formal curriculum as part of a reading group that I initiated with colleagues a few years older than me, notably Susan Foster and Cynthia Novack. Cynthia taught dance at Barnard while also pursuing a PhD in Anthropology at Columbia, and I enrolled in her modern dance class during my first few years in graduate school. She introduced me to her good friend Susan Foster, then teaching at Wesleyan after finishing her PhD in the History of Consciousness at Santa Cruz. We began meeting regularly in early 1984, reading essays and books that one of us had encountered and felt might have relevance for our collective interest in finding new approaches for dance studies. We invited others to join: Mark Franko, then teaching French at Princeton, and Ann Daly, then a graduate student at NYU, were steady members for a year or two, and other dance scholars stopped by on occasion: Evan Alderson, Lynn Garafola, Suzanne Youngerman. But Cynthia, Susan, and I were the core of the group over the five years of its existence, reading Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Thomas Crow, Clifford Geertz, Donna Haraway, Andreas Huyssen, Fredrick Jameson, Rosalind Krauss, and Raymond Williams, among others. However valuable our readings, what was invaluable was bonding over our shared conviction that earlier methods for pursuing dance studies were insufficient for the present moment, a moment that demanded less celebration of master artists and more critical examination of their accomplishments.¹

Among the many readings, it was Williams' *The Sociology of Culture* that spoke most directly to my interests and prompted my search for methods to situate modern dance within its immediate sociopolitical context. The year before the reading group started, I had embarked on my dissertation research on the dances of Mary Wigman. In the standard literature in German and English, Wigman was known for her innovation of "absolute dance," dance that amplified its own qualities, an innovation that anticipated and reinforced the Greenbergian historiography. But I wanted to find out more about her dances and about the flourishing of German modern dance during the 1920s, a movement that had been obscured in subsequent histories. Once I delved into the Mary Wigman Archive at the Academy of Arts in West Berlin, the insufficiencies of previous histories became glaringly apparent: not only was the German modern dance movement far more extensive and dynamic than we had realized, but many of its leaders, including Wigman, had collab-

orated with the National Socialists after Hitler came to power in 1933. This was something that Wigman had never acknowledged during the postwar years, and to focus on her innovation of “absolute dance” only reinforced her own dissembling about her role during the Nazi era.

As my dissertation took shape, it became clear that Wigman’s works were both feminist and modernist, but equally clear was her choreographic accommodation with fascism during the Nazi years. Researching my dissertation against the backdrop of the Berlin Wall, it seemed imperative to tell her story in relation to the changing politics of the German nation-state. Writing my dissertation against the backdrop of Reaganism, it seemed imperative to acknowledge that progressive and reactionary politics could coincide. The passage from the 1970s to the 1980s had left me with the sense that politics are never pure, that social progress is always uneven. None of us is free from the contingencies and contradictions of our historical moment.

My dance viewing also shifted during the 1980s. My previous infatuation with Cunningham’s rich formalism lessened, not so much from attending subsequent performances of his company but from seeing so many other choreographers’ works that seemed derivative of his. Without the subtexts of Cunningham, subtexts that scholars Daniel Callahan (2018) and Carrie Noland (2020) recently have begun to excavate, movement for its own sake became uninteresting. My disaffection with formalism heightened in summer 1984, when two companies from abroad made their New York debut: Sankai Juku, a Butoh company founded in 1975 by Ushio Amagatsu, and Tanztheater Wuppertal, founded in 1973 by Pina Bausch. Both had already made an impact in Europe, and their debut in New York demonstrated that the city no longer cornered the market on innovations in dance modernism.

Although my responses to the two companies differed, watching them changed my approach to dance spectatorship. The nearly nude male dancers in Sankai Juku—moving in slow motion, bodies whitened with greasepaint, heads shaved—were both fascinating and inexplicable. Their excruciatingly slow movement reminded me of Noh performance, and I accepted the view of many critics at the time that Butoh was quintessentially Japanese, just as I saw Tanztheater as distinctively German. (Understanding both forms in terms of global circulation came later.) Bausch’s works felt more comprehensible, although equally innovative, especially in her focus on gender roles. In fact, she staged what Judith Butler (1990) would teach me a few years later to call “the performativity of gender,” the process whereby a repetition of acts creates the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, a process that Bausch constantly interrupts with her use of cross-dressing. Reversing

the gendered conventions for costuming and for partnering, Basuch's works revealed the arbitrariness of what queer theorists later would call "heteronormativity." After this point in the mid-1980s I could no longer attend a dance performance without thinking about the choreographer's staging of gender. In other words, ideological critique entered my dance viewing as well as my scholarship.

In spring 1987 I defended my dissertation, and that summer I wrote an essay that made a first step toward critiquing the Greenbergian historiography. Published the following year in *TDR: The Drama Review* as "Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric," the essay reflected on the two editions of Sally Banes' *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (1980 and 1987), an account of influential contemporary choreographers that updated Johnston's 1965 essay, "The New American Modern Dance." Like Johnston, Banes starts with an overview of modern dance history that traces the familiar succession from Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis to Graham and Humphrey to the "fresh approach" of Cunningham, a "rapidly cyclical" history that reiterates "revolution and institution" (Banes 1987, 5–6). Like Johnston, Banes then outlines how younger choreographers both drew inspiration from and rebelled against Cunningham in their creation of Judson Dance Theater. In an important sense, *Terpsichore in Sneakers* fulfills Johnston's prediction that "the major direction in the dance of the next decade or two will be largely the result of the adventurous work of members of this group" (Johnston 1965, 174). With one exception, the ten artists and one collective that Banes profiles all had their start at Judson, and she explains their selection on the basis of their representing "nearly every theoretical and practical position in the post-modern aesthetic" (1987, 19). Her in-depth profiles thus construct a canon of postmodern choreographers: Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, David Gordon, Deborah Hay, Lucinda Childs, Meredith Monk, Kenneth King, Douglas Dunn, and Grand Union.

All the artists canonized are white, but race was not the basis for my critique of Banes' approach. Rather, my essay focused on the disjunction between her introductions to the first edition, paraphrased above, and the second edition, which acknowledged how much postmodern choreography had changed over the course of the 1980s. Theatricality, virtuosity, narrative, and expressivity all had returned, what Banes calls the "rebirth of content" (1987, xxiv). This leads her to periodize several different phases within post-modern dance and to argue that "historical modern dance was never really *modernist*" (xiv, italics in original) and that it "has been precisely in the arena of postmodern dance that issues of modernism in the other arts have arisen:

the acknowledgment of the medium's materials, the revealing of dances' essential qualities as an art form, the separation of formal elements, the abstraction of forms, and the elimination of external references as subjects" (xv). It was Banes' assignment of these qualities to Judson Dance Theater that I termed "modernist dogma" and "post-modern rhetoric"—"attributing to only one generation of 20th-century choreographers a set of formal concerns shared by other generations as well" (Manning 1988, 34).

I have not allowed others to reprint the essay, nor is the essay reprinted here, because it only gestures toward a critique of the Greenbergian historiography, a critique that *Ecstasy and the Demon* accomplishes more fully in its first chapter titled "Ideology and Absolute Dance." Yet the essay did garner me a reputation as a young scholar willing to go against the establishment, in part due to an exchange of letters with Banes that followed the essay's publication and that the editors of *TDR* headlined "Terpsichore in Combat Boots."

What went unstated in "Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric" and was only partly voiced in the exchange of letters was the function of *Terpsichore in Sneakers* and of its predecessors, not only McDonagh's *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* but also Lloyd's *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance* and John Martin's *The Modern Dance* (1933) and *America Dancing* (1936). All were written by working reviewers and addressed to the general public of dance spectators. All provide invaluable documentation on dance-makers and on dances seen in performance. All construct canons of past and present artists, mostly by showing how current artists surpass the accomplishments of their predecessors. In so doing, these "criticism-histories," as I came to call the genre, furthered the Greenbergian narrative. So it was not only the context of the Cold War that made this narrative so dominant, but also the practice of working critics writing dance histories.

In retrospect, it is telling to examine how Banes handles race in *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. The first edition in 1980 does not address race in any explicit way while presenting an all-white canon of past and present choreographers. The introduction to the second edition in 1987 does note "the recent emergence of a group of black post-modern choreographers," including Bill T. Jones, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Fred Holland, Ralph Lemon, Blondell Cummings, Bebe Miller, "and many others" (Banes 1987, xxxv). Banes also acknowledges artists working outside New York City, in other urban centers in the United States and in Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan. In this sense, what my review called "the mismatch" (Manning 1988, 32) between the introductions to the first and second editions points toward the breakdown of the genre of

the criticism-history and the Greenbergian narrative, since even critics based in New York City could no longer ignore artists of color and artists based outside the city.

What I did not say in “Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric,” but fervently hoped during summer 1987, was that I and others of my cohort could find teaching positions in the academy that would enable us to script alternate histories of dance modernism.

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I started my career on the tenure track in the midst of a culture war. In 1989 controversy erupted over the Corcoran Gallery of Art’s decision to cancel a show of Robert Mapplethorpe’s erotic photographs of nude men, Black and white. In 1990 the NEA withdrew grants from performance artists Holly Hughes, Karen Finley, Tim Miller, and John Fleck for their supposed violation of a newly instituted “decency clause.” In 1994 *New Yorker* dance critic Arlene Croce refused to attend and review Bill T. Jones’ *Still/Here*, calling it “victim art” for the artist’s use of video from “survivor workshops” he convened as part of his creative research. Participants in the workshops all were facing terminal illness, including AIDS, which had killed Jones’ partner Arnie Zane in 1988 and Mapplethorpe in 1989, just a few months before the Corcoran canceled his show.

During these years artists banded together to contest the violation of freedom of expression and to rally support for the continuation of the NEA and NEH, which conservative congressmen threatened to abolish. In one sense, the culture war was the culmination of the political retrenchment under Reagan. But in another sense, it was the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War that combusted the tensions between AIDS activists, socially progressive artists, and conservative legislators and ignited the culture war. Without communism as an external threat defining American identity, conservatives turned against internal enemies, targeting queer men and women of all races and ethnicities.

Focused on finding a way forward in my life and career, I was not at the barricades during the culture war. After three years on the job market, I had nearly given up and started looking for jobs outside the academy when I was offered a tenure-track position in modern drama in the Department of English at Northwestern University in 1988. Against the odds, my plan to combine graduate training in dramatic literature and theater history with research in modern dance became a reality. Thanks to Joe Roach, then a pro-

fessor of English and Theatre at Northwestern, I took on a joint appointment with the Department of Theatre and Program in Dance after my second year on the faculty. By then, I had given birth to my first child, and by the time I came up for tenure in 1993–1994, I had a second child.

During my years as an assistant professor, the literature faculty at Northwestern, as across the nation, was divided between “historians” and “New Critics,” who focused their research on a canon of widely admired writers, and “theorists,” who believed the canon reflected the racism, sexism, and elitism of university culture and called for a reconsideration of how literary texts are selected and valued. The theater faculty was less divided, but only because few of that faculty had ever questioned the values of realism and the Western dramatic canon. My first years on campus I attended retirement parties for senior faculty members in both departments. A retiring professor in English drunkenly joked about the “invasion of women” in the department, while a midcareer director in theater thanked his retiring mentor “for teaching me to cast the prettiest girls so that I would have something to look at during the most difficult weeks of rehearsal.” Needless to say, such comments reinforced my commitment to feminism and to gender as a critical variable for analysis.

In an important sense, the culture war compelled the wholesale revision of my dissertation, my sustained critique of the Greenbergian historiography, and my declaration of “ideological critique” as my preferred approach in *Ecstasy and the Demon*. What I did not fully realize at the time was how the social, political, and artistic changes initiated by the culture war and the end of the Cold War would propel my career over the next three decades, as sexuality became as important a critical concept as gender, as race became as essential to my thinking as gender and sexuality, and as globalization emerged alongside nationality as a foundational category for modern dance history.

Given the AIDS crisis and the tenor of the culture war in the early 1990s, I was certainly aware of sexuality as an integral dimension of identity during the years I wrote *Ecstasy and the Demon*. Yet sexuality did not enter my analytical framework, which drew on the concepts of the male gaze and female spectatorship, concepts that Laura Mulvey (1975), Mary Ann Doane (1982), and E. Ann Kaplan (1983) had introduced to film studies and that theater and dance scholars borrowed and adapted in the 1980s. In my reading of Wigman’s dances, it was the kinaesthetic power of her dances that addressed female spectators, many of whom were enrolled in amateur courses in *Tanz Gymnastik* (“dance gymnastics”), and her representational strategy of *Gestalt im Raum* (“configuration of energy in space”) that resisted the eroticizing or voyeuristic gaze. In these ways, I argued, Wigman’s dances constituted a feminist modernism.

The concepts of the male gaze and female spectatorship, both in their original formulation and my adaptation for *Ecstasy and the Demon*, posited female spectators as a singular entity. It was not until I encountered queer theory in the mid-1990s, most especially the writing of Michael Moon (1989) and Alan Sinfield (1994), that I began to consider sexuality in relation to spectatorship. By that point I had started to research my second monograph on US modern dance. Strikingly, I found it easier to historicize gay male spectatorship than lesbian spectatorship, since in the era before Stonewall, gay choreographers often created a subtext that was legible to queer spectators but mostly opaque to heteronormative spectators. And the generation of gay choreographers that came of age after Stonewall often staged same-sex desire openly in their dances, as part of a broader movement of gay activism. In contrast, there was less of a distinction between works staged by queer female choreographers before and after Stonewall, and it was difficult to differentiate a lesbian feminist response from a straight feminist response, for both responded to the same choreographic innovations in subtly different ways. To make this argument about sexuality and female spectatorship, I first had to reflect on the construction of my own (hetero)sexuality under the regime of the “feminine mystique,” a reflection prompted by my friendship and intellectual exchange with Sinfield, who visited Northwestern as a guest professor in 1997.

What drove the argument in *Ecstasy and the Demon* was the convergence of feminism and nationalism and, during the Nazi era, feminism and fascism in the dances of Wigman. Borrowing and adapting Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as an “imagined community” (1983), I traced how Wigman’s group dances embodied changing metaphors for the nation, from a community where authority and autonomy coexisted to a community where the leader stood apart from the mass. Given that Wigman and her many disciples had never acknowledged her entanglement with National Socialism, it seemed especially important to document and attempt to explain her collaboration.

What also inflected my argument in *Ecstasy and the Demon* was my changing relationship to feminism. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, feminisms in the plural had replaced feminism in the singular. An oft-repeated schema from the time differentiated cultural feminism (the belief that women should bond around specifically female experiences to empower themselves) and liberal feminism (the belief that women should seek legal remedies for unequal pay and other injustices) from materialist feminism (the belief that women must recognize their differences in terms of sexuality, class, race, and nationality even while forming an alliance against patriarchy). In this formu-

lation, materialist feminism was the privileged version (Case 1988), and my research adapted its precepts by interrelating the feminism and nationalism of Wigman's dances. Yet I found the dismissal of cultural feminism and liberal feminism—both associated with the second-wave feminism I had embraced coming of the age in the 1970s—shortsighted.

From my perspective, bonding with other women (cultural feminism) and advocating for equal treatment and accommodations in the workplace (liberal feminism) were not outmoded strategies. For women in the academy still needed to advocate for pay comparable to their male peers; for a balance between research, teaching, and service that did not elevate the latter two over the former; and for provisions for maternity and parental leave so they were not disadvantaged if they chose to combine family and career. (When I had my two sons, there was no set policy for maternity and parental leave. I went back to full-time work when my sons were six weeks old, and I did not extend the tenure clock because it was unclear if to do so would prejudice my case.) And I found that collegiality with other women, inside and outside English and theater, was essential for navigating the tenure track. After all, it was the mostly female ranks of dance studies—and the support of female mentors like Luise Vosgerchian and Selma Jeanne Cohen—that had given me the confidence to pursue an academic career in the first place.

Yet the critique of second-wave feminism launched in the 1980s and 1990s was spot on in its exposure of the class and race privilege associated with manifestos like Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Five years after its publication, I had read Friedan's book, and it had given shape to my twelve-year-old aspirations to lead a life different from my mother's generation. By the time I was an assistant professor, however, it was clear that Friedan's diagnosis of "the problem that has no name"—women's disaffection with the roles of wife and mother—applied mostly to straight, white, middle-class women.

Applying this critique to my own situation, I recognized that my ability to graduate from college debt-free and to risk pursuing a PhD in the humanities without a guarantee of subsequent employment reflected my upper-middle-class upbringing. Similarly, my ability to write *Ecstasy and the Demon* in the three-plus years between the births of my two sons reflected my upwardly mobile husband's willingness to subsidize as much child care and household help as was needed for my writing and research. (My own ability to compartmentalize home and work and prioritize tasks in both spheres also came in handy.) Like Virginia Woolf's proverbial "room of one's own," class and race privilege compensated for the disadvantage of gender in an academy still struggling to integrate white female faculty on an equal footing with male faculty.

Differently stated, I am too aware of my own privilege to conflate my scholarship with political radicalism. And, perhaps not surprisingly, I often find a similar combination of privilege and rebellion in the artists that I study. Duncan, St. Denis, Wigman, and Graham all broke barriers as women and as artists, and yet all reified their whiteness to legitimize their daring and their innovations. By the time *Ecstasy and the Demon* appeared in print, I had begun investigating whiteness as a foundational component of modern dance.

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Why did whiteness become so central to my research in the 1990s? Although I had acknowledged the racist dimensions of Duncan's writing in *Ecstasy and the Demon* (1993, 2nd ed. 2006, 39), I did not focus on whiteness as a primary category for analysis until researching and writing my second monograph, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b). Like earlier shifts in my research agenda, this shift resulted from my encounters with contemporary dance artists, my changing life circumstances, and my embrace of critical concepts that made sense of what I was seeing onstage and experiencing offstage.

In fall 1989 I saw a concert by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and the company she founded, Urban Bush Women, at the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago. As my performance journal noted, Zollar's choreography vivified the fusion and juxtaposition of "white" modern dance moves with "Black" social and ritual dance moves (scare quotes in the original) in a way that I had not fully recognized before in the work of midcentury modernists like Dunham and Ailey. Whereas Dunham's and Ailey's choreography created a nearly seamless continuity between social and ritual dance vocabularies and modern dance moves, Zollar left the seams exposed, as it were. Like Bausch, Zollar compelled spectators to recognize the dynamics of the gaze, wearing sunglasses throughout her solo *Life Dance II . . . the Papess (mirror in the water)*, even after removing first her trench coat and then a lacy camisole and dancing bare-breasted. Or in the group work *Lipstick*, when the dancers apply makeup using the audience as their mirror. Watching Urban Bush Women made me realize that, as my journal noted, "the Black female artist is in something of a double bind," for she was attempting to subvert the male gaze of the female dancer as well as the white gaze of the Black dancer.

This was a new insight. Seeing performances over the next few years on tour by Bill T. Jones (*Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land*, *Last Night on Earth*), David Rousseve (*Urban Scenes/Creole Dreams*), and Donald Byrd (*The Minstrel Show*) amplified my sense of how stagings of gender

and sexuality intersect stagings of race. Rather than frame their works as had midcentury Black artists—as racial uplift, social protest, diaspora consciousness, and cultural memory—these choreographers undermined any sense of coherent or monolithic identity by deploying cross-dressing, caricature, and parody. In so doing, they underscored the social constructedness of all identities, gender and sexuality as well as race. In effect, their choreography broke down the divided practices—and historiography—of Black dance and (post) modern dance.

As I recognized the changing constructs of Blackness across modern and postmodern dance, so whiteness too became a legible category, not simply the unmarked background of the modern dance canon. I remember seeing a reconstruction by Lori Bellilove of Duncan's dancing in the early 1990s, and in contrast to the reconstructions by Gamson that I had seen at Carnegie Hall a decade earlier, all I could see now was the whiteness that legitimized Duncan's radical reconfiguration of the female dancer. I began to wonder about the token integration of Graham's dance ensemble: did dancers of color like Yuriko, Matt Turney, and Mary Hinkson become symbolically white in works like *Appalachian Spring* (1944), or did they open a space for America to be defined in multiracial terms? Why did Helen Tamiris cast only white dancers in *How Long, Brethren?* (1937), a work set to "Negro protest songs" that many contemporaries hailed as a call for antiracist activism? And why did Ailey so often cast a few white dancers in his signature work *Revelations* (1960)? Did they become symbolically Black, or did they serve to remind viewers that the performers' virtuosity was not a "natural talent" of the majority Black cast?

As my argument came together for *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, I traced how changing constructs of whiteness in midcentury US modern dance could not be separated from changing constructs of Blackness and that, in fact, the performances of whiteness and Blackness were mutually constitutive. Examining nearly twenty dance works and concerts from Tamiris's *Negro Spirituals* (1928–1944) to Ailey's *Revelations*, my inquiry located the years surrounding Second World War as a crucial period of transition, when Black dancers' strategies for self-representation became broadly legible as white modern dancers embraced mythic abstraction and turned away from what I termed "metaphorical minstrelsy," white dancers' references and allusions to subjects of color. This argument interrelated production and reception—categories for analysis adapted from Williams' and Sinfield's cultural materialism—and historicized the dynamics of what I termed "cross-viewing," the possibility for spectators "to catch glimpses of subjectivities from social locations that differ from their own" (2004b, xvi). Differences

in gender, sexuality, class, and political ideology entered my historicizing of spectatorship alongside race.

My study also examined the complexities of Limón's choreography, the way his dances performed Latinidad and Indigeneity by refiguring the continuum between Blackness and whiteness. Yet the focus remained on the Black-white dyad, bringing together histories that had been told separately in order to build a foundation for a truly multiracial account of American modern dance. And in the two decades since *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* was published, a multiracial historiography has emerged, so that it is now possible to trace the Asian, Africanist, Indigenous, Latinx, and Jewish influences that informed US modern dance, and how these influences so often became subordinated by the power of whiteness.

The Black-white dyad also reflected my lived experience. Growing up, I had assumed that whiteness and Blackness were fixed identities, a matter of family heritage. Whiteness defined the dominant culture, while Blackness inhabited a distinct subculture. Although I recognized that the dominant culture regularly borrowed its popular music, fashion, and slang from Black subculture, the boundary between dominant culture and subculture seemed rigid, not easily trespassed, at least from my perspective. My neighborhood and public elementary school were all white; the mostly Black neighborhood and public school were in a part of my hometown that I rarely visited. Black and white kids did come together in junior high and high school, but we repeated the pattern of self-segregation that psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum has analyzed in her study *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race* (1997, 2017). To a great extent, this pattern continued during my years in boarding school, college, and graduate school. Although the elite private schools I now attended had begun to recruit a more diverse faculty and student body, there were relatively few faculty members and students of color, and our paths crossed only occasionally.

The de facto segregation of my education coincided with the flourishing of the Black Arts movement. As Black Studies departments and programs took shape in the late 1960s and 1970s, their research and curricula highlighted the traditions of Black cultural production, leading to publications and courses on Black literature, Black music, Black theater, and Black dance. Given the near erasure of these traditions in earlier histories of American culture, the Black Arts historiography was a necessary and overdue corrective. In fact, I took a course at Harvard on Black music, taught by the pioneering scholar Eileen Southern, and wrote my term paper on the Ring Shout. Yet at that time

artists like Duncan and Graham seemed more central to my inquiry. As a young white dance scholar looking to make my mark in the field, I certainly felt that Black dance lay outside my purview.

My lived experience changed when I moved to Evanston, Illinois to take a job at Northwestern University. Evanston was fiercely proud of its integrated public schools. As a kindergartner, my older son asked me—in the middle of an assembly for Black History Month—“are we white?” Looking at his classroom, I was reminded of the ending scene of Bill T. Jones’ *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land*, when all the dancers—the professionals in the company and the community members recruited in each city the company visited—crisscrossed the stage again and again, removing articles of clothing on each pass until they were all dancing together nude. In the multi-racial ensemble of the company, as in my son’s kindergarten classroom, it was all but impossible to identify the dividing point between “Black” and “white.”

Experiences like these vivified the scholarly literature that I was reading, a literature that Shelly Fisher Fishkin characterized in a 1995 essay as “Interrogating ‘Whiteness,’ Complicating ‘Blackness.’” In a hugely influential study, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), Toni Morrison suggested that Blackness hovered at the edges of texts by the most canonical white American writers. Legions of literary scholars followed her suggestion, including several of my colleagues at Northwestern during the 1990s, most notably Eric Sundquist (1993) and Ken Warren (1995). In *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (1996), Brenda Dixon Gottschild made a similar argument regarding American dance, highlighting how modernist icons such as Balanchine and Graham had arguably Americanized their styles by borrowing and “invisibilizing” elements from Black artists. John O. Perpener’s revisionist history of Black concert dance at midcentury (2001) opened up new avenues for inquiry, while Thomas F. DeFrantz’s in-depth research on Ailey (2004) paralleled my interest in analyzing gender and sexuality alongside race. At Northwestern, Sandra Richards, my senior colleague in theater studies, supported my efforts to enter the ongoing conversation on race and performance.

In brief, my encounter with Black postmodernism had made me see the whiteness of the modern dance canon, prompting my determination to write an integrated historiography of Black concert dance and “mainstream modern dance.” As I wrote in the preface to *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*: “I would like to say that the process of writing this book voided the racist assumptions of my earlier dance viewing, but that’s too simplistic.

More accurately, this book historicizes the viewing conventions that I inherited and for a time perpetuated" (2004b, ix).

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In summer 2003, just after I had finished the final edits on *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, my husband and I were invited by Evanston neighbors to a backyard fundraiser for a young state senator from the South Side who was gearing up for a US Senate race: Barack Obama. He opened his remarks with an allusion to his biracial heritage: "I got my funny name from my Kenyan father and my accent from my Kansas mother." He then turned to his accomplishments as a state senator, singling out the legislation he had sponsored extending health care to all children, concluding "if any child is without health care, we are all impoverished." I had not heard such use of the first-person plural in political rhetoric for decades, certainly not during the Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II years, when free-market economics and paeans to individual initiative had seemingly swept away all belief in state intervention as a public good. Excited by his story and by his platform, I eagerly donated to his campaign. As we were leaving the event with our neighbors, more than one of us remarked, "Barack could be the first Black president."

None of us believed that would happen five years later, but during those years we were enthusiastic supporters, organizing and attending fundraisers, traveling to nearby states to assist campaign workers on the ground. The night Obama won the Iowa caucus in January 2008, we watched a live-stream of his speech with the crew of campaign workers and volunteers in Bettendorf—the office strewn with secondhand furniture and empty pizza boxes—and felt that just maybe, as Obama had said at the Chicago event announcing his presidential run, his campaign might push the wheel of history one notch forward.

I was never so naive as to believe that Obama's election ushered in a "postracial America," but I did sense a change, at least in my own social and professional circles. It now felt possible for Americans of diverse backgrounds to come together and work for progressive reform. And within the left-liberal bubble of the academic humanities, it felt possible for scholars of diverse backgrounds to come together and rescript the canons of American art, highlighting the contributions of Asian American, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx artists. My syllabi moved further in this direction, as did the syllabi of many of my colleagues. I felt part of a multiracial coalition of scholars (re)making American cultural history.

In 2004 I was promoted to professor and, having spent the previous decade and a half proving that a woman and primary parent could meet the expectations for a normative academic career, I felt freed to pursue my own path. In fact, I briefly considered leaving the academy to work in the non-profit arts and humanities sector, but decided instead to remain in place and pursue leadership, community outreach, and collaborative research as a professor triply appointed in English, Theatre, and Performance Studies. Over the next decade I took on a number of new roles, too many to catalogue here.² Most consequential for my research were curating an exhibition in 2009 titled *Danses noires/blanche Amérique* (Black Dance/White America) at the Centre national de la danse (CND) in Pantin, a working-class suburb just outside Paris, and serving as dramaturge for Reggie Wilson's 2013 work *Moses(es)* for his Brooklyn-based company Fist and Heel Performance Group. Tellingly, Obama's election and presidency inflected my collaborations with Claire Rousier and the staff at the CND and with Reggie Wilson and his dancers.

In 2007 Rousier commissioned me to provide the overall concept, text, and images for a lobby exhibit and catalogue on the history of Black theater dance in the United States. (I wrote in English and the CND translated all texts into French.) As the catalogue introduced my approach:

Danses noires/blanche Amérique presents a cultural history of theatre dance created and performed by Black Americans over the last century, mostly on U.S. stages but also abroad. Against a backdrop of changing sociopolitical contexts, this exhibition . . . highlights a broad range of forms, from black musical theatre and revue to ballet and modern dance, from virtuosic tap to postmodern dance theatre, from agit-prop to hip hop.

Responding to this diversity and dynamism, artists and critics have engaged in an extended conversation over the last century on dance, race, and politics in American culture. . . . It's this conversation that informs the intentionally ambiguous title—*Danses noires/blanche Amérique*. The slash suggests opposition but also fusion and, above all, the many perspectives from which artists and critics have viewed the Black dancing body onstage. You are invited to join the dialogue. (Manning 2008a, 9)³

Traveling back and forth to Pantin in 2008 to prepare the exhibit and catalogue, I excitedly shared updates on the Obama campaign with Rousier and the CND staff, who were as enthusiastic as I was about his unexpected rise in the polls. The exhibit's opening in January 2009 coincided with the weekend of his inauguration. In fact, my curator's lecture explicitly compared Obama to the postmodern dancers featured in the exhibit, all of whom had come of

age after the civil rights movement and were willing to challenge pre-existing scripts for Blackness, expose the fault lines of difference within the Black community, and acknowledge the interdependence of Africanist and Euro-centric legacies.

Shared admiration for Obama also inflected my work as a dramaturge for Reggie Wilson's *Moses(es)*. Having first met Wilson when his company was on tour in Chicago in 2003, I had followed his career and even included his work in the CND exhibit. But it was not until another visit to Chicago in 2011 that we truly connected, after I complimented him on a beaded bracelet he wore that spelled O-B-A-M-A and invited him to tour an exhibit on Obama's African reception at the Herskovits Library at Northwestern. This was the start of a three-year collaboration on a dance work that queried "how we lead and why we follow."

Wilson's choreography plays with the fusion and confusion of Africanist and postmodernist elements. As his dramaturge, I was able to observe not only his choreographic process in the studio but also the reception of his work on tour. In this way, I could document the process of "cross-viewing" in real time, and in the conclusion to "Reggie Wilson and the Making of *Moses(es)*," reprinted in this volume, I contrast my own view of this work with that of Carl Paris, a Black artist-scholar, who places Wilson's work in the tradition of Black dancers who capture "spirit in the black religious and cultural sense" (146). From my perspective, in contrast, Wilson's work confounds spectators' preconceptions of race and the dancing body. Of course, his work supports both our interpretations, and many more.

Simply put, my relationship to Black culture changed during the Obama years. Having come of age with the Black Arts movement of the 1970s and 1980s, I felt that Black dance was outside my purview. Then in the 1990s scholars and artists affiliated with Black postmodernism compelled my recognition of whiteness. This recognition prompted my scripting of *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, and my second monograph in turn prompted invitations to narrate a history of Black dance for a Francophone public and to work closely with a majority-Black dance company.

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The Obama years also saw a shift toward globalization in the humanities and in my own research. In an important sense, the turn toward globalization accompanied and amplified the rescripting of American cultural history, as scholars traced the global circulation of ideas and practices across national borders. In the years immediately following the end of the Cold War, as the divides between the First and Second and Third Worlds seemingly collapsed,

it felt as if goods and peoples and concepts and capital had never before moved so fast and so freely across continents, an impression only heightened by the emergence of digital technology. This new awareness made us look back at the past, and rather than map arts and artists within the fixed borders of nation-states, as had structured humanities scholarship during the Cold War, we now saw how often arts and artists crossed borders. I use the first-person plural here, because my shift from the nation-state to global circulation as a category for analysis necessitated a shift from solo authorship to collaborative research.

Like earlier redirections of my research, this change of focus did not happen all at once and was informed by several influences. As contemporary dancers from Latin America, Asia, and Africa came to tour the United States, it became clear that dance modernisms had taken hold and flourished in many national contexts. Indeed, it was the breakdown of the Greenbergian historiography that enabled me to recognize the varied approaches to dance modernism outside the United States. These approaches, in turn, resonated with theories of globalization that had begun to circulate in the humanities after the end of the Cold War, notably Paul Gilroy's naming of the Black Atlantic (1993), Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (1994), and Arjun Appadurai's schema of global flows (1996). Informing both my viewing and my reading were the lived experiences of travel in the twenty-first century, and all these experiences together compelled my attempts to script a historiography of modern dance in global circulation.

In 1992, Nucleodanza, an Argentinian company cofounded by Susana Tambutti and Margarita Bali in 1974, appeared at the Dance Center Chicago, the first of several Latin American companies presented by the Dance Center over the next decade. Tambutti and Bali had trained in both ballet and modern dance and had studied modern dance abroad as well as with pioneering modern dancers in Buenos Aires, notably Ana Kamien and Renate Schottelius. Schottelius, German-born, had studied Wigman's methods before her emigration to Argentina in 1936, and she also spent some time in New York in 1953–1954 studying with Graham, Limón, and Hanya Holm. This combination of influences was common across Latin America, where German and American modern dance practices had been transplanted and transformed. At this point I didn't have the tools to fully comprehend the transnational migration of modern dance, although I began to realize that the focus of my own scholarship on modern dance in Germany and the United States told only part of the story.

Over time I came to see two broad patterns of global circulation. In one

pattern, dancers introduce ideas and practices from one country or region to another, and then over a generation or two these influences become naturalized, as happened across Latin America. In another pattern of circulation, modernist dance draws on neotraditional forms, as postcolonial nations theatricalize folk and ritual forms as a means of nation building. After a generation or two, artists may react against these neotraditional dances and develop hybrid movement vocabularies. In 2001 the Dance Center Chicago hosted a festival titled *Bharatanatyam in the Diaspora*, organized by Chicago-based dancer Hema Rajagopalan, which featured *Sharira—Fire and Desire* (2001) by Chandralekha, the Chennai-based choreographer who had pioneered the deformation and reimagination of the form classicized in the mid-twentieth century. In 2003, Compagnie Jant-Bi, founded by Germaine Acogny, a Senegalese dancer considered a pioneer of African contemporary dance, appeared at the Dance Center. Five years later the Dance Center supported a collaborative work between Acogny's Jant-Bi and Zollar's Urban Bush Women, titled *Les Écailles de la mémoire* (Scales of Memory). In fact, the catalogue for *Danses noires/blanche Amérique* concluded by noting the trend toward international collaborations among African American choreographers, including Ralph Lemon, Ron Brown, Wilson, and Zollar.⁴

In addition to seeing Latin American, Asian, and African artists on tour in Chicago, I traveled to Argentina, Cuba, India, and Japan and met dancers and dance scholars. Yet I couldn't fully make sense of these experiences without the research of my students and colleagues. For a few years, Avanthi Meduri was a colleague at Northwestern, and her path-breaking research on Bharatanatyam as an "invented tradition"—to use Eric Hobsbawm's trenchant phrase—gave me an early glimpse of global modernisms (1988). Building on Meduri's insights, Priya Srinivasan (PhD 2003) traced the global flows of Bharatanatyam between the United States and India from the early to the late twentieth century, exploding the myth of St. Denis taking inspiration from an Orientalist poster and arguing that her encounters with Nautch dancers at Coney Island and with Indian students in New York City informed her recreations of Indian dance. Meida McNeal (PhD 2007) compared three contemporary dance companies in Trinidad and Tobago, Victoria Fortuna (PhD 2013) traced several generations of contemporary dance in Argentina, while Mario LaMothe (PhD 2014) illuminated the emergence of contemporary dance in Haiti, and Karima Borni (PhD 2016) the emergence of contemporary dance in Morocco. More recently, Tara Rodman (PhD 2017) has followed the transnational itinerary of Michio Ito, while Amy Swanson (PhD 2019) has examined gender and sexuality in Senegalese contemporary dance,

and Mlondi Zondi (PhD 2020) has compared South African and Black American choreographers. Postdoctoral fellows José Reynoso (2012–2014), Jasmine Johnson (2012–2014), and Elizabeth Schwall (2016–2018) also brought their expertise on theatrical dance in the Global South to Northwestern. Among my faculty colleagues, E. Patrick Johnson, Ramón Rivera-Servera (now at Texas-Austin), Brian Edwards (now at Tulane), and Harris Feinsod (now at Johns Hopkins) provided models for globalizing American Studies.

As younger scholars focused on dance modernisms across the Global South, my own attention shifted to the transnational dimensions of European and American modern dance. Now the appearance of Japanese dancer Sadayakko at the 1900 Paris Exposition—and her arguable influence on Fuller, St. Denis, and Duncan—took on new meaning as a transcultural point of origin, similar to Srinivasan's revisionist look at St. Denis's encounter with Nautch dancers on Coney Island. Artists like Ito, whose dancing in Europe, the Americas, and Japan had obscured his legacy during the years when modern dance history prioritized the nation-state, took on new significance. The years that Dore Hoyer worked in Argentina or Limón in Mexico or Anna Sokolow in Mexico and Israel took on new importance as moments of transnational encounter.

It became clear that we needed to synthesize all this new research and delineate a new historiography of dance modernisms in global circulation. Frankly, we are still in the middle of this process, still developing paradigms for narrating the migrations of dance across national borders. In 2011 I became part of a team headed by Allana Lindgren, who gathered a group of coeditors to commission around four hundred dance entries for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. We envisioned a broad set of terms, including social and popular dance as well as theatrical dance, and highlighted modernist dancers across Latin America, Asia, Australasia, and Africa as well as across Europe, Canada, and the United States. The digital version of the encyclopedia was released in 2016, and a print version of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernist Dance* with additional entries is in preparation. My own entries on "Ausdruckstanz" and "modern dance" emphasize the transnational circulation of these forms, thus challenging and complementing the focus on the nation-state in my two monographs.

Another forum for articulating a transnational historiography of dance and theater was the International Research Center (IRC) at the Free University in Berlin, codirected by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Gabrielle Brandstetter from 2008 to 2018 and focused on the theme of interweaving performance cultures. My own stay at the IRC in 2014 underscored how much the climate for dance research had changed since the Cold War.

Exactly thirty years earlier, I had spent an extended period in the city doing dissertation research on Wigman. In 1984 the city was divided and dominated by the Berlin Wall. Passing through Checkpoint Charlie meant leaving behind the lively pub culture and intimate arts scene of West Berlin and encountering the weirdly empty cityscapes of East Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden. In a nondescript apartment block in East Berlin, I visited Jean Weidt, a dancer known in the late 1920s for his communist agit-prop performance who had gone into exile during the Nazi years and returned to help lead dance in East Germany. Although he never said so directly, his body language suggested his disappointment that officials had curtailed his role in East German dance. At the Dance Archive in Leipzig the director chastised me for not (illegally) exchanging my West German marks with him, rather than at the official border exchange, since he would have given me a much better rate. In Dresden the city center was only partially reconstructed from its wartime destruction and the Wigman School appeared unoccupied, its windows boarded up. Of course, these were the impressions of a visitor who had grown up with the myth and reality of the Cold War, and I recognize now that there was much going on behind closed doors to which I had no access. Yet the sense of two distinct worlds—a First World and a Second World—was palpable and all-encompassing.

Thirty years later the Berlin Wall was gone, as one after another new monument and museum narrated the history of the Nazi years and the years of the Cold War. The dance scene, far less vibrant in 1984 in Berlin than in West German cities, had eclipsed other municipalities and become a mecca for experimental artists from inside and outside Germany. The International Research Center hosted artists and scholars from several continents who gathered weekly to present their research and discuss how the interweaving of elements from diverse cultures defined so many performance genres.⁵

After my stay at the IRC, I was invited back to Berlin every year for the next five years. In September 2019 I gave a lecture on “Mary Wigman and Asia” as part of an exhibit and performance series at the Academy of Arts in the former West Berlin, the same site where I had done my dissertation research thirty-five years before. The exhibit and catalogue edited by Johannes Odenthal, titled *Das Jahrhundert des Tanzes/The Century of Dance* (2019), sketched a broadened canon of modern dance, including Asian and African artists alongside European and American artists, and the performance series, under the rubric *Was der Körper Erinnert/What the Body Remembers*, highlighted Asian and African artists as well. Having published my first monograph on Wigman within the national context of Germany, I now participated in public programming that placed German modern dance within a decidedly global context.

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The election of Donald Trump in 2016 turned my world upside down. And I am still attempting to understand the strength of the reaction against globalization, as resurgent nationalisms rallied Trump's supporters in the United States, voters in Great Britain who supported Brexit just months before Trump's election, and anti-immigration parties across Europe in the wake of the refugee crisis of 2015. Even after Joe Biden's win in 2020, the consequences of Trump's presidency are still evident, most especially in the Supreme Court decisions overturning *Roe v. Wade* and affirmative action. We are still in the midst of this sociopolitical transition, and much is not yet clear.

What is clear, however, is how the pandemic revealed the epidemic of structural racism in the United States. The disparities between white communities and Black and brown communities became evident in terms of access to health care, prevalence of pre-existing conditions, rates of illness and death. On Memorial Day weekend in 2020, police in Minneapolis arrested George Floyd, whom a store clerk had suspected of using a counterfeit bill. As three officers looked on, Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, despite his pleas that "I can't breathe." It was only one of innumerable examples of police brutality against Black men and women—past and present—but it was the example that digital media televised across the nation and the world on a weekend when Covid had confined many to their homes. Protests broke out across the United States and abroad on a scale not seen since the late 1960s. "I can't breathe" became a literal and figurative expression of the systemic racism of US culture, igniting the movement #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) that activists had started seven years earlier in response to Trayvon Martin's murder.

What have been the impacts of these events on my research and my service? The impact on my service felt immediate and direct, whereas the impact on my research was more indirect yet evident in retrospect. Taking on leadership—within dance studies and within Northwestern—felt different after Trump's election than before. As president of the Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS) from 2004 to 2008, I had taken an upbeat and "big tent" approach. "Dance studies has room for all" was my implicit and explicit message, a message intended in part to build consensus for the merger of SDHS and the Congress of Research in Dance, a merger that indeed took place in 2017 and created the Dance Studies Association (DSA). As local arrangements chair for DSA at Northwestern in 2019, I found that the "big

tent” approach required modification, as different constituencies within the organization requested changes to earlier protocols, including the identification of gender-neutral bathrooms and an Indigenous land acknowledgment. Working with my former student Lizzie Leopold, who later became executive director of DSA, we found ways to respond to these requests. The leadership challenge in 2019 was to build community within the new organization while acknowledging difference within its ranks.

A related shift marked my service as chair of English from my first term (2008–2011) to my final term (2019–2021). During my first term, I used a variation of the “big tent” approach, but by my final term the modified approach of building community while acknowledging difference no longer seemed to work. In an important sense, the differences among faculty and between faculty and students had so intensified during the pandemic and racial reckoning that attempts to find consensus failed. Having started my career on the tenure track during one culture war, I now was serving as department chair during another culture war. No longer one of the young rebels, I now represented the establishment. Yet I recognized the validity of the positions staked out on both sides. Whereas older faculty members felt that younger faculty members and students had not recognized the strides they had made over several decades in hiring a more diverse faculty and expanding the curriculum, younger faculty members and students felt that older faculty members mistakenly conflated “diversity” with “equity and inclusion.” Despite the impasse, structural racism was on the public agenda of the department in a way that it was not before. From conversations with colleagues, I know that my home department’s experience was not singular but replicated in many units across the academy.

In summer 2020 the Board of Directors of DSA issued its own responses to #BLM. A statement called out “the white-knuckle hold of white supremacy” in dance studies, and it was followed up by a call for contributions to a bibliography on Black dance by Black scholars.⁶ These communications reinforced my sense that a new Black Arts movement had emerged with #BLM and consolidated during the protests of summer 2020. This new movement incorporated the challenges that Black postmodernism had posed to the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s, replacing the monolithic views of Black identity that some attributed to the earlier movement with a nuanced view of the range of Black identities. Just as the legislative achievements of the civil rights era had proven insufficient to undo structural racism, a realization that had fueled the Black Power and Black Arts movement,

so the seeming achievement of Obama's election belied the intractability of white supremacy and led to #BlackLivesMatter and the revitalization of the Black Arts movement.

The DSA communications left white scholars like myself in a quandary. Should we continue our research contributing to a multiracial rescripting of cultural history, or was our engagement in that rescripting a subtle form of white supremacy? Should we redirect our research elsewhere, while focusing our teaching around readings by BIPOC scholars? In fact, the summer of 2020 was not the first time that I had asked these questions. In fall 2017, at my invitation, South African choreographer Nelisiwe Xaba had performed her work *Fremde Tänze* (Strange and Foreign Dances) at Black Arts International, a conference organized by the Black Arts Initiative at Northwestern. At a panel convened to discuss the work, a Black feminist poet and activist called out my investment in Xaba's work as "the unbearability of whiteness in relation to Black performance." Her comment prompted me to edit a special section of *TDR: The Drama Review* on Xaba, including essays from the other panelists at Black Arts International and from younger scholars from South Africa and Germany.

The print version of *TDR* with the special section on Xaba arrived in my mailbox within a few days of DSA's issuing its statement on white supremacy. At that historical moment in summer 2020, was my editing of seven essays on a Black South African artist—five by Black authors, two by white authors—an act of white supremacy? Or a responsible and appropriate use of my position as a senior scholar dedicated to writing modern and contemporary dance into the cultural record? Or both?

My essay on Xaba points toward an important way that my research has shifted over the past decade, for in addition to a new focus on the global, I have added a new focus on the local as an alternative to the frame of the nation-state. Whereas my essay on *Fremde Tänze* probes audience response in two distinct locales—Berlin and Chicago—ongoing research highlights dance histories in Chicago, my adopted hometown. Although it was clear to me within a few years of relocating from New York to Chicago that dance in the Second City had developed along different routes than dance in the metropole, it took me nearly thirty years to take on the project of probing that difference. Again, collaborative research was required, and I am now coediting with Lizzie Leopold a two-volume anthology titled *Dancing on the Third Coast: Chicago Dance Histories*.

The larger shape of the anthology is still coming into focus. But there are two dimensions of *Dancing on the Third Coast* that seem especially pertinent to this retrospective of my career. First is its timing, for the labor of commissioning essays and drafting a book proposal fell during the years of global pandemic, timing that seems more than coincidental for a scholar who had spent so much time over the preceding decade traveling abroad and now was confined to the hyperlocal sphere of her home and neighborhood. Second is the realization that to narrate the multiple, overlapping, and intersecting histories of dance in Chicago requires a shift away from the choreographic work as a central object for analysis. Through all the previous shifts in my research—from the focus on gender and nationality in *Ecstasy and the Demon* to the intersection of gender and sexuality with race in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* to the documentation of cross-viewing in my writing on Reggie Wilson and Nelisiwe Xaba—my attention centered on choreographers and their works. But to focus only on choreographic works created in Chicago seems to miss so much about what is most significant about dance in the city: the strength of local training institutions, the deployment of dance as a form of community building, the migration of dance across the social divides of race, sexuality, heritage, ability.

In this way, my current engagement with the local histories of dance in Chicago parallels my most sustained engagement with a transnational historiography, as evidenced in the last essay printed in this volume. That essay, “Mary Wigman and Asia: Between Cultural Appropriation and Transnational Encounter,” highlights not Wigman’s works, but her networks. Strikingly, my move away from the nation-state to the local and the global accompanies my move away from the choreographic work. This is not to say that the choreographic work will disappear from my inquiries, but rather to note that networks of transmission now share the stage in my research.

. . .

Starting out, I could not foresee where my research journey would take me. Looking back, I see connections between changes in my lived experience and my research that were not clear along the way. That is the power of retrospective, whether in historical writing or in autobiography. Indeed, my scholarship has autobiographical resonance, as this essay makes clear. Like the artists at the center of my research, my writing dances on the fault lines of history.

Notes

1. See Mark Franko's account of how the reading group figured in his career in *Choreographic Discourses: A Mark Franko Reader*, 263–66. Mark recalls an international symposium on dance research in Essen in 1988, organized by Selma Jeanne Cohen, as a moment of recognition for members of the reading group—he, Cynthia, Susan, and myself—as “the young Turks of dance scholarship” (265). Susan Au and Frank-Manuel Peter edited the proceedings of the conference under the title *Beyond Performance: Dance Scholarship Today* (1989).

2. Two coedited book publications are not noted here: *New German Dance Studies* (2012), coedited with Lucia Ruprecht, and *Futures of Dance Studies* (2020), coedited with Janice Ross and Rebecca Schneider. Both volumes open with coauthored introductions surveying dance studies as a field, one of my recurring interests. For solo-authored commentary on this topic, also see Manning 2008b and 2016.

3. I did consider publishing my original text, but decided that the overview would be redundant in an English-language context.

4. In addition to the Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Harris Theatre have brought international companies to town. All three presenters, and their predecessors, deserve my thanks.

5. For a more detailed account of the changes in Berlin from 1984 to 2014, see my essay “The Shifting Landscapes of Berlin” posted on the IRC site <https://www.textures-archiv.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/index.html%3Fp=4522.html>, accessed November 21, 2022.

6. See #CiteBlackDanceScholars at <https://dasa.memberclicks.net/cite-black-dance-scholars>, accessed November 21, 2022. Subsequently, a bibliography titled #CiteAsianDanceScholars has been posted.

II. Keywords: Gender and Sexuality

The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze (1997)

“The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze,” first published in Jane Desmond’s 1997 anthology *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies in Dance*, takes gender as its primary category for analysis. While never explicitly defining the term, the essay implicitly understands gender as a social construction that defines norms for women (and for men), norms that typically subordinate women and prioritize men yet are open to challenge and revision. Although this literature review does not cite Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), her concept of gender as a “stylized repetition of acts” (179) inflects my analysis of how female dancers and spectators altered social constructions of gender on- and offstage. In the words of Jack Halberstam, “gender is understood as a marker of social difference: a bodily performance of normativity and the challenges made to it” (2020, 124).¹

As the primary category for analysis, gender seemingly erases sexuality and nearly eclipses race. It’s not that I was unaware of Loie Fuller’s long-term partnership with Gabrielle Bloch, Isadora Duncan’s and Mary Wigman’s brief affairs with women, or Yvonne Rainer’s choice of a female partner after she had left dance for filmmaking. But my focus was on the gender norms that all had encountered and eschewed in their works. On the one hand, this focus demonstrates the hold of what Adrienne Rich termed “compulsory heterosexuality” and its erasure of “lesbian existence” in her 1980 critique of the writings of second-wave feminists. On the other hand, my approach resonates with the concept of a “lesbian continuum” that Rich theorized in her essay “to include a range—through each woman’s life and throughout history—of women-identified experience . . . [embracing] many more forms of primary intensity between and among women [than genital sex], including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support” (648–49). Indeed, once I turned to sexuality as a dimension of modern dance, it was Rich’s concept of a “lesbian continuum” that made sense of women’s participation in a modern dance world that had brought together women of different orientations in a collective assault on the male gaze.

Although “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze” acknowledged the racism implicit in the all-white canon under discussion, it did not center race as an analytic. Rather, the essay highlights a tension between the powerful kinesthesia of early modern dancers’ performance and the theatrical frames for their performance, frames that projected essentialized identities (Woman, Oriental Other, American) and countered the ever-changing flux of bodies in motion. This tension, I argue, stands at the center of early modern dance. In making this argument, I staked out a new position within feminist dance studies, resolving a debate between critics who celebrated the liberatory potential of the dancers’ new ways of moving and critics who believed the dancers’ traffic in essentialized identities undermined this potential.

In my subsequent research, I found the method of analyzing plot versus spectacle—to use Aristotelian terms—to be invaluable. Other scholars also found this approach useful: Sally Banes employed a similar method in her extended analysis of ballet and modern dance in *Dancing Women: Females Bodies on Stage* (1998), crediting my essay and expanding on its implications. In so doing, Banes reversed feminist critics’ dismissal of ballet, a dismissal that I took as axiomatic in “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze” and in *Ecstasy and the Demon*. As Banes wrote in relation to repertory standards such as *Giselle* or *Swan Lake*, “The plot may verbally describe a female character as weak or passive, while the physical prowess of the dancer performing the role may saturate it with agency” (9). Following Banes, subsequent scholars have explored a range of feminist approaches to ballet history, and my dismissal of the genre now seems a relic of 1980s feminist dance studies.

In academic circles it has become a truism that feminisms (plural) have replaced feminism (singular). This is not necessarily the case, however, in dance studies, a discipline that has yet to develop and apply the diversity of feminist methods and theories currently found in other fields of the humanities. To survey the recent literature on feminism and Western theater dance is to recognize the extent to which dance scholars have relied on gaze theory as a starting point for their analyses. Not that other approaches—particularly those adapted from anthropology and sociology—have been absent.² But to the extent that dance scholars have moved beyond discrete applications and evolved a dialogue on feminist methods, that dialogue centers upon gaze theory.

By “gaze theory” I mean a set of concepts that originated in film studies,³ migrated to theater studies,⁴ and now have found their way to dance studies.

From my perspective, these concepts include not only the proposition that women on film and on stage typically are represented from the perspective of the male spectator (the notion of the “male gaze” or, alternately, the voyeuristic gaze) but also the counterproposition that female spectators possess the potential to look in a way different from their male peers. How and when female spectators are enabled to look differently and thus to realize a subjectivity of their own remains a much disputed issue. In this essay I use the term “gaze theory” to refer to a broad range of literature that applies the concepts of the voyeuristic gaze and female spectatorship in diverse ways.

Surveying the literature, one notes first that feminist critics who have applied gaze theory to ballet have reached strikingly similar conclusions. With varying emphases, one scholar after another has demonstrated how candidly the form of ballet positions the spectator as voyeur.⁵ In contrast, feminist commentators who have examined modern dance have disagreed over whether and how the form engages the voyeuristic gaze. Their disagreement is particularly vehement when it comes to early modern dance, a practice innovated by female performer-choreographers in the first decades of the twentieth century. Assuming that the more contentious the conversation the more interesting, I have chosen to track the dialogue among feminist scholars of early modern dance. Yet my choice is not disinterested, for at the end of this survey of the literature I enter the conversation and propose an alternate position that may resolve the seemingly contradictory positions staked out in the debate among feminist dance scholars.

The disagreement over early modern dance centers upon two issues. The first is the degree to which successive generations of modern dancers have realized the potential of their practice to undermine the voyeuristic gaze. While some commentators credit early modern dancers with subverting the eroticization of the female dancer (Copeland 1990; Daly 1992), others reassign this achievement to later generations, in particular to postmodern dancers (Dempster 1988; Wolff 1990). The second point of contention among feminist critics is the degree to which the works of early modern dancers reflect dominant conceptions of race and nationality during the early decades of the twentieth century. This second issue has as its corollary the question of how essentialized notions of national and racial identity interact with conceptions of gender in the works of early modern dancers (Desmond 1991; Koritz 1994).

As this review of the literature will make clear, the debate among feminist critics centers upon the question of whether early modern dancers resist or reinforce dominant conceptions of gender. On the one hand, commentators note how deliberately early modern dancers dramatized female subjectivity

and authority and, in so doing, introduced the possibility of female spectatorship. On the other hand, commentators note how clearly, though perhaps unwittingly, early modern dancers dramatized essentialized notions of gender, race, and nationality that seemingly worked against their staging of female subjectivity.

It is my intention to propose an alternate position, an analysis of early modern dance that gives equal weight to the resistive and recuperative dimensions of the practice. Indeed, I would like to propose that it was precisely the double move of subverting the voyeuristic gaze while projecting essentialized notions of identity that defined the practice of early modern dance. It was this double move—along with the rejection of balletic conventions, the fashioning of idiosyncratic movement styles, and the adherence to the modernist program of highlighting the essence and independence of the medium—that made a shared tradition of the individual styles of Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan, Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman, and the early Martha Graham.

In “Founding Mothers: Duncan, Graham, Rainer, and Sexual Politics,” Roger Copeland (1990) celebrates modern and postmodern dance as the one art form where “women have been not only prominent, but also dominant” (6). Drawing on the distinction Luce Irigaray makes between the visual and the tactile, Copeland associates nineteenth-century ballet with the male choreographer’s (and, by implication, the male spectator’s) privileged looking at the ballerina. In contrast, early modern dancers, notably Isadora Duncan, “placed a much higher premium on kinetic empathy than on visual experience” (9). Thus Duncan reversed the hierarchical ordering of visibility over tactility characteristic of Western (and masculinist) thought. In so doing, Duncan danced out her own—and her generation’s—rebellion against the Puritanism of the Victorian era. This rebellion culminated in the theater of Martha Graham, whose works dramatized the conflict between Puritanism and sexual expression.

The postmodernists in turn reacted against the physicality and overt sensuality of Duncan and Graham. Copeland explains this reaction in terms of the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, which “eyed the sexual revolution with considerable suspicion, fearful that it hadn’t really liberated women, but had simply made them more available” (1990, 7). Yvonne Rainer’s 1973 film *This Is the Story of a Woman Who . . .* investigated the dynamics of the gaze, drawing an analogy between the spectator’s relationship to the performer and the man’s relationship to the woman, two years before Laura Mulvey (1975) published her seminal essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” In point-

ing out the convergence between Rainer's and Mulvey's concerns, Copeland acknowledges the divergence between Rainer's and Irigaray's positions, that is, the divergence between Rainer's suspicion of sensuality and Irigaray's celebration of physicality. The author himself does not take sides in this debate, but rather notes how postmodern dance reflects the divisions in contemporary feminist thought.

From one perspective, Copeland historicizes the relations between early modern dance, postmodern dance, and varieties of twentieth-century feminism. From another perspective, he reduces these relations according to a model that posits art as more reflective than productive of social relations. His concluding paragraph walks a fine line between contextualizing dance in its historical setting and assuming that dance *mirrors* its historical setting:

Obviously, none of the choreography I've been discussing can, or should, be reduced purely and simply to its feminist dimensions. The aesthetic and political path that leads from Duncan to Rainer . . . is long, circuitous, and complicated. Feminism is one of many influences exerted on, and reflected in, these works. But the fact remains that modern and postmodern dance are probably the only art forms in which various stages of feminist thinking are literally *embodied*. (29)

Despite his disclaimer, Copeland ultimately does view dance as a reflection of its society and thus commits what some scholars label the fallacy of reflection theory.

Like Copeland, Elizabeth Dempster (1988) presents broad contrasts between ballet, early modern dance, and postmodern dance in her essay "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances." Unlike Copeland, however, she consciously rejects the assumptions of reflection theory and premises her argument on the observation that "social and political values are not simply placed or grafted onto a neutral body-object like so many old or new clothes. On the contrary, ideologies are systematically deposited and constructed on an anatomical plane, i.e., in the neuro-musculature of the dancer's body" (1988, 37). Carrying through this claim, Dempster bases her analyses on the technical methods of the dance styles under discussion.

Her argument sets up a clear opposition between classical ballet and postmodern dance. "In the classical dance," Dempster writes, "the spectator is invited to gaze upon a distanced, ideal world where the female dancer is traced as sylph and cipher, a necessary absence" (1988, 49). In contrast, "the body, and by extension 'the feminine,' in postmodern dance is unstable, fleet-

ing, flickering, transient—a subject of multiple representations” (Dempster 1988, 48–49). It is the shifting quality of the body and subject in postmodern dance that Dempster finds so liberating.

Her attitude toward earlier modern dance styles is far more ambivalent. She recognizes that Duncan and Graham “proposed a feminist dance practice which would return the real female body to women.” Yet she also recognizes that Duncan and Graham posited a natural and interiorized body that seemed to reiterate traditional assumptions about the relatedness of women, nature, emotionality, and the body. It was Graham’s codification of her technique, she believes, that led to the cooptation of modern dance. Once “one woman’s speech [became] ‘women’s language,’” the ability of early modern dance to challenge dominant conceptions of gender was rendered null. Postmodern dance avoids such cooptation by defining itself not as a newly innovated dance vocabulary but as “an interrogation of language itself” (Dempster 1988, 51).

Although in an endnote Dempster cites Susan Foster’s (1985) distinction between resistive and reactionary modes of postmodernism, her description of postmodern dance never becomes less than celebratory. She does not address the specific example Foster gives of reactionary postmodernism—the dancing of Twyla Tharp. Indeed, her argument makes little reference to specific choreographers or specific works but remains an idealized description of postmodern dance *sui generis*. And she never resolves the question of the gender politics of early modern dance. If Martha Graham was largely responsible for the cooptation of the practice, then where does that leave Isadora Duncan? Dempster ends her discussion of Duncan without being able to decide whether to place more weight on her historical significance or her theoretical incorrectness:

Duncan’s vision of the dance of the future presumes an unproblematic return to a body of untainted naturalness and to an essential purity which she believed was fundamental to women. To recognize that Duncan’s vision is unrealizable and perhaps, from a 1980s perspective, in some degree complicit with the concept of “natural” sexual difference is not to deny the power of her rhetoric, nor to dismiss the considerable impact her dancing had upon audiences of her time. (51)

In “Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics” Janet Wolff (1990) echoes many of Dempster’s judgments. Yet Wolff does not write pri-

marily as a dance critic but rather as a feminist theorist and sociologist of art. She structures her essay as a review of recent literature on the body and proceeds to question which model of the body best serves a "feminist cultural politics" (1990, 120). With impressive erudition, she summarizes the insights of Mary Douglas, Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault, Mary Russo, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous. For Wolff's purposes, none of the available models quite work, for all presuppose either a purely constructed body or an essentialized body, and she is looking for an alternate position that acknowledges the female body "as discursively and socially constructed and as currently experienced by women" (134). This she finds in postmodern dance and in related modes of performance art, film, and visual art. Her essay concludes:

Beginning from the lived experience of women in their currently constituted bodily identities—identities which are *real* at the same time as being socially inscribed and discursively produced—feminist artists and cultural workers can engage in the challenging and exhilarating task of simultaneously affirming those identities, questioning their origins and ideological functions, and working towards a nonpatriarchal expression of gender and the body. (138)

Wolff's essay includes a cursory survey of dance history. In agreement with other feminist commentators on ballet, she sees the form "[colluding] in a discourse which constructs, in a medium which employs the body for its expression, a strangely disembodied female" (1990, 136). She then acknowledges the transgressive potential of early modern dance, in particular its "commitment to women's stories and lives" (137). But in the end, she believes, the essentialism of early modern dance, the "notion of women's natural body or women's universal essence" (137), undercut its potential to resist the patriarchal status quo. Following the lead of Elizabeth Dempster, Wolff asserts that "dance can only be subversive when it questions and exposes the construction of the body in culture" (137) and credits postmodern dance with this achievement, citing the examples of British choreographer Michael Clark and American choreographer-turned-filmmaker Yvonne Rainer.

Although she mentions Clark and Rainer by name, Wolff provides no further analysis of their works. Even more than Dempster, she relies on an abbreviated, idealized description of postmodern dance. In the end, postmodern dance becomes more of a metaphor than a practice in Wolff's account, a metaphor for the alternate position she stakes out in the debate between essentialists and antiessentialists. Moreover, her metaphorical figuring of

postmodern dance introduces a teleological narrative to her survey of dance history: that is, postmodern dance realizes the transgressive potential that early modern dance failed to achieve. A less pronounced version of this teleological narrative underlies Dempster's dance history as well.

To summarize my review of the literature thus far: the overviews penned by Copeland, Dempster, and Wolff necessarily rely on schematic arguments and broad generalizations supported by a few specific examples. Copeland's survey can be reduced to a single proposition: the evolving practice of modern dance reflects evolving notions of feminism. In other words, art reflects culture. Deliberately avoiding the reflection theory that informs Copeland's account, Dempster and Wolff risk another sort of reductive generalization. Their arguments come down to the proposition: early modern dance produced a corrupt feminism, postmodern dance an authentic feminism. In other words, contemporary theory becomes the yardstick by which the critic measures history.

It is telling that the surveys under discussion fall on opposing sides of the debate over whether early modern dance resisted or reinforced the status quo of gender. Copeland believes that early modern dance did resist dominant conceptions of womanhood during the Victorian era. On the contrary, Dempster and Wolff believe that early modern dancers' resistance to the status quo was coopted by, alternately, their codification of techniques first developed experimentally and their essentialist notions of woman and the body. There seems no middle ground between the two perspectives. The critic either endorses or dismisses the feminist aspirations of early modern dance.

The same either/or judgments inform the specific case studies of early modern dancers penned by Ann Daly, Jane Desmond, and Amy Koritz. Yet their case studies complicate the rhetorical opposition by introducing issues related to racial and national identity. Whereas Wolff and Dempster criticize early modern dance for its essentialized notions of gender, Desmond and Koritz compound the critique by pointing out how solos choreographed by Ruth St. Denis and Maud Allan, respectively, essentialized not only gender but also race and nationality. In contrast to Desmond and Koritz, Daly downplays the national self-fashioning implicit in the dancing of Isadora Duncan, focusing instead on issues surrounding the voyeuristic gaze. Yet none of the authors extends her case study to the practice of early modern dance as a whole. And so the question remains of how their insights can be applied to understanding the larger trajectory of early modern dance from Loie Fuller to Martha Graham.

Ann Daly boldly challenges the applicability of gaze theory to Isadora Duncan's dancing in her essay "Dance History and Feminist Theory: Reconsidering Isadora Duncan and the Male Gaze." Writing an implicit rebuttal to the position staked out by Wolff and Dempster, Daly remarks:

The male gaze theory forces the feminist dance scholar into a no-win situation that turns on an exceedingly unproductive "succeed or fail" criterion. We expect the choreographer to topple a power structure that we have theorized as monolithic. The dancer or choreographer under consideration will always be condemned as a reinforcement of the patriarchal status quo, despite any transgressive behavior, because, by definition, that which is communicated arises from within the fabric of culture, that is to say, within patriarchy. (1992, 243)

As a way out of, or around, this "no-win situation" Daly focuses on the kinesthetic quality of Duncan's dancing, building on Julia Kristeva's notion of the chora as the realm of the "ineffable." In dance terms, Duncan "rendered [the ineffable] intelligible" by "choreographing the drama of the kinesthetic—the sense of intentionality communicated through activated weight, the attentiveness signaled through spatial sensitivity, and the impression of decisiveness or indecisiveness gained through the manipulation of time" (1992, 252). In so doing Duncan projected a "dancing subject-in-process . . . constantly reimagining herself" (254). Daly concludes: "Dance was no longer about the spectacular display of the legs for entertainment's sake; it was about the self's inner impulses made manifest through the rhythmic, dynamic expression of the whole body" (255). Focusing on Duncan's performances during her first American tours from 1908 to 1911, Daly argues that Duncan did not perform Woman but rather staged her own complex subjectivity. In other words, the kinesthetic power of Duncan's dancing countered not only the voyeuristic gaze but also the essentialism that commentators such as Dempster and Wolff have perceived in the form.

Daly, however, does acknowledge that American spectators of Duncan's early tours did generalize her performances of the "subject-in-process" in national terms. Noting that this was a time "when America was obsessed with finding for itself a national selfhood, a cultural identity, and a means of individual self-expression" (1992, 254), Daly believes that Duncan's American audiences projected their own self-fashioning onto her performances. In the eyes of progressive liberals, Duncan "embodied an optimistic belief in the

reformability of the social and political system,” while in the eyes of radicals, the dancer “enacted a paradigm of complete social rupture” (247). Limiting her comments to the early phase of Duncan’s career, Daly presents the association between Duncan’s dancing and the fashioning of an American identity in terms that are more celebratory than critical.⁶

In contrast to Daly’s attitude toward Duncan, Jane Desmond and Amy Koritz harshly judge Ruth St. Denis’s and Maud Allan’s engagement with agendas of racial and national self-fashioning. Drawing on the theorization of orientalism by Edward Said and others, as well as on feminist theory, Desmond and Koritz interpret solos by St. Denis and Allan, respectively, and point out how transparently the two choreographers staged Western stereotypes of the East. Neither critic sees much redeeming value in such thoroughgoing assent to orientalism.

In “Dancing Out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis’s ‘Radha’ of 1906,” Jane Desmond (1991) reads St. Denis’s solo as a multilayered performance text. Her analysis turns on the solo’s framing of female sensuality within a narrative context of renunciation and transcendence, the evocation of Indian temple dancing suggested by the dance’s title. Desmond sees the juxtaposition of female sensuality and representational pretext working in a complicated way, both subverting and reinforcing strictures on the sexuality of middle-class white women while projecting the Oriental Other as a figure of dangerous and excessive sexuality and redemptive spirituality. Yet despite her acknowledgment of the complexity of *Radha*, Desmond in the end views the solo as far more recuperative than resistant. Indeed, her concluding remarks call attention to the “invisible links that bind racism, sexism, and cultural imperialism so tightly together” (1991, 49), in St. Denis’s oeuvre and in society at large.

Amy Koritz (1994) extends Desmond’s argument about how early modern dance conflated the staging of Woman and Oriental in her essay “Dancing the Orient for England: Maud Allan’s *The Vision of Salome*.” To a greater degree than Desmond, Koritz explores the potential disjunction between the Western woman as performer and the Oriental Other as subject matter. Koritz first notes how Allan displaced the threat of her assertive female sexuality onto her representation of an Oriental woman. But Allan could not afford to identify herself wholly with an Oriental Other. Rather, she “made the East transparent to the West by representing its essence” (1994, 68), thus simultaneously embodying and distancing herself from her performance of the spiritual and sensual Oriental. Yet Allan’s embodiment of the essence

of the East also circled around and reinforced her staging of the Western women's separate sphere, for her dance reaffirmed "the spiritual nature of (middle-class) womanhood" (70). Thus her solo resolved the potential disjunction between orientalism and the ideology of separate spheres, as "the dark continents of Western femininity and Orientalism [met] in Allan's depiction of Salome" (68).

Koritz surmises that the reason why *The Vision of Salome* enjoyed such popularity among English audiences when Allan appeared at the Palace Theatre in 1908 was that the dance "both [calmed] and [embodied] anxieties about female power and sexuality being raised by the suffrage movement and the incursion of middle-class women into the work force. [The dance] both [calmed] and [embodied] anxieties about English knowledge and imperial domination of the East" (Koritz 1994, 76). Although Koritz casts her analysis of early modern dance in less judgmental terms than does Desmond, she nonetheless concurs with Desmond's conclusion that *The Vision of Salome*, like *Radha*, functioned to contain potential threats to the social order.

What both Koritz and Desmond overlook, however, is the kinesthetic dimension of Allan's and St. Denis's performances, a dimension that surely informed their dancing as well as Duncan's. Like Duncan, both Allan and St. Denis innovated their own movement vocabularies that drew on methods of physical culture—aesthetic gymnastics and Delsartism—widely practiced among middle-class women of the time. Unlike spectators of nineteenth-century ballet, whether male or female, who rarely had direct experience of the movement techniques presented onstage, many female spectators of early modern dance did have such direct experience, which surely intensified their kinesthetic response to the performances they witnessed. Although few women wrote reviews of early modern dance, more than a few recorded their enthusiasm in letters and memoirs, and these sources suggest that they viewed the kinesthetic power of early modern dance as a metaphor for women's heightened social mobility and sense of possibility. It may well be the case that the representational frames of orientalism were less central to the responses of contemporary female spectators than they were to the responses of male reviewers of the time.

Neither Daly, Desmond, nor Koritz extends her argument to the practice of early modern dance as a whole. But if they did, their arguments would fall on opposing sides of the same rhetorical axis that divides Copeland from Dempster and Wolff. Like Copeland, Daly focuses on the resistive potential of early modern dance. Like Dempster and Wolff, Desmond and Koritz draw

attention to the recuperation of the subversive potential of the practice. It seems that pursuing the debate over early modern dance in terms of whether the practice transgressed or upheld dominant conceptions of race, gender, and nationality results in a dead end comparable to the “no-win situation” Daly posits as a consequence of applying gaze theory to dance.

As a way around this impasse, I propose an alternate position that accepts the validity of Daly’s argument as well as Desmond’s and Koritz’s and extends the implication of their case studies to the practice of early modern dance as a whole. That is, I would like to pay as much attention to the kinesthesia (Daly’s focus) as to the representational frames (Desmond’s and Koritz’s focus) of early modern dance. To do so is to recognize a complexity in the formal structure of early modern dance that traced a distinct ideological profile, the dismantling of the voyeuristic gaze and the reliance on essentialized notions of identity. And it was this ideological profile that marked the paradoxical social function of the form, its ability to contest and to conform at the same time.

In my view, it was the kinesthesia of early modern dance that allowed for its choreographic dismantling of the voyeuristic gaze and its address to the female spectator. Here I would like to extend Daly’s analysis and suggest that not only Duncan’s dancing but also the dancing of her contemporaries projected a kinesthetic power that challenged male viewers to see the female dancer as an expressive subject rather than as an erotic object. At the same time the kinesthesia of early modern dance engaged female viewers in ways that the spectacle of late nineteenth-century ballet did not. In fact, since many female spectators had experienced the same movement techniques that the dancers transformed in performance—Delsartism and aesthetic gymnastics—their kinesthetic response was particularly intense and led more than a few to identify the dancer’s flow of bodily motion as reflective of their own. As Mabel Dodge Luhan once wrote about her experience of seeing Isadora Duncan: “It seemed to me I recognized what she did in the dance, and that it was like my own daily, nightly return to the Source” ([1936] 1985, 319–320).

Whereas the kinesthesia of early modern dance challenged the voyeuristic gaze, its representational frames deployed essentialized images of identity, images of a universalized Woman or generalized ethnic or national type. Here I would like to extend Desmond’s and Koritz’s analysis and suggest that just as the Oriental frames of St. Denis’s and Allan’s dancing countered the performance of their individual subjectivities, so too did the representational frames employed by their contemporaries. Indeed, I would like to suggest that the kinesthesia and representational frames of early modern dance often

worked at cross-purposes. Or perhaps more accurately, the juxtaposition of individualized kinesthetic subjectivity and generalized representational type created a dynamic tension underlying the form of early modern dance, a tension that grounded the paradoxical social function of the form. Whereas the representational frames reiterated and updated pre-existent images of gender and ethnicity, the kinesthetic dimension introduced a new image of the female body in motion that was without precedent.

Stated in these terms, my analysis is necessarily schematic. What is required now is a precise comparison of how different dancers inflected the dynamic tension between kinesthetic flow and representational frame, between undermining the voyeuristic gaze and deploying essentialized images of identity, between resisting and reinscribing dominant cultural values. Although this is not the place to detail such a comparison, it does seem an appropriate occasion to call upon dance scholars to acknowledge and confront the tensions and paradoxes of early modern dance. For until we do so, we will remain limited in our ability to write early modern dance into the history of a “feminist cultural politics.” And that is where the practice clearly, if complicatedly, belongs.

Notes

1. Over the last decade the emergence of a range of non-binary and transgender identities, and the development of trans theory, has made me realize the limitations of the biosocial model. In my teaching, but not (yet) in my writing, I have started to think about what trans theory might bring to dance studies, most especially to the interpretation of works which I and others have described as subverting gender. Among the choreographers discussed in *Dancing on the Fault Lines of History*, Vaslav Nijinsky, Mary Wigman, Harald Kreutzberg, Hijikata Tatsumi, Ohno Kazuo, and Mark Morris invite readings informed by trans theory. See Jack Halberstam (2018) for an overview of trans theory and Doran George (2017) for an application to dance studies.

2. See, for example, Judith Lynne Hanna (1988) and Helen Thomas (1993).

3. See Mary Ann Doane (1982, 1988). See also Laura Mulvey (1975, 1981) and E. Ann Kaplan (1983).

4. See Sue-Ellen Case (1988) and Jill Dolan (1991).

5. See Evan Alderson (1987); Ann Daly (1987a, 1987b). See also Lynn Garafola (1985/1986).

6. In a book published after this essay was written, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*, Ann Daly (1995) does carry her discussion into the later phases of Duncan's career and confronts the racism of Duncan's 1927 essay, “I See America Dancing.” As Daly writes, Duncan “effectively [constructed] the genre of American modern dance as whiteness” (219).

Looking from a Different Place (2001)

“Looking from a Different Place,” first published in Jane Desmond’s 2001 anthology *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On & Off the Stage*, intentionally departs from the emphasis on gender in “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze.” Acknowledging the whiteness of the modern dance canon to a greater extent than did the earlier essay, “Looking from a Different Place” centers sexuality. Drawing from both gay social history, notably George Chauncey’s magisterial *Gay New York* (1994), and from early articulations of queer theory, namely Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) and Michael Warner (1993), this thought piece focuses on gay or queer male spectatorship of modern dance from Ted Shawn to Matthew Bourne, arguing that gay spectators may well recognize references to same-sex desire that escape the notice of heteronormative spectators. Scripted as a response to two other essays in Desmond’s anthology—Julia Foulkes’ “Dance Is for American Men” and Susan Foster’s “Closets Full of Dances”—the thought piece draws evidence from both texts.

In making its argument, “Looking from a Different Place” develops a model of spectatorship that became central to my research and that I later termed “cross-viewing,” borrowing and adapting the concept from Tirza True Latimer (1998, 1999a). Strikingly, Latimer had deployed the term to probe the reception of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes from 1909 to 1929, when the company cultivated gay spectators even while reasserting dominant norms that reassured heteronormative spectators.¹ In a parallel move, I first articulated my model of cross-viewing in relation to sexuality. In the end, however, I applied the model to a broader range of differences among spectators, including differences in class, race, and nationality, as is evidenced in subsequent essays reprinted in this volume and in my second monograph, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b).

In the history of the field, it is noteworthy that the intense focus on female dancers in feminist dance studies of the 1980s and early 1990s, as evidenced in the literature surveyed in “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze,” gave way in the late 1990s to an equally intense focus on male dancers’ (homo)sexuality, as is evident in this essay. Jane Desmond

acknowledges as much in her introduction to *Dancing Desires*, where she notes the paucity of research on women choreographers, dancers, and spectators in her anthology, the first anthology dedicated to creating a bridge between dance studies and sexuality studies. She suggests that the invisibility of same-sex desire between women reflects the dynamics of spectacle in modern Western culture: "The feminization of spectacle, of putting oneself on display (without the cover of sport's masculinity authorizing violence), feminizes male dancers (thus enabling a representation of homosexuality as the 'specter' come true?), but female dancers are already feminized, already positioned as spectacle" (18). Imagining how dancers and scholars might combat this invisibility, Desmond proposes a range of possible strategies and approaches, including the proposition that "queerness often resides in reception" (23).² That is exactly the point I make in "Looking from a Different Place," which ends by interrogating my own spectatorship of a duet between two women.

I had seen the duet at a dance studies conference in 1998, where I presented a talk on lesbian spectatorship on a panel shared with Susan Foster and Tirza True Latimer.³ Subsequently, I published the talk in German translation (1999) and raised questions about lesbian spectatorship in the introduction to the second edition of *Ecstasy and the Demon* (2006), acknowledging that Wigman likely had an affair with her close associate Berthe Trümpy during the early years of her career. In fact, the 2006 introduction surveyed what was then known about gay and lesbian dancers in Germany between the two world wars and posed a number of questions for further research.

Strikingly, I have never managed to finish and publish the conference talk in English, despite several efforts to do so, including for the present volume. Why is that the case? Mostly because the responses of the (elite white) women who wrote about Duncan contradicted the model of cross-viewing that informed much of my scholarship after the late 1990s. For nearly all the women whose writings I collected and analyzed for my uncompleted essay, whatever their sexual orientation, found Duncan's dancing exhilarating in its freeing of their body and mind. Hence my borrowing and adaptation of Adrienne Rich's notion of the lesbian continuum in my concept of the continuum of interpretation, which I detail in an extended endnote to "Looking from a Different Place" and in the revision of the essay "Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence" in this volume. This concept remains a working hypothesis, awaiting further research on women watching women dancing.

Is it possible to historicize and theorize gay and lesbian spectatorship of American modern dance? That is, do gay and lesbian viewers experience modern dance in distinctly different ways from straight viewers? If so, how do we go about recovering the difference, given that most published reviews record responses as perceived from dominant social locations and omit responses as perceived from alternate social locations? If we manage to recover differences between queer and straight spectatorship, can we avoid essentializing gay and lesbian subjects? Do the dynamics of lesbian spectatorship parallel or diverge from the dynamics of gay spectatorship? And what are the implications of theorizing “queer spectatorship” as opposed to “gay and lesbian spectatorship”? Most importantly, why does the inquiry matter?

In order to think through these questions, I engage with two essays that Jane Desmond commissioned for her edited anthology, *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On & Off the Stage* (2001): Julia Foulkes’s “Dance Is for American Men: Ted Shawn and the Intersection of Gender, Sexuality, and Nationalism in the 1930s” and Susan Foster’s “Closets Full of Dances: Modern Dance’s Performance of Masculinity and Sexuality.” Read together, the two essays illuminate gay spectatorship of Ted Shawn’s dances and raise provocative questions about the possibilities for gay (queer?) spectatorship of modern dance from 1930 to the present. Although this essay cannot answer all the questions enumerated above, perhaps I can offer starting points for inquiry.

Although neither Foster nor Foulkes focuses on spectatorship, both provide evidence for a difference between gay and straight spectatorship of performances by Shawn and His Men Dancers. Whereas most newspaper reviews interpreted the dances in the heterosexist terms promulgated by Shawn, published memoirs and unpublished letters demonstrate that some gay viewers interpreted the dances in homophile terms. Foster quotes Barton Mumaw’s memoir, which recalls “a more subtle response to our work by young men . . . pretending a fascination with our streamlined Desoto in an attempt to disguise their real interest” (quoted in Foster 2001, 168). Thus, she notes, “some audience members saw straight past Shawn’s manly ideal to the possibility of male homosexual love celebrated and honored in the noble forms of the dance” (Foster 2001, 168). Both Foster and Foulkes rightly connect this idealization of homosexual love to the writings of Havelock Ellis that so influenced Shawn.

From today’s perspective, it is clear that the anonymous young men Mumaw describes, as well as Shawn’s supporters (Lucien Price, Walter Terry, John Lindquist), whom Foulkes describes, recognized a homoerotic subtext in his choreography. In fact, the subtext appears so clear to our vision—

whether looking at photographs, watching old films, or seeing revivals of the work in performance—that we wonder how anyone in the 1930s could have missed it. Yet Foster and Foulkes convince us that in the historical context of the Depression and the approach of world war, Shawn's choreographic imagery carried multiple levels of meaning—in Julia Foulkes's words—"as an example of America's potency, as a sign of essential differences between men and women, and as an ideal of homosexual love between men" (2001, 139). In other words, Foster's and Foulkes's essays suggest that some gay spectators saw Shawn's Men Dancers differently than did many straight spectators.⁴

Note the qualifying terms *some* and *many*. I am not positing that all gay spectators interpreted Shawn's choreography in one way and all straight spectators in another way. On the contrary: I am assuming that all levels of meaning were available to all spectators in the 1930s and that individual spectators perceived some levels as more resonant than others, depending on a myriad of influences, most of which are beyond the reach of historical research. It is certainly likely that many gay spectators recognized the homophobic frame as well as the homoerotic subtext in the choreography. It is equally plausible that at least some straight spectators recognized the subtext as well as the frame. I am developing a model of spectatorship that posits performance as an arena within which spectators may consider perspectives other than those conditioned by their social identities outside the theater, as a cultural space where spectators negotiate their simultaneous habitation of multiple and overlapping social formations.

For gay spectators of American modern dance, this means straddling the boundaries between gay subculture, ethnic/racial/immigrant subcultures, and/or class formations. Indeed, the project of American modern dance involves an interplay of diverse subcultures, dominant cultures, and the dissident middle class, the class fraction within which modern dancers stage their opposition not only to middle-class norms but also to upper-class privilege. My terminology comes from Raymond Williams (1982) via Alan Sinfield (1992, 1994). Understanding artistic production and reception as a set of social relations, Williams and Sinfield analyze twentieth-century culture in terms of dominant cultures in the plural (established elites, mass media, middle-class norms), dissident middle-class cultures (catalyst for many developments conventionally designated "high art"), and subcultures (social formations premised on collective experiences of systematic discrimination, common life choices, and/or shared tactics for maneuvering within dominant cultures).

It goes without saying that a comprehensive history of spectatorship is impossible. Nevertheless, one can generalize from fragmentary evidence

documenting the responses of individual spectators and argue for the probability of divergent spectatorial responses from divergent social locations, social locations defined in terms of dominant and dissident cultures and subcultures. Thus juxtaposing evidence of spectatorial response gleaned from Mumaw's memoir, Lucien Price's unpublished letters, John Lindquist's photographs, and the reviews pasted in Shawn's scrapbooks demonstrates a divergence in views of Shawn's Men Dancers from the social location of gay subculture and from the social location of dominant culture.

In one sense, the "changing epistemology" of the closet that Foster traces so elegantly through modern dance accords with changing relations between gay subculture, dissident middle-class culture, and dominant cultures. As these relations change over time, so gay spectatorship of American modern dance changes over time. Here I am reading Foster's essay against itself. Although Foster acknowledges that closeting did not preclude gay spectatorship, her argument emphasizes parallels between choreographic strategies for closeting sexuality and written discourses on homosexuality (Shawn and Havelock Ellis, Merce Cunningham and the Kinsey Report, Mangrove and Guy Hocquenghem, Matthew Bourne and queer theory). Foregrounding what she backgrounds, I would argue that the "changing epistemology" of the closet resulted in changing forms of gay spectatorship.

My reversal of emphasis reflects a somewhat different conceptualization of the closet from Foster's. Although Foster does not specifically cite Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Foster's contention that "modern dance has staged with consummate clarity the embodied version of the closet's changing epistemology" (2001, 151) clearly alludes to Sedgwick's work. Sedgwick challenges progress narratives of gay and lesbian history and asserts that "the reign of the telling secret was scarcely overturned with Stonewall" (1990, 67). On the contrary, Sedgwick believes and Foster reaffirms, "the epistemology of the closet has given an overarching consistency to gay culture and identity throughout this century" (Sedgwick 1990, 68). Although I do not dispute the validity of this claim, I want to pay more attention than do Sedgwick and Foster to "consequential change" over time "around and outside the closet" (Sedgwick 1990, 68). In so doing, I am following the lead of George Chauncey, who scrutinizes when and how the term *closet* came to characterize gay lives (not until the 1960s) and argues that earlier constructions of gay life reveal patterns that are distorted by post-Stonewall understandings.

Chauncey's *Gay New York* (1994) illuminates the shifting relations between gay subculture and other social formations during the 1930s, when Shawn

and His Men Dancers were crisscrossing the United States. In Chauncey's periodization, the 1930s was a decade of transition, when the gay world that had flourished in the public sphere since the 1890s gave way to the era of the closet, when state legislation pushed homosexuality out of the public sphere. In other words, the boundaries between gay subculture and dominant and dissident cultures were more permeable before the 1930s than after. Shawn and His Men Dancers both embodied the assumptions of the gay world and participated in the transition from the gay world to the closet.

As Chauncey argues, from the 1890s through the 1930s the gay world understood male sexuality in terms of gendered personae, distinguishing "fairies"—overtly effeminate men who were assumed to solicit male sexual partners—from "normal men"—men who abided by social norms of masculinity irrespective of whether their sexual partners were male or female. This conceptualization of sexuality makes sense of most reviews of Shawn's Men Dancers, as exemplified by the passage that both Foster and Foulkes quote: "vigor limned by restraint . . . a hale and rugged lyricism . . . which of these qualities apparent in Shawn's work can be called effeminate?" (quoted in Foster 2001, 166; quoted in Foulkes 2001, 125). Before and into the 1930s, if a gesture did not read as effeminate, it read as manly.

Not until the 1930s, Chauncey argues, did state legislation construct a closet around gay subculture. This legislation, prompted partly by the social crisis brought about by the Depression, accompanied a shift from understanding sexuality in terms of gendered personae to understanding sexuality in terms of sexual object choice, the conceptualization that continued through the twentieth century. As Foulkes suggests, performances by the Men Dancers participated in the transition from Chauncey's gay world to the era of the closet: Shawn's "manly men may have conformed to heterosexual norms, but they were challenging common homosexual images of sissies. And, in this way, Shawn helped change the definition of homosexuality from gender inversion to same-sex object choice, through visual display of the male body itself" (Foulkes 2001, 129–30). Beginning in the 1930s and thereafter, gayness did not depend on the performance of gesture but on the choice of a sexual partner.

As Chauncey and other historians have shown, relations between gay subculture and other social formations changed significantly after 1940. During World War II the US military for the first time declared homosexuality grounds for discharge, yet officers made exceptions for innumerable soldiers considered essential to the war effort. Thus many gay soldiers experienced what Allan Bérubé (1990) has characterized in his oral history as "coming out

under fire.” Yet as soon as the war was won, the military enforced the official policy and dismissed many gay soldiers. After the war many dishonorably discharged gay (and lesbian) veterans settled in San Francisco, where they founded the first gay rights organizations. At the same time state harassment of gay men intensified, as the dominant culture conflated “communists and queers” as interrelated threats to the “American way of life” (D’Emilio 1983; Savran 1992; Corber 1997).

These changes in turn occasioned changes in gay spectatorship of American modern dance, which Foster illuminates through her discussion of Merce Cunningham. As her essay makes clear, Cunningham’s formalist aesthetic both closeted *and* signaled his homosexuality. On the one hand, “Cunningham neutralized all masculine, feminine, and sexual connotations by focusing on space, time, and motion” (Foster 2001, 174). Yet within his dances Cunningham “circulated as the odd man out” (177), allowing “any who would look for it [to] find Cunningham’s difference” (178). At the same time Cunningham’s choreography staged whiteness as “an unmarked and unchallenged category” (175), thus extending the racism that also informed Shawn’s dancing, as both Foulkes and Foster acknowledge.

In many ways Mangrove, an all-male collective of contact improvisers, encountered radically different conditions for production and reception than did Cunningham. Based in San Francisco from 1975 to 1980, Mangrove staged a new image for the male dancer—combining “astonishing physical daring with a sensuous vulnerability” (Foster 2001, 184)—in the years between the emergence of the Gay Liberation Front and the onset of the AIDS crisis. Foster reads Mangrove’s performances as a variation of the racial and sexual politics of Shawn and Cunningham, for the company presented the “nonerogenized body” (183) within the frame of whiteness, a nonerogenized body that exuded an overall sensuality. The group’s “polymorphous sensuality” (184), Foster believes, staged a closeted version of Guy Hocquenghem’s 1972 manifesto, *Homosexual Desire*, which celebrated anal sexuality and critiqued phallic sexuality.

Foster does not include evidence of alternate spectatorship of Mangrove, as she does in her discussions of Shawn and Cunningham. Because I have no information about the group other than what she provides, I cannot argue decisively for gay spectatorship of the group’s work. Nonetheless, I wonder whether evidence does exist for spectatorship from subcultural social locations (reviews in the gay press?) and whether gay spectators might have read the imagery of the male-male duets performed by Mangrove in the revolutionary terms proposed by Hocquenghem. In other words, as with Shawn

and Cunningham, might choreographic strategies that Foster reads as attempts at closeting homosexuality also be read as attempts at addressing gay spectators?

Foster opens and closes her essay with a discussion of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*. In the end, she concludes, the work reveals "heteronormative assumptions about gay life" and "conveys neither a gay nor a feminist politics." Thus, she believes, Bourne's *Swan Lake* exemplifies the problematic social agenda that Sue-Ellen Case (1996), among others, has identified with queer theory. Although I am swayed, I am not convinced by Foster's argument. Granted, the mainstream press omitted mention of the work's gay thematics. (But the mainstream press never acknowledged the homoeroticism of Shawn's choreography, either.) Granted, the narrative frame does include elements of heteronormativity. (But so did the choreographic frames for Shawn's choreography.) Once again I would ask whether divergent readings are possible from the social locations of dominant culture and of gay subculture. Foster's analysis cannily accounts for the mainstream success of Bourne's work, but does her analysis also account for the passionate response accorded the work by gay spectators of my acquaintance?

That I am not fully persuaded by Foster's reading of Bourne's *Swan Lake* perhaps reflects a difference in our views of queer theory. Foster is suspicious of the "pseudocoalition" that queer theory promises and that Bourne's swans embody, for although both promise "inclusion of all minoritized groups," both become advocates for "white middle-class gay men" (2001, 196). Moreover, both queer theory and Bourne's swans remain uncritical of their commodification by global capitalism. These insights are beyond dispute, as Foster acutely pinpoints limitations in contemporary dance politics and cultural politics. Yet, however much I respect (and in many ways share) Foster's perspective, I have found queer theory useful for quite different reasons.

Skeptics might say that queer theory's "defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual" allows me and many other straight academics to work in gay and lesbian studies. Although it is true that queer theory's "resistance to regimes of the normal" (Warner 1993, xxvi) has enabled me to ask questions I did not feel qualified to ask before, it is also true that queer theory has prompted me to interrogate my own sexuality in a way that I had not before. Moreover, queer theory contributes to the model of spectatorship I am developing, for it reminds me how complex is the interplay between subjectivities and social identities.

My model of spectatorship derives from my own theater going as well as from my historical research. Although my life experiences generally conform

to the norms of dominant culture, these norms do not fully circumscribe my experience in the theater. On the contrary, I go to modern dance in part to encounter perspectives other than those conditioned by my social identity outside the theater. Seeing Mark Morris Dance Group or Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company or Urban Bush Women, I glimpse what the world might look like from the perspectives of gay subculture and/or African American subculture. This kind of spectatorship surely reflects my privilege in the social order, for I perceive myself as enlarged rather than as erased by the choreographic imagination of modern dance. Other viewers may well have the opposite experience, feeling excluded by the elitism of the form or its persistent binary of whiteness and Blackness or its sexual and gender politics. Perhaps it is only from a position of privilege that I may posit that spectators read across the diverse social locations they inhabit.

In *Gay and After* Alan Sinfield speculates on the effect of post-Stonewall gay and lesbian subcultures on social and sexual practices at large:

What has occurred, I suspect, is that while many people who once would have been married and/or covert are now leading an openly gay or lesbian life, a further cohort that would once have scarcely allowed themselves fantasies is now having covert same-sex experience. And, beyond that, almost certainly, there are people who are thinking about it, but as yet hardly doing anything. The relative legitimation that the lesbian and gay movement has achieved has allowed everyone to move one space over. (1998, 13)

Participating in post-Stonewall dance culture, reading in gay and lesbian studies and queer theory, and researching multiple spectators of American modern dance have allowed me to move one space over. When I first became serious about dance viewing in the 1970s, I lived in a world of compulsory heterosexuality. Being straight did not seem like a choice but like a given, both the ideal and the default option. Now I can look back and recognize my heterosexuality as a choice and discern other desires not pursued.

Recently, while watching a female duet at a concert sponsored by a university dance department, I experienced a startling shift in perception. It was the sort of duet I had seen innumerable times before: two young female dancers exploring a range of movement qualities and spatial relations. Earlier I might have read their interaction as suggestive of close friends, but that level of meaning would have seemed less important than the formal structure of the choreography. Now, all of a sudden, I read the two young women as lovers and their movements as suggestive of same-sex intimacy and erotic desire.

Why did this duet look so different to me now? Had this alternate level of meaning been present before but had I simply overlooked it? If so, what had revealed this meaning to me now? The hours I had spent during the previous few months recovering the passionate responses of lesbian viewers to the dancing of Isadora Duncan? (The concert took place at an annual meeting of the Society of Dance History Scholars [SDHS], where I was presenting a paper on lesbian spectatorship of American modern dance.) Had my historical research made me see differently than I had before, as if in sympathy with the lesbian spectators of Isadora Duncan? Or had introspection—memories and fantasies stirred by my research—made me see differently? Was I catching a glimpse of a response from a social location distant from my own? Or on a continuum with my own? Was I experiencing what might be termed “queer spectatorship,” a response contrary to “regimes of the normal”?⁵

Given the complications of any individual act of spectatorship, it perhaps seems foolhardy to historicize and theorize the process. Yet the lived complexity of spectatorship compels my attempt to fathom what modern dance might have meant to other watchers in other times and other places.

Notes

1. Latimer in turn had borrowed and adapted the term from Patricia Simons (1994), who had used the term off-handedly to describe how “any woman [in the Italian Renaissance] daring enough to recognize her own sexual orientation outside the norm might also have surreptitiously enjoyed some images of sensual women produced for heterosexual men, ‘cross-viewing’ as it were” (83). Latimer also used the term “cross-viewing” sparingly and as a synonym with “subcultural cues,” “subtexts,” “homosexually coded,” “double entendre,” and “alternative channels.”

2. Essays in Clare Croft’s edited anthology, *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (2017), realize many of the strategies that Desmond proposes. In fact, the paucity of women artists in Desmond’s anthology was one starting point for Croft’s curation and editorial work, which significantly expands attention to women and to artists of color.

3. See Foster (1999) and Latimer (1999b) for their published talks. I did not publish my talk in the conference proceedings, intending to expand and revise its argument.

4. In 2020 Paul Scolieri published *Ted Shawn: His Life, Writings, and Dances*, a critical study that “[elucidated] a hitherto untold story about the ways that Shawn’s sexual identity informed his principles and practices of dance” (2), arguing that homophobia had distorted earlier biographies.

5. My paper for SDHS, titled “Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and Lesbian Spectatorship,” posited that a “continuum of interpretation” characterized the intense responses of straight women and lesbian spectators to the dancing of Isadora Duncan. Close readings of responses by Edith Wharton, Harriet Monroe, Charlotte Per-

kins Gilman, Eva Palmer Sikelianos, Gertrude Stein, Eva Le Gallienne, Mabel Dodge Luhan, May Sarton, Janet Flanner, and Mercedes de Acosta (with whom Duncan had a brief affair near the end of her life) do not demonstrate a divide between “lesbian” and “straight feminist” responses. (Nor do these women’s lived experiences demonstrate this divide, for while some focused their erotic and domestic lives exclusively around women or men, several had serious relationships with both men and women.) Rather, these women described similarly impassioned responses to seeing Duncan dancing. As Eva Palmer—a friend of Gertrude Stein, lover of Natalie Barney, and later wife of Angelos Sikelianos—recalled decades later: “We all saw her . . . and we all felt that the shackles of the world were loosened, that liberation was ahead of us” (1993, 181). Hence the responses of elite white women to Duncan plot a “continuum of interpretation”—a term adapted from Adrienne Rich’s notion of a “lesbian continuum” in women’s lives—rather than the double-coding and subtexting that characterize gay male responses to Ted Shawn.

Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence (2015)

“Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence” started as a lecture at a 2010 conference held at Northwestern on Greek Drama in America and was revised for publication in the *Oxford Handbook on Greek Drama in the Americas* (2015b). The colleague who convened the conference also coedited the *Oxford Handbook*, and without her and other colleagues’ engagement in classical reception studies, I would never have entered the conversation between dance studies and classics. Indeed, the same year the conference was held, Fiona Macintosh published an edited anthology, *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*, which provides an ideal frame for my argument.

In many ways, “Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence” integrates the insights of “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze” and “Looking from a Different Place,” demonstrating how works by Isadora Duncan, Vaslav Nijinsky, George Balanchine, Martha Graham, and Mark Morris challenge normative images of gender while also presenting dissident images of sexuality. After Stonewall, these dissident images of sexuality were legible to nearly all viewers, whereas before Stonewall, they were often “cloaked,” a term I use rather than “closeted” to suggest the complex dynamics of spectatorship, the possibility for the double-coding of queer readings before Stonewall and for the continuum of interpretation among female spectators.

Implicit, but not explicit, in the essay is the way the whiteness of the dance canon reinforced choreographers’ engagement with the classics. Or perhaps the influence moved in the opposite direction: choreographers of ballet and modern dance looked to the classics to support their bids to remake theatrical dance as a high art, that is, a white art. From this perspective, it would be fascinating to compare the strategies that artists of color deployed in choreographing the classics—for example, José Limón, Alvin Ailey, and Bill T. Jones—to the strategies deployed by the white artists surveyed in this essay.

With the 2010 publication of *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*, editor Fiona Macintosh initiated a rich dialogue between classical reception studies and dance studies. Bringing together more than twenty essays by classicists, dance scholars, and dance practitioners, Macintosh demonstrates the significance of theatrical dance in Europe, Britain, and the United States for “classical performance reception” from the seventeenth through the early twenty-first centuries. The collected essays—and the invaluable list of premiere dates for the ninety dances discussed in the volume—organize the classical reception of Western theatrical dance into two periods: first the transition from court entertainment to the public stage in Europe and Britain, a move that culminates with the *ballet d'action* of Jean-Georges Noverre in the late eighteenth century, “by which time,” Macintosh writes, “ballet had acquired sufficient status to become a high cultural art form *sui generis*: and it had done so with the ancient example as both guide and legitimizing authority.” After a hiatus of nearly a century in the list of works, the twentieth century inaugurates a second period of “fascination with ancient dance . . . especially as a means of liberating the body and soul from the repressive forces of nature and society and in turn from the strictures of balletic tradition itself” (Macintosh 2010b, 2).

Although Macintosh’s introduction to *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World* masterfully balances the two periods, the collected essays devote far more attention to the twentieth century. Given the predominance of the last century as a research focus in dance studies, this is not surprising. Taken together, the essays demonstrate the explosive convergence of ideas espoused by Friedrich Nietzsche, Maurice Emmanuel, Jane Harrison, and Lillian Lawler with the performance practices of Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan, Eva Palmer, and Ted Shawn in the early twentieth century. Later in the century these ideas and practices continue to reverberate through the work of Martha Graham, George Balanchine, Pina Bausch, Mark Morris, Michael Clark, and William Forsythe. As Macintosh cautions her fellow classicists, “we ignore dance history at our peril” (Macintosh 2010b, 9).

In this essay, I would like to complement the pioneering research of *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World* by drawing attention to the way that twentieth-century choreographers deploy Greco-Roman antiquity as source material, subject matter, reference, and allusion to perform dissident stagings of gender and sexuality for both male and female dancers. My use of the term “dissidence” derives from Alan Sinfield (1994) and expands his usage, for while Sinfield typically refers to “sexual dissidence,” I use the term also to refer to practices and representations of gender, in addition to sexuality, that

depart from dominant norms as these norms are defined culturally and historically. When the departures from dominant norms are visible only to some but not to all viewers, I use the term “cloak” rather than “closet,” in order to underscore that unconventional images of gender at times hide in plain sight, along with non-normative images of sexuality.¹

Looking closely at dances across the century, I will suggest that choreographers significantly shifted the ways they used the classics to articulate gender and sexual dissidence from the years before World War I to the decades surrounding World War II to the closing decades of the century. In this way, my account further periodizes the larger narrative of *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*. During the early years of the twentieth century, Isadora Duncan staged a radically new image of the female dancer while Vaslav Nijinsky staged a radically new image of the male dancer, and both relied on classical imagery to legitimize their dissident performances of gender and sexuality. At midcentury George Balanchine and Martha Graham narrated classical myths in ways that cloaked the performance of gender and sexual dissidence. At century’s end Mark Morris, among other postmodernists, revisited classical myths in order to stage gender and sexual dissidence more openly than was possible at midcentury. Thus choreographing the classics embodies and enacts changing conceptions of gender and sexuality across the twentieth century.

These changing conceptions shape and are shaped by broad sociocultural changes. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the entry of middle-class women into the academy and the professions, the suffrage movement, the emergence of sexology and sex reform, and the formation of social worlds where sexual dissidence flourished. Midcentury occasioned backlash: in response to economic depression, the rise of authoritarianism, and world war, many nation-states criminalized and medicalized sexual dissidence, and traditional gender roles reasserted their dominance. The 1960s and 1970s initiated pushback, as second-wave feminism, womanism, and gay rights challenged social norms, medical policy, and state oppression and discrimination. These broad sociocultural changes played out differently in the United States, in Great Britain, and across Europe, but some variation of early twentieth-century progress, midcentury backlash, and late twentieth-century reform held across Europe and America and informed the choreography of the classics.

. . .

Perhaps no dancer has received more discussion in classical reception studies than Isadora Duncan. From essays in *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern*

World (2010) to Carrie Preston's *Modernism's Mythic Pose* (2011) and Helene Foley's *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage* (2012), scholars have probed Duncan's reading of Nietzsche, familiarity with Maurice Emmanuel, engagement with Delsarte, and acquaintance with Jane Harrison, as well as her study of Greek vases in museums across Europe and her own writings on Greek dance. In her engagement with the Greeks, Duncan reacted against what she perceived as the limitations of late nineteenth-century ballet—the “unnatural” demands of the technique, its reliance on the corseted figure and the toe shoe, and its emphasis on virtuosity. Along with other late nineteenth-century reformers, she abandoned the corset in favor of free-flowing silk tunics, a silhouette adapted from the images on Greek vases. She had studied Delsarte as a young woman, and her movement vocabulary adopted many of its precepts, along with basic steps such as runs, walks, skips, hops, simple leaps, and turns, all performed in bare feet, a radical gesture at the turn of the century, barely a generation away from the Victorian bustle. Duncan resisted codifying her technique and instead believed that each dancer should develop her own signature style. This became the founding move of what later generations would call “modern dance”: each dancer her own choreographer.

The female pronoun is significant here, because Duncan appealed especially to female spectators in her reconfiguring of the female body onstage. At once spiritual *and* sensual, Duncan emphasized the kinesthetic dimension of movement, its flow. In so doing she symbolized the heightened possibilities for female mobility in an era when white middle-class women first entered universities and the professions and organized for suffrage. As Eva Palmer later recalled her and her friends' first encounters with Duncan's dancing: “We all saw her . . . and we all felt that the shackles of the world were loosened, that liberation was ahead of us” (Palmer-Sikelianos 1993, 181).

Many of Duncan's female spectators took up forms of corporeal practice that resembled her dancing. As Macintosh demonstrates, legions of women studied and performed Greek dance during the years before and after the First World War (Macintosh 2010a). Yet this phenomenon was not limited to Britain, but also widespread across the British Empire, continental Europe, and the United States (Carter and Fensham 2011; Tomko 1999). Embodying a range of forms in addition to Greek dancing—Delsarte theatricals, Dalcroze eurhythmics, aesthetic gymnastics, *Körperkultur* (“body culture”)—Duncan's female followers experienced new forms of corporeal and imaginative mobility.

Although Duncan looked to Greek dance as her inspiration, she did not attempt to recreate Greek dance, as Eva Palmer did in her staging of *Prometheus Bound* at the Delphic Festival in 1927 and 1930. Rather, as early

as her 1903 manifesto “The Dancer of the Future,” Duncan articulated her vision of dance regaining the central place it had occupied in ancient Greece and linked that vision to new possibilities for women’s lives and expressive practices:

To return to the dances of the Greeks would be as impossible as it is unnecessary. But the dance of the future will have to become again a high religious art as it was with the Greeks. . . . The dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body . . . [The dancer] will dance not in the form of nymph, nor fairy, nor coquette, but in the form of woman in her greatest and purest expression. . . . She will dance the freedom of woman. (Duncan [1928] 1969, 62–63)

In one sense, Duncan’s allusions to “the dances of the Greeks” legitimized her radical reconfiguration of the female dancer, a reconfiguration that defined modern dance as a high art at precisely the moment when the distinction between high and low took shape in American culture. Not coincidentally, as a high art modern dance also became a “white art,” for Duncan defined her new art of the dance not only in opposition to ballet but also in opposition to jazz dance, in particular the ragtime craze of the 1910s and 1920s.²

Although Duncan never codified her technique, her followers did. Over the course of her career, she founded several schools for young girls. Her students in turn became professional dancers in their own right and further disseminated her technique and repertory. That’s how her works survive into the present, through oral and kinesthetic transmission from student to student, and there are videos available for educational distribution that demonstrate the performance of second- and third-generation students.³ Like many dance scholars, however, I find contemporary visual images of Duncan as illuminating as the reverential recreations of her dancing. Consider the watercolor of Duncan by Abraham Walkowitz (figure 1). The viewer’s gaze encounters her body as a single mass, her forearms tucked behind her back, her breasts and pubis visible behind the diaphanous folds of her sleeveless tunic, her neck exposed, her face upturned. The expressiveness of the pose resides in the body’s fulsome stance and dynamic balance. As Cooper Albright writes, “Walkowitz’s sketches . . . help us to comprehend how Duncan was able to transform her ideas . . . into a fleshy, weighty corporeality” (Albright 2010, 63).

Responses to Duncan dancing emphasized her dissident images of gender, and feminist analyses of her work typically have advanced this argu-



Figure 1. Isadora Duncan, watercolor by Abraham Wal-kowitz. Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

ment.⁴ Yet for some viewers, the images of gender dissidence also connoted sexual dissidence. Natalie Barney and other members of her Paris social circle, known for their open expression of same-sex desire, were fans of Duncan. In fact, Barney included Duncan in the frontispiece to her 1929 memoir *Aventures de l'Esprit*, a schematic drawing that Tirza True Latimer has called “a blueprint, a map, a guest list, a social register, a genealogy” of lesbian Paris (2005, 39–40). Among the members of the Academy of Women profiled in Barney’s memoir were Gertrude Stein and Mina Loy, both of whom wrote poems inspired by Duncan’s dancing: Stein’s “Orta, or One Dancing” (1911) and Loy’s “Biography of a Songge Byrd” (1952). A cognate circle of American women who loved women also recorded their passionate responses to Duncan, among them Eva Le Gallienne, Mercedes de Acosta, and Janet Flanner. In fact, Acosta had an affair with Duncan near the end of her life: erotic poems from Duncan survive in Acosta’s papers, and Acosta’s memoir records her lover’s private performances. As Acosta recalled:

Many nights Isadora danced for me. She danced for me three and four hours at a time. She would completely lose herself as she moved about, and became utterly unconscious of anything but the rhythm of her own body and the exaltation of her own spirit. She accompanied herself by singing or humming in a curiously low tone that often gave me the illusion that the sound was coming from somewhere far away and not from her at all. . . . Often she danced until the first light of morning began to creep in, then suddenly she would stop and look about bewildered, like someone returning from a long journey. (Acosta 1960, 178–79)

What's striking is the similarity of responses to Duncan by her elite white women fans, whether they focused their erotic and domestic lives exclusively around women or around men or moved from one configuration to the other. When Eva Palmer first saw Duncan dancing, she was Barney's lover, but by the time she recorded her and her friends' response in her memoir, she had been married and separated from Raymond Duncan's brother-in-law Angelos Sikelianos, with whom she had collaborated in staging the Delphic Festivals in Athens. Her vision of Duncan anticipating the "liberation . . . ahead of us" demonstrates a continuum of interpretation among female spectators, for whom Duncan's dancing resonated with their own diverse explorations of female subjectivity, sexuality, and agency.

. . .

Whereas Isadora Duncan is widely considered the founder of modern dance, Vaslav Nijinsky is widely considered the founder of modern ballet. Duncan and Nijinsky both spent most of their adult lives in Paris, she in exile from Victorian America, he in exile from Tsarist Russia. Both did tour the United States, although as many Americans knew them by reputation as actually saw them perform onstage. Like Duncan, Nijinsky grounded his artistic rebellion in an imagined classical world.

Nijinsky's choreographic innovations—and his reconfiguration of the image of the male dancer—cannot be separated from Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*, a legendary company of St. Petersburg-trained dancers based in Paris from 1909 to 1929. Serge Diaghilev was an impresario who had a knack for discovering young talent; he brought together composers such as Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Erik Satie with painters such as Henri Matisse, Georges Roualt, and Pablo Picasso. He nurtured young dancers as choreographers, among them Nijinsky, who was also his lover for a time.

It is rare in historical research to be able to point to a single event that

changed broader cultural conceptions, but in this case it is not an exaggeration to state that Nijinsky's performances with Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* before World War I introduced an association between the male concert dance and homosexuality that has persisted into the present. After the Romantic ballerina went up on pointe during the 1830s and 1840s, the male dancer had mostly disappeared from the ballet stages of western Europe and the United States, surviving only in the court-supported theaters of Denmark and Russia. So when Nijinsky reappeared on the feminized stage of ballet in Paris and London, he introduced a new set of meanings for the male dancer.

As Ramsay Burt ([1995] 2007) has demonstrated, the bourgeois norms of masculinity established during the Industrial Revolution resulted in the near disappearance of the male dancer during the Victorian era.⁵ During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the male dancer had embodied the aristocratic ideal of masculinity, projecting the power of the aristocratic subject as object of the gaze, his authority announced through fashionable dress and leisure pursuits, including dancing. This ideal reached its apotheosis in the dancing of Louis XIV as Apollo, the Sun King. During the Victorian era the bourgeois man rejected the aristocratic ideal, redefining male authority as the bearer, not the object, of the gaze. This accompanied a sharpened division between the public and the private sphere brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Adopting the standardized dress of frock coat, waistcoat, and trousers—the precursor of today's suit—the Victorian bourgeois man focused on the public sphere of work and politics rather than the newly privatized sphere of domesticity and the emotions. Maintaining an ideology of separate spheres, men socialized with one another outside the home, often attending the theater together, where the Victorian actress and dancer occupied a cultural space associated with “public women” and where prostitutes inhabited the “third tier” of the auditorium.⁶ Within the gendered ideology of separate spheres, male artists became an exception, as the Romantic genius defied the division between masculine and feminine pursuits, bringing emotion into the public sphere.

Thus, when Nijinsky became a star dancer in the years before World War I, he fulfilled the expectations for an artistic genius whose virtuosic performance and charisma rendered him an exception to bourgeois norms for masculinity. For many spectators, Nijinsky's otherness was part and parcel of the innovative spectacle of the *Ballets Russes* as a whole. But for some spectators, Nijinsky's dancing connoted the otherness of nonnormative sexuality, during an era when homosexuality was taking shape as a social identity in Western culture. In fact, Tirza True Latimer and Lynn Garafola demonstrate

that performances of the Ballets Russes drew visibly gay circles of viewers. Even after Nijinsky stopped performing, the subcultural meanings of his performance continued to mark the reception of ballet.

Diaghilev first presented Nijinsky in the reform ballets of Michel Fokine, who had rejected the strict classicism of Maryinsky's artistic director Marius Petipa and, entranced by Duncan, brought a heightened expressiveness and fluidity to ballet. In Fokine's ballets, Nijinsky took on androgynous personae as the Spirit of the Rose in the work of the same title, the Blue God in *Le Dieu bleu*, the melancholy puppet in *Petrouchka*, the Golden Slave in *Scheherezade*. Fokine choreographed two works on classical themes for Nijinsky: *Narcisse* (1911) to music by Nicholas Tcherepnin with libretto, set, and costumes by Léon Bakst; and *Daphnis and Chloë* (1912) to music by Maurice Ravel with set and costumes by Bakst. A photograph of Nijinsky in *Narcisse* shows him dressed in a Duncan-style tunic and posed on half-pointe with arms angled overhead, his Duncanesque silhouette confounded by his defined musculature.⁷

By the time *Daphnis and Chloë* premiered, Fokine had lost favor as the Ballets Russes house choreographer, and Diaghilev had turned his attention to developing Nijinsky as a choreographer. Thus in 1912 Diaghilev commissioned costumes and décor from Bakst and selected Claude Debussy's lush score inspired by Mallarmé's poem *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (Afternoon of a Faun) for his protégé's choreographic debut. Known for his astonishing jumps in Fokine's works, Nijinsky eschewed virtuosic technique in creating *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Rather, he experimented with two-dimensional movement, angular lines, awkward poses, slow tempos, and long pauses. As Nijinsky told an interviewer in London at the time of the work's premiere, he had studied "the ancient marbles, the bas reliefs, the vases" in museums in Paris and London, seeking inspiration for "dance gestures, physical balance, and purity of movement." He continued, "It has no story really: it is simply a fragment drawn from a classic bas-relief" (quoted in Macdonald 1975, 79). A photograph (figure 2) shows Nijinsky in a characteristic pose, arms held stiffly in front of his body, torso angled, legs in parallel, balanced on half-toe, his stance weighted with stillness, so contrary to the fulsome curves of Isadora Duncan or the virtuosic display of Petipa's ballets.⁸

Onstage, Nijinsky's planar movement—created at exactly the moment Cubism was taking shape in Paris—contrasted the sustained breath of Debussy's score and the rich colors of Bakst's palette. Taking the role of the Faun, Nijinsky devised a simple plot for the ballet. The work begins and ends with the Faun alone onstage, lying outstretched on a concealed platform, dif-

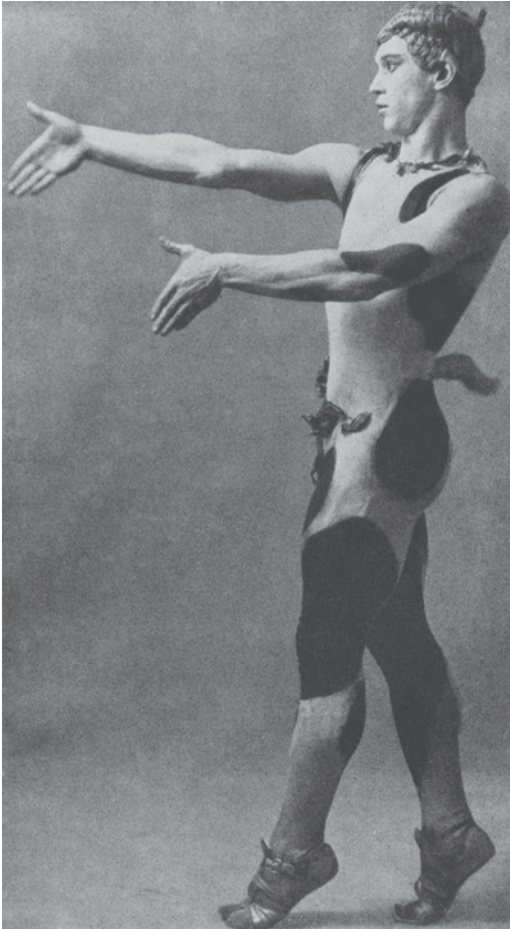


Figure 2. Vaslav Nijinsky in *Afternoon of a Faun*. Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

difficult to distinguish from the impressionist backdrop. He slowly arches back, like a cat waking from a nap, then returns to his repose. A group of nymphs enters, and the Faun is roused from his perch; he descends and encounters one of the nymphs. When she departs, she leaves a scarf behind; the Faun picks up the scarf, takes it back to his perch, and lies on top of it, ending the dance with an orgasmic gesture like a wet dream.

To paraphrase Nijinsky, no story really? At the time of the premiere some critics were appalled by the ending gesture, while others saw the gesture in keeping with the archaic Greek world depicted onstage. The morning after the premiere, the reviewer for *Le Figaro* protested: “We are shown a lecherous faun, whose movements are filthy and bestial in their eroticism, and whose

gestures are as crude as they are indecent. . . . Decent people will never accept such animal realism” (quoted in Farfan 2008, 76–77). But when reprised in London later that season, many critics saw the ending gesture as part of the larger stylization of the work. The reviewer for the *Times* noted: “M. Nijinsky as the faun is . . . another creature from the [dancer] we have known [in other works]. Yet his crouching movements, his stiff poses, and particularly his last action when he lies down to dream beside the scarf, are extraordinarily expressive” (quoted in Macdonald 1975, 80).

Subsequent scholars have recast this critical debate. For some (Garafola 1989), the work depicts the Faun’s awakening sexuality, his awkward adolescent longing for the nymph realized only in fantasy. For others, the Faun exudes a queer sexuality, turning away from male-female coupling and evoking nonnormative desires (Kopelson 1997; Latimer 1999a; Farfan 2008). In my teaching, it is hard for students to see levels of meaning beyond the queer reading, and it is difficult to convince them that in the early twentieth century many spectators saw modernist experimentation, while only some saw same-sex desire. Yet the historical record demonstrates exactly such double-coded reception.

After *L’Après-midi d’un faune*, Nijinsky created three more works for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, including the choreography for the riotous 1913 première of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. While on tour of North and South America during the years of World War I, Nijinsky married another member of the company and Diaghilev, infuriated, dismissed him. Within a few years, Nijinsky was diagnosed as schizophrenic and confined to an asylum, although his reputation as an artistic genius and gay icon outlived him.

• • •

After Nijinsky left the company, Diaghilev turned his attention to other dancers who became his lovers and whom he groomed as choreographers—first Leonide Massine and then Serge Lifar. He also engaged Nijinsky’s sister, Bronislava Nijinska, and another recent Russian émigré, George Balanchine, to choreograph new works for the company. In 1928 Diaghilev commissioned Balanchine to choreograph a work to a new score by Igor Stravinsky, *Apollon Musagète* (Apollo), with scenery designed by André Bauchant and costumes by Bauchant and Coco Chanel. The dance featured Serge Lifar as the protagonist and three female dancers who represented Calliope (goddess of poetry), Polyhymnia (goddess of mime), and Terpsichore (goddess of dance). After choosing Terpsichore as his favored Muse and performing a duet with her, Apollo dances with all three Muses at the end.



Figure 3. Jacques D'Amboise with Allegra Kent in Balanchine's *Apollo*, New York City Ballet, photograph by Martha Swope/© New York Public Library. Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

In both plot and movement style, *Apollon Musagète* was the inverse of Nijinsky's *Faune*. Whereas in *Faune* the nymphs barely touch the Faun before leaving the stage, in *Apollon Musagète* the Muses engage Apollo physically throughout the work. Near the end, as Balanchine describes the image, "the three Muses pose in arabesque behind Apollo's profiled figure to form a tableau in which the goddesses are as one with him" (figure 3) (Balanchine and Mason 1975, 16). Here the female dancers' lifted and curved torsos, extended legs, and pointed toes contrast with the stiff and angular stance Nijinsky adopted in *Faune*. Here Balanchine returns to Petipa's classicism, revitalizing its precepts with novel partnering, one man supporting three women "as one with him."

At the same time as Balanchine returns to classicism, his choreography also reasserts a heteronormative understanding of gender. Here it seems significant that Apollo remains onstage through all the solos of the Muses, so we watch him watching the women: the male dancer is the bearer of the gaze. In this way Apollo serves as a projection of the choreographer himself, who once famously declared that "Ballet is Woman" and typically pursued romantic relationships with his leading ballerinas. Like Apollo at the end of

the dance, Balanchine was entangled with many women over the course of his career. Yet the work originally starred Serge Lifar, Diaghilev's lover at the time, and the male protagonist remains at the center of the spectacle, the object of the audience's gaze. Thus the reassertion of heteronormative gender roles does not displace the centering of Diaghilev's repertoire around his favorite male dancer.

The year after the premiere of *Apollon Musagète*, Diaghilev died and the Ballets Russes collapsed. Its dancers scattered across the globe, seeding dance modernism from Argentina to Australia. At the invitation of Lincoln Kirstein, George Balanchine came to the United States, established the School of American Ballet in 1934, and, after working on Broadway and starting several short-lived companies, founded New York City Ballet in 1948. In an essay published the following year, Balanchine wrote:

Apollon I look back on as the turning point of my life. In its discipline and restraint, in its sustained oneness of tone and feeling the score was a revelation. It seemed to tell me that I could dare not to use everything, that I, too, could eliminate. . . . I could clarify, by limiting, by reducing what seemed to be multiple possibilities to the one that is inevitable. (Balanchine [1949] 1975, 81)

In retrospect, critics have hailed the work as a significant moment of transition in Balanchine's career and in the history of modern ballet: the advent of neoclassicism, a term that applies as well as Stravinsky's musical allusions to earlier forms.

In 1937 and then in 1979 Balanchine revised the work, stripping the earlier décor and costuming and cutting the prologue to the original, in which Leto gives birth to Apollo. The revised work took the shortened title by which it has continued to be known in the repertoire of New York City Ballet, *Apollo*.⁹ How do the gender and sexual politics of the work change from its 1928 premiere to the later repertoire version? In *A Queer History of the Ballet* Peter Stoneley argues that the consolidation of Balanchine's neoclassicism after 1948 "meant the foreclosing of other, more obviously queer possibilities" (2007, 115). By this, Stoneley meant the ascent of Balanchine's women-centered ballets after 1948 and his turn away from Diaghilev's focus on star male dancers. Yet Stoneley also notes the many queer men (some married, some not) who supported Balanchine's neoclassical aesthetic, beginning with Lincoln Kirstein and including Edwin Denby, Frank O'Hara, and George Platt Lynes, among many others. During the early years of the New York City Ballet, simply to visit a gay bar was warrant for arrest, and thousands of men during these

years were jailed on this pretext in New York City alone. Perhaps attending the ballet was a safer way to assert a gay identity.

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Martha Graham's Greek dance dramas took shape during this same complicated moment in American sexual and gender politics during the years surrounding the Second World War. While the US military for the first time criminalized homosexuality, legions of gay men and women experienced what historian Allan Bérubé narrated in this book of the same title as "coming out under fire." Women on the home front experienced an unprecedented degree of financial, emotional, and sexual independence, yet were also expected to conform to the "return to normalcy" promised and promulgated at war's end.

These broader social tensions resonated with changes in Graham's career. Over the course of the 1930s she had developed her technique and repertory in collaboration with her all-female company and with Louis Horst, her accompanist, composer, artistic mentor, and lover twelve years her senior. In 1938 she met Erick Hawkins, a Harvard graduate in classics and a young dancer and aspiring choreographer fifteen years her junior. Hawkins became her lover and later, briefly, her husband. He joined her company, and his presence accompanied a significant shift in her artistic career: with a mixed-sex company, her style became more narrative and more theatrical, and her company appeared for the first time on Broadway; she turned away from the American themes and social concerns that had predominated in her work from the 1930s and embraced more universal and more psychological subject matter, above all in her Greek dance dramas.

Many of her dances from the 1940s can be read in Jungian terms. Graham typically took the role of the female protagonist who is torn between her needs for intimacy and for independence. She confronts a masculine antagonist and in so doing confronts her own fears and her own desires for freedom. The psychodrama resolves as Graham integrates the masculine principle within herself, a drama played out in movement terms as Graham's characteristically inward style integrates the more expansive style of her male characters.

This arc clearly structures *Errand into the Maze*, a 1947 work set to music by Gian-Carlo Menotti and designed by Isamu Noguchi.¹⁰ Graham based the dance loosely on the myth of Ariadne and Theseus, casting herself as the unnamed protagonist and a male dancer as her antagonist, the Creature of Fear. As the dance opens, Graham follows the wavy line of a rope placed on the floor to a sculptured object, resembling a door or perhaps a vulva. Her steps



Figure 4. Helen McGehee (in Graham's role) and Clive Thompson in Graham's *Errand into the Maze*, photograph by Umaña. Courtesy of Helen McGehee Archive, Music Division, Library of Congress.

cross over one another, echoing the zigzag of the rope and echoed in turn by the decoration on her dress. The Creature of Fear enters, his arms bound at shoulder height by a shaft he carries. He walks stiffly, lifting his knees and flexing his feet at strong angles, commanding the space and threatening the female protagonist. She retreats behind the sculpted object, using the rope to construct a makeshift barrier (figure 4). His crouched stance recalls Nijinsky's weighted angular pose, and the stand-off between the two magnifies the lack of interaction and touch between Nijinsky and the nymphs in *Faune*.

The work draws to a close once the female protagonist determines to vanquish the Creature of Fear, confronting him face to face for the first time. He falls backward, his threat extinguished, and at last her movements gesture beyond herself, "as if swimming through a substance suddenly become light," in the words of one critic (Siegel 1979, 201). By the end, she has incorporated the space-filling movements of her masculine antagonist into her own more interior movement quality, and she stands her ground calmly. The ending image could not be more different from *Apollo*, where the work concludes with one man supporting three women "as one with him."

In her solos and dances for her all-female group before 1938, Graham presented the female dancer as a representative subject. But after 1938 she and her female dancers took on more gendered identities in relation to the presence of male dancers in the company. Nonetheless, as *Errand into the Maze* demonstrates, female subjectivity and agency remained center stage in her oeuvre. In one sense, the presence of male dancers in her work after 1938 served to cloak Graham's dissident staging of gender, her protagonists' desires for independence as well as for intimacy. The men's stiff and strong movement style also served to cloak the sexual dissidence of the male dancers, foregrounding their hypermasculine presentation. Graham's challenge to the status quo was hiding in plain sight.

. . .

Not only Balanchine and Graham, arguably the most influential choreographers of their generation, created works on classical themes on the American stage at midcentury. Indeed, it would be hard to name a major American choreographer from the 1930s through the 1960s who did not create one or more works on classical themes. A partial catalogue includes Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, Lester Horton, Erick Hawkins, José Limón, Jerome Robbins, Alvin Ailey, and Merce Cunningham.

What conclusions might we draw from this profusion of artists? Strikingly, classical reception among dance artists follows a different pattern than reception among theater artists. In the introduction to *Dionysus Since 69*, Edith Hall notes an explosion in productions of Greek tragedies since the late 1960s, an explosion she relates to the myriad social and intellectual movements of the time, from feminism and sexual liberation to antiwar activism, multiculturalism, and poststructuralism (Hall 2004). In contrast, choreographers appear more preoccupied by the classics before 1969 than after. Perhaps it was the ability of works to cloak dissident performances of gender and sexuality that made choreographing the classics so pervasive before 1969.

After all, 1969 also marks the date of the Stonewall Rebellion, and the gay rights movement of the 1970s occurred alongside second-wave feminism, and both social movements rendered the choreographic strategies of double-coding and subtexting evident earlier in the century no longer necessary among artists and audiences for modern and postmodern dance and contemporary ballet. If my supposition is right, then the same social and intellectual trends that led theater artists to the classics led dance artists away from the classics, for they no longer needed the high-cultural legitimization to stage gender and sexual dissidence.



Figure 5. Guillermo Resto and Mark Morris in Morris's *Dido and Aeneas*, photograph by Cylla von Tiedemann. Courtesy of the Mark Morris Dance Group.

This is not to say that dance artists after 1969 did not continue to choreograph the classical texts. In *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*, Alessandra Zanobi and Nadine Meisner have explored Pina Bausch's engagement with classical subject matter, while Arabella Stanger has demonstrated how Michael Clark's *Stravinsky Project* (1994) and William Forsythe's *Eidos: Telos* (1995) revisit Balanchine's Apollonian classicism. That both Clark and Forsythe make reference to *Apollo* is telling, for given the ubiquity of classical motifs in early and midcentury choreography, it is hard for contemporary dance works on classical themes not to refer to previous works. And so, in closing, I will turn to a dance that stages a particularly self-conscious revision of its predecessors, Mark Morris's *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) set to Purcell's score.¹¹

Morris himself took the doubled role of Dido and the Sorceress, and as critic Joan Acocella has noted, created a "profoundly sexual dance" to the "notably chaste" libretto (Acocella 1993, 98). Figure 5 shows Morris as Dido—not in drag, but clearly a man playing a woman—with Guillermo Resto as Aeneas. The two mirror one another, lunging forward, interlocking arms and touching hands, their mutual gaze and mirrored positions suggesting full and

equal partnership in same-sex desire. Their angled and weighted pose recalls both Nijinsky in *Faune* and the Creature of Fear in *Errand into the Maze*. Indeed, the entire work is shot through with references to Graham (back falls, deep second-position pliés, hands covering the eyes) and Nijinsky (two-dimensional, planar movement). The costuming for all the characters, male and female, evokes Graham's characteristic torso-hugging, broad-skirted silhouette. As the Sorceress, Morris wears his long hair loose; as Dido he pulls his hair back with the sort of oversized hairpin that Graham often favored. The most unexpected allusion comes near the end, when Morris-as-the-Sorceress lounges downstage and mimes female masturbation to the point of orgasm, recalling the final gesture of Nijinsky's *Faune*. The filmed version of the dance does not fully show this moment. In our time, it seems, showing a man impersonating a woman masturbating is far more dangerous than showing two men desiring one another.

Morris's iteration and revision of Nijinsky's ending gesture in *Faune* underscores how clearly the choreography of the classics has performed dissident images of gender and sexuality. The dialogue between classical reception studies and dance studies has only just started.

Notes

1. For a fuller explication of how Sinfield's cultural materialism may be adapted as a method for dance studies, see Manning (2004b, xviii–xx).

2. See Daly (1995, 215–20) on the construction of whiteness in Duncan's choreography. See Manning (2004b) on the construction of whiteness in subsequent practices of modern dance.

3. The most comprehensive video is *Isadora Duncan Dance: Technique and Repertory* (1995), directed by second-generation Duncan dancer Julia Levien. *Isadora Duncan: Movement from the Soul* (1988) features third-generation dancer Lori Bellilove. My favorite video documentary is *On Dancing Isadora's Dances* (1988), where Annabelle Gamson describes the resources for her reconstruction, including the myriad of visual images of Duncan made by contemporary artists.

4. See "The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze" reprinted in this volume.

5. Smith (2007) qualifies Burt ([1995] 2007) but the predominance of female dancers on the ballet stage in western Europe is incontrovertible. Male dancing, however, remained popular on the minstrel stage, and this history inflects the cultural associations carried by male dancers of color.

6. Davis (1991) is particularly astute on the eroticization of the actress and dancer in the Victorian theater.

7. This photograph is reproduced in Kirstein (1975, 122). Neither *Narcisse* nor *Daphnis and Chloë* has survived in repertoire.

8. *Faune*, as the work is known in the dance world, has survived in repertoire, handed down from one dancer to another. Nijinsky also recorded the work in a notation system of his own devising, and scholars Anne Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jeschke (2010) have decoded his system and staged their version of his work, available on video, which differs in subtle ways from the versions handed down from dancer to dancer. Nonetheless, the plot and movement style of *Faune* described here characterize all versions in contemporary repertoire attributed to Nijinsky.

9. Excerpts of *Apollo* are available on video from the George Balanchine Foundation (*Music Dances: Balanchine Choreographs Stravinsky*) and from PBS (*Balanchine Celebration*).

10. *Errand into the Maze* has survived in the repertoire of the Martha Graham Dance Company. A video recording is available on *Martha Graham, Three Contemporary Classics* (Video Arts International, 1984).

11. Morris's performance in *Dido and Aeneas* is documented on a 1995 video by Image Entertainment.

Archives in Collision

Excursus on Method (2025)

“Archives in Collision: Excursus on Method,” printed here for the first time, originated as a keynote in 2012 for Dance Under Construction at the University of California-Riverside. At that point, in the wake of Michel Foucault’s and Jacques Derrida’s influential writings on the archive, the term had nearly become a pejorative. Typically deployed in the singular, “the archive” connoted a hegemonic institution that reflected the dominant culture and erased subjugated identities. From my perspective, this notion not only misrepresented Foucault and Derrida’s foundational insight that “the structure of the archive determines what can be archived” (Manoff 2004, 12), but also misconstrued how historians work within archives in the plural to reconstruct overlooked histories. Hence this essay theorizes my archival practice of paying special attention to gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions among primary sources as evidence of the complexity and, indeed, messiness of dance histories.

Two case studies illustrate my practice of what I call “archives in collision.” The first amplifies research conducted for *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman* (1993, 2nd ed. 2006) and probes the contradictions between print sources and oral histories in relation to the question of how—and to what extent—the Wigman School in Dresden conformed to the dictates of National Socialism during the years from 1933 to 1945. Whereas print sources document the school’s compliance with the anti-Semitism prescribed by Nazism, oral histories counter and nuance the school’s compliance. My argument takes this discrepancy as its starting point.

The second case study draws from research conducted for *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b), highlighting the gap between print sources and visual images of José Limón’s *The Traitor* and other dance works in relation to queer spectatorship. In most of these

instances, published photographs suggest a queer reading that counters and augments the interpretations offered by published reviews. Hence the disparity between visual image and review supports my argument about the likelihood of cross-viewing between dominant and sexually dissident publics. But in one instance, the divergence between photograph and print documentation is so pronounced that it demands further inquiry. Never published until now, the photograph is an interracial nude of Edith Segal and Alison Burroughs in a pose that recalls the machine aesthetic of Segal's leftist choreography during the 1930s. Hence this essay ends with a catalogue of questions raised by the photograph, most especially the question of same-sex female desire in the histories of modern dance.

In dance studies, much of the current writing on archives focuses on the question of embodiment. In *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (2012) Priya Srinivasan describes the moment when she saw a film of St. Denis dancing and realized that her gesture (mudra) felt so right to her own bodily training in Bharatanatyam that the white modern dance must have learned it from a South Asian performer, not from library research, as she had claimed. In "Kinaesthetic Seeing: A Model for Practice-in-Research" (2020) Hannah Kosstrin summarizes her own archival practice of bringing her training in Laban movement analysis and in Graham technique to her interpretation of photographs of Anna Sokolow, highlighting her ability to kinaesthetically sense and describe the artist's movements. In my research too I often have deployed drawings and photographs for their evidence of movement style, as is demonstrated throughout this volume.¹

Yet recapturing embodiment is not as central to my archival practice as it is to Srinivasan and Kosstrin.² Rather, I have found that attending to the gaps, discrepancies, and contradictions between archival sources yields the most significant insights and research findings. This method for archival research parallels my attention to the tension between plot and spectacle in choreographic works and to the possibility for spectators to respond to different dimensions and levels of meaning.

To illustrate my archival method, which might be termed "archives in collision," I will present first an example from my research on German modern dance during the Nazi period, when the evidence of print sources contradicts oral history, and then an example from my research on American modern dance at midcentury, when the evidence of visual imagery contradicts print

sources. Both examples end with questions that demand further inquiry. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the archive does not yield fixed, monolithic, and hegemonic readings, as some commentators have suggested, but rather rich, complex, and shifting readings of bodies in motion.³

. . .

Before I began my research on Mary Wigman in the early 1980s, accounts of her career during the Nazi years repeated the story she herself had told in the postwar years of being proclaimed a “degenerate artist” by the regime. Yet as soon as I began to dig through her archive at the Academy of Arts in West Berlin, it became clear that she had misremembered her past. For during the years from 1934 to 1936, she received commissions from the Nazi cultural ministry to stage her dances, and she published a treatise in 1935 titled *Deutsche Tanzkunst* (German Dance Art) that voiced implicit, if not explicit, support for fascist aesthetics. Although she received no further commissions after 1937 and felt that the cultural ministry undermined her leadership of German dance, neither her life nor her livelihood was ever endangered. When her German biographer Hedwig Müller and I reported these findings at conferences in the mid- and late 1980s, Wigman’s disciples were furious, believing that she had conformed to Nazi dictates out of necessity. Generations of her friends, associates, and colleagues defended Wigman’s actions during the Nazi years as her only possible option for survival. In other words, as I researched and wrote *Ecstasy and the Demon*, the evidence of archival documents contradicted the evidence of oral history.⁴

This contradiction becomes especially clear when examining the evidence for the operations of the Wigman School in the years between the two world wars. Wigman founded her school in Dresden in 1920, and during the first few years the curriculum was quite informal. As the choreographer later recalled the early years:

At that time one could not yet have spoken of a Wigman *school*. We rather were a small experimental club in which everything was tried out which the imagination would yield and which the bodily abilities would permit. . . . There were not yet any single subjects, there were not yet any systematically arranged schedules which would have organically divided the entire range of the subject matter. Whenever I was absent for a short time due to my touring obligations, the young group worked by itself and just as intensely as they would have done under my personal guidance. (quoted in Sorell 1975, 17)

As Wigman's popularity grew, however, so did the popularity of the school. By 1927, when the school building underwent extensive renovation and expansion, the curriculum had formalized. Amateur dancers took separate classes from aspiring professional dancers and educators, and professional students pursued a three-year certification program in either dance education or stage dance. Both certification programs culminated with comprehensive exams. A school brochure from 1927 listed the required subjects for the stage dancers' exam: physical training (*Gymnastik*), free dance improvisation, independent composition of solo dances, composition and direction of group dance, and written essays on given themes. Professional students had private lessons once a month with a member of the faculty, and four times a year Wigman would critique students' compositions during special evening sessions. For her certification exam, Pola Nirenska, a student at the school from 1929 to 1932, recalled teaching three levels of technique and of improvisation, as well as a percussion class; presenting a concert with three solos and one group dance; and selecting the topic "Women in the Arts" for her written essay. Nirenska was a Polish Jew, and she estimated that around 20 percent of the students were Jewish during her years at the school, although she said that students typically didn't discuss religion or politics, for they were very involved in their vocations as dancers. She also recalled that students came to the school from many countries, and abundant evidence supports this claim.⁵

In researching the Wigman School during the Weimar years from 1920 to 1933, print sources, such as the school brochure, and oral history, such as Nirenska's recollections, generally concur. In other words, the historian can pursue the accepted methodology for research, correlating the evidence from diverse primary sources and confidently presenting the correlations as historical fact. But this is no longer the case after Hitler comes to power in 1933: from that point, the print sources and the oral historical sources diverge, and so the scholar has to confront and narrate "archives in collision." While the print sources demonstrate Wigman's compliance with Nazi cultural policies, oral history reinforces, counters, and qualifies the extent of her compliance. This collision becomes especially clear in regard to the question of how the Wigman School enforced the new regulation that aspiring professional dancers must prove their Aryan origins and take classes in Nazi ideology.

In July 1933 the Wigman School joined together with other Wigman-affiliated schools and agreed to enforce the so-called Aryan paragraph in order to become members of the Fighting League for German Culture (Karina and Kant 1996, 92, 195–97). Simply put, the Aryan paragraph required faculty

members and students to prove they did not have Jewish parents or grandparents. From its founding in 1929 by Alfred Rosenberg, the Fighting League had endorsed the Aryan paragraph, and when Hitler came to power in January 1933, the league seemed poised to become a major force in reorganizing the arts. Hence the bid by the Wigman-affiliated schools for membership in July 1933. By that time, Wigman already had dismissed Jewish employees at the school, including the instructor Fred Coolemans.⁶

Over the next few years, however, it became clear that Goebbels' Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda would regulate arts training and professional certification, not Rosenberg's Fighting League. The Fighting League was first folded into Strength through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*), the unit within the Labor Ministry that organized leisure activities, and then dismantled altogether in 1937. Yet the ascent of Goebbels' Ministry over Rosenberg's Fighting League was not yet clear in summer 1934, when Wigman wrote to Hanya Holm:

Crazy situation: we have organizational concerns that are difficult to explain. We (the modern dance) do not quite belong anywhere. On the one hand rhythmic gymnastics claims us, and on the other, the theater organizations. It doesn't work to be torn in two parts. We are working like mad to get all these difficult things figured out. I've been in Berlin for one-and-a-half days of meetings, conferences, four to eleven p.m. without a pause. But there is hope to get official recognition for "the new German dance" and banish ballet back into its proper borders, borders it has penetrated in fantastic ways. (quoted in Gitelman 2003, 49)

The meetings that Wigman attended hashed out new regulations for training professional dancers and educators. In late July 1934 Goebbels' Theatre Chamber, a unit within the Propaganda Ministry, issued the new guidelines, which called for students "of Aryan origin 18 years and older" to pursue training at approved schools and to prepare for certification exams in designated fields, from music theory and dance history to the "ideological foundations of National Socialism (general state theory, race theory, cultural politics)" (Büchler 1941, 95, 98).

That fall the Wigman-affiliated schools introduced a new curriculum in the spirit of the new directives. Although the school brochure did not use the phrase "Aryan origins" per se, it did herald the role that "new German artistic dance" could play in the "cultural revitalization of the Volk." The required

training in National Socialist ideology was listed simply as “civics,” and “folk dance” and “classical dance” appeared as subjects new to the curriculum alongside familiar subjects such as “physical training” (*Grundgymnastik*), “dance composition,” and “group dance.”⁷ A year later the Theatre Chamber issued even more detailed directives, which clearly outlined the movement skills that students were required to master for “German dance forms,” “classical dance forms,” and “folk dance forms” along with the required exam in “ideological foundations of National Socialism” (Büchler 1941, 113).

Strikingly, even these print sources raise questions about how the Aryan paragraph and National Socialist ideology were enforced at the Wigman School. The school brochure for fall 1934 employed neither the term “Aryan origins” nor the term “National Socialism.” Was the omission of those loaded terms a marketing ploy, an appeal to international students, whose tuition always had been welcome at the Wigman School? Or was their absence a sign of Wigman’s subtle dissent against the institutionalized anti-Semitism of the Nazi state? After all, the school could and did apply for special permission to train Jewish students. Or was the absence of the terms “Aryan” and “National Socialism” a way for Wigman to not fully acknowledge her complicity, since the Theatre Chamber would enforce those regulations in any case?

If the print sources raise questions, even more questions are raised when the print sources collide with oral history. And the dancers’ reminiscences also collide with one another when the topic is the enforcement of the Aryan paragraph and the required classes in Nazi ideology. In 1986 more than fifteen former students from the Wigman School gathered at the Academy of Arts in West Berlin to share their recollections. Among them, two dancers who had spent their careers in Germany vehemently denied that ideology classes were taught at the school: Drusilla Schroeder-Schwinghammer, an American-born student, began her study at the New York branch of the Wigman School directed by Hanya Holm and then completed her diploma in Dresden in 1934; she performed with Wigman’s group in 1934 and 1935, and remained affiliated with the school during the years of World War II, along with her husband Victor Schwinghammer. When asked in 1986 if she recalled the Nazi ideology classes, she replied “absolutely not.” Kurt Paudler, a student at the school from 1937 to 1939 who continued his professional dance career after World War II, echoed her reply, “absolutely not.” He then continued, “There were Germans, British, Czechs. There were Greeks and students from Scandinavia. We were international and we lived for dance. Of course, when you walked out, you saw [Nazi] signs, for the Nazi period was in full swing. But we really didn’t

hear much about Volkish ideology at the school.” Schwinghammer echoed his reminiscences, “We didn’t talk at all about politics.”⁸

Another student from Paudler’s class, Gundel Eplinius, also participated in the panel. She said nothing one way or the other about the ideology classes, but she did recall the altered curriculum:

I believe that Wigman accepted classical ballet out of pragmatism. I believe that the school would not have offered classical ballet if we could have passed the state exams without it. And then we had to learn folk dance. Of course, at the Wigman School that made no sense! But Mary viewed the necessity with humor. There was always pressure, and so folk dance was swallowed, just as classical ballet was. (quoted in Manning 1993, 204–5)

Eplinius also continued her dance career after World War II, and she taught for many years at the Conservatory for Music and Theatre in Hannover, where she developed the principles of Wigman’s pedagogy. At the 1986 gathering in West Berlin, Eplinius emphasized how Wigman’s pedagogy encouraged students to develop their own creativity, their own artistry, and she believed the school’s nurturing of students’ talents was “unchanged” from the Weimar years. Paudler and Schroeder-Schwinghammer vigorously agreed.

Only in interviews with students who had emigrated, which I conducted independently after the 1986 gathering in West Berlin, did memories of the ideology classes resurface. One student who clearly remembered was Margrit Bassow, a student at the school from 1933 to 1936. She recalled a young blond man, “quite good-looking,” who taught the ideology classes, and one day took her aside and “kindly suggested” that since she was Jewish, she had “little chance” of pursuing a dance career in Germany and recommended that she try her luck in Switzerland or Italy instead (quoted in Manning 1993, 204). She eventually followed his advice, but first she studied ballet in Berlin for three years. Finally in 1939 she emigrated, first to England, where she had contact with Kurt Jooss and with Rudolf Laban, and later to the United States, where she first worked with Erwin Piscator and later became a dance therapist in New York City.⁹

Another student who remembered the ideology class was Shirlee Dodge, who studied dance at the University of Wisconsin before going to the Wigman School from 1937 to 1939, where she became friends with Paudler and Eplinius. Dodge left Germany after the war started, hoping to wait out the hostilities in Sweden, but in 1940 she returned to the United States and in 1945 she founded the dance program at the University of Texas in Austin, where she

taught for many years and attempted, in her words, “to recreate the creative atmosphere of the Wigman School in Dresden.” Dodge’s memories were so contradictory, so confounding, so chilling that it’s the one interview I remember viscerally more than thirty-five years later.¹⁰

Dodge remembered a female teacher who came to the Wigman School to teach the ideology classes. (Apparently she had replaced the earlier teacher, the young man who had advised Bassow on her career options.) Dodge recounted in particular one class when Eplinius, a “fiercely anti-Nazi” student, came in late with heavy strides and defiantly turned her chair around and sat with her back to the teacher. That incident “flipped”—Shirlee’s word choice—Gretl Curth, a teacher at the school who monitored the ideology classes. Dodge also remembered Eplinius creating an angry dance aimed at the Nazis, which Wigman “tore apart” at one of the school’s regular critique sessions, stating that anger was too personal an emotion to serve as a choreographic subject. In an admiring tone, Dodge recalled Wigman always demanding that the artist go beyond herself to create, and she quoted one of her mentor’s favorite phrases, “über die Selbst hinaus” (from beyond the self).

In the interview, Dodge clearly recalled the anti-Nazi sentiments of Eplinius and the pro-Nazi stance of Curth. What fascinated me about Dodge’s memories was how she unwittingly indicted Wigman, even though she consciously lionized her mentor. More curious yet was Dodge’s unwitting self-indictment in another anecdote. As our phone interview continued, Dodge remembered going to downtown Dresden one day when Goebbels was coming through town. (Not Hitler? I still wonder to myself.) As a crowd gathered alongside the route of his motorcade, she found that she couldn’t get back to the Wigman School. She kept saying to herself, “I don’t have to lift my arm in the Hitler salute.” But she felt all the eyes of the crowd on her, and suddenly she realized that her right arm was raising to shoulder height against her conscious intent. Recounting this incident, her tone expressed wonder, even admiration for how the presence of a Nazi leader and a crowd in thrall to his leadership could compel her body to move against her own will.

What still makes me shudder today is how this anecdote suggests that the dance training at the Wigman School prepared students physically, kinesthetically to support National Socialism. Writing *Ecstasy and the Demon*, I didn’t include this anecdote, partly because Dodge was still alive and, in an era before humanities scholars followed IRB protocols, I had neither informed her of my research goals nor gained her consent, but simply asked leading questions and listened as she poured out her memories over the phone. But I also didn’t know how to incorporate this anecdote, because my interpretation

of her recollections did not fit with the explanatory model I was developing for why so many German modern dancers had collaborated with the Nazis. My explanation was broadly sociological and focused on how the Nazi state had offered patronage that resolved internal conflicts within Ausdruckstanz, whereas Dodge's embodied experience in the late 1930s suggests that the Wigman School prepared students corporeally to accept fascism.

Differently stated, Shirlee Dodge's oral history unwittingly reinforces the print sources about how the Wigman School supported the "cultural revitalization of the Volk." Yet Dodge remembered her study at the school as a time of creative experimentation that launched her subsequent career, as did most of the other students at the school during the Nazi years, including Jewish student Margrit Bassow. If there is a truth to be found about the role of the Wigman School in the Nazi period, it has to take the full range of contradictory evidence—print sources and oral histories—into account. To prioritize the print sources is to interpret Wigman as fully compliant with Nazi cultural policy, as Lilian Karina and Marion Kant do in their study *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich* (1996, 2003). To prioritize oral history is to interpret Wigman as fully resistant, as did so many of her disciples during their lifetimes. From my perspective, Wigman's compliance and resistance were inseparable, and it is the discrepancies between sources—"archives in collision"—that grounds my interpretation.¹¹

• • •

My second example develops material first published in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*. Once again, I will demonstrate how differing types of sources contradicted one another and how that contradiction yielded significant insight. Once again, I will present a research discovery that did not fit the explanatory model I was developing and demands further attention. In this case, the "archives in collision" are print sources and visual images of American modern dance from the 1930s through the 1950s, a collision that shows what, following Susan Foster (2001), might be termed a "choreographic closet."

A paradigmatic example of the choreographic closet is José Limón's *The Traitor*, an all-male work premiered in 1954 at the American Dance Festival. Although photographs widely published at the time suggest a subtext of same-sex desire in the action, not one published review even hinted as such a reading. These photographs were by Matthew Wysocki, a photographer about whom little is known; he certainly was not an established dance photographer, and my attempts to find out more about him have not yielded more



Figure 6. José Limón's *The Traitor*, photograph by Matthew Wysocki. Courtesy of José Limón Dance Foundation.

information. What the photographs do show are the dancers in rehearsal bare-chested, rather than in the costumes used in performance. These photos appeared on the cover of *Dance Observer* and in a photo spread in *Dance Magazine* the year of the premiere. They reappeared on the cover of *Dance Observer* in fall 1957, just as the company was about to embark on a State Department tour of Europe and the Mideast with *The Traitor* in its repertoire. And then again in a photo spread in *Theatre Arts* in 1960, just as the company was about to showcase *The Traitor* on a State Department tour of South America (figure 6).¹²

While readers were invited to enjoy these visual images of male dancers, they encountered reviews that focused on the biblical allusions of the action. Typical is Walter Terry's review in 1954:

Although Mr. Limon . . . does not specifically identify the traitor as Judas [performed by Limon] or the leader as Jesus [performed by Lucas Hoving], their identities are clear and the drama of betrayal, including the scene of the Last Supper, is instantly related to its Biblical source. . . . Clearly, frighteningly, the consuming jealousy of Judas is portrayed in angry gesture, great exhortations, twisted insinuations and clearly and strongly the unquenchable fire of Jesus'

mission glows through action revelatory of purpose, dedication, faith and a strangely appealing kindness steeled with alertness. The ensemble of six men serves first as the followers of the Jesus-figure, later as a general chorus which carries off the crucified one and torments the traitor as he hangs in death. (293–94)

The Traitor remained in the repertoire of the Limon Company until 1969, and in fact Limón gave his farewell performance in the work. Although the Limón Company advertises the work as available for restaging, there is little documentation of subsequent productions.

The last year that the company performed the work—1969—was, not coincidentally, the year of the Stonewall Rebellion. What is difficult to fathom from a post-Stonewall perspective is how opaque Limón's choreographic closet was to many viewers in the 1950s and 1960s. Today we giggle with smug recognition at the queer subtext of the work, so clearly displayed in the little-known photographer's images. Yet the archive shows that many spectators from the dominant culture did indeed view the work as a dramatization of a biblical story. To be sure, there were spectators from the gay subculture of the time who likely saw other levels of meaning and felt secure that their perceptions were not legible beyond their discreet and discrete circles for gay sociality. So the closet that appears transparent in the decades since Stonewall appeared opaque, or perhaps translucent, in the decades before Stonewall, for the power of a work like *The Traitor* may well have enacted a tension between what was seen and what was not seen. Jill Johnston (1994) suggested as much when she recalled *The Traitor* in the context of the Limón repertoire in the 1950s:

Possibly others looked around them and understood the gender makeup of the classes and company right away. Oh, at some level we all did. . . . Jose was a gay man, what some people now call a queer married man, whose dances were absolutely heterosexual. . . . He did have one outlet in dances he created for his men, in the tradition of Ted Shawn. . . . But no one would have thought that the . . . men in *The Traitor*, playing Apostles, were participating in a homosexual scenario. (95)

In Johnston's memoirs, Limón's choreographic closet was translucent, neither fully opaque ("but no one would have thought") nor fully transparent ("oh, at some level we all [understood]").

In addition to *The Traitor*, my research uncovered other works that were

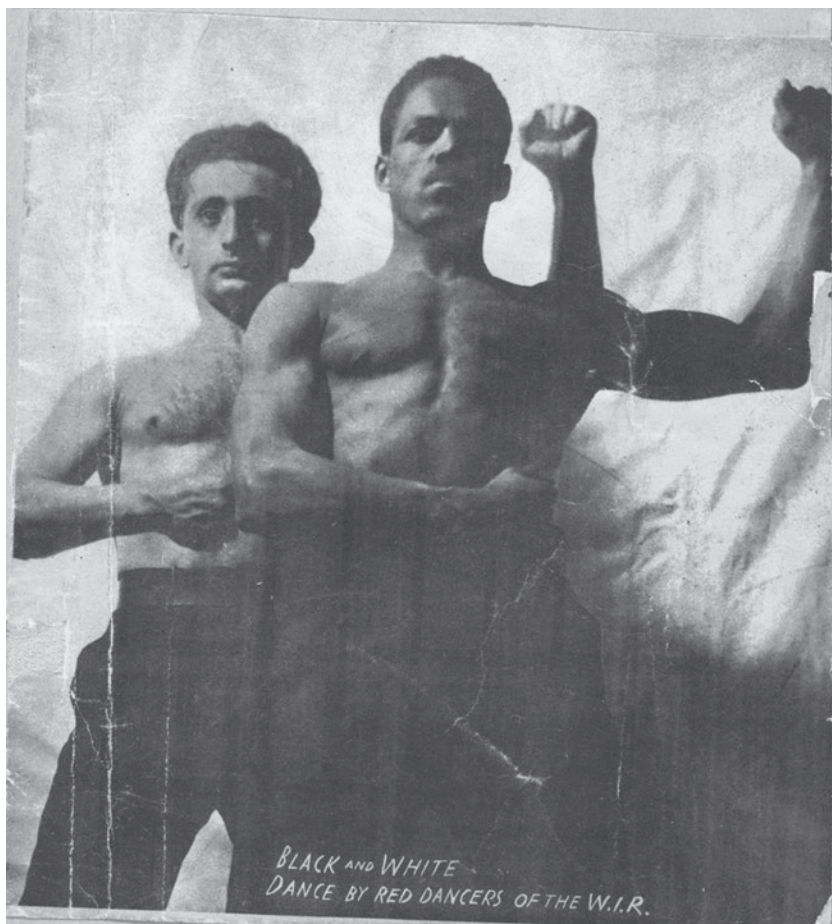


Figure 7. Hy Boris and Add Bates in a pose reminiscent of Edith Segal's *Black and White*. Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

photographed in ways that countered reviewers' accounts. Thus "archives in collision" yielded queer readings of Ted Shawn's *Negro Spirituals*, Katherine Dunham's *Tropics and Le Jazz "Hot,"* and Doris Humphrey's *Day on Earth*. But there were other works featured in *Modern Dance*, *Negro Dance* that reversed the paradigm of *The Traitor* and Shawn's *Spirituals* and where reviewers' accounts suggested a queer reading that photographs did not capture. This was particularly true of "Men in the Dance," two concerts that the New Dance League presented in 1935 and 1936, for which few photographs survive but

which reviewers describe as “queer” and “gay” at a time when the subcultural meanings of both terms were just beneath the surface of common usage. In the context of “Men in the Dance,” even a resolutely masculinist work such as Edith Segal’s *Black and White*, placed last on the program, might have suggested bonds between men beyond socialist brotherhood.

In many ways, Segal’s *Black and White* was the signature work of leftist dance in the early 1930s. Performed dozens, if not hundreds, of times at union halls, political rallies, benefit concerts, and workers’ summer retreats, the dance featured African American dancer Add Bates and Jewish American dancer Hy Boris or Irving Lansky, all members of the Workers Dance League. As the reviewer for the *Daily Worker* described the dance: “With sure performance the Negro and white workers went through rhythmic movements depicting work, speed-up, racial antagonism, then realization of class solidarity. The dance reached a dramatic climax when Negro and white workers join hands in a red front salute” (quoted in Manning 2004b, 57). The action and ending tableau summarized the Communist Party position: that only an alliance between Black and white workers could challenge the twin evils of capitalism and racism (figure 7).

In keeping with communist rhetoric, Segal’s dance *Black and White* implicitly gendered workers as male. This was also true of the Federal Theatre Project and of the numerous murals commissioned by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), as Barbara Melosh demonstrates in *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater*. Hence, as I wrote in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, “it is somewhat startling to realize that Segal first choreographed *Black and White* for herself and another woman, Alison Burroughs” (70). Segal and Burroughs performed the work only a few times in March 1930, including at the “Second Annual Inter-Racial Dance” in Harlem, before Segal recast the work. In an interview decades later, she simply noted “then I decided that [*Black and White*] would be much better done by two men” (quoted in Manning 2004b, 72).

Even more startling is a nude photograph of Segal and Burroughs, which Rebecca Rossen, while still a graduate student at Northwestern, found while going through the Edith Segal Archive at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in 2002. Rossen, now a tenured professor at the University of Texas-Austin, was doing research for her dissertation, which she later revised as the book *Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Post-modern Dance* (2014). When Rebecca sent me the photograph, I immediately knew that it raised more questions than could be answered in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*. Just as Shirlee Dodge’s anecdote about her right arm raising into



Figure 8. Edith Segal and Alison Burroughs in Segal's *Black and White*, photograph by Trui H. Uruma. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

a Hitler salute against her will sets the archive in motion, so too does this photograph of Segal and Burroughs (figure 8).

The questions raised by this photo run from the very specific to the very broad. To start, who was the photographer? His or her name, T. H. Uruma, is embossed on the front of the photograph. Like Wysocki, Uruma was not an established dance photographer of the time, and so far I have not been able to find out anything more about him or her. How was the photo circulated in the 1930s and beyond? It certainly was not published in the public sphere, as were Wysocki's photos of *The Traitor*. Did Segal and Burroughs share this photo with friends or colleagues, or not? Edith Segal surely valued this image, for she kept it with her personal papers. Did Burroughs also preserve the

photo? I have not been able to locate her papers, and there is much less information about her career in the archive than about Segal. From newspaper accounts and other archival sources, I do know that Burroughs studied at the Dalcroze Institute in Geneva, that she collaborated with Edna Guy to present a “Negro Dance Evening” in 1937 at the 92nd Street YMHA, and that she founded the Associated Schools for the Theatre, Dance and Music in Harlem in 1941. I also know that she came from a theatrical family: her father Charles Burroughs had directed W.E.B. DuBois’s 1913 pageant *The Star of Ethiopia*, and her brother Eric Burroughs starred in the New York Negro Unit production *Voodoo Macbeth*.

The photo of Segal and Burroughs is a studio portrait, the two women viewed from the side, their back-to-back geometrical poses recalling the machine aesthetic of the period—and of the choreography of *Black and White*—but not documenting the work. So much of Segal’s archive documents her commitment to communism and the cultural front. What is the relationship between her political and social commitments and this nude portrait of the two women? Is the photo evidence of a subtextual response to women dancing together on the American left, a subtext of same-sex desire? Did Segal’s and Burroughs’ political commitments extend to sexual liberation as well as political liberation? Were circles of women-loving-women in the 1930s drawn to modern dance, similar to how Natalie Barney’s circle and Mercedes de Acosta’s circle were drawn to Isadora Duncan during the first quarter of the twentieth century?

To answer these questions would require a quite different process of archival research than the process that resulted in my book *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*. To date, Susan Foster (1999), Hannah Kosstrin (2017b), and Clare Croft (2020) have undertaken inquiries that illuminate the contributions of women-loving-women to American modern dance from the 1930s through the 1970s, but their research is only a beginning. Differently stated, there are times when contradictions and discrepancies between archival sources yield nuanced interpretations of historical events, and then there are times when “archives in collision” demand entirely new routes for inquiry.

Notes

1. See “Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence”; “White Voices, Black Bodies: Tamiris’ *How Long, Brethren?*”; and “Mary Wigman and Asia: Between Cultural Appropriation and Transnational Encounter” in this volume for examples of how I have used visual images as evidence for movement analysis.

2. For further examples of current thinking on the archive and embodiment in

dance studies, see the essays collected under the keyword Archives in *Futures of Dance Studies*, ed. Manning et al. (2020).

3. Working within the disciplinary frame of theater and performance studies, Diana Taylor inverted the traditional hierarchy of text over embodiment in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003). In so doing, her study located dance within the sphere of the repertoire. This essay shows that dance also exists in the archive and that pursuing dance research in the archive does not necessarily replicate hegemonic readings.

4. This essay amplifies my discussion of Wigman's school in *Ecstasy and the Demon*. Citations are provided for material *not* included in my book. All translations from German not otherwise credited are my own.

5. Nirenska later pursued a career as a choreographer and educator in Washington, DC. For an overview of her career in US exile, see Mozingo 2008.

6. For more on Coolemans, see the essay in this volume, "Wigman and Asia."

7. "Prospectus." 1934. "Die Berufs-Ausbildung," Mary Wigman-Zentralschule, Dresden. Mary Wigman Archive, Academy of Arts, Berlin.

8. "Transcript." 1986. Mary Wigman Conference, Academy of Arts–West Berlin. Mary Wigman Archive, Academy of Arts, Berlin. All quotations not otherwise attributed come from this document.

9. Margrit Bassow, phone interview with author on January 21, 1988. Interview notes in author's collection. See Judith Malina (2012) for an account of the dance training at Piscator's Workshop.

10. Shirlee Dodge, phone interview with author on January 22, 1988. Interview notes in author's collection.

11. For an overview of scholars' explanations for the alliance between German modern dance and the Nazi state, see my 2017 essay "Modern Dance in the Third Reich, Redux," which updates an earlier essay on the same topic titled "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Six Positions and a Coda" (1995).

12. This section amplifies material from *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, most especially my discussion of José Limón, pp. 193–201. All material here is included in my book, with the exception of the listing of publications that printed the photos of Limón's company.

III. Keywords

Whiteness and Blackness

Black Voices, White Bodies

Tamiris's *How Long, Brethren?* (1998)

This essay was first published in *American Quarterly*, and its placement shows my interest in cultivating a readership in American Studies as I was probing the role of race in American modern dance. The title “Black Voices, White Bodies” alludes to Michael Rogin’s 1996 study *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, one of several studies published in the 1990s that invigorated academic scholarship on minstrelsy and its afterlives. When I was an undergraduate in the mid-1970s and graduate student in the early 1980s, minstrelsy felt like a taboo topic, a shameful dimension of US performance history that professional performers had finally abandoned during the civil rights era and that consequently warranted little attention. But then Black artists returned to the tropes of minstrelsy—in Ntozake Shange’s *Spell #7* (1979), George C. Wolfe’s *The Colored Museum* (1986), Bill T. Jones’ *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land* (1990), and Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* (2000)—in order to query the extent to which minstrelsy haunted the American imaginary. And scholars responded to similar currents of thought, inquiring into how blackface minstrelsy had enabled immigrant performers to construct their whiteness and their belonging in the dominant culture, and in so doing project ambivalent feelings of affiliation and alienation from Black Americans.

Although scholars like Rogin focused on popular entertainment rather than theatrical dance, their studies spurred my interest in probing how US modern dance constructed and performed whiteness. As noted in “Choreographing the Classics, Performing Sexual Dissidence,” Isadora Duncan’s allusions to classical Greece and her racist dismissal of ragtime converged to elevate her dancing as a high art, a white art. As noted in “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze,” the Orientalist frames deployed by Ruth St. Denis and Maud Allan reinforced the colonialist distinction between the West and the rest. But how did the generation of modern dance that came of age in the 1930s perform whiteness?

To answer this question, I focused on works by Ted Shawn, Helen Tamiris, Martha Graham, and the Workers Dance League that took up Black subject matter. Although the politics of these artists varied widely—from Shawn’s nativism to the Dance League’s belief in international socialism—they all deployed white bodies as metaphors for Black experience. Hence I coined the term “metaphorical minstrelsy” to describe this performative convention, a convention that relied neither on parody nor impersonation but on gestural allusion, musical accompaniment, and framing devices, such as the title *Negro Spirituals*.¹ This convention was short-lived in the history of modern dance, emerging in the 1930s as white artists addressed Black subject matter as part of their broader turn toward American subject matter and disappearing in the 1940s once Black concert dancers came into their own.²

The argument in “Black Voices, White Bodies” turns on the distinction between plot and spectacle theorized in the essay “The Female Dancer and the Male Gaze.” Whereas the musical accompaniment by a Black choir articulated a plot of Black suffering and anger, the spectacle empowered the white female dancers to generalize the resonances of the music and to embody a universal subject. Hence, I argue, the work countered the more familiar images of women during the decade, “whether an eroticized object of desire, a participant in heterosexual romance, or even a partner in the ‘comradely ideal’ [favored by the Cultural Front]” (100). In my argument, the metaphorical minstrelsy of *How Long, Brethren?* could not be separated from its feminism.

Hence, this essay demonstrates how race joined gender as critical variables in my research. In many ways, my research on race followed the intellectual trajectory that Lee Bebout outlines for “critical whiteness studies” (2020). That is, my understanding of whiteness emerged from the Black intellectual tradition, in my case, from the writings of Toni Morrison and Brenda Dixon Gottschild and the choreography of Jawole Zollar, Bill T. Jones, David Rousseve, and Donald Byrd. Hence my analysis in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance* turned on the Black-white binary, although I also noted the role that Indigenous, Asian American, and Latinx artists and cultures played in the formation of American modern dance. Indeed, my book was intended to enable a more multidimensional and intercultural analysis, and subsequent scholarship has realized this intention. We now can teach the history of American modern dance as a rich interweaving of cultural influences, an interweaving too long buried under the performance of whiteness, but now excavated by scholars’ collective efforts.

Women standing by their men, supporting their men's efforts to effect reform, never claiming their own rights: this is the dominant image of womanhood that Barbara Melosh (1991) discerns in plays staged by the Federal Theatre Project from 1935 to 1939. In her comprehensive study, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater*, Melosh argues that the Federal Theatre Project participated in the containment of feminism evident in New Deal liberalism. Although she cites the plays' celebration of domesticity as a specifically female form of activist citizenship, she argues that this idealization of domesticity "precluded any acknowledgment of the conditions that restricted women's full participation" in the public sphere. Melosh concludes that the Federal Theatre "cast women in revised roles but retained them as supporting players in male narratives of work and politics" (1991, 232).

However aptly Melosh reads the dramatic productions staged by the Federal Theatre Project, her analysis does not extend to the choreographic productions patronized by the project under the auspices of the Federal Dance Theatre. Instituted after modern dancers had protested their absence from the theater project, the Federal Dance Theatre was an even shorter-lived venture than its parent organization. As an autonomous unit, the Federal Dance Theatre existed less than two years, from January 1936 to October 1937, when budget cuts dismantled its administrative structure and reabsorbed its personnel into the Federal Theatre as a whole (O'Connor and Brown 1980, 213–15). Yet during that brief period—and during the brief period thereafter when modern dancers continued to mount works for the project—the dance stage of the Federal Theatre rarely showed a woman standing by her man. Rather, the imagery of 1930s modern dance predominated—images of women figuring the diversity of American life, commenting on social issues, protesting injustices onstage and offstage. If Melosh cannot find feminism within New Deal theater, it is perhaps because she overlooks the choreographic productions staged by the mostly female dancers and choreographers associated with the project, among them Doris Humphrey, Katherine Dunham, and Helen Tamiris.

The undisputed hit of the Federal Dance Theatre was Tamiris's *How Long, Brethren?* Premiered in May 1937, the work enjoyed more critical acclaim and a longer run than any other production sponsored by the Federal Dance Theatre in New York City (Code 1939; Lally 1978, 39–55).³ In *Dance Observer*, an organ of the modern dance movement, Henry Gilfond called *How Long, Brethren?* "one of the most exciting compositions of this or any season" (1937, 68). Owen Burke, reviewing the work for *New Masses*, agreed and described

“a new and enthusiastic audience—not strictly a dance audience, but, on the contrary, people who have never seen in dance anything but incomprehensible gesture” (1937, 28). Since tickets for all Federal Theatre productions were discounted, the audience for *How Long, Brethren?* was more diverse than were audiences for modern dance productions outside the Federal Theatre, typically single performances or short runs aimed at spectators already initiated into the modern dance movement.⁴

Thus *How Long, Brethren?* presented images of women familiar to devotees of modern dance since the early 1930s but unfamiliar to the larger public. Within and without the Federal Theatre, spectators were accustomed to seeing images of women in relation to men, whether an eroticized object of desire, a participant in heterosexual romance, or even a partner in the “comradely ideal” Melosh discerns in so many Federal Theatre plays. In contrast, the modern dance stage rarely defined women in relation to men; rather, the modern dance stage dramatized encounters between a (usually female) choreographer-dancer and an (often all-female) ensemble. In works cast only for women, the female body became a vehicle for choreographic metaphors of social process. Such works—including *How Long, Brethren?*—were feminist in the sense of challenging a centuries-old representational convention that makes men the measure of all things. In 1930s modern dance a collective of women—white women, that is—became the universal subject.

Tamiris, a committed leftist, set *How Long, Brethren?* to African American work songs taken from a recently published anthology by Lawrence Gellert (1936) titled *Negro Songs of Protest*. Gellert, a white writer and researcher also committed to the left, had collected more than three hundred songs on extensive travels through the South, recording performances by African Americans “in city slums, on isolated farms out in the sticks, on chain gangs, lumber and turpentine work camps” (Gellert 1936, ii–iii). Collaborating with composer Elie Siegmeister, Gellert transcribed two dozen of the songs for publication, intending them “to embody the living voice of [an] otherwise inarticulate resentment against injustice” (Gellert 1936, ii–iii).⁵ From these Tamiris chose seven to choreograph. In performance the Federal Theatre Negro Chorus sang the lyrics to orchestral accompaniment, while Tamiris and her all-white, all-female group rendered, according to the program note, “the emotional effects of [the] melodies in a vivid, choreographic pattern.”⁶

The collaboration between Tamiris’s ensemble and the Negro Chorus, one of the groups sponsored by the Federal Theatre Project’s Negro Unit, was unusual in its time. Although Federal Theatre productions typically played to integrated audiences, they rarely brought together Black and white perform-

ers on the same stage (Fraden 1994, 6–7). As Hallie Flanagan, director of the Federal Theatre Project, wrote after seeing the performance: “The dancers are never dully descriptive. They are the dance equivalent of the music. . . . One cannot tell where music becomes movement, where black voices become white bodies. [*How Long, Brethren?*] . . . is a powerful social document on freedom from racial prejudice given, through music and dance, inevitable form.”⁷ In her published memoir of the Federal Theatre Project, *Arena*, Flanagan reiterated her belief that the casting of Black singers and white dancers exemplified “the democratic principle of racial equality” (1940, 199).

Yet from the perspective of the present, the casting raises complex questions regarding the performance of race and gender in the Federal Dance Theatre and in 1930s modern dance. How is one to view its racialized division between Black (male and female) singers and white (female) dancers? It is a question that dance scholars did not ask for more than five decades after the work’s premiere. In *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City 1928–1942*, Ellen Graff (1997) notes that earlier scholars failed to recognize the irony of Tamiris casting white dancers to protest racism. Her study contextualizes the work’s casting not only in relation to the Popular Front, the alliance between communists and liberals launched in the mid-1930s, but also in relation to the alliance of Blacks and Jews within the 1930s left. Graff believes that the majority of Tamiris’s dancers, like the choreographer herself, were first-generation American Jews and, as such, could identify with the systematic racism experienced by African Americans. Graff concludes: “Perhaps they did not dance side by side [with Black dancers,] but many white dancers identified deeply with the Negro struggle, seeing in it a parallel to the entire country’s economic struggle. . . . Revolutionary dancers identified with Negroes because they believed they were members of the same class and because Negro protest songs echoed their determination to take control of their economic lives” (1997, 96). Here Graff echoes the views of many dancers from the period, whose oral history provides an important source for her research. Like the dancers and like earlier scholars, Graff considers *How Long, Brethren?* a masterpiece of leftist dance.⁸

It is not an assessment I dispute, yet I do not believe that oral history and the historical contexts of the Popular Front and an uneven alliance between Blacks and Jews answer all the questions raised by the casting of the work—and other works of 1930s modern dance that cast white women as metaphorical African Americans, such as Tamiris’s solo *Negro Spirituals* and Martha Graham’s *American Document*. Indeed, I would like to ask if the mostly Jewish dancers in *How Long, Brethren?* constructed their “whiteness,”

their assimilation into the dominant culture, through their performance of African American experience, much as Michael Rogin (1996, 73–120) argues that Al Jolson created an assimilated Jewish American identity through his blackface performance in *The Jazz Singer*. Moreover, I would like to ask if 1930s modern dance legitimized the performance of the white female body as high art partly through white dancers' metaphorical blackface. In other words, can the feminism of *How Long, Brethren?* be separated from its metaphorical minstrelsy? The answer, I would suggest, is no. My argument implies that minstrelsy did not disappear after blackface declined as a professional performance practice in the United States, but rather persisted in alternate guises as the Euro-American body continued to serve as a privileged site of circulation for bodies marked as culturally Other. Moreover, my argument implies that the metaphorical minstrelsy of 1930s modern dance legitimized a feminist staging of the white female body.

What follows is a descriptive reconstruction of *How Long, Brethren?* that synthesizes evidence gleaned from archival sources—the musical score, production notes, spectator surveys, photographs, designs, programs, reviews—as well as from oral history and from the video record of a contemporary stage version recreated by Dianne McIntyre in collaboration with three of the original dancers, Pauline Bubrick Tish, Ida Little Arbeit, and Sasha Pressman.⁹ My reconstruction distinguishes between the work's narrative progression—its advocacy of leftist politics—and its embodiment as performance—its interlocked conventions for staging whiteness and Blackness and the collectivity of Euro-American women. As I argue, although spectators in 1937 clearly recognized the leftist politics of the work, they named neither the work's feminism nor its metaphorical minstrelsy. This is not because the work's performance of race and gender did not signify. Rather, the paucity of contemporary comment on the work's casting points toward pervasive conventions that were all the more powerful for remaining unarticulated. It is only in the few instances when spectators did acknowledge what otherwise went unspoken that the historian can read what so many spectators accepted as conventions of representation and performance.

In keeping with the general practice of the Federal Theatre Project, *How Long, Brethren?* employed a large cast and minimal production elements. This distribution of resources was dictated by a rule that stated that 90 percent of Federal Theatre funds should go toward labor costs and only 10 percent toward material costs (Flanagan 1940, 29–30; O'Connor and Brown 1980, 7). Thus *How Long, Brethren?* cast nearly twenty dancers and another twenty singers, not to mention a small orchestra. The production employed simple

ramps and boxes to create distinct spatial levels. Lighting, rather than scenery, set the mood.

Since the nearly twenty dancers occupied all of the stage space, the singers were “seated in the upper boxes at one side of the stage” (Weber 1937, 22), according to a review of the premiere at the Nora Bayes Theatre. When the production was revived at the 49th Street Theatre, the singers were “seated at one side of the orchestra pit” (Lloyd 1938, 12), according to another review. In other words, the Black choir was visible to spectators in the theater. Its individual members, though, were not always named on the program. The first printed program for performances at the Nora Bayes listed the dancers by name, but not the singers. This oversight was rectified by the end of the two-month run at the Nora Bayes, for later programs did list the members of the Federal Theatre Negro Chorus in addition to members of the dance ensemble.¹⁰

How Long, Brethren? divided into seven episodes, each set to a song selected from *Negro Songs of Protest* and orchestrated by Genevieve Pitot, Tamiris’s musical collaborator. The song lyrics provided a narrative pretext for each episode, and taken in sequence the lyrics offered a narrative through-line that carried Tamiris’s leftist critique of American racism. Yet the dances did not simply illustrate the lyrics, but rather abstracted and amplified their meanings. The narrative critique thus existed in tension with its performative elaboration. This tension is crucial to my analysis of *How Long, Brethren?*, for it allows me to contemplate the gap between the leftist critique carried by the musical lyrics and the assumptions about race and gender evoked by the casting.

In the first episode, “Pickin’ Off de Cotton,” the white female dancers moved back and forth across ramps, bent over with their hands placed against the smalls of their backs. As in all the episodes, the choir sang Pitot’s orchestrated version of Siegmeister’s transcription of a song collected by Gellert. Yet Tamiris made a crucial substitution in the lyrics for this opening episode, replacing the use of “nigger” in Gellert’s collection with “darkie.” The Black choir sang:

Pickin’ off de cotton, Hoe-in’ up de corn,
 I’m de lazies’ Darkie Sho as yo’ born . . .
 If Darkie work hahd, He worked out ‘fore long,
 An’ Captain only want him when he stay strong . . .
 De’ hahdes’ workin’ Darkie I ever saw,
 Now goin’ roun’ beggin’ can’t work no mo’ . . .

Laborin fo' white folk, No Matter what I'm doin'
I'm de lazies Darkie Sho' as yo' born.¹¹ (Gellert 1936, 24)

Vivifying the lyrics, the dancers alternated repetitive work-like movements and movements of exhaustion, giving into the body's weight and falling to the floor.

In the second episode, "Upon de Mountain," the choir sang:

Upon de mountain chillun call,
Cain't make a dollah, save mah soul.
Chillun hungry, nothin' to eat,
Git no money, walk in de street.
Ast man Cap-'n cain he use a man.
Use a man, not a skeleton.
How cain ah make, Ah don' know,
Tired of starvin', won' starve no moah! (Gellert 1936, 26)

The song's thematic combination of despair and defiance was visualized by two juxtaposed groups of dancers: on one side of the stage, Tamiris and three other dancers stylized a domestic scene of a mother comforting her three hungry children, while on the other side of the stage, a group of dancers at first stood close together and then one by one stepped out of the line formation, "raising an arm as if demanding food," to quote Tish (1994, 347), one of the dancers in the original production. This line formation reappeared in the ending section, where the choreography again associated the close line with protest.

The third episode, "Railroad," opened with a striking lighting effect of locomotive headlights seeming to approach over a hill and recede. Then out of the darkness a small group of white female dancers became visible, as the Black choir sang:

Workin' on de railroad, fifty cents a day.
De boss at de comp'ny sto' sign all I makes away.
Manny po'ly write, "Please sen' some money, son."
But I ain't got no ready made money . . .
my goddamn black soul I can't send her none . . .
Help to build dat railroad, can't afford no ridin' tag.
Money talks but my bits ain't bits enough to wag.
Walkin' 'long side de track, hungry, wantin' to eat.



Figure 9. "Scottsboro," the fourth episode of Helen Tamiris's *How Long, Brethren?* (1937). Courtesy of the Performing Arts Division, Library of Congress.

Dog dead tired, Shoes wore out . . .
Lawd, burnin' blisters on my feet. (Gellert 1936, 35)

In the fourth episode, "Scottsboro," pulsing lights alternately illuminated and blacked out seven dancers, their eyes blindfolded, their limbs contorted in grotesque fashion. Of all the visual images that survive from the 1937 production, a photograph of this episode (figure 9) best exemplifies the irony of the casting: the collective of white women protest the jailing of the Scottsboro boys, who were falsely accused of rape by white women. In other words, the dancers substituted their white female bodies for the Black male bodies narrated by the lyrics, their angled limbs suggesting a mass lynching that evokes the judicial lynching of the Scottsboro boys. The Black choir sang:

Paper come out, Done strewed de news,
Dat seven po' chillun Moan deat' house blues . . .
Seven nappy heads wit' big shiny eye

All bound' in jail an' framed to die . . .
 Messin' white woman Snake lyin' tale,
 Dat hang and burn and jail wit' no bail. (Gellert 1936, 44–45)

According to the original production notes, the lighting gave the effect of “the smoldering red of fire all over the stage.”¹² The red lighting, obviously symbolic of international socialism, recurred in the final scene.

In the narrative critique sketched by the lyrics, “Scottsboro” marked the turning point. Whereas the earlier episodes had emphasized the double burden of back-breaking labor and heart-rending unemployment, the subsequent episodes moved toward active protest, transforming the experience of mourning—mourning for the lives of the sharecroppers, mourning for the fate of the Scottsboro boys—into revolutionary conviction.

The fifth episode, “Sistern an' Brethren,” brought on stage two groups of mourners along with Tamiris, who alternately blended into the group and assumed a leadership role. Swaying and rocking in unison, the dancers clenched their fists at their sides. The choir sang:

Sistern an' brethren, Stop foolin' wid pray . . .
 When black face is lifted, Lord turnin' way . . .
 We's buryin' a brudder Dey kell fo' de crime . . .
 Tryin' to keep what was his all de time.
 When we's tucked him on under, What you goin to do? . . .
 Wait till it come dey's a rousin' fo' you? . . .
 Stand on yo' feet, Club gripped 'tween yo' hands . . .
 Spill dere blood too, show 'em yo's is a man's. (Gellert 1936, 10–11)

Whereas the lyrics of “Sistern an' Brethren” transformed mourning into violent resistance, the dancing in the subsequent and penultimate episode, “Let's Go To De Buryin,” transformed mourning into energetic celebration, despite the macabre undertone of the lyrics. The choir sang:

Come one, come one, let's go to de buryin' . . .
 Way over in de new buryin' groun' . . .
 Cap'n killed my buddy, let's go to de buryin' . . .
 Way over in de new buryin' groun'. (Gellert 1936, 46–47)

In this episode Tamiris led the other performers in a jazz-inflected dance that was the kinaesthetic high point of the work. As Tish recalled the dance:

Tamiris came out in an almost swashbuckling sideways pattern of arms and legs. She chewed up the space in full-bodied movement phrases, not dancing to the music as much as embodying it . . . Tamiris's chugs and struts moved as quickly as if on air, while digging into the ground at the same time. She seemed to say, "Here I am. Come and join me wherever I go." As the audience responded with wild applause, [the ensemble] danced Tamiris's phrases, coming and going on and off stage. (1994, 348–49)

Confirming Tish's memory, contemporary reviews often noted that this episode brought the audience to its feet.

Clearly, "Let's Go To De Buryin" provided a kinesthetic and emotional release for the spectators, yet the release did not last. For the final episode, the title song "How Long Brethren?" made the spectators confront again the realities portrayed in the earlier episodes. Once again Tamiris substituted "darkie" for the term "nigger" recorded in Gellert's collection. The choir sang:

How long, brethren, how long
 Mus' mah people weep an' mourn? . . .
 So long mah people been asleep,
 white folks plow' darkies soul down deep.
 How long, how long, brethren, how long?
 So long, brethren, so long
 Darkie keep a singin' de same ol' song . . .
 Darkie he jes' patch black dirt,
 de raisin' part of de white man's earth,
 So long, so long, brethren, so long.
 Too long, brethren, too long
 We jus' barely miserin' 'long . . .
 White folk he ain't Jesus, he jes' a man,
 grabbin' biscuit out of poor darkie's hand.
 Too long, too long, brethren, too long. (Gellert 1936, 16–17)

The episode began with Tamiris alone on stage, lunging in place and reaching her arms into space, but rarely moving from her solitary post. Then the dancers entered in close line formation and, rhythmically clenching their fists, moved across the stage past Tamiris and toward a red light in the wings, an action the production notes describe as "marching into a red dawn."¹³ In historical context, the political connotations of the ending are clear: it is the socialist-inspired mass, not the individual, that must take the lead in effecting social change.

The point was not lost on reviewers in 1937, although few went so far as Hazel Huffman, who called the work “communistic propaganda” when she testified before the Dies Committee, predecessor to the House Un-American Activities Committee, during the 1938 hearings that led to the dismantling of the Federal Theatre Project.¹⁴ In 1937 most reviewers interpreted the work not from the perspective of anticommunism but from the perspective of the Popular Front, an alliance between communists and liberals launched in the mid-1930s. In keeping with the politics of the Popular Front, most reviewers understood *How Long, Brethren?* not only as a call for justice for African Americans but also as a call to end social injustice more generally. Consider Margaret Lloyd’s comment in the *Christian Science Monitor*: “[These] modern songs of protest from the present-day deep South . . . focus attention on Negroes, not only as Negroes, but as a symbol of all the oppressed peoples of earth. It may be racial oppression, or religious, or political, but thus focused on one aspect of contemporary life, [the production] becomes in its singularity a poignant reminder of a universal problem” (1938, 12). Like innumerable other examples of Popular Front discourse, Lloyd’s reading of *How Long, Brethren?* emphasizes the link between oppressions based on race, class, and belief and omits the possibility of oppressions based on gender or sexuality.

Interestingly, Lloyd was the only critic in 1937 who publicly associated the politics of the work with Tamiris’s own ethnicity. Asking why the choreographer “felt this sort of creative kinship with the folk songs of another race,” Lloyd suggests that Tamiris’s impoverished childhood “in lower New York” prompted her sympathetic identification with African Americans (1938, 12). (Lloyd does not specifically name Tamiris’s Jewishness but rather lets the reader make the inference from the social location of “lower New York.”) Anticipating the conclusions Ellen Graff draws from oral history, Lloyd understands *How Long, Brethren?* within a cultural logic that asserts an analogy between the experience of Blacks and Jews.

Other reviews read the Popular Front ideology of the work not through the choreographer’s Jewishness but rather through her—and her dancers’—political activism. Two weeks into the run of *How Long, Brethren?* the dancers staged an overnight sit-in at the theater to protest possible funding cuts to the Federal Theatre Project, and this was only one of the dancers’ many publicized acts of political activism. Indeed, the dancers were considered the most radical members of the Federal Theatre Project, and they spearheaded many of the strikes, sit-ins, and picket lines organized to rally support for the project (Graff 1997, 76–104). Reviews of *How Long, Brethren?* often devoted as much space to the sit-in as to the choreography, implicitly associating

the dancers' protest after the performance with their close line formations during the performance "marching into the red dawn."

Reviews that highlight the dancers' after-hours protest exemplify the alliance of the Popular Front, for while some critics called for an overthrow of capitalism, others called only for reform within capitalism. Reviewing *How Long, Brethren?* in *New Masses*, Owen Burke (1937) drew a pointed comparison between structures for artistic patronage in the United States and the Soviet Union:

Dancers can't very well live on the ten dollars they're generally paid per concert. . . . This picture doesn't compare very favorably . . . with the facilities for work and the economic security of artists in the Soviet Union. The upshot of the matter is that dance isn't going to exist as a private industry, and the dancer knows it. . . . A dancer is entitled to be allowed to make a living at his [*sic*] own kind of work dancing, and he intends to do something about it. (28)

In contrast, when Henry Gilfond reviewed *How Long, Brethren?* in *Dance Observer*, he cast his support of the Federal Theatre Project in terms of grassroots nationalism:

If any were ever skeptical of what a Federally subsidized dance group could do, let them get their tickets in advance for [*How Long, Brethren?*] . . . now currently presented by the government of these United States at the Nora Bayes Theatre. . . . So much aware are dancers and audience that they have something worthwhile, something extremely important to the dance and the other arts, in the Federal Theatre, that they are taking no chances of its suddenly disappearing for some false economy that may originate in Washington, or elsewhere. They sat down, audience and dancers, and musicians and singers; spent the night in the theatre—to let the administration know that [they] did not relish the threatened cuts in W.P.A. appropriations because [cuts would] interfere very much with this Federal Theatre that's been a long time in coming, but has come, and should stay. (Gilfond 1937, 67–68)

Agreeing despite their obvious political differences, Burke and Gilfond concurred in their celebration of *How Long, Brethren?* Taken together, reviews and oral history evidence how powerfully the work embodied the alliance of the Popular Front.

There seems little doubt that most contemporary spectators recognized and named the leftist politics of the dance. Yet the evidence suggests that

only a few spectators acknowledged the racialized division of the casting, and even these acknowledgments do not confront the implications of the division between the Black singers of both sexes and the white female dancers. Given the paucity of evidence, does my preoccupation with the casting simply impose recent theorizations of race and gender onto a work where such considerations are, at best, irrelevant? Although I do not deny that present-day interests inform my inquiry, I would argue that my inquiry does illuminate the history of spectatorship in the 1930s. For my research involves not only spectators' articulated responses—in this case, their interpretation of the leftist politics of Tamiris's work—but also spectators' unspoken perceptions—in this case, assumptions about race and gender so widely shared that they were only occasionally voiced.

Underlying the casting of *How Long, Brethren?* were two sets of interrelated assumptions. First was the emergent convention of 1930s modern dance that a collective of female dancers could figure the body politic rather than compose an eroticized chorus line. Although widely accepted by the dance press and by elite newspapers such as the *New York Times*, this convention was mocked on occasion by both the popular press and the Black press as high-art pretension. For example, newspaper accounts in the popular press of the dancers' activism on behalf of the Federal Theatre Project often carried photographs of dancers in practice clothes with captions such as "WPA dancers, on hunger strike, sun themselves at Federal Theatre." Mocking this mockery in turn, *Federal Theatre Magazine* carried a cartoon showing men ogling female dancers from box seats in the theater and saying, "Look it, I'm paying 55 cents for standing room and a week ago I could have seen the same dancers on the picket line for nothing."¹⁵ That the Federal Theatre publicity department was not above using some viewers' presumed interest in exposed leg for its own purposes is evident in the photograph of the closing section "How Long, Brethren?" Catching a glimpse of this photograph in a newspaper (and it was widely reproduced), the casual reader would not have realized that the ending actually advocated mass action and Popular Front ideology as solutions to American racism.¹⁶

The second convention underlying the casting of *How Long, Brethren?* had a much longer history in American culture, originating in the nineteenth-century practice of blackface minstrelsy and persisting in early twentieth-century theater, film, and dance in altered form. During the 1930s minstrelsy took such diverse forms as Fred Astaire's blackface number, "Bojangles in Harlem," in *Swing Time* (1936); Langston Hughes' casting of a blackface actor in the 1935 Broadway production of *Mulatto*; and modern dance works that

eschewed blackface but deployed what I term metaphorical minstrelsy. In *How Long, Brethren?* and related works of 1930s modern dance the Euro-American performer still maintained the privilege of representing the culturally Other, while the African American performer still labored under the limitation of representing white folks' images of Black folks. The reception of *How Long, Brethren?* reveals an explicit awareness of this doubled convention of racial representation only intermittently, suggesting how widely shared were its assumptions.

My point is that modern dancers such as Tamiris deployed metaphorical minstrelsy in order to legitimize their challenge to traditional images of the female dancer. By refusing to traffic in erotic self-display and instead engage the subject matter of African American experience, the women in Tamiris's company—and the choreographer herself—gained artistic authority. In other words, representing the Other conferred “whiteness”—aesthetic legitimacy—on the female body. At the same time, representing the Other may well have conferred social legitimacy on the immigrant, working-class, Jewish body. In either case, the racialized division of the casting—the substitution of white female bodies for the Black bodies referenced by and referencing (singing) the lyrics—ensured that the performance both cited and transcended its explicit subject matter. While the Black singers of both sexes lent authenticity to the voices transcribed in Gellert's *Negro Songs of Protest*, the white female dancers generalized the applicability of the lyrics beyond the experience of African Americans. Or so the performative logic of the work suggests.

Among all the reviews published of *How Long, Brethren?*, the only two to challenge the casting appeared in the Baltimore *Afro-American* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Black newspapers with national circulations. How the newspapers came to report on Tamiris's dance is an unresolved chapter in the stage history of the work. Based on a press release sent out by the Federal Theatre Project, Black newspapers across the country announced that Tamiris's company was scheduled to appear in *How Long, Brethren?* for a limited engagement in late January 1938 at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, headquarters of the Negro Unit in New York City. Oddly, the scheduled performances never seem to have taken place, for reasons that remain unclear. Perhaps a protest on the part of the Negro Unit or the Harlem community led to the cancellation of the performances, a protest that left no archival traces.¹⁷ What is clear, however, is that two of the half-dozen Black newspapers announcing these dates registered dissent against the racialized division of the casting.

Interestingly, the two dissenting reports made their point through photo spreads, juxtaposing pictures of the white dancers and Black singers and

thereby implying a dissonance between the white dancers' performance and Black musical practice. The *Afro-American* superimposed a photo of Eva Jessye's Black choir over a photo of Tamiris and the dancers in the episode "Sistern 'n Brethren." Headlined "Spirituals Interpreted from Two Viewpoints," the superimposed photographs carried the caption: "How do you like your spirituals? Here are two contrasting interpretations. In the oval (lower right) is the orthodox singing as portrayed by Eva Jessye's choir of *Porgy and Bess* fame. But the young woman at the left is Tamiris and her ensemble appearing in *How Long, Brethren?* who has set the spirituals to dance rhythm from the viewpoint of the People's Theatre."¹⁸ Given the choice between the Black choir and the white dancers, what reader of the *Afro-American* would have chosen the latter over the former? The photo spread exposed the metaphorical minstrelsy of *How Long, Brethren?*, the work's substitution of the white female dancer for the Black subject.

The photo spread in the *Pittsburgh Courier* made the same point.¹⁹ Under a photograph of four of Tamiris's dancers bending from the waist and extending their limbs in dancerly poses, the caption read: "Illustrations which demonstrate 'Negro art' which won Dance Magazine's award for the best color choreography of 1936-37. You are looking at the 'physical expressions' of certain 'Negro Songs of Protest' which will be presented next week as a dance drama at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem by white members of a WPA art project. The dance above is supposed to protest conditions among Negro industrial workers and sharecroppers in the South." (1938, n.p.) Creating a visual and verbal pun, the captioned photograph poked fun at the *Dance Magazine* award (mistakenly noted in the headline as the award for "best solo choreography," whereas it actually was bestowed for "best group choreography") by renaming it the "award for best color choreography." Another photograph of Tamiris and the three dancers representing her hungry children in "Upon de Mountain" carried the laconic caption: "another dance of protest."

And the final photograph, the only extant image of the Federal Theatre Negro Choir in *How Long, Brethren?*, ran over a caption that stated: "The cast is all white with the exception of a Negro chorus directed by Bob Moman which will supply the vocal interpolations when the dances are offered to Harlemites next week."²⁰ Seemingly reporting the facts in a straightforward fashion, the caption slyly pointed up the marginality of the choir by terming its contribution "vocal interpolations." Taken together, the photo spreads in the *Afro-American* and *Pittsburgh Courier* demonstrate that Tamiris's asymmetrical staging of whiteness and Blackness—the unspoken assumption that the Euro-American body could represent Black experience, while the African

American body could only represent Black experience—was *not* universally accepted in 1937. Juxtaposed against the pervasive silence surrounding the casting of *How Long, Brethren?*, the photo spreads expose assumptions all the more powerful for remaining otherwise unspoken.

Outside the Black press, one of the few voices to call attention to the racialized casting of Tamiris's leftist masterpiece was an anonymous viewer who responded to an audience survey distributed during the first week of the production's run at the Nora Bayes Theatre. Identified only as a "writer," the spectator queried, "Why not Negro dancers?"²¹ From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is an obvious question and demands a response. One plausible answer is that the Federal Theatre Project segregated its personnel. Thus the all-white ensemble under Tamiris's direction contrasted the all-Black ensemble under the direction of Momadu Johnson at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem. (Johnson's 1936 production *Bassa Moona* was widely praised in the dance press.) Yet it seems that segregation was more *de facto* than *de jure*, for Charles Weidman's company under Federal Theatre sponsorship included Add Bates, an African American dancer who earlier had performed in works by Edith Segal, a choreographer associated with the Communist Party. In fact, Bates took the role of the general in Weidman's production of *Candide* presented on the same program as the premiere of *How Long, Brethren?*

Fanya Geltman, one of the dancers in *How Long, Brethren?* and one of the most politically active members of Tamiris's ensemble, recalls her attempt to recruit Black dancers for the Federal Dance Theatre: "[Add Bates] was our—unfortunately, as I would say it today, our 'token black.' We were very, very proud of him. But we did very much want black dancers. In fact, when I was getting people on relief, I wanted black dancers. There weren't too many, but we got some."²² Although Geltman recalls that "there weren't too many" Black dancers, research by John Perpener has uncovered the work of a number of African Americans trained in modern dance during the 1930s (Perpener 2001).

As proof in point, just two months before the premiere of *How Long, Brethren?* a group of African American modern dancers had presented a "Negro Dance Evening" at the Young Men's Hebrew Association on 92nd Street. The program, performed only once, closed with a collaboratively created work based on Gellert's *Negro Songs of Protest*, cast for two women and four men. Edna Guy contributed the choreography for the opening section "How Long, Brethren?"; Clarence Yates for a song that Tamiris did not choose from Gellert's collection, "Cause I'm a Nigger"; and Alison Burroughs for the closing "Scottsboro." Thus the all-Black version began rather than ended with the

plaintive lyrics of “How Long, Brethren?”: “How long, brethren, how long/Mus’ mah people weep an’ mourn?” The work then moved to the provocative lyrics of “Cause I’m a Nigger,” signifying on the racist slur that Tamiris two months later masked with the term “darkie”:

You take mah labor
 An’ steal mah time,
 Give me ol’ dish pan
 An’ a lousy dime,
 ‘Cause I’m a nigger, dat’s why . . .
 I feel it comin’, Cap’-n,
 Goin’ to see you in God-damn,
 Take mah pick an’ shovel,
 Bury you in Debbil’s lan’
 ‘Cause I’m a nigger, dat’s why. (Gellert 1936, 42–44)

The work then ended with the confrontational lyrics of “Scottsboro”: “Messin’ white woman / Snake lyin’ tale, / Dat hang and burn and jail wit’ no bail.” In other words, the all-Black *Negro Songs of Protest* compelled spectators to interpret the dancing literally as a call for justice for African Americans, not metaphorically as a call to end social injustices of varying hues. The Negro Dance Evening was perhaps the most audible of the dissident voices sounded in 1937 to the racialized casting of Tamiris’s leftist masterpiece.

Within a few years, however, the convention of Black self-representation, just becoming visible at the time of the Negro Dance Evening, became prevalent in American modern dance. As I argue in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b), the shift from Black self-representation as an emergent to a dominant convention occurred around 1940. At the same time metaphorical minstrelsy lost its representational hold, leftist politics largely disappeared as subject matter, and mixed-sex companies replaced the single-sex companies that had typified 1930s modern dance. These interrelated changes all responded to the changed cultural climate of the Second World War, persisted during the Cold War, and informed the canonization of American modern dance in the postwar era.

How Long, Brethren? did survive in the canon as a high point of leftist dance. Yet from my perspective, its significance lies as much in its linking of metaphorical minstrelsy and feminism as in its advocacy of Popular Front politics. Tamiris’s work vivifies how 1930s modern dance legitimized the performance of the white female body as high art in part through extend-

ing the legacy of minstrelsy. Not the performance practice of blackface, but the representational convention that enabled the Euro-American body to circulate identities marked as culturally Other. Reconstructing *How Long, Brethren?* complicates the history of spectatorship in the 1930s. For Tamiris's determination to cast a collective of (white) women as the universal subject challenges Melosh's contention that the Federal Theatre Project contained feminism. And Tamiris's deployment of metaphorical minstrelsy extends the discussion that Rogin has initiated on "New Deal blackface" in movies such as Fred Astaire's *Swing Time*, Shirley Temple's and Bill Robinson's *The Little Colonel* and *The Littlest Rebel*, and Mickey Rooney's *Babes in Arms* (Rogin 1996, 162–91). As Rogin argues, blackface movies functioned to construct white (assimilated Jewish American) male subjectivity. In contrast, the metaphorical minstrelsy of 1930s modern dance authorized the artistry of white female bodies. It is a conjunction that should not be overlooked in accounts of 1930s culture.

Notes

1. Both Tamiris and Shawn titled works *Negro Spirituals*. See Mannng 2004a.
2. Although I coined the term "metaphorical minstrelsy" to characterize this short-lived performance convention, other scholars have broadened the usage of the term. See Danielle Robinson (2015), Hannah Schwadron (2018), and Brynn Shiovitz (2023).
3. Premiered on May 6, 1937, at the Nora Bayes Theatre, *How Long, Brethren?* was revived in July at the Maxine Elliott Theatre and in December at the 49th Street Theatre. Tamiris's work was performed more than forty times and seen by more than twenty-four thousand spectators.
4. Ticket prices for *How Long, Brethren?* at the Nora Bayes and Maxine Elliott ran from \$.25 to \$.55, roughly comparable to movie admissions at the time. At the 49th Street Theatre, balcony tickets still cost \$.25, while orchestra tickets reached \$1.10. By way of comparison, ticket prices for Martha Graham in 1937 ran from \$.75 to \$2.20 and for the New Dance League, the collective of leftist dancers, from \$.35 to \$2.20. During this period the best seats on Broadway cost from \$7 to \$9.
5. Gellert earlier had published accounts of his collecting in *New Masses* (1930, 1931, 1932) and in Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology*. For discussions of Gellert's work within the context of 1930s music, see Cantwell (1996, 93–95) and Lieberman (1989, 30–39, 50–63). For more recent scholarship probing the reception of Gellert's collection, see Garabedian (2020). Gellert's field recordings are housed at the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University.
6. Scripted for the premiere, the note disappeared from most subsequent programs once the publicity for the work took over its task of orienting viewers to the relation between Gellert's collection and Tamiris's choreography.

7. Hallie Flanagan, "The Dance and the Modern Theatre," typescript dated May 14, 1937, Federal Theatre Collection, National Archives.

8. In *Tamiris: A Chronicle of Her Career, 1927–1955*, Christena Schlundt (1972) praises the work and its "conjunction of Tamiris the artist with her theme of the suffering Negro" as "the high tide of . . . the Federal Dance Theatre" (1972, 42). Helen Thomas reiterates Schlundt's assessment in *Dance, Modernity and Culture* (1995, 122–25). Historians of Black concert dance also have cited *How Long, Brethren?* as a significant precedent. For example, in *The Black Tradition in Modern Dance*, Richard Long (1989) notes that in "the use of Black motifs . . . it was still Helen Tamiris who . . . overshadowed other dancers with her monumental composition for the Federal Theatre, *How Long, Brethren?*" (1989, 53). None of these studies before Graff probes the racialized division of the casting.

9. Primary sources are housed at the Performing Arts Division, Library of Congress; National Archives; Special Collections, George Mason University Library; and at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. I would like to thank Dianne McIntyre for granting me permission to view the video record of her stage production, which immeasurably enriched my own research. Featuring an integrated all-female cast, McIntyre made the morally responsible decision *not* to reproduce the original casting. Indeed, McIntyre believes that Tamiris would have cast the work similarly had she had access to African American dancers. Thus it must be emphasized that my analysis refers only to the 1937 production, not to McIntyre's brilliant recreation. For further information on McIntyre's production, commissioned by the Federal Theatre Festival at George Mason University, see Kriegsmann (1991); Jackson (1991); Kisselgoff (1993); and Anderson (1995). A video of the 1995 production, performed by the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, may be viewed at the American Dance Festival Archives at Duke University and at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The 1995 production was Labanotated, and a clip from the second section, "Upon de Mountain" is posted on YouTube.

10. "Program Files." n.d. Performing Arts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; "Program Files." n.d. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

11. Inserts printing the lyrics inserted into many, but not all, programs show the substitution.

12. "Production Notes." n.d. Performing Arts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The production notes are unsigned. They may well be Tamiris's directives to Feder, a lighting designer credited on the program for the revival at the 49th Street Theatre.

13. "Production Notes." n.d. Performing Arts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

14. Huffman's allegations were based on the fact that lyrics from Gellert's *Negro Songs of Protest* had been printed earlier in *New Masses*. United States Government 1938.

15. "Cartoon." 1937. *Federal Theatre Magazine*. Special Collections. Northwestern University, Evanston.

16. Interestingly, the editors of *American Quarterly* also selected this image for the cover of the issue where this essay originally appeared.

17. A search of the relevant correspondence files at the National Archives yields no documentation of why the announced performances did not take place. There is, however, suggestive circumstantial evidence in the archives and in the press: ongoing complaints from the African Dance Unit at the Lafayette that they were not given enough production opportunities; pride in the fact that the Lafayette operation included only one white employee, a female secretary; and anger that a white man was "temporarily" put in charge of the entirety of the Harlem WPA in February 1938.

18. "Spirituals Interpreted from Two Viewpoints." *Afro-American*. January 29, 1938. Clippings file, Federal Theatre Project. National Archives, Washington, DC.

19. "Examples of 'Negro Art' Which Won Dance Magazine's Award." *Pittsburgh Courier*. January 15, 1938. Clippings file, Federal Theatre Project. National Archives, Washington, DC.

20. "Examples of 'Negro Art' Which Won Dance Magazine's Award." *Pittsburgh Courier*. January 15, 1938. Clippings file, Federal Theatre Project. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

21. "Audience Survey, *Candide* and *How Long Brethren*, 6–13 May 1937." 1937. Audience Survey Files, Federal Theatre Project. National Archives, Washington, DC.; for an overview of the audience research undertaken by the Federal Theatre Project in 1936–1937, see O'Connor (1985, 171–83).

22. "Transcript of 1977 Interview with Fanya Geltman Del Bourgo." 1977. Special Collections. George Mason University Library, Fairfax.

Watching Dunham's Dances, 1937–1945 (2005)

“Watching Dunham’s Dances, 1937–1945” continues the story of race and American modern dance started in the previous essay. Comparing the reception of two concerts in New York City—the “Negro Dance Evening” staged in 1937, a collaborative effort among several Black choreographers, among them Katherine Dunham, and Dunham’s own break-out success from 1940, *Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot”*—this essay demonstrates how the choreographic strategies that Black choreographers innovated during the 1930s transformed and became more broadly legible after 1940. This resulted from a number of social and artistic changes; among them, my argument highlights the possibility for spectators to cross-view Dunham’s dances and, in so doing, learn to read Dunham’s performance of diaspora.

A longer version of this essay was first published in 2001 in *Textual Practice*, a British journal then edited by Alan Sinfield, and a shorter version was prepared for *Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham* (2005), co-edited by VèVè A. Clark and Sara E. Johnson. I had met Sinfield when he was a distinguished visiting professor of English at Northwestern in 1997, and his adaptation of Raymond Williams’ cultural materialism empowered me to further develop the method for dance studies. I had reached out to Clark, a professor of Caribbean literature who had compiled an earlier version of *Kaiso!* (1978), when I first began researching Dunham, and her 1994 essay cited at the beginning of this essay laid the groundwork for my own readings.

My research focused on Dunham’s reception in New York City, an urban center that many dance histories have taken as emblematic of the nation. As the introduction to *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b) noted: “I do not mean to endorse the practice of writing the history of dance in New York City as the history of American dance. Or, perhaps more accurately, I do so with the awareness that future histories of dance in other urban centers may well qualify my conclusions” (xxv). Now that I have embarked on researching Chicago dance histories, I can attest that the “history of dance in other urban centers” does indeed “qualify my conclusions.”

In contrast to the New York reception of the 1937 “Negro Dance Evening,” Dunham’s choreography presented in Chicago during the 1930s was legible to a broad range of theatergoers, both Black and white. *L’Ag’Ya* (1938), the work that arguably crystallized Dunham’s choreographic style, was a featured production of the Federal Dance Theatre in Chicago, premiering the same year as Ruth Page’s *Frankie and Johnny*. And both dances deployed fusion movement vocabularies, in contrast to the stripped-down modernisms favored by Helen Tamiris, Martha Graham, and their peers in New York City. In other words, the performance of race in the Federal Dance Theatre differed from city to city.¹

My larger point is that we now have a sufficient body of research on Dunham to contextualize her work in local, national, and global contexts. Dunham’s dances in Chicago during the 1930s, in New York during the late 1930s and early 1940s, on tour across Europe, Latin America, and Asia from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, and in East Saint Louis from the mid-1960s through the early 1990s carry different meanings for different audiences. As the parameters for modern dance history shift from the national to the local and the global, we can follow artists across a wider range of contexts and networks. And this is not just true of Dunham, but of her predecessors, contemporaries, and successors as well—a point that the subsequent section on “Nationality and Globalization” will make clear.

In a seminal essay published in 1994, “Performing the Memory of Difference in Afro-Caribbean Dance,” VèVè Clark wrote that Katherine Dunham’s “transformations of indigenous Caribbean, African American, and South American dances challenged her dancers, audiences, and critics to develop their dance literacy as they appreciated the changing same” (Clark 1994, 202). Here I would like to historicize Dunham’s challenge to her viewers to ask how and when spectators learned to read Dunham’s performance of diaspora. Or, more precisely, how and when spectators from different social locations learned to read Dunham’s “memory of difference.”

In so doing, I adopt a cultural materialist approach that attends to conditions of production and reception and interrelates social and artistic change. From this perspective, the years surrounding the Second World War constitute a paradigm shift in representations of race in American concert dance. Although leftist dance in the 1930s had patronized Black artists to a greater extent than did the modern dance associated with Bennington, both leftist dance and modern dance relied on assumptions about the generalizing power of white bodies that created a critical conundrum for Black dancing

bodies. After 1940, mobilization for war distanced civil rights activism from leftist culture, and this realignment enabled Black dancing bodies to acquire new meanings as signs of diaspora. Dunham's dances played a powerful role in this process of social and artistic change.

Like other Black concert dancers during the 1930s, Dunham had to improvise patronage at the interstices of leftist culture, elite Black culture, commercial and noncommercial theater, and an emergent American ballet and modern dance. In fact, Dunham's affiliation with leftist culture took her from Chicago to New York in September 1939. Two and a half years earlier she and her company had made a one-time appearance at the Young Men's Hebrew Association on Ninety-second Street, where they joined with other Black dancers to present a "Negro Dance Evening." A producer for the Labor Stage had seen the concert, and he remembered Dunham when he was looking for a choreographer for the 1940 edition of *Pins and Needles*. The Labor Stage performed at the Windsor Theatre, a small Broadway house. Taking advantage of her new position, Dunham booked her own company at the theater for a Sunday performance, which was such a hit that the company repeated the Sunday performances for another ten weeks. In theatrical lore these concerts, titled *Tropics and Le Jazz "Hot,"* constitute the turning point of Dunham's career. For the next twenty years Dunham managed to keep her company afloat—and for a shorter period, her school—from income generated in the commercial theater.

What I want to probe is how and why the spectatorship of Dunham's dances so radically changed from the 1937 "Negro Dance Evening" to her 1940 production of *Tropics and Le Jazz "Hot"* and subsequent runs in New York during the war years. When Dunham first presented dances based on her ethnographic research as part of the "Negro Dance Evening" only one Black critic and one leftist critic recognized what the concert organizers so clearly intended: to narrate the Black Atlantic through dance. When Dunham returned to New York three years later and appeared at the Windsor Theatre, her performance of diaspora became legible to a broader spectrum of theatergoers. Strikingly, only a few leftist critics dissented from the general acclamation, disappointed by what they perceived as the artist's retreat from social protest.

Through the war years Dunham's performances drew audiences that, according to her own estimate, were nine-tenths white and one-tenth Black (Lowe 1943, 8B). Watching Dunham's dances, critics and audiences engaged in the dynamics of cross-viewing, the possibility for spectators to catch glimpses of perspectives conditioned by subjectivities and social identities that differed from their own. It is my contention that spectators

learned to read the performance of diaspora in part through the experience of cross-viewing.

For the 1937 "Negro Dance Evening," Dunham collaborated with Edna Guy, Alison Burroughs, Clarence Yates, and Asadata Dafora. An advance flyer clearly announced the artists' intent to narrate the Black Atlantic. However familiar this genealogy for African American dance became after the late 1960s, this was the first iteration in print that I know. The flyer stated:

The program commences in Africa. This is to make immediately apparent to the audience the roots of the dancing in the Americas today. Then the scene goes across the ocean in slave ships to South and North America, and we see what becomes of the African in feast dances, war, religious and love dances. As generation succeeds generation of black folks, the memory of a free life based on hunting and farming becomes more and more vague. But the black builders of the New World must sing and dance in order to forget the awful misery of their new life which seems to hold no future. The third part of the program brings us to the present day. There is no more chattel slavery, but life is still difficult. . . . And then comes the contribution of the contemporary Negro artist.²

Although the advance publicity clearly articulated the frame of the Black Atlantic, it was less forthcoming about a second frame for the concert, the "contribution of the contemporary Negro artist" in terms of social protest. The first half of the evening opened with African dances choreographed by Asadata Dafora, moved to West Indian dances choreographed by Dunham, and closed with dances based on the Ring-Shout and Cakewalk choreographed by Clarence Yates. The second half of the evening, titled "Modern Trends," opened with solos by Guy, Burroughs, and Dunham and then presented a female duet and trio choreographed by Guy to the accompaniment of spirituals. The evening culminated in two dances of social protest: Dunham's *Tropic Death*, which cast Talley Beatty as the fugitive from a lynch mob, and a collectively choreographed work titled *Negro Songs of Protest*. Set to lyrics collected by Lawrence Gellert, the final work moved from a collective lament against injustice ("How Long, Brethren?") to a daring threat of violent resistance ("Cause I'm a Nigger") to a specific protest against the fate of the Scottsboro Boys.³ A photograph from the *Daily Worker* shows three male dancers in the final "Scottsboro." Displaying the separation of torso and pelvis characteristic of West African dance, the dancers performed social protest with an Africanist accent.⁴

Only one critic from the dance press bothered to review the concert. Ignoring the advance publicity, the reviewer for *Dance* reiterated the limiting conceptions of Black dance widely in evidence during the 1930s. Overall, the reviewer found “the combinations of primitive and French or American cultures” in the dances by Dunham, Guy, Burroughs, and Yates less effective than Dafora’s African dances, described as “short—almost single phrases—and authentic.” In other words, although the reviewer recognized the intercultural fusion in Dunham’s dances, the reviewer favored Dafora’s dances, because “primitive as they were, they contained a natural design which [sprang] truly from the people’s imaginations” (“Negro Dance Evening” 1937, 32–33). Thus the white critic credited the value of Dafora’s dances to an essential naturalness in Black dancing bodies.

This was one-half of the critical conundrum encountered by Black concert dancers in the 1930s. On the one hand, if Black concert dancers staged themes perceived as Africanist, then white critics considered them “natural performers” rather than “creative artists.” On the other hand, if Black concert dancers staged themes perceived as Eurocentric, then white critics considered them “derivative” rather than “original artists.” In 1931 John Martin wrote in the *New York Times* that “it is not in these dances which echo and imitate the manner of the dancers of another race that the Negro dancers are at their best, but in those in which their forthrightness and simplicity have full play” (1931, 27). Yet Martin never chided modern dancers or leftist dancers for making references to “another race,” which was an accepted convention in works from the 1930s that I have termed metaphorical minstrelsy. The most spectacular example was Helen Tamiris’s *How Long, Brethren?*, set to the same collection of *Negro Songs of Protest* as the closing dance of the “Negro Dance Evening.” Commissioned by the Federal Theater Project, Tamiris’s work premiered three months after the “Negro Dance Evening” and received rave reviews. Accompanied by a Black choir, the white dance ensemble protested the conditions of African American life, and only a few commentators found the configuration odd. Hallie Flanagan, director of the Federal Theater Project, spoke for many when she noted “One cannot tell where music becomes movement, where black voices become white bodies. *How Long, Brethren?* . . . is a powerful social document on freedom from racial prejudice.”⁵ Given the widespread acceptance of metaphorical minstrelsy among modern dancers, leftist dancers, and their audiences, it is no wonder that most white dance critics overlooked the “Negro Dance Evening.”

Not so the Black critic who reported on the concert in both the *New York Amsterdam News* and the *New York Age*. Attuned to the frame of the Black

Atlantic, the critic described the evening as “an illustrative survey of the Negro dance from its origins in Africa to its present-day trends in America.” Downplaying the dances of social protest, the critic singled out solos by the female dancers—Guy’s *After Gauguin* and her rendition of *How Long, Brethren?*, Burroughs’ *Composition*, Dunham’s *Biguine-Biguine* and *Moorish Dance*. Thus the Harlem critic implicitly linked artistry not only to the performance of diaspora but also to female bodies in motion (“Crowd at Negro Dance Recital: Folk Dances of Many Lands Featured in Dance Recital” 1937, 9; “An Interim of Dancing: Negro Dance Recital Enthralls Audience” 1937, 13).⁶

The critic for the *Daily Worker*, Louis Mitchell, also recognized the concert’s performance of diaspora. Yet, not surprisingly, the leftist critic reversed the valuation of the Harlem critic. Whereas the Harlem critic had praised *After Gauguin*, *Composition*, and *Moorish Dance*, Mitchell considered these works limited by their “studio influence.” In contrast, he considered Dunham’s antilynching dance, *Tropic Death*, “most successful for dramatic projection” and *Negro Songs of Protest* “moving” and “a new source of dance material.” Not insensitive to the frame of the Black Atlantic, Mitchell lamented the omission of jazz dancing from the program. Yet he clearly valued most the concert’s culmination in social protest (Mitchell 1937, 7).

When Dunham returned to New York three years later with *Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot,”* she adapted the frame of the Black Atlantic from the “Negro Dance Evening.” Significantly, she dropped overt dances of social protest and added jazz dancing. Her 1940 program began with dances based on Latin American and Caribbean sources and then moved to dances based on African American sources from nineteenth-century “plantation and minstrel dances” to twentieth-century jazz dances.⁷ Although she did not script an extended program note, most white dance critics perceived her performance of diaspora. Not that they changed their preconceptions overnight, but it is clear that watching Dunham’s dances in 1940 altered white critics’ perceptions of Black dancing bodies.

One example will have to stand for many. In the *New York Times* Martin applauded Dunham’s reliance on the “[rich] heritage” of Negro dance. Although he disparaged the integration of ballet into her intercultural movement vocabulary, he perceived an artistic authority in Black concert dance that he had not seen before. Martin wrote, “To sit before a program such as this is to be impressed both with the existence of a constant element in it that is different from all other types of dance and with the great range and variety with which that constant element manifests itself” (1940, 2). Although Martin never used the term diaspora, he perceived a “constant element” in Dunham’s dances that later commentators would term “Africanist.”

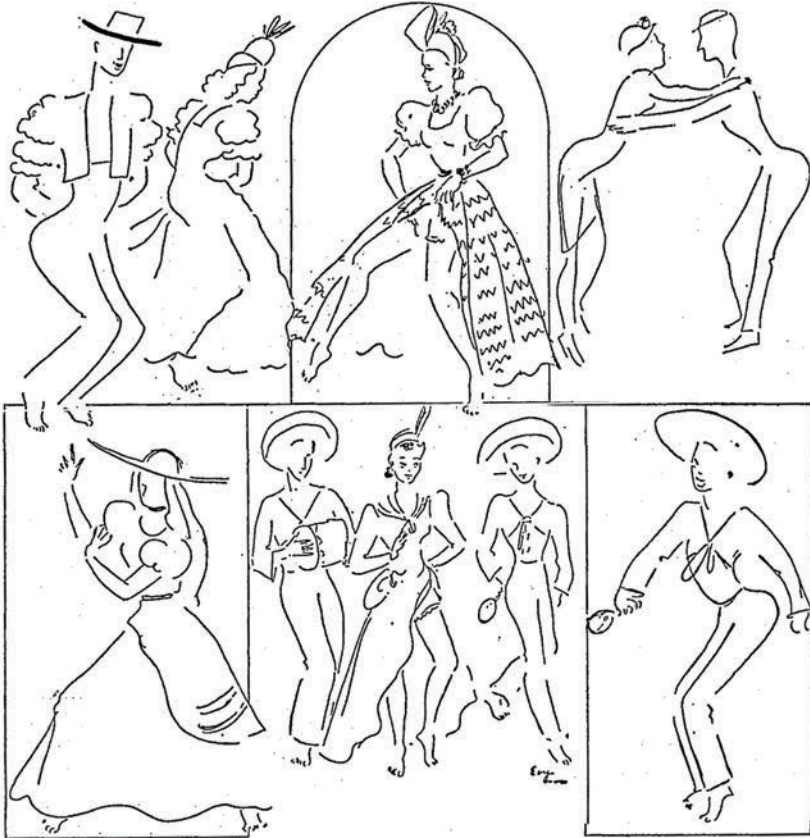
Amplifying the response of the reporter for the *Amsterdam News* and the *New York Age* three years earlier, critics from the national Black press reveled in Dunham's success. In *Opportunity*, Blanche Matthias narrated her response in the first-person plural: "From the beginning we were electrified, joyfully so. . . . Each time we returned to see Katherine Dunham and her group we were filled with wonder. The spirit which made gesture an art of glittering possibility, or of spontaneous reaction to just life with its magic yeas and nays, when that life meant love and story, plantations, hot jazz, rumbas, boleros, and was suddenly turned into a reason for being" (1941, 112–13). Like Martin's "constant element," Matthias's "reason for being" articulates the performance of diaspora. For many white critics, Dunham's 1940 concerts resolved the critical conundrum they earlier had scripted for Negro dance. For many Black critics, Dunham's 1940 concerts realized the potential of Negro dance that they had barely glimpsed before.

Strikingly, the leftist press in New York registered less admiration for Dunham's extended run at the Windsor than did the Black press and white dance press. The dance critic for *TAC*, a journal published by the left-wing Theater Arts Committee, wrote, "When Miss Dunham has her eye cocked on musical comedy, her numbers fall into the all too obvious patterns of white man conceptions of Negro dancing" ("Katherine Dunham" 1940). Where many Black and white critics had seen the performance of diaspora, this leftist critic saw the performance of minstrelsy. Yet not all leftist critics agreed. Writing in *People's World*, a communist paper published on the West Coast, John Pittman believed that Dunham's "social significance" was self-evident, because "the themes of her dances stem from the folk life of Negroes and of the peasant colonial peoples of Latin America and the Pacific."⁸

Of course, the few critics quoted here do not represent the views of all critics who recorded their impressions of Dunham's company on its nonstop tours across the United States. Nor do all the critics represent the views of all the spectators who flocked to see Dunham's company during the war years. Although it is clear that many Black and white critics learned to read Dunham's performance of diaspora, it is equally clear that many spectators were drawn to the eroticism of Dunham's performances. For some spectators, Dunham's dances reinforced stereotypical images of sexy Black female bodies, what a reporter for *Time Magazine* described as "a great scalawaggery of shimmying, shagging, rowdy flashing of black eyes and brown legs, a lively wigwagging of rumps" ("Anthropology, Hot" 1940, 32).

For other spectators, Dunham's dances presented legibly queer images. Here the evidence for dissident spectatorship is less direct than the unabashed account of dominant spectatorship in *Time*. Consider the line

A View of the Dunham Dancers



Action sketches of the Negro dancers in Katherine Dunham's group suggest the gay good spirits of "Tropics and le Jazz Hot," the program which brings to a close the popular series of Sunday evenings with the Dunham dancers at the Windsor Theater

Figure 10. "A View of the Dunham Dancers," from the *New York Herald Tribune* (April 28, 1940). Courtesy of Northwestern University Library.

drawings that accompanied Walter Terry's rave review of *Tropics and Le Jazz "Hot"* in the *New York Herald Tribune* (figure 10). Did the caption describing the "gay good spirits" of Dunham's company carry more than one meaning for queer spectators, Terry included? Did the male dancers' jutting hips signify as gay as much as Africanist? Other evidence supports the possibility of a queer reading. Archie Savage, Dunham's frequent partner onstage, belonged to Carl Van Vechten's interracial gay social circle (Kellner 1987, 205).⁹ Gordon Heath, a gay Black actor, remembered Dunham's company as "the highest prancing

camp in the business" (Heath 1992, 59). And George Chauncey's oral history confirms the reputation of the Dunham Company as one center for gay life in Harlem during the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰

Here as elsewhere in my research, it is easier to recover gay male spectatorship of Black dance than lesbian spectatorship, and the same holds true for modern dance. Were lesbians simply less drawn to Black dance and modern dance than were gay men? Or is lesbian spectatorship less evident in the archive because it existed along a continuum with straight feminist spectatorship? Consider the example of *Tropics: Shore Excursion*, one of Dunham's signature works. The dance dramatized an encounter between Dunham, the "Woman with the Cigar," and Savage, a dock hand whom Dunham "meets . . . [and] flirts with" but who "has a date down the road"—in the words of one critic (Buckle 1949, 2–3). Yet countering this narrative frame (or perhaps extending the narrative for spectators who knew the company's reputation) was the spectacle of Dunham as the "Woman with the Cigar." On the one hand, the cigar alludes to the religious practices of Santería, a fusion of Yoruban and Catholic practices that originated in Cuba (Hagedorn 2001, 205, 216).¹¹ On the other hand, Dunham based the dance on Caribbean market women known as Madame Saras, market women who often supported "wives."¹² Photographs of the dance show Dunham clenching a cigar between her smiling lips (figure 11). Clearly an allusion to fellatio and just as clearly an allusion to a butch femme, the image fused heteronormative with queer eroticism and both with the performance of diaspora. Like the male dancers' jutting hips in the line drawings published in the *Herald Tribune*, the image of Dunham as the "Woman with the Cigar" carried both Africanist and queer connotations.

To return to my earlier query: What accounts for the radically different reception of Dunham's choreography in 1937 and from 1940 to 1945? First, and most obviously, the decline of leftist culture. Leftist spectators had applauded not only the "Negro Dance Evening" but also Tamiris's *How Long, Brethren?* because in different ways both events realized the ideal of interracialism, the belief that only an alliance of Black and white activists could dismantle the doubled legacy of capitalism and racism. But the rhetorical conjunction of socialist solidarity and ethnic self-representation came apart during the war years. Or, perhaps more accurately, ethnic self-representation came to stand for socialist solidarity, as exemplified by John Pittman's review of Dunham in *People's World*.

Second, and less obviously, wartime mobilization initiated a transition from the gay world that took shape earlier in the century to the era of the closet that descended after the war. As Chauncey has demonstrated, the gay world used new spaces in the urban landscape—public parks, rooming houses,



Figure 11. Katherine Dunham as the Woman with the Cigar in *Tropics: Shore Excursion*. Courtesy of Katherine Dunham photograph collection, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

entertainment districts—to enable the expression of same-sex desire in ways that were boldly legible to insiders and not necessarily illegible to outsiders. In contrast, the era of the closet created discreet and discrete spaces for gay sociality (Chauncey 1994). During the war years the transition from the gay world to the closet was particularly clear within the military, which for the first time made homosexuality grounds for deferment or discharge but which also prompted legions of gay men and women to experience what Allan Bérubé (1990) has described as “coming out under fire.” The home front was equally contradictory, as massive geographic dislocation of civilians gave men and women, gay and straight, new opportunities for sexual expression. At the same time popular culture and government policy bombarded civilians with the rhetorical ideal of traditional domesticity, the return to normalcy promised and realized at war’s end (May 1996, 128–43). During these years civilians and soldiers on leave queued in long lines to see Dunham’s company. Did they recognize in her dual performance of heteronormativity and queerness something of their own contradictory experiences during wartime?

Third, and most importantly, mobilization for war accelerated the momentum of the civil rights movement, as the Double-Victory campaign linked the fight against fascism abroad with the fight against racism at home. In a very real way, Dunham's appearances furthered the Double-V campaign. Touring across the country, her company at times found itself booked into theaters with segregated seating, a situation that demanded that Dunham decide whether to stage a protest or not.¹³ In October 1944 Dunham addressed an audience in Louisville that a Black journalist estimated as nearly a quarter Black:

Right now war is being fought. People the color such as we are . . . giving our lives, and we come to a city like this and find that we cannot have our people seated among you because of color. I will have to say that it is impossible for us to return to you . . . as much as we would like, since we see by your response you would like us to come back. But we cannot appear where people such as ourselves cannot sit next to people such as you. ("Dunham Denounces Kentucky Jimcra" 1944, 28 quoted in Beckford 1979, 69)

Within the week the theater in Louisville had changed its policy on ticket sales, and within the year the United States had won the war.

Playing mostly in integrated theaters across the country through the war years, Dunham demanded that her audiences experience cross-viewing. Of course, Black spectators long had experienced one-way cross-viewing, sitting in the balcony and watching white spectators watching Black performers. But integrated houses introduced two-way cross-viewing, where Black and white spectators watched each other watching. It is my contention that spectators learned to read the performance of diaspora in part through this two-way exchange.

Dunham's performances also encompassed another form of cross-viewing, where queer spectators saw what straight spectators saw but also saw another layer of meaning. Dunham did not necessarily reverse this established pattern for spectatorship, a pattern introduced by the gay world and continued by the era of the closet. Thus a work like *Tropics*, featuring Dunham as the "Woman with the Cigar," participated in an established dynamic for cross-viewing.

In effect, Dunham's wartime performances layered a new dynamic over a pre-existing dynamic for spectatorship. What resulted was a complex range of responses, many of which remain beyond the reach of historical research. Yet the evidence makes clear that watching Dunham's dances changed many spectators' perceptions of Black bodies in motion and that these new per-

ceptions encompassed queer bodies in motion. In other words, theatergoing changes the ways people interpret the social meanings of physical bodies. For those who were looking, Dunham's dances made legible the performance of diaspora and of Black sexual dissidence during the war years.

Notes

1. Caroline Shadle, a PhD student at Northwestern, has embarked on research exploring dance productions staged by the Federal Dance Theatre in Chicago.

2. "Publicity Flyer." 1937. "Negro Dance Evening," March 7, 1937. Young Men's Hebrew Association, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York.

3. "Program." 1937. "Negro Dance Evening," 1937. Young Men's Hebrew Association, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York.

4. This photograph is reprinted in *Modern Dance, Negro Dance* on p. 99.

5. Hallie Flanagan, n.d. "The Dance and the Modern Theatre." Federal Theater Collection. National Archives, Washington, DC. For an extended discussion of metaphorical minstrelsy and *How Long, Brethren?*, see "Black Voices, White Bodies" reprinted in this volume.

6. Essentially the same review appeared in both newspapers, leading to the conclusion that one critic wrote both.

7. "Program, Katherine Dunham and Dance Group." April 7, 1940. Windsor Theater, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York. In *Katherine Dunham: Dance and the African Diaspora* (2017) Joanna Dee Das emphasizes the difference between the temporal arc of the 1937 program and the revue format of *Tropics and Le Jazz Hot* and in so doing tactfully questions my reading. I take her point, although I define the Black Atlantic in both temporal and spatial terms, similarly to how she defines diaspora.

8. John Pittman, 1942. "Dunham Dance Group Returns for Another San Francisco Triumph." *People's World*, January 3. Dunham scrapbook, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York.

9. In a letter to Hugh Laing dated August 8, 1944, Van Vechten wrote, "If you see Archie Savage, send me all the dirt. Is he free again? What did he do with the \$10,000 etc?" (quoted in Kellner 1987, 205).

10. George Chauncey, 1999. Personal communication with author. When Chauncey first shared his research with me, I assumed the company's reputation relied on the sexuality of several leading male dancers. But his informants had told him about Dunham's own fluid sexuality, a fact confirmed by Das (2017), who acknowledges that Dunham was "publicly heterosexual, but had multiple relationships with women" (8).

11. My thanks to Deborah Thomas for drawing my attention to Santería as an obvious referent. 2001. Personal communication with author.

12. VèVè A. Clark, 2000. Personal communication with author.

13. In this regard, Das (2017) corrects the historical record, noting that Dunham did agree on occasion to perform in theaters with segregated seating, for she had to be strategic about when and where she could stage a public protest (1–2, 96–98). Although there is no comprehensive study of how US theaters desegregated seating, it is clear that many theaters did not integrate seating until after the Second World War (Manning 2004b, 224, note 11).

Reggie Wilson and the Making of *Moses(es)* (2019)

Writing about Reggie Wilson differed in significant ways from my earlier publications. Whereas my revisionist histories of German and American modern dance relied on archival research and oral history, my essays on Wilson resulted from participant observation, first as a passionate spectator of his work and then as a dramaturge for the work under discussion here, *Moses(es)*, premiered in 2013 and toured over the next two years. My intention in writing about Wilson and his full-evening work was to bring more visibility to his artistry. Hence I was writing as a critical advocate, not as a historian, although my account contextualized his work within the history of American theater dance from the 1970s to the early twenty-first century.

This essay compares my spectatorial response to the published analysis of Black critic and scholar Carl Paris, thus documenting what I have called cross-viewing. Yet the reception of Wilson's work goes beyond cross-viewing in terms of race. In an extended essay not reprinted here, "On the Making of *Moses(es)*: Notes from a Dramaturg's Journal," I surveyed colleagues and friends in Chicago and realized that their differing responses could not be reduced to racial differences. In fact, the only variable that correlated with differences in spectatorship was religious background, namely, the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish viewers. In the end, I characterized the reception to *Moses(es)* as "Rorschach viewing," that is, spectators "finding meanings in the work that reflect their own preoccupations and interests" (2015a, 51).

"On the Making of *Moses(es)*: Notes from a Dramaturg's Journal" appeared in a cluster of essays that I contributed in 2015 to *TDR: The Drama Review*.¹ Most of my writing for the cluster took place in spring 2014, during a residency at the Institute for Interweaving Performance Cultures affiliated with the Free University in Berlin. The essay reprinted here draws material from the *TDR* cluster and was published in an anthology featuring essays by fellows at the institute, titled *Movements*

of *Interweaving: Dance and Corporeality in Times of Travel and Migration* (Brandstetter et al. 2019). Hence my use of the term “interweaving” carries a special resonance in this essay, for it was the central concept of the institute, a research paradigm that asserts that “performance cultures refuse to be captive to nationalist theatrical imaginaries or hostage to hierarchical tyrannies of tradition.” As Homi Bhabha, a member of the institute’s Advisory Board, reflected on the institute’s decade of activities, “theatrical transformations . . . occur as a result of the mobility of symbolic action,” “[following an] itinerant itinerary . . . in the ongoing processes of cultural movement” (quoted in *Interweaving Performance Cultures* 2018, 5).

When I highlight the “interweaving of Africanisms and postmodernisms” (146) in Wilson’s work, I am gesturing toward this research paradigm for globalizing and decolonizing dance research. Despite this gesture, my essay contextualizes his work only within a US context. In fact, Wilson’s collaboration with artists from Africa and the Caribbean was one of several influences that had pushed me to see the global circulation of modern dance. Although his “itinerant itinerary” is not foregrounded in this essay or in the cluster of essays in *TDR*, it is an essential component of his career and invites further inquiry.

“Postmodern Katherine Dunham.” That is what I wrote in my performance journal in 2003 after first seeing Reggie Wilson and his Fist and Heel Performance Group at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. The work was titled *Black Burlesque (revisited)*, a collaboration between Fist and Heel; Black Umfolosi, a company of Zimbabwean musicians and dancers founded by Thomeki Dube in 1982; and the Noble Douglas Dance Company Inc., a contemporary ensemble founded in 1985 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Creating the work over a period of seven years, members of all three companies had traveled back and forth between southern Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States, sharing dance and music. Watching *Black Burlesque (revisited)*, I found it impossible to disentangle what was “traditional” and what was “contemporary,” what was “Africanist” and what was “postmodernist.” Wilson’s collaborative work seemed to recall and revise the choreographic canon. Whereas Katherine Dunham’s programs in the 1940s and 1950s had staged the African diaspora as a historical movement from Africa to the Caribbean to the United States, Wilson and his collaborators staged the diaspora as endlessly circulating elements across the Black Atlantic.

Let me define my terms: by “Africanisms” I mean qualities such as polycentrism and polyrhythm, angularity and asymmetry, dynamic suggestion, and an “aesthetic of the cool,” qualities that—as artists and scholars from Zora Neale Hurston and Melville J. Herskovits to Robert Farris Thompson and Brenda Dixon Gottschild have argued—migrated with peoples of African descent to the New World.² By “postmodernisms” I mean choreographic devices such as pedestrian movement, task-oriented choreography, improvisation, chance procedures, repetition, referentiality, separation of music and dance, and inclusion of text and media that artists and scholars from Jill Johnston and Yvonne Rainer to Sally Banes and Susan Foster have identified as generating cutting-edge dance performance from the 1960s to the present.³ Encountering Wilson’s work for the first time challenged my preconceptions, for what I had considered separate categories of Africanisms and postmodernisms collided, colluded, and collapsed in my viewing of his work. I was enthralled and immediately became a fan.

After that first encounter, I saw Wilson’s work as often as possible, and for a three-year period from 2011 to 2014, I served as dramaturge for *Moses(es)*, a full-evening work premiered in 2013 at FringeArts in Philadelphia and subsequently shown at leading venues for contemporary dance in the United States. As dramaturge, I acted as Wilson’s sounding board and research assistant and as a writer who could document the making of *Moses(es)* through participant observation. This essay writes Wilson into the dance canon.

Writing as a critical advocate, I hope to avoid what I have accused others of doing when writing on contemporary performance: flattening the complexity of earlier choreographers’ works in order to highlight the originality of a present-day artist. In fact, I am not arguing for Wilson’s originality *sui generis*, but for how he remixes elements of earlier practices of postmodern dance and Black dance. As a young choreographer, Wilson entered the arena of US dance at a time of tension and debate between advocates of Black Dance, artists who came of age with the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and Black postmodernists, young choreographers in the 1980s who found the construct of Black Dance constricting.

As I will argue, Wilson’s signature choreography for Fist and Heel Performance Group mediates the tension between Black Dance and Black postmodernism, a tension that has lessened over time but is still evident today. Like the proponents of Black Dance, Wilson looks to African and African diasporic dance for inspiration. Yet he understands Black vernaculars in the plural, never in the singular, and he is attuned to the admixtures of diverse cultures

in vernacular traditions. Like the Black postmodernists, Wilson looks to Judson Church and its progeny for compositional devices. Yet his postmodern sensibility has always coexisted with his commitment to a majority-Black company. In his own words: "Early on I committed to Fist and Heel as a company of primarily, or predominantly, brown-skinned and Black dancers. And to problematize what that is supposed to mean. If I have a didactic soapbox, it's that to be Black or African-American is much more complicated or complex than one thing, much more complicated and complex than the conversation or dialogue often allows. Black is also human, even more so."⁴

Wilson's choreographic approach negotiates between Black Dance and Black postmodernism by redeploying the research-to-performance methodology that Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham, and Pearl Primus innovated at midcentury. Here I am drawing on VèVè Clark's formulation of a research-to-performance methodology in Dunham's work in the late 1930s and 1940s, a methodology that reperforms ethnographic research as the embodiment of cultural memory (1994). Yet unlike his midcentury predecessors, Wilson does not translate his ethnographic research on African diasporic dance into theatrical spectacles that function as facsimiles of the dances in their originating contexts. Rather, he treats his research as found movement, source material for his postmodern compositional sensibility. What results are works that challenge spectators' preconceptions about race, culture, and identity.

In the United States, the term "Black Dance" emerged in the late 1960s to designate the aesthetics and politics of dancers affiliated with the Black Arts movement, the cultural arm of the Black Power movement. Summarizing the Black Arts aesthetics, Larry Neal proclaimed: "The black artist must link his work to the struggle for his liberation and the liberation of his brothers and sisters. [...] The artist and the political activist are one" (1968, 655–56). In 1970, Carole Johnson founded the monthly journal *The Feet*. The inaugural issue set out an ambitious list of goals, including creating more employment for Black companies, taking dance performances into Black communities, developing an archive on Black dancers and choreographers, and helping Black colleges find teachers. A subsequent issue defined the term "Black Dance" as:

Any form of dance and any style that a black person chooses to work within. [...] Since the expression "Black Dance" must be all-inclusive, it includes those dancers that work in: 1) the very traditional forms (the more nearly authentic African styles); 2) the social dance forms that are indigenous to this country which include tap and jazz dance; 3) the various contemporary and more

abstract forms that are seen on the concert stage; and 4) the ballet (which must not be considered solely European). (quoted in DeFrantz 1999, 91)

During the late 1960s and 1970s, all these forms of Black Dance flourished in the United States. Proponents of Black Dance delineated a continuum of diverse forms premised on the transmission and transformation of African expressive practices in the New World. In 1983, the Brooklyn Academy of Music staged a four-day symposium and festival titled *Dance Black America* that, in retrospect, marks the high point of the movement.

Yet not all artists and critics who attended *Dance Black America* concurred with the Black Arts manifesto. In fact, a cohort of young Black choreographers in New York City had already registered their dissent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These artists were part of a larger cohort of Black artists who came of age after the civil rights movement and after the Stonewall rebellion, and in the midst of second-wave feminism and gay liberation. For many in this cohort, the Black Arts' emphasis on a shared racial and, to a lesser extent, class identity ignored other axes of difference, most especially gender and sexuality. For these artists, the explosion of Black Arts had created a new set of expectations that felt nearly as suffocating as earlier stereotypes had felt to their predecessors.⁵ Prominent among these young choreographers was Bill T. Jones, whose exploration of same-sex desire in duets with his Italian-Jewish partner Arnie Zane forced open a closet in the late 1970s, a closet that had protected many choreographers from homophobia at midcentury.

Given his heightened visibility, Jones was absent from a program of young Black choreographers that Ishmael Houston-Jones curated in 1982 at *Danspace*, a leading venue for postmodern dance in New York City. Titled *Parallels*, the program featured, among others, Blondell Cummings, Ralph Lemon, Bebe Miller, and Gus Solomons Jr. In a program note, Houston-Jones explained his rationale for the title, claiming: "If there is an implicit 'message' to be gotten from this series, it is that this new generation of black artists—who exist in the parallel worlds of Black America and of new dance—is producing work that is richly diverse" (2012, 20). Note how Houston-Jones opposed the lowercase "black artists" with the uppercase "Black America," an opposition that pointed toward young Black choreographers' subtle defiance of the expectation that their works have a "message" (also in quotes in Houston-Jones' quiet manifesto) in accord with Neal's proclamation.

Given the subsequent careers of so many of the artists featured in *Parallels*—not to mention the festival and publication commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the concert—it is hard to fathom the intensity of the

reaction sparked by the young Black postmodernists in the early 1980s. Solomons recalls appreciating how the concert “acknowledged me for being a black choreographer working outside the ‘black mainstream’—read Alvin Ailey heritage—instead of criticiz[ing me] for not being ‘black enough,’ as I often was back then” (Houston-Jones 2012, 49). Lemon comments: “I was never invited to any of the black dance conferences that meet annually [. . .] I suppose I am not considered a ‘black dance artist’” (2000, 35). Alongside Bill T. Jones, the cohort of Houston-Jones, Solomons, Lemon, and their peers challenged the reigning conception of Black Dance.

Yet it was not only the young postmodernists’ challenge to the Black Arts consensus that some commentators found disturbing, but also how white critics had deployed the term “Black Dance.” In 1988, Zita Allen wrote at length about the contested meanings of the term:

What is “Black Dance”? Is it Alvin Ailey’s racially-mixed company in his soul-stirring masterpiece *Revelations*, but not American Ballet Theatre’s performance of his more abstract ballet *The River*? Is it Dance Theatre of Harlem’s percussive, pelvic thrusts in Geoffrey Holder’s *Douglas*, or its distinguished adaptation of the Romantic ballet *Giselle*, or the company’s crisp neoclassicism in George Balanchine’s *Concerto Barocco*? [. . .] Is it works whose themes reflect the unique Afro-American experience, like Donald McKayle’s *Games*, Talley Beatty’s *Road of the Phoebe Snow*, or Eleo Pomare’s *Blues for the Jungle*, but not more abstract works by these same choreographers? [. . .] Does the label apply to works by Bill T. Jones, Ralph Lemon, Bebe Miller, and other experimentalists who emphasize form more than content and make no thematic reference to the broad-based Afro-American experience? [. . .] Or, is “Black Dance” just an empty label devised by white critics to cover that vast, richly diverse and extremely complex area of dance they know nothing about? Does “Black Dance” really exist? And, if in fact it does, just who is qualified to define it? (1988, 22)

Just one decade earlier, Carole Johnson had confidently penned “an all-inclusive” definition of Black Dance, but for Zita Allen the term seemed another way for dominant US culture to distort Black cultural expression. In fact, these divergent perspectives clashed at Dance Black America, and the controversy led participants Brenda Dixon-Stowell (later Dixon Gottschild), Sally Banes, and Julinda Lewis to organize a seminar six months later titled, after Langston Hughes, “You’ve Taken my Blues and Gone: A Seminar on Black Dance in White America” (Dixon-Stowell 1984, 37).

In fall 1985, Wilson moved from his hometown of Milwaukee to New York to attend the intensive three-year, year-round professional dance training program at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. During the mid-1980s, the conflict between advocates of Black Dance and proponents of Black postmodernism was at its peak, and it did not take long for Wilson to sense the strife. He recalls, "It wasn't my fight," but a fight among his elders. Yet Wilson says that observing how Black postmodernists ten to fifteen years his senior negotiated this minefield impacted his own career decisions. In retrospect, Wilson feels "very glad to have come up in New York" in the late 1980s, when "Black choreographers in New York had such different approaches—Bebe Miller, Jawole Zollar, Ralph Lemon, Bill T. Jones, David Rousseve and Marlies Yearby were all working downtown. Their wide range of examples gave me the permission to make work I wanted to make, didn't have to fulfill a Black Dance checklist." At the same time, Wilson recalls the impact of white postmodernists on his emerging approach and aesthetic. He notes, "As influences, I would single out Laura Dean, Lucinda Childs and Meredith Monk for their formalism, use of repetition, and vocal work."⁶

It is my contention that the choreographic method Wilson developed negotiated the tension between Black Dance and Black postmodernism by redeploying the research-to-performance methodology Black choreographers had developed at midcentury. Traveling to the Mississippi Delta to research the Shout, to Trinidad and Tobago to research Spiritual Baptists and Shangoists, to urban dance clubs and to more than fifteen countries in Africa to research contemporary dance, Wilson unwittingly retraced the travels of Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham, and Pearl Primus from the 1930s through the 1960s. Rather than attempt to recreate the originating milieus for African and African diaspora dance, however, Wilson's works gesture equally toward contemporary urban life in the United States and toward imaginary diasporas. His movement carries multidimensional resonances, evoking but never quite fulfilling our imagination of Africanist cultures. In his choreography, evocative gestures fuse with grounded weight and propulsive rhythms to create a signature style that is virtuosic but not dancery; rather, his dancers look like people who share a world, while each remains distinct from the others.

This almost-but-not-quite-evocation of Africanist cultures results from his distinctive rehearsal process. In the studio, Wilson treats his ethnographic research as found movement subject to manipulation through postmodern choreographic devices, and the resulting choreography looks nothing like the found movement. Yet an aura, fragmentary and partial, remains. Nor is eth-



Figure 12. Dancers' imperious gesture evokes the princess commanding her serving women in the biblical story that forms one of many sources for Reggie Wilson's *Moses(es)*, photograph by Christopher Duggan at Jacob's Pillow. Courtesy of Christopher Duggan.

nographic research on African and African diasporic forms the only source of found movement in the studio. For *Moses(es)*, for example, his found movements included sequences from a Yupik traditional performance group he met while on a teaching residency in Alaska and from the K-Pop music video sensation *Gangnam Style*. He also used "hyperliteral gestures" created by his dancers. For *Moses(es)*, the dancers created one hyperliteral gesture sequence based on the story of Miriam putting the baby Moses in the river and the princess's attendants retrieving the baby from the river, and another based on the ten plagues Moses unleashed on the Egyptians in order to free the Hebrews (figure 12). Other passages of found movement came from Wilson's earlier work, including his 1998 duet *The Overwhelming Scenario* and from a work by Ohad Naharin, *Innostress* (1983), which Wilson had learned as a young dancer in Naharin's New York-based company from 1988 to 1990. (In fact, Wilson credits Naharin with modeling how to effectively recycle one's own choreography.)

Wilson also departs from his midcentury predecessors in his employment of music. Significantly, Katherine Dunham often had drummers accom-

pany her company classes, rehearsals, and performances, thus recreating the intimate relation between drumming and dancing found in many parts of Africa. Like his peer postmodernists, Wilson eschews the use of live drumming. Rather, in class and in rehearsal Wilson has the dancers perform to a wide variety of recorded musical accompaniment: house, sabar, show tunes, soul and gospel, folk music from varied cultures. Only later does he decide what music goes with what movement. Some matches came quite early in the process. For example, at the showing at the end of the first studio residency in June 2012, a section called “Droppings” (based on the hyperliteral sequence of the baby Moses story) was performed to *The Klezmatics*, and this pairing became constitutive of *Moses(es)*. Other musical selections came late in the process, such as the version of “Go Down, Moses” sung by Louis Armstrong that opens the work. And just as with his movement material, Wilson often recycles music from one performance to another. So, the Ngqoko Women’s Ensemble, an ensemble of Xhosa women from South Africa that accompanied Wilson’s previous work titled *the Revisitation*, reappears in *Moses(es)*. Watching the work, it feels like the music and dance were born together, but in actuality, the dance comes first, and the music develops along a parallel but separate track and is added later.

Whereas found movement has long served Wilson as a starting point in the studio, he discovered a new device for organizing movement while making *Moses(es)*. In fall 2011, he came upon a book that fascinated him, Ron Eglash’s *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (1999), and asked if I could find a mathematician to help him understand the concept of fractals. This is how Jesse Wolfson became involved as a consultant on *Moses(es)*, and from the very first studio residency in June 2012, Wolfson consulted with Wilson on how fractals might be used to generate and organize movement.

As Wolfson explained to the company, there are many types of symmetry, including reflection symmetry (two halves of a face or two dancers mirroring one another’s movements), rotational symmetry (a wheel turning), and translational symmetry (the repetition of tiles in a floor pattern). Fractal symmetry, in contrast, is generated through scaling or adjusting the spatial size, length in time, volume, or other variables of the pattern; snowflakes are a classic example of fractal symmetry. In Western mathematics, fractals were first identified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although they did not become a significant topic in contemporary mathematics until Benoit Mandelbrot coined the term “fractal” in 1975. Since then, fractals have helped mathematicians understand dynamic systems, such as storm systems or whirlpools, and they are also used in computer design.

In *African Fractals*, Eglash demonstrates that for centuries African cultures have applied the principles of fractal geometry in building houses and fences, decorating fabrics and pottery. Even African systems of divination reveal fractal patterns. This thesis galvanized Wilson and led him to ask whether African music and dance also embody fractal patterns, which can unfold in time as well as in space. Wolfson assisted him in this analysis and outlined various types of fractals, such as the Koch curve and the Fibonacci sequence. During the company's regular rehearsals in New York, Wilson then used these concepts to create additional movement sections. Yet the fractal patterns are no more evident upon viewing *Moses(es)* than the sources in found movement, for both become transformed by Wilson's choreographic method.

Encountering Eglash's work, Wilson wondered how fractals might relate to his long-term interests in multiples (myriad Moseses, for example), tangents (the associative links between diverse research topics), and accumulations and recursions (compositional devices in both Africanist and post-modern dance). While finalizing my research for Wilson, I wondered whether Zora Neale Hurston's definition of asymmetry in her 1934 essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression" in fact describes fractals. Hurston has long been an inspiration and model for Wilson, and her novel *Moses, Man of the Mountain* served as one of many sources for *Moses(es)*. As Hurston writes:

Asymmetry is a definite feature of Negro art [. . .] It is the lack of symmetry which makes Negro dancing so difficult for white dancers to learn. The abrupt and unexpected changes [. . .]. The presence of rhythm and lack of symmetry are paradoxical, but there they are. Both are present to a marked degree. There is always rhythm, but it is the rhythm of segments. Each unit has a rhythm of its own, but when the whole is assembled it is lacking in symmetry. ([1934] 1969, 35, 41)

In one sense, "the presence of rhythm and lack of symmetry" exactly describes Wilson's choreography. Were fractals present all along in his work, and did his consultation with Wolfson enable him to name this pattern? Or did the consultation with Wolfson enable Wilson to develop a heightened density and complexity in this work? From my perspective, both propositions are true.

As spectators enter the theater, they see a large pile of shiny, silver, Mylar tinsel jumbled onstage, alongside a red suitcase. If they are acute listeners, they hear a recorded voice, oddly high-pitched, over the rustle of the audience chatting, settling in their seats, flipping through their programs. The



Figure 13. Reggie Wilson stuffs silver tinsel into a red suitcase in the opening section of *Moses(es)*, photograph by Kevin Monko. Courtesy of Kevin Monko.

program points out that rereading Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* prompted Reggie to create the work, although it does not identify the oddly high-pitched voice telling folktales as Zora's, from a radio interview.⁷

The voice fades, lights dim, and Reggie enters downstage right, wearing a white jumpsuit—not sleek, more like worker's overalls—and red Converse sneakers. Standing and looking out at the audience, Wilson shifts slightly from one foot to the other, smiles, crosses his arms, takes out a red print handkerchief and wipes his forehead, pushes his hands deep into his pockets and then takes them out again. Finally, he announces: “Reggie Wilson, Fist and Heel Performance Group,” and moves center stage, kicking through the tinsel and pushing piles to either side, creating a pathway for the performers who now enter, one after the other, costumed in a patchwork of red and white polka dots. Each pauses to address the audience, before turning and walking across the diagonal pathway to the opposite corner. The eight performers recite their names, birthplaces, and how long they have performed with the company.

By now, all the performers have gathered in the upstage left corner, their backs to the audience, huddled together as a group. Lights cue the audience's attention back to Reggie center stage, who gathers all the tinsel back into one large pile, before undertaking what seems an impossible task of stuffing all

that shiny silver into the red suitcase (figure 13). Louis Armstrong's rendition of "Go Down Moses" accompanies his efforts to stuff, then zip, then stuff and stuff some more, then zip. As the song nears its close, it is unclear if Reggie can get the remaining mass of tinsel into the already bulging suitcase. Some nights the zipper gets stuck; other nights he has to sit on the suitcase to force the zipper shut. He often picks up stray ribbons of tinsel as he steadies the suitcase and readies to pull it offstage. He almost collides with the performers, who have begun to move together toward center stage, but he manages to circle around them and exit, as the audience shifts its attention toward the moving collective.

The performers retrace their diagonal pathway, their backs still to the audience, then they turn forward, raise their arms overhead, then kneel and touch the floor. They are humming what sounds like a hymn in an unfamiliar key, as they sweep through the space en masse, repeating the simple sequence of raising arms overhead and bending to touch the floor, hailing all four corners of the stage. Variations in the sequence appear as they circle the stage, not just once but several times. Clement Mensah pauses and waits for the others. Anna Schon and Rhetta Aleong stand to one side together, while the men continue on their own. Paul Hamilton is left behind, and then rejoins the group. At some point Reggie has re-entered and taken a seat in the upstage left corner, where the group had first gathered. He joins the singing, his voice adding a dissonant countermelody, his clapping and stamping adding percussive accents to the haunting hymn.

Although it is not apparent right away, Anna breaks the pattern, walking downstage, falling and rolling. All of a sudden Clement and Raja Feather Kelly have joined hands, and they catch the other performers as they pitch backward, as if undergoing full-immersion baptism. The image dissolves as the performers one by one fall and roll, joining Anna in a heap downstage, except for Lawrence Harding, who kneels and bends his forehead to the ground. The performers end their haunting hymn intoning "aah-main."

These opening ten minutes function as a prologue to *Moses(es)*, introducing themes that thread through the seventy-minute work. The theme of time: taking one's time, as Reggie does at the beginning, looking back at the audience longer than feels comfortable; marking time, as do the members of Fist and Heel in their introductions, as does a baptism in the life of a Christian; overlapping times, the present of the stage action, the mythic past of Moses, the varying temporalities of diaspora, multiple diasporas that have brought together performers from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The theme of leading and following: Reggie becomes Moses, who parts the silver sea for his

performers to pass through; Reggie disappears, and the group continues on its own, sharing the stage world, taking turns as leaders and followers. The theme of travel and of journey: Reggie packs his bag, trying to stuff all the richness of his experience into a portable object; the group circumnavigates the stage, limning the dimensions of their shared world or perhaps wandering as the Hebrews did for forty years in the wilderness. In fact, “Wandering” is what the dancers call this section.

Some themes are accessible to most of the audience; others are culturally specific or require insider’s knowledge and are legible only to some members of the audience. Only members of the audience who know Anna’s commitment to Modern Orthodox Judaism will understand why she does not participate in the representation of full-immersion baptism. Not all members of the audience will recognize “aah-main” as a Hebrew pronunciation of “Amen” or understand the significance of full-immersion baptism for Southern Baptists. Likely even fewer will interpret Lawrence’s kneeling gesture at the end of the baptism scene as a reference to Islamic prayer and as Reggie’s way of acknowledging all three monotheistic religions in the opening few minutes of *Moses(es)*, or recognize the haunting hymn as Spiritual Baptist and as Reggie’s way of underscoring the broad range of Africanist-inflected Christianities in the Americas. Yet another kind of specialist knowledge is needed to interpret Reggie packing the suitcase as an exemplar of what postmodernists call “task choreography.”

. . .

Judging from reviews, awards, and venues, Reggie Wilson already has secured canonical status in American dance. Few choreographers have been as consistently well-reviewed in the *New York Times* as Wilson. Jack Anderson, Jennifer Dunning, Anna Kisselgoff, Claudia La Rocco, Brian Siebert, Gia Kourlas, and even balletomane Alastair Macaulay have written positively about Wilson’s work. He has received a Bessie, a Guggenheim, a Herb Alpert, and a slew of other grants, including the \$250,000 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. He has presented his work at most, if not all, leading venues for contemporary dance in the United States, including the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), New York Live Arts (and its earlier incarnation Dance Theater Workshop), Jacob’s Pillow, International Festival of Arts and Ideas, Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, FringeArts in Philadelphia, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, The Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, On the Boards in Seattle, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and UCLA Live.

Yet Wilson has received far less attention from dance scholars than have his predecessors, peers, and successors. At the time that *Moses(es)* premiered, only one extended critical essay on Wilson had appeared in print, in contrast to the many books and articles citing Lemon, Jones, Miller, Rousseve, Zollar, Ronald K. Brown, Trajal Harrell, and Kyle Abraham. A few of these choreographers have written books themselves, most have not; yet all have accumulated bibliographies beyond performance reviews.

Accounting for scholarly oversight is always fraught, especially in the field of dance studies, where so many significant artists, past and present, have not (yet) been written into the canon. But there do seem at least two reasons why Wilson has received less attention from scholars of Black performance than have his colleagues. First is Wilson's own sense of priorities, for he has consistently placed advancing his creative process over investing in infrastructure for his company. In contrast to the fulsome websites maintained by his colleagues, for example, the *Fist and Heel* website for many years contained information only on the current production, not on past productions and their rave reviews.⁸ Second, and more consequential, is the way Wilson's choreography confounds critical categories. Mediating between Black Dance and Black postmodernism, his work cannot be subsumed under either rubric. In this sense, perhaps, his work is too postmodernist for advocates of Black Dance and too Black for proponents of postmodernism.

If Wilson's choreography does not fit the pre-existing critical categories of African American dance, nor does it fit easily under the rubric of contemporary African dance. Wilson arguably has worked as much between Africa and the Americas as have African-born choreographers now resident in North America, such as Nora Chipaumire and Zab Maboungou. Yet these choreographers are regularly presented as part of the transnational movement of contemporary African dance. Milwaukee-born Wilson is not, although he has always believed that "black is not just African American. It's the African diaspora and all the international influences upon it" (qtd in Howard 2007, 18).

In another way too, Wilson's choreography does not fit pre-existing assumptions within the dance world. The hugely influential work by Jones and Zane, for example, created an expectation that gay choreographers who came of age after Stonewall would foreground dissident sexuality in their work. Dissident images of gender and sexuality are present in Wilson's work, but they are not necessarily foregrounded. Introducing the first extended critical essay published on Wilson, editors Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (2014) note that "queer texts of black performance arrive in implicit

abundance, often as gestures or subtext of omission” (DeFrantz and Gonzalez 2014, 12). In that essay, “Reading ‘Spirit’ and the Dancing Body in the Choreography of Ronald K. Brown and Reggie Wilson,” Carl Paris highlights the queer subtext of Brown’s 1995 work *Dirt Road: Morticia Supreme’s Revue*. Of the Wilson work under discussion, *Black Burlesque (revisited)*, Paris describes “one male-to-male couple, which appears to have no particular significance” (Paris 2014, 111).

Paris, a dancer who came of age during the heyday of Black Dance, now works as a critic and scholar.⁹ Addressing the presence of “spirit,” Paris draws attention to Wilson’s “postmodernism” and his use of “conceptual and experimental choreographic strategies of downtown dance” (Paris 2014, 108).¹⁰ Paris highlights “a tension between the expectations that Wilson’s use of black cultural material engenders and how he chooses to frame this material in his choreography” (108). He asks, “So how can we reconcile these aspects of Wilson’s work with the notions of spirit? [. . .] Or is it the case that these aspects simply crowd out the potentiality of spirit?” (109). In the end, Paris resolves the issue of how Wilson “unsettles our expectations” by turning to Michael Wade Simpson’s notion of “cumulative spiritualism” and Kariamu Welsh-Asante’s concept of “holism” in African dance (109). Scripting a descriptive analysis of *Black Burlesque (revisited)*, Paris concludes that Wilson’s “holistic use of elements (texts, music and movement) and [. . .] his personal investment [in the Black church] constitute a cumulative and imminently potential embodiment of spirit in the performance event” (109).

I do not disagree with Paris’s astute analysis, but I do land somewhere else. Whereas Paris concludes that an Africanist notion of holism integrates the postmodern devices in *Black Burlesque (revisited)*, I remain with Wilson’s intentional troubling of spectators’ expectations of what constitutes Africanisms and postmodernisms. For me, his confounding of spectators’ preconceptions is precisely the point. His works demand that spectators confront their own preconceptions, question their assumptions, and search for alternate perspectives that make more sense of what they have experienced in the theater. In fact, Paris undergoes exactly this process in his essay, first emphasizing what seems “unsettling” in *Black Burlesque (revisited)* and then expanding his understanding of “spirit” to encompass Wilson’s challenge.

Over my many years of viewing Wilson’s work, I have undergone a similar process: what at first seemed the collision of Africanisms and postmodernisms now appears as their interweaving. Watching *Moses(es)* over and over in rehearsal and in performance, I never tire of noting the overlapping and

multiple layers in the work, the ways that elements that can be read as Africanist also can be read as postmodernist. Watching Wilson's works over the past decades has eviscerated assumptions that shaped my earliest viewing of concert dance in the 1970s—assumptions that divided Eurocentric and Afrocentric traditions—and has compelled me to see the two traditions as complexly interwoven. In contrast, it seems that watching Wilson's work has compelled Paris to expand his vision of Afrocentric traditions.

In his extended essay, Paris implicitly canonizes Wilson by placing him in the tradition of African American choreographers who capture “spirit in the black religious and cultural sense,” a tradition that also includes “Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, and Alvin Ailey” (Paris 2014, 101–2). In this chapter, I explicitly canonize Wilson within traditions of American dance, the tradition of Judson Church as well as the tradition of Dunham and Primus. Within both traditions, Wilson stands out for his distinctive research-to-performance methodology, his almost-but-not-quite evocation of Africanist cultures, and his confounding of critical categories. Recalling his early days in New York, Wilson explicates these multiple traditions:

[I]t was such a fertile place for dance. Bill T. Jones, Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Ohad Naharin, these people weren't performing museum pieces; they were creating entirely new material, and I was energized by that. Living in Brooklyn, I had access to a large African community—Nigerian, Ghanaian, Senegalese, South African; a large Caribbean community—Jamaican, Haitian, Trinidadian; and a large African-American community, and that allowed me to imagine the choices my ancestors made by seeing how black Americans adapted to life here. Nowhere else could you have such a rich sampling. (qtd in “Forward and Back” 2003, 64)

Nowhere else, perhaps, except in the work of Reggie Wilson. In an important sense, Wilson's work resonates with recent scholarship gathered by DeFrantz and Gonzalez in their coedited collection *Black Performance Theory*. In that volume, Paris, among other scholars of color, reclaims the power of Blackness and the poetry of African diaspora dance after the antiessentialist critiques of the 1980s and 1990s. That, I would contend, is exactly what Reggie Wilson has done in his works since 1989, and, in this way, his work anticipates the recent turn in *Black Performance Theory*. Interweaving Africanisms and postmodernisms, his work revises his predecessors, Black and white, and in so doing remakes the canon of American dance.

Notes

1. The cluster in *TDR: The Drama Review* 59, no. 1 (2015a) encompasses “Reggie Wilson and the Traditions of American Dance” (12–24); “Reggie Wilson in Conversation with Susan Manning” (25–33); “On the Making of *Moses(es)*: Notes from a Dramaturg’s Journal” (35–54); and “Zora, Zar, Ohad and Nubia: Research Memos for Reggie Wilson’s *Moses(es)*” (55–66). The company also contributed a timeline of “Selected Works, Concerts, and Curated Events” (28–29).

2. See Hurston (1934); Herskovits (1941); Thompson (1974 and 1984); Gottschild (1996).

3. See Johnston (1965); Rainer (1974); Banes (1987); Foster (2002).

4. Reggie Wilson, 2011–2014, interviews with the author. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations and paraphrases of Wilson’s views are from formal interviews and informal conversations conducted by the author from June 2011 to June 2014.

5. For a fuller account of the differences between Black Dance and Black postmodernism, see Manning (2008a).

6. Wilson, 2011–2014, interviews with the author.

7. *Moses(es)*, choreographed by Reggie Wilson, premiered at FringeArts Festival, Suzanna Roberts Theater, Philadelphia, September 19, 2013. My descriptive analysis comes from my viewing of performances in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and Boston and from a DVD of the work provided by the company.

8. Not until 2015 did the company website add archival information. See www.fistandheelperformancegroup.org. Since this chapter was written, two significant publications have appeared: a portfolio on Reggie Wilson in *Movement Research Performance Journal* 47 (Fall 2015) and the booklet accompanying Wilson’s curation of the Danspace Project titled *Dancing Platform Praying Grounds: Blackness, Churches, and Downtown Dance* (Spring 2018).

9. Paris was writer-in-residence for the Danspace platform commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of *Parallels*, and his online blog provides invaluable documentation on the festival.

10. The quotation marks around “spirit” and “postmodernism” come from Paris’s essay.

Cross-Viewing in Berlin and Chicago

Nelisiwe Xaba's *Fremde Tänze* (2020)

Five years after *TDR: The Drama Review* published my cluster of essays on Reggie Wilson, I placed a cluster of essays on the South African artist Nelisiwe Xaba in the same journal. This time, however, I was not the sole author. Rather, I invited colleagues from South Africa, Germany, and the United States to contribute essays on “how her works take on different meanings for different spectators in different cultural contexts” (2020, 4). In addition to scripting an introduction to Xaba's career, I contributed the extended analysis of her 2014 work *Fremde Tänze* (Strange and Foreign Dances) reprinted here.¹

In contrast to my collaboration with Wilson, where my contract as his dramaturge specified that I would publish my observations on making *Moses(es)*, my collaboration with Xaba was not planned ahead of time. I first saw *Fremde Tänze* in Berlin and found the work so compelling that I recommended it to colleagues at my home institution for inclusion in a conference titled Black Arts International: Temporalities and Territories. The reception of Xaba's work at the Chicago conference was so rich and so provocative that I decided on the spot to compile my own and colleagues' responses. Xaba supported the idea, but she never read the cluster ahead of publication, and we have not had contact since then.²

Writing about *Fremde Tänze*, like writing about *Moses(es)*, afforded me the pleasure of delving into the choreographic complexity of works that I could see more than once in the theater and view repeatedly via digital documentation. What fascinated me about Xaba's and Wilson's dances was the way they revised and commented on earlier works by modernist artists. In fact, over the past few years I have shifted my teaching from case studies of modernism that often ended with one or two contemporary works to pairings of modern and contemporary works that illuminate one another. This started with a course on Reperforming the Avant-Garde that I designed around Xaba's residency in Chicago and subsequently have extended to other courses. One of my intentions

in compiling the *TDR* cluster on Xaba was to provide a pedagogical resource that details diverse responses to the same work.

Another intention was to respond to the concern voiced by Alexis Pauline Gumbs at a panel discussion in Chicago about my investment in *Fremde Tänze* as a white scholar and spectator. As this essay narrates, my cross-viewing of the work significantly shifted from Berlin to Chicago, as I talked with other spectators about the myriad references they saw in the work. For many German spectators, the dance broke a taboo against discussions of colonialism and racism in the Berlin dance scene. For some Black spectators in Chicago, the dance re-enacted the trauma that Xaba referenced through deconstructing stereotypes of Black women. As I conclude, cross-viewing in an era of resurgent nationalisms in Europe and the United States made me question whether the spectatorial dynamic intensified or ameliorated pre-existing social divides.

This essay compares reception in the two cities where I saw *Fremde Tänze*. Xaba also performed the work in South Africa, and the panel discussion in Chicago also turned to the topic of what might be considered Black art in Johannesburg or Cape Town. If Black dance implies Africanist movement qualities in a US context, how might these qualities register in a South African context? How do Xaba's artistic choices resist predetermined notions of African or Africanist dance? Most importantly, does the performance of race shift its embodiments and meanings across national borders, or does anti-Blackness constantly reform in relation to changing contexts? These are questions explored, but not exhausted, by the cluster of essays in *TDR*.

Never have I wanted to walk out of a performance so desperately. Seated at the far end of the bleachers, I would have to step over a dozen or more spectators, all riveted by the performance, to reach a central stairway before descending and crossing in front of the audience to leave. As an invited guest to a weekend festival in January 2016 at Sophiensæle, one of Berlin's premier venues for experimental dance, I could not risk offending my hosts by such a public exit. So I stayed put, squeezed against the side rail and wondering why the other spectators didn't feel as queasy as I did watching *Schönheitsabend* (Evening of Beauty, 2014). At first I wondered if it was an illusion, but then realized that the dancers were actually performing an extended series of moves with a foot-long dildo strapped onto the female dancer Florentina Holzinger and inserted into the anus of her male partner, Vincent Riebeek.

Schönheitsabend was commissioned by the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum,

a project that asked contemporary choreographers to examine the archives of modern and exotic dance in the early years of the twentieth century and stage their responses. Holzinger, born in Austria, and Riebeek, born in the Netherlands, had met as students in Amsterdam, and their duet looked back to queer couples of dance modernism: Vaslav Nijinsky and Ida Rubinstein, whose joint appearance in *Schéhérazade* (1910) later commentators would hail as a precursor of camp aesthetics (Moon 1989); and Anita Berber and Sebastian Droste, cabaret artists whose performances seemed equally camp and whose 1923 work (Fischer 1984; Gordon 2006) provided Holzinger and Riebeek with their subtitles *Tänze des Lasters*, *Tänze des Grauens*, *Tänze der Ekstase* (Dances of Vice, Dances of Horror, Dances of Ecstasy). The title *Schönheitsabend* also recalled evenings of nude dancing staged by male and female performers at the intersection of nudist culture and early modern dance in 1910s and 1920s Germany (Toepfer 1997).³

The following evening, I attended another of the festival events, a solo by South African artist Nelisiwe Xaba titled *Fremde Tänze* (2014). Like *Schönheitsabend*, *Fremde Tänze* was commissioned by the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum. Taking a different approach to the archive, Xaba looked back to soloists who had imagined dances from non-Western cultures, only some of whom, like Ruth St. Denis, are remembered in the chronicles of dance history. At the end of *Fremde Tänze*, Xaba sits onstage and crafts her decorative costume; taking no heed of the audience, she goes about her task without regard to the passing of time. After a while the Berlin audience became audibly restless, then a few spectators, and finally a steady stream walked out. My reaction was the opposite, engrossed as I was by Xaba's refusal to enact closure in a conventional sense. Particularly arresting was her allusion to the "African Villages" staged as part of world's fairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where passersby watched "natives" making crafts and dancing. By placing the predominantly white audience in the role of spectators at world's fairs a century ago, Xaba made us acknowledge the continuing impact but also the absurdity of the colonizing gaze.

Wanting to leave the theater but not doing so for fear of offending others, and watching others leave the theater while remaining engaged by the performance: both experiences make explicit what I have termed "cross-viewing," the recognition that spectators' varied social identities outside the theater may well lead them to respond differently to the same performance event (Manning 2004b, xv–xviii). Why did I find Holzinger and Riebeek's queer eroticism so hard to watch and Xaba's critique of the colonizing gaze so compelling? My offstage social identity in terms of gender, sexuality,

and nationality surely played a role. Xaba's refusal to perform the sexy Black female dancer appealed to my straight, cisgender, feminist subjectivity in a way that Holzinger and Riebeek's gender-bending sexual acrobatics did not. Moreover, as a German acquaintance quipped, my American Puritanism was showing in my response to *Schönheitsabend*. My national identity also was evident in my response to *Fremde Tänze*, for I felt that my engagement with race and racism in US dance history made me more attuned to Xaba's exposure of the white gaze than were German spectators, for whom the concept of racism often feels problematic, given the history of fascism.

This initial experience of cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* became complicated over time. As I talked with other spectators about the work, I learned about an even broader range of citations and possible meanings than I had sensed in Berlin. This was particularly true when Nelisiwe Xaba, at my invitation, brought the work to Chicago. As a member of the Advisory Board for the Black Arts Initiative at my home institution, Northwestern University, I recommended that *Fremde Tänze* be one of the featured works at our conference in October 2017, Black Arts International: Temporalities and Territories. Participants in the conference saw the work at Links Hall, one of Chicago's premier venues for experimental dance, and gathered two days later to hear a panel of distinguished guest speakers discuss the work with Xaba. The many Black spectators at the conference voiced a range of responses that differed from my own, and in this way my experience of cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* intensified along the axis of race as well as the axes of gender, sexuality, and nationality.

In the end, I realized that no one spectator could comprehend the range of citations and layers of meaning in the work. This realization vivified how dramatically venue, frame, and audience composition shape spectatorship. In one sense, *Fremde Tänze* viewed within the context of the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum in Berlin meant something very different than the same work viewed within the context of Black Arts International in Chicago. In Berlin, the work forced spectators to consider the racism of the white gaze in a context where the contemporary dance world typically avoided such conversations. In Chicago, the work seemed too reliant on the white gaze, at least from the perspective of some Black spectators at a time when the Black Arts aesthetic articulated from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s felt newly resonant and in a city where the Black Arts aesthetic had never fully transformed under the pressures of postmodernism.

This recognition in turn led me to rethink my theorizing of cross-viewing. As I was formulating the concept in the late 1990s, I wondered if "it is only

from a position of privilege that I may posit that spectators read across the diverse social locations they inhabit” (2001, 410).⁴ But when I published a monograph demonstrating how cross-viewing shaped the reception of US modern dance and Black concert dance in the mid-twentieth century, I argued for its “potential to alter how publics read bodies in motion and thus to effect progressive social and artistic change” (2004b, xvi). My encounter with *Fremde Tänze* in Berlin and Chicago led me to a differently nuanced conclusion, as I became intensely aware of how cross-viewing may function differently for spectators from dominant cultures and from minoritarian subcultures. Indeed, cross-viewing emerges as a powerful dynamic precisely at moments when dominant cultures and subcultures intersect and collide. The present is one such moment, with #blacklivesmatter and #metoo countering the Trump presidency and with xenophobic nationalisms countering the regional integration of the European Union. The question for this essay is how and whether cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* in Berlin and Chicago illuminates these sociopolitical fault lines.

FREMDE TÄNZE AT THE JULIUS-HANS-SPIEGEL-ZENTRUM IN BERLIN

Fremde Tänze came to the Berlin stage as part of a curatorial initiative funded by Tanzfonds Erbe, the German Dance Heritage Fund. Established in 2011, Tanzfonds Erbe followed the lead of contemporary European choreographers like Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, and Xavier Le Roy by subsidizing the performance of works from the modernist canon.⁵ Tanzfonds Erbe supported conventional reconstructions—for example, of Mary Wigman’s *Totentanz* (Dance of Death) from 1926 and *Le Sacre du Printemps* from 1957—as well as more reflexive and imaginative engagements with earlier works: for example, Christoph Winkler received support for his own choreography titled after Wigman’s and Tom Schilling’s *Abendliche Tänze* (Evening Dances) and for a festival where he commissioned a range of choreographers from inside and outside Germany to take on Wigman’s iconic *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance). And Wigman was not the only earlier German choreographer to receive attention: so too did Clotilde von Derp and Alexander Sakharoff, Rudolf Laban, Kurt Jooss, Oskar Schlemmer, Jean Weidt, Anita Berber, Harald Kreutzberg, Yvonne Georgi, Gertrude Bodenwieser, Marianne Vogelsang, and Dore Hoyer.⁶

From 2011 to 2017, Tanzfonds Erbe funded sixty projects across Germany,

and during these years one of the few projects to specifically address questions of colonialism and racism was the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum. Cofounded by Eike Wittrock and Anna Wagner, the project asked Xaba, Holzinger, and Riebeek, along with other artists, to reflect on the role of exoticism in early modern dance. Whereas US-based artists and scholars have vigorously debated the role of race and racism in the formation of modern dance, this has not been the case in Germany, where even the word for race (*Rasse*) carries fascist connotations. Indeed, contemporary dance scholars in Europe often distance themselves from what they consider the “identity politics” of US dance studies. Addressing this division at a symposium on dance and theory convened in Berlin in 2011—the year Tanzfonds Erbe was established—André Lepecki asked: “How is it possible that in current discourses on dance [in continental Europe], the political fact of colonialism, of colonization and post-colonization, of racism and its interpellations, of racism and its capacities to produce bodies and movement effects are constantly being ‘forgotten’ from critical discourse and from choreographic practices?” (2013, 157).

That same year Wittrock was finishing his dissertation in dance studies at the Free University in Berlin and Wagner was an assistant to the dance curator at HAU, one of the leading venues for contemporary performance in Berlin. (Subsequently Wittrock became a professor at the MUK/Music & Art University in Vienna and Wagner artistic co-director of the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm in Frankfurt.) Their co-curation of the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum, initiated in 2014, seems like a direct response to Lepecki’s challenge.⁷

A forgotten figure in dance history, Julius Hans Spiegel performed exotic dances in the 1920s for both popular and avant-garde audiences. Costumed and masked, he danced Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Indonesian styles. Offstage, Spiegel was gay, deaf, and Jewish and hence triply marginalized in interwar Germany. Wittrock and Wagner believe that acknowledging his marginality can help us rethink dance history and “[reverse] the relationship between periphery and center.” As they wrote in a program booklet distributed at Sophiensæle: “Modern Dance has fundamentally made reference to non-European cultures of movement. However, it simultaneously exoticized them, excluded them from the field of artistic dance and thus eliminated them from dance historiography as something foreign. So how can one consider a dance history that accepts precisely these mechanisms of exclusion? . . . And do so without brushing over the breaks, gaps and ambivalence that are also recognizable in [the dynamics of exclusion]?” In this passage Wagner and Wittrock rely on the concepts of “exoticism,” “periphery and center,” and

the “mechanics of exclusion” to suggest their perspective. Later in their essay they boldly name “the colonial and racist discourses” informing early modern dance, discourses they argue “still latently shape contemporary dance.”⁸

To pursue their project, Wittrock and Wagner invited a group of artists from diverse national backgrounds to gather for six-week residencies in 2014 in Freiburg, a quaint university town in southwestern Germany near the Black Forest. There the group looked through photographs of early twentieth-century dance, read primary and secondary sources, and talked with visiting scholars. In Freiburg Eko Supriyanto, a contemporary dancer from Indonesia, and Nacera Belaza, an Algerian-born dancer based in France, joined Xaba, Holzinger, and Riebeek in creating and premiering works based on their research. In 2015 a second residency took place in Berlin, where another group of choreographers—Dragana Bulut, a Berlin-based artist from Belgrade; Sara Mikolai, a dancer of mixed Sri Lankan and German heritage who originally studied Bharatanatyam; Tümay Kiliñel and Nuray Demir, German dancers of Turkish heritage; and Julian Weber, a German installation artist and choreographer—focused on one archival object, a box of photos labeled “Exotic Dance” from a costume library in Berlin. These photographs were reproduced in the program booklet, alerting the audience to the inquiry and process of the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum. At the closing festival in January 2016 Xaba, Holzinger, and Riebeek reprised their works in Berlin. My focus here on *Fremde Tänze* is not intended to diminish the significance of the many works commissioned by the project, but rather to follow the changing reception of one work beyond its commissioning by Tanzfonds Erbe.⁹

Xaba later noted that she knew little about early twentieth-century German dance because the modern dance history she learned focused on the United States.¹⁰ As part of her research, she examined photos of Raden Mas Jodjana, an Indonesian dancer who toured Europe in the 1920s and influenced Mary Wigman, and Sent M’ahesa, the stage name for a German dancer born Elsa von Carlsberg who performed Egyptian, Indian, and other orientalist dances in the 1910s and early 1920s. What fascinated Xaba were not the images per se of exotic dance; these looked familiar, even though she had not studied these dancers before. Rather, what interested her was the way dancers like M’ahesa sequenced their solo evenings, alternating short dances inspired by cultures around the world with musical interludes. Hence *Fremde Tänze* plays off the earlier dancers’ repertoire practice, alternating dance with film and alluding to a range of cultures. Even the typography of the work’s printed program recalls earlier conventions.

When I first saw *Fremde Tänze* in Berlin, what compelled me was how the



Figure 14. Nelisiwe Xaba in the prologue “Triumphal March of the Donuts” from *Fremde Tänze*, photograph by Maurice Korb. Courtesy of Eike Wittrock.

work exposed, inverted, parodied, and deconstructed the white spectator’s gaze of the Black female body.¹¹ In the prologue, comically titled “Triumphal March of the Donuts” (Triumphmarsch der Krapfen) and accompanied by Verdi’s well-known processional from *Aida* (1870), Xaba parades through the spectators waiting in the lobby for the house to open (figure 14). She wears a donut-shaped tray around her neck, like a manacle; arrayed on the tray are frosted donuts topped by kitschy blackface figures. Confronting the spectators’ amused looks with her own stare, Xaba exposes the thin line separating Verdi’s orientalism from blackface minstrelsy. If European and American dancers in the early twentieth century freely appropriated other cultures, she implies, then why cannot she do the same?

Xaba disappears into the theater, and after a few minutes, the doors open and spectators enter and find seats. Xaba is nowhere in sight; rather, in the center of the black box theater we see only a large tent, its blue and green panels softly illuminated, tall enough for a person to stand in. Wittrock enters from the wings, welcomes the audience, and delivers the first interlude titled “Historical Introduction” (Historische Einführung). Illustrated by images of Sent M’ahesa, his slide lecture introduces the “forgotten” dancer, whose reputation in the 1910s and early 1920s rivaled Wigman’s and Laban’s, but whose embrace

of “exoticism” led to her “marginalized position” in dance history. He points out that like other female soloists of the time, M’ahesa was an independent artist who functioned as her own designer and manager. In a playful turn at the end of his lecture, he shifts from the past to the present: “In little miniatures, each lasting only several minutes, separated by costume changes, switching genres of music; mixing, juxtaposing and collaging sources for her own artistic interest, Sent M’ahesa will present a series of imaginative dances from all over the world.”¹² Here Wittrock describes exactly the elements from the earlier soloist’s practice that intrigued Xaba and that she recreated in her own work.

The curator exits, and the lighting shifts our focus to the tent for “Black Forest Dance” (Schwarzwaldtanz) (figure 15). The tent becomes a screen against which photographs of Freiburg are projected over Xaba’s dark silhouette, her seemingly nude body like an Indonesian shadow puppet. Xaba moves from one pose to another—placing a beer glass on the top of her head, placing her hands together over her head as if in prayer position in yoga class, even placing her hands together between her bent legs and spreading them open them like a giant labia—her silhouette far more distinct than the indistinct tourist views of Freiburg. It is as if Xaba literalizes—and parodies—the title of Michel Leiris’s 1934 travelogue *L’Afrique fantôme* (*Phantom Africa*), which reduced African subjects to shadows, projections of the Western mind. Her wry visual commentary is accompanied by a “regional” (*badisch*) tune, “Liebe kleine Schwarzwaldmarie,” its oom-pah rhythm punctuating sentimental lyrics:

Liebe kleine Schwarzwaldmarie
 Dir bleib’ ich treu und vergesse dich nie.
 (My dear small Marie from the Black Forest / I will remain true and
 never forget you.)¹³

“Asian Fantasy” (Asiatische Phantasie) follows. Only Xaba’s head emerges from a flap in the front of the tent, and she circles her eyes, grimaces, puffs her cheeks, bares her teeth, all in rhythm to an accompanying song by Vietnamese singers Cô Ba-Thinh and Khâm-Thiên. Parodying the orientalist clichés of the music, Xaba’s face dance also seems to parody the postmodern device of accumulation, where the dancer performs gesture a, then adds another gesture and performs a-b, then a-b-c, and so on. Blackout. Next comes a film interlude, titled “Commercial” (Werbung). The blackface figures that decorated the donuts Xaba paraded in the opening processional seem to come to life in an outdated commercial for Sarotti chocolate.

Xaba returns for “Auf Wiedersehen,” the German word for “farewell” not



Figure 15. Nelisiwe Xaba in “Black Forest Dance” from *Fremde Tänze*, photograph by Tasmin Jade Donaldson. Courtesy of Tasmin Jade Donaldson.

translated on the English-language program. This time we see her body from the waist up emerge through the top of the tent. To the sentimental lyrics of what the program identifies as an “old German song” (alt-deutsches Lied), she crosses her hands over her heart, waves goodbye, shrugs her shoulders, flaps her hands like a bird flying away. Her gestures, sequenced in another accumulation, comically literalize the lyrics of the accompanying song, which is actually a cover by Berlin Comedian Harmonists of a close-harmony group of male singers popular in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s:

Gib mir den letzten Abschiedskuss
 Weil ich dich heute verlassen muss
 Und sage mir auf Wiedersehen
 Auf Wiedersehen, leb wohl.

(Give me a last farewell kiss / Because today I must leave you / And tell
 me farewell, / Farewell and live well.)

As in “Black Forest Dance,” “Auf Wiedersehen” reduces Germanness to a collage of clichés. Xaba suggests that the landscape and soundscape of Germany appear as “strange” and “foreign” to her as did Asia and Africa to early modern dancers.

Blackout. Another film is projected against the tent-as-screen, titled “Dervish-Dance” in both German and English. The circular tray that Xaba wore in the opening processional spins like a dervish dancer, a dance form that arguably inspired Mary Wigman in her development of spinning as a movement motif. In fact, Wigman’s 1926 solo *Drehmonotonie* (Whirl Dance) involved extended spinning before a final collapse. The spinning tray is accompanied by a mid-twentieth-century tune covered by Nina Hagen. Known as *Schlager* (hits), such songs evoke love and heartache with a simple melody and memorable refrain, often elegiac or melancholic in tone.

Hagen’s accompaniment shifts up-tempo for the next dance, “Tap and Kick” (Schritt und Tritt). For the first time Xaba exits the tent, carrying a step ladder with her and costumed in a white leather bodysuit and see-through high heels. To a disco beat she climbs up and down the ladder, kicking her legs like a bored dancer in a chorus line or Josephine Baker tired by the expectations of her audience. She momentarily assumes the pose that Grace Jones adopted in a well-known photograph by Jean-Paul Goude. Here the choreography emphasizes the legs, just as earlier sections emphasized the face or the arms. So far, this is choreography for body parts, not for the whole dancer.

Another “Interlude” (Zwischenspiel) features a film of Xaba in a very long blond wig and white evening dress, projected against images of the quaint canals in Freiburg. She reappears from the tent for “African Dance I” (Afrikanischer Tanz I), her white body suit now augmented by a white-tasseled bodice, skirt, wig, and wrist and ankle bracelets (figure 16). Accompanied by the pulsing rhythms of South African pop musician DJ Ganyani, she shim-mies her way around the tent, her expression as disaffected as before, her body going through the motions. For the first time in the work, she uses her whole body and the whole space, yet she refuses to entertain the spectators, eschewing expectations of high-energy vitality that “African dance” so often connotes to the Western viewer.

The final section is titled “Tableau Vivant” (Lebendes Bild, literally “living picture”). Without musical accompaniment, Xaba sits in front of the tent and begins to craft the tasseled costume pieces she had worn for “African Dance I,” in effect staging an “African Dance II.” As noted earlier, this section clearly alludes to the “African Villages” staged as part of world’s fairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It’s as if the allusions in *Fremde Tänze* have moved backward in time, or perhaps more accurately, circled back to *Aida*, roughly contemporaneous with the world’s fairs. Along the way Xaba has made reference to the orientalist and primitivist dances of early modern dancers and to the chorus lines of Josephine Baker’s *Revue nègre* and the Cot-



Figure 16. Nelisiwe Xaba in “African Dance I” from *Fremde Tänze*, photograph by Tasmin Jade Donaldson. Courtesy of Tasmin Jade Donaldson.

ton Club. Her work has exposed and parodied the white gaze that structured not only Black performance in the first half of the twentieth century but also the formation of modern dance. She has reoriented the antitheatricity of much contemporary European dance toward a new end.

But there's a final unexpected twist. As it became clear that Xaba had no intention of enacting a conventional closure and as spectators began to walk out, I realized that the tassels that she was using to fashion her costume decoration were tampons. First, she extended the string attached to the tampon (the type without an applicator, a type, in fact, invented by a female gynecologist in Germany in 1936 and more popular in Europe than in the United States). Then she slid a few clear plastic beads over the string before attaching the tampon-tassel to the netting used in her costume. In performance the beads had made a sound like wind chimes when Xaba circled her hips and shook her hands in African Dance I. Now she sat and fashioned her decorative costume element from an everyday object in women's lives, a consumer product first widely manufactured in the years after the Second World War and today used by women globally, although use varies widely across nations, religions, and classes.¹⁴

Once I recognized the tampons, I leaned over to an American female colleague sitting next to me and whispered, "that's brilliant." Seated on my other side, my husband became bored, and although he wouldn't walk out in deference to me, I sensed that he wanted to leave. His restlessness made me admire *Fremde Tänze* even more, as I realized that most of the spectators walking out were men and that this ending constituted a potential moment of cross-viewing, when I felt myself and my female colleague responding differently from my husband and other male spectators.

In retrospect, there was far more going on in this ending image—and *Fremde Tänze* as a whole—than I had realized. But in that moment of first encounter in Berlin, I felt hailed as a privileged insider during the final "Tableau Vivant," as a woman who could get the joke and take pleasure in Xaba's comic—and evocative—reuse of an everyday product in women's lives, a product that makes many men uncomfortable and that not all men even recognize. (In Chicago I had to identify the object for several gay men of my acquaintance.) Just as Xaba had made creative reuse of her research into German dance history, so too she made creative reuse of an everyday object whose use unites women as women across lines of nationality and racial difference.

In one sense, my experience of the ending as an affirmation of shared bonds among women countered the critique of the white gaze that had structured

the work. Yet I felt like a privileged insider in relation to that critique as well, for not only did I recognize the myriad references to earlier dance practices, but I also had authored a study that explicitly named the structural racism of midcentury US modern dance, a study that had informed the curators' project and led them to invite me to lecture at the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum.

The last event that I attended that weekend at Sophiensæle was an artists' talk featuring Riebeek and Xaba along with Wittrock and Wagner.¹⁵ Riebeek recalled feeling "liberated" by his exploration of the archives of queer couples in early modern dance, by the invitation to enter the realm of the erotic "without disrespect." Becoming "an erotic object onstage," he acknowledged, "seems so wrong, but feels so good." Although he had not taken this into account during the rehearsal process, he "embraced" the experience onstage, noting that "even spectators there for the sex cannot take away from my work." Xaba replied that "in contrast, I always have to think about the audience."

From this point, the conversation became heated: the freedom Riebeek felt to ignore spectators who came to see a "sex show" seemed to irk Xaba, who asserted that "there is a box when you are Black." She continued that one "cannot change the problematic of performing in Europe [as an exotic Black body]. Racial politics has more layers than sexual politics." This statement in turn seemed to irk Riebeek, who retorted that his sexuality still "marginalizes" him, even if he is a "white boy." When Xaba asserted that "racism is a problem everywhere in the world," Riebeek replied that "so is religion and lots of other differences." With that comment, the conversation came to a dead end.

On my flight back to Chicago the next day, I wrote in my performance journal that "in retrospect, it will be hard to *not* reduce the festival to the trenchant moment . . . when tension flared between [Riebeek's] articulation of queer oppression and [Xaba's] articulation of racism." But I also wrote that Wittrock and Wagner's conception for the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum was brilliant, that both *Schönheitsabend* and *Fremde Tänze* held up as provocative theater works, and that the artists' talk on the continuing hold of racism and homophobia in contemporary dance was unprecedented in my experience of the German dance scene.

FREMDE TÄNZE AT BLACK ARTS INTERNATIONAL IN CHICAGO

A few months later, at a planning session for Black Arts International, I proposed that we invite Xaba to present *Fremde Tänze* in Chicago. Rather than

book the show on the Northwestern campus, we decided to find a venue in downtown Chicago so local dancegoers could join conference participants in seeing the work. Over the next year, I served as an unofficial producer for the show, securing Links Hall as a venue, writing publicity copy, raising funds from Goethe Institute, and filing the necessary paperwork for Xaba to apply for a US visa. Throughout I consulted with E. Patrick Johnson, director of the Black Arts Initiative, and other members of the Advisory Board; our plan was to feature works in different genres and to invite scholars to comment on the works, rather than follow the more typical format of highlighting the scholars' research and scheduling the arts as evening entertainment. As Johnson wrote in the program booklet:

The conference format centers art as research across the genres of film, music, literature, dance, theater, and visual art to be the genesis of critical engagement of the questions that frame the conference [. . .] The key themes [. . .] engage notions of time, space and place and the ways in which black art plays a pivotal role in and has been influenced by historical epochs such as colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, modernity and post-modernity, industrialization and globalization [. . .] Given our current political climate, it is my belief that art is still a viable means through which we might speak truth to power. No less true four hundred years ago than four hours ago, it is through expressive culture that blacks in the diaspora have survived the most pernicious forms of oppression. (Johnson 2017)

Realizing this vision, the weeklong conference in October 2017 featured *Fremde Tänze* alongside an undergraduate production of Tarell Alvin McCraney's *In the Red and Brown Water*, a screening of Haile Gerima's *Sankofa*, readings by Caryl Phillips and Chris Abani, a performance of Abiku Tutu's "Record Rituals" at a local music club, and an exhibit of Carrie Mae Weems' *Ritual and Revolution* at the campus museum. Graduate students moderated nearly all the events, including panels where invited respondents joined the artists to discuss their work. Mlondolozzi Zondi, a dance artist from South Africa and at the time a doctoral student in performance studies, was slated to moderate the panel on *Fremde Tänze*, featuring Xaba alongside Aimee Meredith Cox (Anthropology and African American Studies, Yale), Brent Edwards (English and Comparative Literature, Columbia), Hershini Young (African and African Diaspora Studies, University of Texas-Austin), and Brooklyn-based choreographer Reggie Wilson. Wilson was in town with his company Fist and Heel Performance Group to perform *Citizen*, scheduled

by the Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago to coincide with Black Arts International.

Needless to say, the frame and audience for *Fremde Tänze* in Chicago differed dramatically from the audience for the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum in Berlin. Although I had not intended to write about the work, the reception of *Fremde Tänze* in Chicago was so rich and so provocative that by the time Xaba left the city to return to Johannesburg, I asked her permission to compile a cluster of essays on her work. And even after she left town, I continued to talk with friends and colleagues who had attended the production at Links Hall and learned about references, allusions, and levels of meaning that had escaped my attention in Berlin. From German speakers, I learned about references to German culture that I had barely glimpsed in Berlin. From African American spectators, I learned about references to Black popular culture and everyday life that I had not recognized before. In Chicago my cross-viewing of *Fremde Tänze* intensified across the axes of nationality and race.¹⁶

After the performance in Berlin, my German acquaintance had told me that during her childhood a chocolate-covered marshmallow treat was called a Negerkuss (Negro's kiss) or Mohrenkopf (Moor's head), terms an older generation still might use, although her generation would use the more generic term Schokokuss (chocolate kiss). She implied that *Fremde Tänze* made reference to a Negerkuss or Schokokuss, but I didn't know exactly where she saw this reference: Was it during Xaba's opening "Triumphal March of the Donuts" or during the "Commercial" featuring an outdated ad for Sarotti Chocolate or during the "Dervish-Dance," the film interlude with the spinning tray of donuts from the opening "Triumphal March"? To be sure, all these images were related and raised the question of why sugary treats in German culture were (are?) associated with exotic others, Africans and Arabs or, to be more exact, with a fantasy image that combines blackface and orientalism, as Xaba had embodied during her opening procession through the lobby.

Not until I watched the video documentation did I see what my German acquaintance noticed immediately: the image of Schokokuss in "Dervish-Dance" right before the image of the spinning tray. During this film interlude Xaba literalizes the spinning motif by turning the tent during the projection, further confusing and conflating the layers of reference and allusion. (In another sleight of hand, the typography of the program suggests that "Dervish-Dance" is an embodied performance by Xaba, not a film interlude.) For a non-German watching "Dervish-Dance," the film interlude recalls earlier imagery in *Fremde Tänze*—the kitschy blackface figures displayed in "Triumphal March of the Donuts" and the commercial for Sarotti featuring

a blackface Moor handing out chocolates to white passengers on a train—imagery that has abundant analogues across Western cultures. In fact, Xaba has noted that she did not see these images as distinctively German but as representative of Western views toward Africa.

But for viewers with a deep knowledge of German culture, the film interlude in “Dervish-Dance” carried more nationally specific associations, not only the use of the terms *Negerkuss* and *Mohrenkopf* by earlier generations to name confections that layer chocolate over marshmallow, but also the historical associations of the accompanying musical track, Nina Hagen’s 1983 release titled “Zarah.” This track on its own condenses the complexities and ironies of twentieth-century German history. It is a cover of Zarah Leander’s 1942 song “Ich weiss, es wird einmal ein Wunder geschehen” (I know, one day a miracle will happen), one of the most popular songs in Germany during the final years of Nazi rule. Leander was a Swedish singer and actress whom the Nazis had elevated to star status in 1936, after both Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich had emigrated (Ascheid 1999). The song made its debut in the film *Die grosse Liebe* (The Great Love), in which a fighter pilot posted in North Africa falls in love with a cabaret singer (Leander), and their love survives despite all odds. The lyrics proclaim:

Ich weiss, es wird einmal ein Wunder geschehn
 Und dann werden tausend Märchen wahr.
 Ich weiss, so schnell kann keine Liebe vergehn,
 Die so gross ist and so wunderbar.
 Wir haben beiden den selben Stern
 Und dein Schicksal is auch meins
 Du bist mir fern und doch nicht fern,
 Denn unsre Seelen sind eins.
 Darum wird einmal ein Wunder geschehn
 Und ich weiss, dass wir uns wiedersehn.

(I know, one day a miracle will happen / And then a thousand fairy tales will come true. / I know, so fast a love cannot pass by / Which is so great and so wonderful. / We both share the same star / And your fate is also mine / And you're far but not really far / Because our souls are one. / That's why one day a miracle will happen / And I know, that we will meet again.)¹⁷

Like many of Leander’s other hits, the song was composed by Michael Jary with lyrics by Bruno Balz. Jary was born Maximilian Michael Andreas Jarczyk

to a Polish Catholic family with Jewish heritage. He studied at the State Academy for Music in Berlin, and after he graduated in 1933 he changed his name in order to hide his Jewish heritage. He attempted to emigrate in 1938 but was denied a visa, and so he remained in Germany and focused on jazz- and swing-inflected compositions for film, often collaborating with Bruno Balz. Balz was an openly gay lyricist during the 1920s who was imprisoned for his homosexuality after the Nazis came to power, but was released on the condition that his name not appear in public and that he marry a distant cousin (Lareau 2005). It is more than ironic that a Jewish-Catholic composer and gay lyricist wrote many of the most popular songs of the Third Reich.

More questions are raised by Hagen's 1983 cover simply titled "Zarah." Did the star of Berlin punk intend the cover as an homage to Leander, who continued her career in the postwar period and whom Hagen had lionized during her childhood growing up in East Germany? Or was her cover a punk-inspired gesture of breaking the taboo against references to Nazi culture after her emigration to West Germany in 1976? Or her acknowledgment of Leander, with her deep alto voice and her femme look, as a diva for gay culture and hence as a precedent for Hagen's own popularity with gay listeners (Zervigon 2005)? For viewers of *Fremde Tänze* with a deep knowledge of German musical culture, all these levels of signification are present in the film interlude "Dervish-Dance."¹⁸

Yet not all such spectators interpret these references in the same way. For one colleague in German studies who is not a German citizen, *Fremde Tänze* provides a "subtle and ironic commentary on German racism" beneath the surface images of German kitsch. For a graduate student from Germany, the cultural references to Schokokuss and to Zarah Leander trigger feelings of "shame and self-awareness." Passing comments in the German published criticism hint at similar responses. A journalist who visited during the rehearsal process in 2014 described preparations for "Black Forest Dance" as a "photo safari through Freiburg—the phrase came into my head, and I immediately bit my lip" (Hoffmann 2014). A journalist previewing the Berlin weekend at Sophiensæle queried, "Do we admire foreigners only when on holiday? Why do we tolerate foreigners on our streets much less so?" (Wesemann 2015). In retrospect, I wonder if the many spectators walking out of *Fremde Tänze* in Berlin were reacting not so much to Xaba's crafting with tampons, as I had originally surmised at Sophiensæle, as to their discomfort with performative commentary on Otherness within German culture.

In Chicago, no one walked out of the performance of *Fremde Tänze*. Rather, the performance struck a chord as spectators debated the provoca-

tions of the work—at the official panel convened by Black Arts International, in my graduate seminar, and within the local community of dance artists and dancegoers who filled Links Hall both nights of the performance. At Black Arts International, my own role in the work changed. In the year leading up to the conference in October 2017, I had worked behind the scenes as an unofficial producer, but at the last moment—and at Xaba’s invitation—I also took a role onstage, delivering the “Historical Introduction” that Wittrock had scripted and delivered in Johannesburg and Berlin. (I hastily edited the text that Wittrock had sent, eliminating his Germanic syntax and making the prose sound more like my own voice.) The day after the second performance—also at the last moment and at the invitation of E. Patrick Johnson—I also took the role of moderator for the panel at Black Arts International, to step in for the intended moderator, doctoral student Zondi, who was late returning for the academic year from South Africa due to a delay with his visa.¹⁹ In fact, Xaba barely received her visa in time to travel, so US immigration policy must be added to the several frames surrounding *Fremde Tänze* in Chicago.

The responses articulated at Black Arts International were wide-ranging.²⁰ For Cox, a former dancer and anthropologist, watching *Fremde Tänze* evoked a painful memory: a trio of white girls in her ballet class mocking her body’s distinctive curves. For Young, a performance studies scholar who has written extensively about South Africa, watching the work recalled a passage in Count Harry Kessler’s memoir from 1926, when he invited Josephine Baker to dance for his dinner guests: Young’s reading turns Kessler’s account on its head, for she reads what Kessler describes as the dancer’s “sulking” as Baker’s resistance to the white gaze. For Wilson, a US choreographer who has spent extensive time in Africa, Xaba’s choreography stands out for how she “creates from [her] own perspective [. . .] as a strong independent [woman].” For Edwards, a former dancer and a scholar and translator of African diasporic literature, *Fremde Tänze* raised complex questions about the artist’s relation to the archive: He saw Xaba undertaking not the historical recovery suggested by the “Historical Introduction,” but a “subversive appropriation” of a methodology “we might associate with Sent M’ahesa, a hallucinated exoticism of dance.” Xaba, he concludes, made the “radical gesture” of “claiming the right of hallucinate from Africa,” a “transplanted inverted exoticism.”

Listening to the panelists’ formal comments, I experienced cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* across the Black-white divide in US culture. It was like an exhilarating seminar, when one’s understanding of a work expands exponentially. This was one reason why I determined to publish a cluster of essays on Xaba in *TDR*: so other dance and performance scholars and viewers of her work

had access to the brilliant insights and comments of the panelists at Black Arts International.

Yet there were other moments when cross-viewing felt like an intrusion. Two such moments stand out. The first came in my graduate seminar, when Black students cued me in on Xaba's creative repurposing of an everyday object and consumer product for women in the opening procession, hair extensions called "tracks." Like tampons, hair extensions have a long history, but the current product dates to the years after the Second World War. Tracks, also known as "weaves," can either be natural or synthetic. Natural hair extensions typically are bought from Asian women for sale to women in the First World, while synthetic tracks are less expensive and more accessible worldwide. Xaba's designer Franziska Jacobsen used synthetic blond tracks to make her costume for the opening procession—a long wig, sleeveless dress, arm and leg cuffs—all made from the same straw-like material.

Viewing "Triumphal March of the Donuts," I hadn't paid that much attention to Xaba's costume. Rather, I was focused on the manacle-like tray around her neck and especially on her steady gaze leveled at the spectators waiting in the lobby. Had someone asked me to comment on her costume, I would have seen it as a parody of a primitivist costume, perhaps even an allusion to the photograph of Wigman in her early solo *Idolatry* from *Ecstatic Dances*, a solo that Wittrock and Wagner mentioned in the Berlin program booklet.²¹ But once I was alerted, it was obvious that blond tracks had fashioned the costume, just as tampons and cut-up plastic straws later decorated the white leather body suit that Xaba wore for the remainder of *Fremde Tänze*. In other words, the opening procession invited recognition from Black spectators in the same way that the ending scene invited recognition from female spectators. As Rachel Russell, a student in my graduate seminar, wrote:

In a brief pass through the audience [in "Triumphal March"] Xaba has suspended time and challenged the audience to sit with the juxtaposition of her deep brown skin and 4c textured hair with the straight blond tracks of her costume, and the clowns and minstrel caricatures on the donuts surrounding her head; that is, if they know what tracks and 4c textured hair is. That first image of Xaba, and the images that followed, are layered, complex, and not universally ascertainable. I, as a Black woman, recognize the tracks, and the minstrel caricatures. I understand the historical significance of what it means to see Xaba covered in straight blond hair with straight blond hair being marketed as a marker of beauty [...].

Each piece contains layers upon layers of meaning, some that are easy

to grasp [...] and others remain hidden, visible to those who “get it” and obscured for those who don’t. [...] I left the theatre wondering if people got it: if they understood the layers contained in each short piece? If they understood the implicit critique of the past and present engagement of people who understand themselves to be neutral, blank canvases trying on those of us who are deemed consumable and disposable? If they realize that the test of attention contained in “Tableau Vivant”—sitting through the stringing of tampons on a piece of mesh—is replicating the taxing and durational impact of existing in a system that was set up to dispose of you?²²

This is a powerful reading of *Fremde Tänze*. And it raises the question of whether a Black feminist viewpoint can be layered with the other levels of meaning incorporated in my analysis of Xaba’s work.

The other moment when cross-viewing felt like an intrusion came in the Q&A at the end of the panel at Black Arts International. Alexis Pauline Gumbs—a poet, independent scholar, and activist—raised the question of my engagement with the work, not only in the role of scholar delivering the “Historical Introduction” but also as moderator, host, and translator. She asked: Was my involvement in *Fremde Tänze* an “authorizing role” similar to the “verificatory preface to Phyllis Wheatley’s collection of poems” by a white author? Remarking on the “unbearability of whiteness in relationship to Black performance,” she wondered if “Xaba asked Professor Manning to be especially white so it would be painful to us throughout this experience—or not?” Aware that Black Arts International—a weeklong gathering of Black artists and Black scholars—was “maybe the only place” that she could pose such a question in public, she ended reframing her query: “I’m not asking whether it was intentional or not, but I’m just asking that we think more explicitly about pain, the painfulness of whiteness in relationship to Black performance and art.”

Gumbs’ comments reverberated through the subsequent conversation. Xaba responded first, noting that she “thought it would be better if [the scholar delivering the prologue] was someone white, precisely.” Edwards spoke next, saying “I don’t have an answer to that, but to me it feels right to be made uncomfortable because that unbearability doesn’t go away.” After further reflection, he commented that what the “Historical Introduction” authorized was not Xaba’s “subjectivity” as author but rather her “right to do the research . . . and a reminder that the space of the archive is racially marked.” Acknowledging that she also “struggled” with the “proprietary whiteness” of my role, Cox commented that what she found “so amazing” was how the work

asks “who gets to speak, who gets to create the frame, and who can step out and play with that [frame].” She concluded that Xaba’s intentionality “about that gave me some sense of hope.” Wilson returned to Xaba’s decision to cast a white scholar in the “Historical Introduction,” noting that choreographers “put something there for you to read in time and in space.” Highlighting choreographic craft, he remarked that dance artists manipulate not only the abstractions of time, space, and energy but also audience expectations—the “different baggage [viewers bring] about whiteness, about blackness, about hair texture, about hand gestures, about hip width, about groin size.”

Xaba elaborated further on her choices—and constraints—as an artist. Amplifying the remarks she made during the artists’ talk in Berlin, she stated that she is “always thinking about the audience.” She continued:

I never get to perform [my work] in Soweto . . . where I’m from, so [my work] is never consumed by [people with my same cultural background] . . . The audience [for my work] is predominantly white . . . So I have to think about the politics of the gaze, and I . . . play with it, I challenge it, but I can’t control it . . . I want Black people to consume my work . . . I’ve had to think a lot about why Black people don’t go to theatre . . . in Paris, London, Johannesburg, New York . . . Black people don’t come to these spaces [where my work is performed.] Why? . . . Some people [in South Africa] have said my work is white, which I don’t understand . . . and there’s never a conversation about . . . what makes it white, and what is Black art or Black dance or Black theatre?

From the audience, Omi Osun Joni L. Jones (African and African Diaspora Studies, University of Texas-Austin) picked up on Xaba’s query, commenting that “we’re in a moment where reverting” to the question of what constitutes Black art has become “necessary.” She specifically asked Young, who had shown videos of other contemporary artists in South Africa during her formal remarks, to reflect on “what Black art might be.” Closing the Q&A, Young replied that the conversation—and the performance—raised questions for her about “structural location . . . the tent, the archive, academia.” She suggested that “the position of whiteness or the position of Blackness needs to move . . . away from embodiment towards ideas of . . . structural empowerments.” Asking us to consider “how we inhabit structures of power,” she pointed out that Black and white bodies both are “[interpolated] within power structures” and that these power structures elevate “the liberal enlightened singular subject” over communities.

In their edited comments included in the issue of *TDR: The Drama*

Review where this essay originally appeared, Cox, Edwards, and Young all reflect, directly or indirectly, on the questions raised in the Q&A about the role of whiteness in *Fremde Tänze*. This essay results from my own subsequent reflections on this issue. Importantly, I now see the “Historical Introduction” in a different light than when I first encountered Xaba’s work in Berlin. There I had considered Wittrock’s slide lecture as roughly equivalent to the program booklet that reproduced the photos the curators had shown the artists, that is, as a mark or trace of the creative process prompted by the Tanzfonds Erbe commission. Although Wittrock did not take an onstage role in any other work at Sophiensæle, the frame of the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum was evident throughout the weekend, as we saw six distinctly different artistic responses to the creative prompt to respond to the dance archive. Just as I had not taken much notice of the material that Xaba used in creating the costume for “Triumphal March of the Donuts” upon first viewing, so I did not attribute much significance to Wittrock’s “Historical Introduction.”

After it became clear that some spectators in Chicago found the “Historical Introduction” a painful experience, I wondered if my performance had altered the meaning of the slide lecture. After all, in my hasty editing of Wittrock’s text I had deliberately downplayed his persona as a rebel within the field of German dance studies, the rebel who dared discuss racism in a performance world that rarely engaged the topic. Several decades ago that had been my role within US dance studies, but now I was a senior scholar and it felt more honest to speak in my own voice than in Wittrock’s. And I knew that Wittrock had altered his role from venue to venue and even that Xaba did not always include the “Historical Introduction” in *Fremde Tänze*.²³ Thus I had assumed that my version was within established parameters for the work. In retrospect, however, I realized that my assumptions and hasty performance choices were in error, for my attempt to play the material straight in order to heighten the parody failed. As Chicago blogger Michael Kramer commented in a post published many months later:

Manning’s presence onstage [. . .] did not raise the critic to the role of performer so much as trouble the boundaries between interpreter and interpreted, critic and maker, the scholar and the studied. It was a parody of the Western academic, presenter, or performance curator, although it was a bit unclear if Manning was in on the parody (or if she gave an outstandingly naïve performance of the figure of the Western “expert”). (Kramer 2018)

After Chicago my understanding of the “Historical Introduction” changed. Now I see how the slide lecture mocks the widespread practice of European and American dance presenters commissioning works by contemporary African artists. This is not only true for Xaba, but it is also the case for many of her peers across the continent, who find that British, American, or European patronage is essential for circulating their work. As Germaine Acogny, one of the pioneers of contemporary dance in Africa, once remarked, “I do not consider Western patronage a problem, considering how much the West took from Africa during colonialism.”²⁴ Whereas in Berlin I had recognized the influence of the white gaze in shaping earlier performance practices, after Chicago I realized how forcefully *Fremde Tänze* points toward the continued power of the white gaze in shaping Black performance. In other words, however much I am compelled by Xaba’s deconstruction of the white gaze, I am also implicated.

Not that I wasn’t aware of my complicity in Berlin. On the contrary, what I admired was how in choreographing the gaze, Xaba in effect choreographs spectatorship. Watching *Fremde Tänze*, we become aware of our preconceptions and expectations, our grasp of some but not all references, our shifting position as insiders and outsiders. What I did not realize until Chicago was how some spectators experienced Xaba’s choreography as a traumatic re-enactment of the past and present. Cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* in Chicago made me recognize the limits of the first-person plural and the limitations of white liberalism in understanding the full range of Black spectatorship.

For me, the artists’ talk in Berlin and the Q&A in Chicago vivified the differing fault lines surrounding race in European and US cultures. In Berlin there seemed an unbridgeable gap between Riebeek’s equation of racism and homophobia and Xaba’s insistence that Riebeek’s white privilege enabled him to ignore audience expectations in a way that she never could. In Chicago there seemed an unbridgeable gap between Xaba’s deconstructive play with the white gaze and some spectators’ experience of that play as a re-enactment of trauma.

Does recognizing these fault lines stage a difficult conversation about difference, or simply voice distinct viewpoints that cannot find common ground? In Trump’s America and in an era of nationalist threats to the European Union, the inability to find common ground became an everyday reality and the staging of difficult conversations a rarity. For me, cross-viewing *Fremde Tänze* initiated a difficult conversation with African American colleagues, yet I recognize that for others the experience of the work only confirmed the persistence of white privilege.

CODA IN BERLIN

Two and a half years after first seeing *Fremde Tänze* at Sophiensæle, I am back in Germany for a few weeks of research and am astonished by the level of public dialogue on colonialism and racism in German arts and culture. In Dresden an exhibit traces the construction of racism as an idea and practice in Germany from the eighteenth century to the present, emphasizing the role of colonial-era popular entertainments in reinforcing racist ideologies (Geulen and Vogel 2018). At the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin a multipart exhibit scrambles the European and US emphasis of the museum's collection with objects and images from Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Kittelmann and Knapstein 2018). And at the Bode Museum in Berlin masterpieces of African sculpture are displayed alongside medieval Christian sculpture. The curators at the Bode note "Germany's growing openness to question its role as an agent in the history of European colonialism" (Chapuis et al. 2017, 13). Colleagues in dance studies concur that questions about colonialism and racism are now on the cultural agenda in a way that they were not a few years prior.

When I first saw *Fremde Tänze* at Sophiensæle, Xaba's work raised questions that the Berlin public seemed neither willing nor equipped to answer. Now those questions seem urgent, and the arts public is struggling to respond. And I am left to wonder what role Xaba's *Fremde Tänze*—and the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum—might have played in pushing a difficult conversation from unthinkable to inevitable.

Notes

1. In addition to "Nelisiwe Xaba Dancing between South Africa and the Global North" (8–15) and the essay reprinted here, the cluster in *TDR: The Drama Review* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2020) included Reggie Wilson, "Encountering Dance in Africa—and Nelisiwe Xaba" (16–17); Mlondolozi Zondi, "Venue and the (R)uses of Power: Nelisiwe Xaba's *They Look at Me and That's All They Think*" (18–27); Mbongeni N. Mtshali, "Hottentot Venus Redux: Nelisiwe Xaba's Critical Moves of Resistance" (28–37); Eike Wittrock, "Fremdes Erbe: Nelisiwe Xaba and German Dance Heritage" (38–53); Aimee Meredith Cox, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Hershini Young, "Reflections on Nelisiwe Xaba's *Fremde Tänze*" (73–87). I cannot emphasize enough that the current essay should be read in tandem with the responses of Cox, Edwards, and Young.

2. In contrast, I remain in close touch with Reggie Wilson, who did read my essays ahead of publication in *TDR* in order to check for factual accuracy. However, I consulted neither Wilson nor Xaba on my interpretations of their works, which remain my own, shaped by my perspective as a white scholar and spectator drawn to Black postmodernism.

3. From 2015 to 2017 *Schönheitsabend* toured extensively in Germany (Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg) and to the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Groningen, Tilburg); Belgium (Brussels, Gent, Antwerp, Mechelen); Great Britain (Birmingham, Leeds); Austria (Vienna); France (Montpelier); Portugal (Porto); Italy (Terni); Finland (Helsinki); Norway (Trondheim); and Iceland (Reykjavik). See Leopold (2017) for an extended critical analysis of *Schönheitsabend*. Since 2017 Holzinger and Riebeek have pursued their choreographic careers independently.

4. The 2001 essay, "Looking from a Different Place," is reprinted in this volume.

5. The literature on Bel, Charnatz, and Le Roy is extensive, especially in French and German. In English, see Lepecki (2010), Hardt (2012), Bleeker (2012), and selected essays in Franko (2017).

6. American modern dancers active in Europe, notably Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller, also became subjects for projects funded by Tanzfonds Erbe, as did the pioneering generation of Tanztheater choreographers—Pina Bausch, Susanne Linke, Reinhild Hoffmann, and Gerhard Bohner—and US postmodernists Yvonne Rainer and Anna Halprin. The website at www.tanzfonds.de includes documentation on all projects in German and English.

7. See Wittrock's essay "Fremdes Erbe" in the *TDR* cluster (2020) for his account of the origin of the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum.

8. Wittrock and Wagner (2016). Program booklet in author's collection. Since English is a working language in the Berlin dance world, the program booklet was bilingual, in German and English.

9. In contrast to the fulsome touring schedule for *Schönheitsabend*, *Fremde Tänze* has toured only to Johannesburg, Cape Town, New York, and Frankfurt, in addition to Berlin and Chicago. The English-language translation of the title has varied: in New York *Fremde Tänze* was translated as "Foreign Dances," in Johannesburg as "Strange Dances." Since the adjective *fremd* means both "strange" and "foreign" in German, I used both terms to title the program in Chicago.

10. Except as otherwise noted, all quotations and paraphrases from Xaba come from our informal conversations in Berlin (January 2016) and Chicago (October 2017).

11. The following descriptive analysis is based on my viewing and my notes on the work in performance, supplemented by a recording of the Johannesburg performance provided by Xaba.

12. Wittrock (2016), "Historical Introduction." Unpublished manuscript in author's collection. This is different from program booklet noted in #8 and bibliography.

13. Except as otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

14. Later Wittrock told me that the "beads" were cut-up plastic drinking straws, another everyday object that Xaba repurposed in performance.

15. My reconstruction of the artists' talk comes from notes I took during and after the event.

16. The panelists and audience at Black Arts International, as well as students in my fall 2017 graduate seminar and other colleagues at Northwestern, shared impressions

of the work. Quotations from student papers and from conversations with colleagues are used with permission of the authors.

17. English translation of lyrics accessed February 20, 2019, at <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/ich-weiss-i-know.html>.

18. Given these levels of meanings, I wondered if Wittrock and Wagner had recommended the use of Hagen's "Zarah." But Wittrock told me that Xaba had selected the track. The curators, however, did recommend the accompaniment to "Auf Wiedersehen" by the Berlin Comedian Harmonists.

19. Zondi is currently an assistant professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California, focusing on Black critical thought, performance theory, and visual studies.

20. Quotations from the panel are transcribed from a video recording held by the Black Arts Initiative at Northwestern University. The essays published in the cluster on Xaba in *TDR: The Drama Review* reflect later editing by the authors and may not include the comments excerpted here.

21. See image of *Idolatry* in the essay "Mary Wigman and Asia" on p. 229.

22. Rachel Russell, "Fremde Tänze," 2017. Unpublished manuscript, Re-Performing the Avant-Garde, Northwestern University.

23. Performances in New York and Cape Town did not include the "Historical Introduction." Co-curator Wagner delivered it in Frankfurt, costumed in "a leopard-skin shirt" and adopting "a deliberately academic stance" (Piccirillo 2017, 146).

24. Germaine Acogny, conversation with author, Evanston, IL, October 16, 2017.

IV. Keywords

Nationality and Globalization

An American Perspective on Tanztheater (1986)

I was the right person in the right place at the right time, when Pina Bausch and other exponents of Tanztheater arrived in New York City in fall 1985. Having recently returned from an extended trip to East and West Germany, I was immersed in research on the past and present of German theater dance. Hence the staff at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where Bausch and her peers were appearing as part of the Next Wave Festival, commissioned me to curate a lobby exhibit on the history of twentieth-century German dance, and editors at *TDR: The Drama Review* invited me to contribute to a cluster of essays they were compiling on Tanztheater. In the end, I contributed a photo essay documenting the lobby exhibit and the essay reprinted in part here, an extended review of the Tanztheater season that fall in New York City.¹

At this early point in my career, I saw German and American modern dance as “independent traditions” (179). In fact, by the mid-1980s the English-language literature had all but erased German modern dance, so to recover its history was to push back against the historiography penned by Don McDonagh (1976), Marcia Siegel (1979), Sally Banes (1980), and other leading critics who narrated modern dance as a succession from Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis to Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey to Merce Cunningham and Judson Church. To recognize that Pina Bausch and her contemporaries had direct and indirect links with Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, and their contemporaries in the 1920s and 1930s was to tell a story that the New York dance public in the mid-1980s had not heard before.²

From my perspective in the mid-1980s, modern dance in Germany and the United States were “distinctly different styles” that nonetheless had common roots, originating in the early decades of the twentieth century from “the double impulse to . . . establish movement as a self-sufficient means for expression . . . [and] to subvert and perhaps transform dominant social values” (179). After World War II, however, modern dance in both Germany and the United States “lost this sense of its dual mission,” and artistic developments fueled by the 1960s—postmodern dance in the United States and Tanztheater in Germany—disentangled

the “double impulse” altogether, with US artists focusing on “the inherent expressivity of pure movement” and the German artists on “the social import of dance” (179). This divergence, I contended, was why German and US critics were so defensive of their own nations’ “independent traditions” and so hostile toward one another’s aesthetics. The defensiveness and hostility were amply documented in the *TDR* cluster.³

Although the established New York critics were dismissive of Bausch in fall 1985, I was far from alone in my fascination with her work, which was shared by many younger artists and spectators in the Next Wave audience. At first, it was Bausch’s relentless focus on gendered roles and sexual violence that compelled my attention, as is clear in this essay and is of a piece with my research in the 1980s focused on the keywords of gender and nationality. When I later commented on Tanztheater in *Ecstasy and the Demon*, I interpreted the images of gender as commentary on the confusion between victims and victimizers in the German memory of the Nazi period. Not until *TDR* asked me to script brief reflections after Bausch’s death in 2009 did my interpretation of her significance move beyond national borders and highlight the global influence of her company’s tours (2010).

As the earliest essay reprinted in this collection, “An American Perspective on Tanztheater” demonstrates how my encounter with Bausch pushed me to articulate an alternative to the Greenbergian historiography that had enshrined the formal exploration of movement as the defining value of (American) modern dance. Furthermore, the essay demonstrates how even as I posited the “independent traditions” of German and American modern dance, my thinking was shadowed by a sense that there were more consequential interconnections between traditions than a historiography premised on nation-states allowed. The subsequent essays in this section trace how my writing shifted from highlighting the “imagined community” of the nation—in Benedict Anderson’s trenchant phrase—to probing global circulation as an integral dimension of modern dance history.

At a symposium on German and American modern dance held in November 1985 at Goethe House New York, Anna Kisselgoff, chief dance critic for the *New York Times*, turned to Reinhild Hoffmann, director of the Tanztheater Bremen, and asked in exasperation, “But why aren’t you more interested in dance vocabularies?” Hoffmann did not answer but instead turned to Nina Wiener, a New York choreographer, and asked, “But why aren’t you more

interested in the social problems seen in a city like New York?" Weiner did not answer.

This incomplete exchange—two questions that received no answers—summarized the divergence between German and American modern dance in the mid-1980s. While American choreographers generally emphasized the inherent expressivity of pure movement and considered narrative or representational subject matter beside the point, new German choreographers reversed these priorities and considered subject matter far more important than the formal display of movement values. In other words, the new German choreographers were no more interested in exploring "dance vocabularies" than their American counterparts were in engaging "social problems."

With few exceptions, critics followed the inclinations of their fellow citizens. Hence the New York critics by and large dismissed the Tanztheater (literally "dance theater") featured as part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival in fall 1985. The same critics who had praised American postmodern choreographers for challenging received definitions of "dance" criticized Pina Bausch, Reinhild Hoffmann, and Mechthild Grossmann because their works were not "dance." And even though critics conceded that the works of Susanne Linke exhibited dance interest, they still criticized her solos' overt content. (Gerhard Bohner, whose *Triadic Ballet* [1977] received its American premiere at the Joyce Theater, generally escaped the critical polemics that embroiled his female colleagues, perhaps because his work was not burdened with the "Next Wave" label.)

The German critics were no less chauvinistic than the Americans. They too defended their own modern dance tradition by criticizing the dominant style on the other side of the Atlantic. Jochen Schmidt, dance critic for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and a participant in the Goethe House symposium, once compared the "depth" of Tanztheater with the "lightness" of American postmodern dance and concluded that "the American art of lightness [may] all too quickly [become] an art of insignificance" (1982, 13).

Although German and American critics have often defined independent traditions, the divergence between the two traditions had not always seemed as great as it did in the mid-1980s. Although choreographers like Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, and Martha Graham developed distinctly different styles of modern dance, they were united in their refusal to separate the formal values of movement from the social import of dance. In fact, modern dance originated in Germany and America from the double impulse to not only establish movement as a self-sufficient means for expression but also to subvert and perhaps transform dominant social values. At first,

modern dancers connected the formal and social impulse in utopian terms. They believed that the experience of dance could free energies within the individual and within society, energies that could lead from personal to cultural renewal. Modern dancers later turned away from such utopian visions and staged their social critique through sympathetically portraying marginal social types or enacting agit-prop parables. They believed that dance should confront the viewer with aspects of social life demanding reform. But whether utopian or confrontational, modern dance in Germany and America took its social mission as seriously as its formal mission.

After the Second World War modern dance lost this sense of its dual mission, for clear sociopolitical reasons. After 1933 National Socialism appropriated *Ausdruckstanz* ("dance of expression"), one of several names for German modern dance, and made it serve ideological ends, as in the opening night spectacle for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games staged by Wigman, Gret Palucca, Harald Kreutzberg, and others. After the war *Ausdruckstanz* never regained its earlier stature, in part because of its fascist ideological taint. To Germans it seemed unsuited to the new era of postwar recovery, an era that preferred the supposedly untainted classicism of ballet. Yet, in actuality, the Nazis had promoted ballet as requisite training for professional dancers and an appropriate public diversion. Even so, as West German cities vied to found ballet companies of international stature during the 1950s and 1960s, they built on the foundation laid by National Socialism. Ironically enough, ballet at the time seemed a refuge of internationalism, classicism, and formalism.

While West German dance took refuge in ballet during the early postwar years, American dance adopted an increasingly formalist credo. Ballet choreographers followed the example of George Balanchine, and modern dancers that of Merce Cunningham, as both idioms enjoyed the security of America's newfound cultural and political dominance. Choreographers no longer struggled to fuse formal values with social import. Rather they gloried in technical virtuosity and formal experimentation and play. American critics responded by orienting their writing more toward description and less toward interpretation.

Beginning in the late 1960s, stimulated by the youth upheavals of 1968, young German choreographers reacted against the formalism of German ballet and of American dance. In fact, they associated the ballet boom with the postwar era's relentless Americanization, and they wanted to break its hold if only for that reason. So they reached back to the traditions of *Ausdruckstanz* and intermingled influences drawn from experimental theater and, surprisingly, from American modern dance. Indeed, *Tanztheater* showed the simul-

taneous rejection and integration of American influences, a paradox that served as an apt metaphor for cultural relations between West Germany and the United States in the 1980s.

Perhaps even more surprising was the paradoxical relationship between Tanztheater and German ballet. While Tanztheater choreographers explicitly negated the principles of classical and neoclassical ballet, they generally employed ballet-trained dancers in companies within the municipal repertory system. Because Tanztheater choreographers were dependent on the repertory system's patronage, they accepted its orientation toward ballet. They both resented this orientation and exploited the values of their dancers' daily discipline.

Pina Bausch developed the most distinctive and the most internationally known form of Tanztheater. Directing the Tanztheater Wuppertal from 1973 until her death in 2009, she evolved a large-scale, improvisational performance mode that transcended its specific sources in her training with Kurt Jooss at the Folkwang School (1955–1959) and her studies at Juilliard in New York (1960–1961). Like her contemporaries in theater, Bausch combined a visually rich production style with techniques drawn from Stanislavski and Brecht, and the result approached Artaud's idea of a theater of cruelty. Her performers employed principles of method acting, infusing their interactions with the intensity and pain of remembered experience. At the same time they employed Brechtian alienation techniques, undercutting the spectator's sympathetic identification by presenting their role playing as self-consciously theatrical. The result are performances—still in repertoire—that simultaneously distance and engage the spectator. This push and pull leaves many spectators exhausted by the end of the evening, overwhelmed by the emotional complexity of the experience. Bausch's Artaudian theater effects a peculiar catharsis, for the experience of the work leaves spectators drained, but with no sense of resolution.

Especially unresolved are the images of gender roles and sexual relations. Bausch shows men and women locked into power plays and obsessive patterns of physical and emotional violence. For instance, near the beginning of *Bluebeard* (1977), Beatrice Libonati lies on her back, clutching Jan Minarik's head on her stomach, and drags the two of them across the floor strewn with dead leaves. Near the end Minarik reverses the action and drags Libonati across the floor, her body rigidly bloated by layers of dresses. In *Gebirge* (1984) Josephine Anne Endicott repeatedly lies down before Jan Minarik, pulling her skirt up over her head so that he can draw a red X on her bare back. But even when he stops marking her back, she continues to prostrate herself before

him. In Bausch's works moments of tenderness and humor only occasionally relieve the ugliness of male-female relations.

The women, often dressed in old-fashioned formals and high heels, become sex objects and sexual victims, while the men, often dressed in black tuxedos, become sexual oppressors. At times the images reverse: men become the victims and women the victimizers, or the men dress in drag and become narcissists, competing with the women to become sex objects. The images of masculinity and femininity are never idealized, for Bausch presents no independent yet caring women, no strong yet sensitive men. Rather she frames the images of gender roles in the boundary zone between reality and fantasy. The men and women onstage suggest both the projections of unconscious desires and the real-life analogues of battered wives, numb whores, and sexually confused men. Hence Bausch's theater functions both as psychological projection and as reflection of reality.

Bausch's distinctive mode of Tanztheater emerged in the mid-1970s. Strikingly, its characteristic form evolved together with its characteristic subject matter. Although Bausch had shown choreographic daring from the time her first work premiered in 1968, she did not push her dance structures beyond the limits that traditionally define choreography until the mid-1970s. At that same time gender roles and sexual relations became her primary focus.

In earlier works Bausch respected the traditional limits of choreography by setting dance to a continuous musical score. Hence *Afterzero* (1970) and *Actions for Dancers* (1971) were set to music by contemporary composers, Ivo Malec and Gunter Becker respectively. A triumvirate of dances set to classical compositions followed: Wagner's "Bacchanale" from *Tannhäuser* (1972), Gluck's *Iphigénie auf Tauris* (1974), and *Orpheus und Eurydice* (1975). During the same period other works, namely *Fritz* (1974) and *Ich bring dich um die Ecke* (1974), moved toward a fusion of dance and theater. Bausch's performers not only executed choreographed movement sequences but also began to play theater games, to sing and tell stories, and to project shifting character roles.

The Rite of Spring (1975) and *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1976) marked the transition to Bausch's mature mode. Although both used familiar scores, neither was limited to the score that titled the work as a whole: in *The Rite of Spring* Bausch set the titled score as the third part, following the first two parts set to other Stravinsky compositions, and in *The Seven Deadly Sins* she set the titled score as the first half, followed by a collection of other Weill songs under the subtitle "Don't Be Afraid." Thus both works sprawled beyond the duration and unity imposed by a continuous musical score. As Bausch developed her fusion of dance and theater, she left behind live orchestral accompaniment



Figure 17. Marlis Alt in Pina Bausch's *The Rite of Spring*, which presents clear distinctions and tensions between the sexes, photograph by Rolf Borzik. Courtesy of Pina Bausch Foundation.

and substituted a collage of recorded music, the dancers' own voices, the sounds of their moving bodies, and silence.

The Stravinsky and Weill works also introduced Bausch's characteristic subject matter. While earlier dances like *Afterzero* and *Actions for Dancers* had made little distinction between the sexes and instead focused on images of debilitated bodies—according to Jochen Schmidt, both men and women looked like “the leftovers from some war or atomic catastrophe . . . members of some deformed thalidomide society” (1984, 14)—*The Rite of Spring* and *The Seven Deadly Sins* presented clear distinctions and tensions between the sexes. While the Stravinsky work comprised three choreographic variations on the theme of antagonism between the sexes, the Weill work staged two alternate visions of male exploitation and female self-degradation, visions that challenged any simplistic interpretation by showing women dressed as men and men dressed as women. With *The Rite of Spring* and *The Seven Deadly Sins* Bausch had found her form and her subject matter (figure 17).

The works that followed—including *Bluebeard*, *Kontakthof* (1978), *Arien* (1979), *1980* (1980), and *Gebirge*—charted the contours of Bausch's mature mode. Interestingly, this mode juxtaposes two extremes of scale, the monu-

mental and the intimate. These dances comprise huge assemblages of fragments and push the performers' and spectators' endurance beyond the usual limit of a two- to three-hour performance broken by one or two intermissions. Everything about the works is monumental: their duration, the size of the theater space opened to the back walls of the opera house, the twenty or more dancers always onstage, and the sprawling, multifocused, chaotic quality of the stage action.

Yet at the same time a definite intimacy characterizes the works, an intimacy that results from the use of improvisation as part of both the choreographic process and the performance structure. Never alone on stage, performers are always interacting and responding to one another and to the stage environment. They constantly shift from one role to another, and yet, paradoxically, each dancer projects a coherent identity. The performers seem more like people with widely varying body types, accents, and personalities than like dancers. Throughout, Meryl Tankard seems clownlike, Monika Sagon demure, Sylvia Kesselheim shrill, Dominique Mercy sunny, Lutz Forster aloof. Especially when the performers break the proscenium, spectators feel an intimate connection with them as people. This sense of intimacy contradicts the works' monumental scale.

Each work creates an environment often defined through distinctive floor coverings, dead leaves in *Bluebeard*, water in *Arien*, grass in *1980*, dirt in *Gebirge*. As each work progresses, the dancers mark and are marked by their environment. Their hair becomes entangled with dead leaves, their clothes become waterlogged, their skin becomes smeared with dirt. They bring on objects and then discard them, chairs, pieces of clothing, toys. Other objects appear on their own accord, like the miniature frigate and the hippopotamus in *Arien*, and add to the accumulation of things onstage. The environment is constant, remaining essentially the same at the end as at the beginning, except that it becomes worn, littered, used up.

Discarded costumes often appear among the stage debris. In fact, constant costume changes mark the performers' shifting roles, suggesting that the performers' roles are like costumes to be put on and taken off at will. The performers often dress and undress onstage, frequently assisted by one another. Even when they change offstage, they often re-enter still adjusting their undergarments, zipping their last zipper, or buttoning their last button. At times the performers, usually the women, are forced into layers and layers of costumes. This happens to Libonati in *Bluebeard*, when Minarik dresses her in the Victorian gowns cast off by the other women; to a row of seated women in *Arien*, when the men doll them up with makeup and odd pieces of

clothes; and to Kesselheim in *Gebirge*, when Minarik wraps gauze around her, covering even her face. The women become paralyzed by the layers of clothes, paralyzed by the signals of gender identity.

Costume changes are only one of the motifs that recur from work to work. Indeed, Bausch's works are like miscellaneous assemblages of motifs that keep reappearing in transformed guises. There are children's games (duck-duck-goose in *1980*, musical chairs in *Arien*) and social rituals (the dinner party in *Arien*, the funeral and formal goodbyes in *1980*). There are images of food and of eating. In *1980* performers enter with plates of jello, and Kyomi Ichida throws her piece into the air and catches it on her plate like a juggler, while Grossmann shakes her piece of jello and then her breasts; in *Gebirge* Minarik makes a sandwich of his hand and offers it to a spectator. There are endless lineups, processions, and takeoffs on beauty contests. In *1980* one woman has a row of men drop their drawers, exposing their buttocks to the audience, while she walks in front of them inspecting their genitals; later the women line up, a man walks down the line inspecting the jiggle in their breasts, and ultimately a quarrel breaks out as to who has the best-looking leg; as *Kontakthof* begins, the performers one by one come downstage, show their various profiles, and bare their teeth. There are images of narcissism and self-display. In *Kontakthof* Mercy and Anne Marie Benati sit across from one another and with adolescent self-consciousness strip to their undergarments; in *1980* the performers expose all varying patches of skin as they sunbathe.

The catalogue continues: performers play word games, monologue, tell stories. In *1980* Benati tells the story of her father dressing her as a child and often forgetting her underpants; later the dancers shout out three-word associations with their country of national origin; in *Arien* performers play a game substituting the name of a body part for the blank in a sentence. Two men or two women perform a turn together, as in *Kontakthof* when Tankard and Endicott appear in party frocks and dance girlishly. In *Gebirge* Forster and Mercy dance a soft-shoe number. Authoritarian director/choreographer figures appear. In *1980* Minarik functions as a master of ceremonies; in *Kontakthof* he wanders around with a clipboard inspecting the technical equipment while Endicott and Sagon instruct the others like ballet mistresses.

Needless to say, the disparate images come together in different ways for different spectators. For me, the parts of *Gebirge* remained fragments and never coalesced as a whole. Minarik as a monster man, Urs Kaufmann wearing a red woman's bathing suit and heavy red lipstick, pine trees hauled onstage and then carted away—these incongruous juxtapositions seemed like a bad dream of a Bausch work, designed to confound and bore the spectator. Yet



Figure 18. Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* (1978), which presents double references to theatrical and social relations, photograph by Ulli Weiss. Courtesy of Pina Bausch Foundation.

the various images of *1980* and *Kontakthof*, probably no less disparate than those in *Gebirge*, came together for me and resonated around an ineffable center. The theme of play seemed to anchor *1980*—the children's games, the physical self-display of the sunbathers, the magician's display of skill, the role-playing of Tankard as the dotty English tourist and Grossmann as the punk screaming "fantastic." The work seemed to equate theatrical play and social play: we play at roles in life, especially at gender roles, just as performers play at roles in the theater. This same double reference to theatrical and social realities seemed to anchor *Kontakthof*, except that it cut sharper and deeper than in *1980*: just as performers take on roles vis-à-vis the audience, we take on roles vis-à-vis one another, and in both instances role playing involves a mixture of pleasure, self-disgust, resentment, and desperation (figure 18).

This is not to say that Bausch's work can be reduced to the theme of role playing. Indeed, her works deliberately defy any single, reductive interpretation, even as they demand to be interpreted. This paradox of interpretation also appeared in the works of modern dancers between the wars—Wigman,

Jooss, Graham, and others—and appears in the works of the generations of Balanchine and Cunningham. Bausch's fusion of dance and theater, however antithetical to 1980s modes of American dance, did not place her outside the tradition of modern dance, for she revitalized its tension between the denial and the possibility of interpretation. Although Bausch, like her American contemporaries, broke the essential connection earlier generations effected between dance's formal values and its social import, she continued the tradition by recasting the paradox of interpretation. Violating one aspect of the tradition while reworking another, Bausch pushed the evolution of modern dance in a new direction.

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Perhaps the most astounding aspect of the 1985 appearances by Bausch and her contemporaries was the negative response by so many New York critics. It is puzzling why so many American—and German—critics felt compelled to take sides, why they could not accept each other's aesthetic on their own terms. Obviously, if the American proponents of formalism and the German proponents of antiformalism felt totally secure about their own positions, they would not have reacted so defensively to one another. Their defensiveness suggested to me that the most vocal advocates feared that their positions were incomplete and inadequate. It was as if both the formalists and the antiformalists sensed the impoverishment of the postwar split between the social mission and formal mission of modern dance.

Notes

1. "An American Perspective on Tanztheater" (57–79) was reprinted in *The Pina Bausch Sourcebook*, ed. Royd Climenhaga (London: Routledge, 2013): 31–44. The reprint in this volume cuts about half the original essay, essentially the commentary on Bausch's contemporaries Reinhild Hoffmann, Mechthild Grossmann, Susanne Linke, and Gerhard Bohner.

2. The photo essay co-curated with Melissa Benson, "Interrupted Continuities: Modern Dance in Germany" (30–45), was reprinted in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Cooper Albright and Ann Dils (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001): 218–27.

3. In addition to my contributions, *TDR: The Drama Review* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1986) included Ann Daly, ed., "Tanztheater: The Thrill of the Lynch Mob or the Rage of a Woman?" (46–56); "What the Critics Say About Tanztheater" (80–84); Johannes Birringer, "Pina Bausch: Dancing Across Borders" (85–97); and "Mechthild Grossmann: The Art of Anti-Heroes: An interview by Carol Martin" (98–106).

Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic (2007)

“Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic” originated as a lecture in 2003, when I for the first time explicitly called for a transnational approach to modern dance history. By the time the essay appeared in print in 2007, I had reiterated this call in the introduction to the second edition of *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman* (2006). While researching and writing the first edition in the 1980s and early 1990s, my focus on narrating the complexities of Wigman’s and other dancers’ accommodations with the Nazi state had “seemed the only responsible intellectual choice,” since the “preexistent literature . . . had rarely broached [this] taboo topic” (2006, xx). By the time I released the second edition, however, it had become clear that the global circulation of Ausdruckstanz and, by extension, “twentieth-century theatrical dance” demanded attention. For, to quote the concluding line of this essay, “transnational influences work in a myriad of directions, creating hybrids and fusions that we have barely begun to fathom” (201).

As a first step toward a transnational history, “Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic” integrated material from my Wigman research with material from my research on American modern dance undertaken for *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b).¹ Like my first monograph, my second monograph focused on the interplay of dance and politics within the frame of the nation-state, as I sought to probe the complexities of race, racism, and racialization in midcentury modern dance in New York City. Not surprisingly, it was only after completing this investigation that I could begin to evolve a transnational approach.

In contrast to the history narrated in “An American Perspective on Tanztheater,” where I posited American and German modern dance as “independent traditions,” “Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic” demonstrates how dance practices that emerged in Germany during the 1920s inflected the development of modern dance in the United States during the 1930s. The routes for transmission were many: the awareness of Ausdruckstanz by critic John Martin and by Graham’s mentor and composer Louis Horst; the tours of leading German dancers, first Yvonne Georgi

and Harald Kreutzberg, then Mary Wigman, and later Kurt Jooss (the latter not mentioned in this essay); the opening of a New York branch of the Mary Wigman School in 1931 by Hanya Holm (retitled the Hanya Holm Studio in 1936); the migration of German dancers to the United States, whether to find employment or to escape Nazi persecution for their Jewish heritage or communist beliefs. Yet all these influences were downplayed as critics mythologized the Americanness of modern dance, a process that I first explored in the final chapter of *Ecstasy and the Demon* on “Mary Wigman and American Dance” and continue in the subsequent essay reprinted here, “Nation and World in Modern Dance.”

Truda Kaschmann, a student of Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman during the 1920s, immigrated to the United States in 1933. She spent the next six summers at Bennington, where she integrated what she learned from Martha Graham, Louis Horst, and other American moderns with the improvisational working methods she had acquired studying Ausdruckstanz in Germany. Meanwhile, she established herself as a leading teacher of modern dance in Hartford, Connecticut, where she introduced generations of students to modern dance, including the young Alwin Nikolais. Once John Martin asked her, “Truda, when are you finally going to stop improvising?” “Never,” she replied, “that’s the only way I know how to dance!” Recounting their exchange decades later, she laughed as she recalled Martin’s perplexed, admonishing question.²

This anecdote points toward the complex transformations of Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic. From the mid-1920s to the late 1930s, legions of dancers intermingled the improvisational methods developed by Laban, Wigman, and their many followers in Germany with the modern dance vocabularies emerging in the United States. Like Kaschmann, many of these dancers were immigrants; some were Jewish, others were leftists, still others were looking for employment opportunities. At the same time, dancers from the United States—and from many other countries—traveled to Germany to study the new techniques in their country of origin. Yet whatever the nationality of the dancers who crossed the Atlantic, they encountered a dance world in the United States where improvisational methods were not a given, in contrast to Germany during the 1920s, where Ausdruckstanz flourished.³ As Kaschmann’s exchange with Martin demonstrates, critical arbiters for modern dance in the United States considered improvisation to be suspect, not rigorous enough to compete with ballet as a high art form and perhaps too close for comfort to jazz dance and music. Nonetheless, the improvisational methods of Ausdruckstanz powerfully impacted American modern dance

during its formative decade, supporting the mass outreach of leftist dance, the Popular Front choreography of modern dancers, and the emerging movement of Negro dance, as Black concert dance was called during this period.

As American modern dance consolidated over the 1940s and 1950s, Martin's prejudice against improvisation took hold and marginalized the methods of *Ausdruckstanz* or, more accurately, the Americanized versions of *Ausdruckstanz*. During the decades immediately following the Second World War, codified movement techniques developed by Graham, Katherine Dunham, and José Limón dominated modern dance training in New York City. Meanwhile, the war had stopped dancers from crisscrossing the Atlantic, and although dancers resumed the two-way traffic after the war, German-trained dancers did not regain the influence they exerted before the war. Since many German-trained dancers taught in the rapidly expanding dance programs in US colleges and universities, their improvisational methods became more associated with dance education than with choreographic innovation. When improvisation re-emerged during the 1960s as a significant resource for dance making, it had myriad sources beyond the Americanized methods of *Ausdruckstanz*. As Susan Foster has argued, the varieties of improvisation that emerged during the 1960s had roots in diverse sources, notably Africanist performance practices and Asian philosophies (2002, 24–68).

Tracing the impact of *Ausdruckstanz* on American modern dance from the mid-1920s through the late 1930s amplifies two stories that are not yet fully written. The first is the story of improvisation in American modern dance, which critics and scholars generally date from the 1960s. On the contrary, I will argue, improvisational methods entered American modern dance during the 1930s, then became marginalized during the 1940s and 1950s before re-emerging during the 1960s. The second story is of the diaspora of dancers trained in *Ausdruckstanz*. For German-trained dancers migrated to France, Great Britain, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Italy, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Australia, Japan, India, and Israel, as well as to the United States. Thus this case study makes up only one chapter of a much larger tale of cross-cultural circulation.

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While the Weimar Republic saw the flourishing of a self-consciously modern dance movement, the American Jazz Age saw only the first stirrings of a comparable movement. Thus when the first German-trained dancers arrived in the United States, the press considered them only one novelty among others. Eugene von Grona, a student of Wigman and of Jutta Klamt, came to New York

in 1925. His 1927 work *Spirit of Labor*, described as “a human-spirit-caught-in-the-machine solo with fierce pumping, hauling, and hammering movements performed to the accompaniment of steam whistles and thudding machinery,” was included on bills at the Roxy Theater, New York’s well-known vaudeville house (Acocella 1982, 23).⁴ Ronny Johansson, a soloist in central Europe who had studied with Heinrich Kröller, also arrived in 1925. In addition to presenting her own concerts, she taught and performed with Denishawn and with Elsa Findlay, a Hellerau graduate who had emigrated earlier.

At this time only a few American dancers and critics realized that Germany supported a modern dance movement without parallel elsewhere. Louis Horst had heard about Wigman’s dancing in the early 1920s, when working as an accompanist for Denishawn. In 1925 he left the company, first to study in Vienna and then to collaborate with his lover who had left two years earlier, Graham. Under Horst’s artistic tutelage, Graham adopted methods similar to Wigman’s for resolving the music-dance relationship (Soares 1992).⁵ Martin, engaged by the *New York Times* as its first full-time dance critic in 1927, traveled to Germany to report on the Third Dancers Congress in 1930, and his advocacy of modern dance echoed the writings of his German peers. Edwin Denby, the dance critics’ critic, spent a number of years in Germany during the 1920s: a graduate of the Hellerau-Laxenburg School, Denby performed with Cläre Eckstein’s dance ensemble in Darmstadt and at the 1930 Dancers Congress that Martin reviewed. As Denby later recalled his experiences within the collective of dancers, “if Wigman was bad, we were depressed for a week” (Denby 1986, 17).

Thus at least a few observers were prepared for the 1928 arrival of Harald Kreutzberg and Yvonne Georgi on their first of several tours. Their performances sparked the curiosity of the dance world at large about Ausdruckstanz, and their overwhelmingly positive reception reflected an undercurrent of interest in the new possibilities of modern dance. By the time Wigman arrived two years later on the first of three transatlantic tours, this underlying interest had swelled into a well-publicized preoccupation. Dancers and critics engaged in vigorous debate about the relative merits of German and American dance and about the relevance of German models for American developments. Some, like Lincoln Kirstein, who three years later invited George Balanchine to New York, denied that German dance had any value for American dancers (Kirstein 1931, 574–76). Others, like Ted Shawn, who had performed at the same Dancers Congress where Denby appeared, prophesied the coming “brotherhood” of German and American dance (Shawn 1930, 5). Still others, like Doris Humphrey, who had left Denishawn two years earlier in

order to work independently, warned that Americans could not imitate German dance but should focus on the development of their own forms ("What Dancers Think About the German Dance" 1931, 15). The American dance world responded to Wigman's tours as an inspiration and a competitive spur.

From the time of Wigman's tours, the two-way traffic over the Atlantic picked up speed. In 1930, Margarethe Wallmann, director of the Wigman School in Berlin, was invited to teach and lecture at Denishawn; Louise Kloepper was the first American to graduate from the main Wigman School in Dresden; and Lora Deja was the first German-born graduate of the school to accept a full-time teaching position in the United States, at the Cornish School in Seattle, a center for progressive education in the arts. Hanya Holm, a longtime member of Wigman's company and a teacher at the Dresden school, estimated that of the students who took the 1931 summer course in Dresden, half were Americans. That fall, under the sponsorship of Sol Hurok, the manager of Wigman's American tours, Holm opened a branch of the Wigman School in New York. Three years later she was invited to teach at the Bennington School of the Dance.

Almost as soon as Holm landed in New York, her responsiveness to the movement environment—a faculty cultivated by Wigman training—led her to adapt her approach to her new surroundings. She retained the emphasis on spatial awareness and improvisation as primary tools for the dancer, but she codified her approach to a greater extent than Wigman had done. This represented, on the one hand, the almost inevitable systematization that occurs when a follower attempts to transmit the teaching of a master and, on the other hand, an accommodation to the practice of leading American modern dancers such as Graham and Humphrey, who aimed to articulate identifiable movement techniques. Holm, however, never evolved a set vocabulary based on a single movement principle, as did Graham and Humphrey. Rather, she developed a distinctive technique based on the students' improvisational encounter with space. Other dancers trained by Wigman and Laban—Erika Thimey, Jan Veen, Kaschmann, Steffi Nossen, Fé Alf, Tina Flade—arrived soon after Holm did, and each in her own way furthered the integration of German and American modern dance.

As American modern dance came into its own, critical attitudes toward German modern dance decidedly changed. Critics noted that the German dancers who appeared on tour did not impress the audience in the way they once had. In attempting to explain the "unsatisfying quality" of Kreutzberg's performances in 1935, Martin attributed the changed response to the growing sophistication of an audience that had come to expect the "seriousness

of purpose and depth of emotional perception” of the new American dance (Martin 1935, 9). At around the same time, Henry Gilfond, reviewer for *Dance Observer*, was more blunt about what he saw happening:

Yvonne Georgi in [her recent] solo recital [...] was not the profoundly moving Georgi we had last seen with Kreutzberg; and for that matter Harald Kreutzberg in his last concerts demonstrated no considerable development of the brilliant technician we had occasion to see with Georgi. Something has happened to the dancers from across the Atlantic [...]. From [...] reports of the nature of the work of these generally acclaimed masters of the dance, and from the nature of their acquiescence to the brutalization of all the arts in their homeland, we may draw the quite simple conclusion that unlike the dance in America, the dance in Germany is fast becoming (if it has not already become) a matter of little positive significance. Dealing with trivialities, theatrical (not dramatic), its substance is so thoroughly escapist that there is no relation at all to the present scene or audience. (1936, 4–5)

Here Gilfond refers to reports of the collaboration of Wigman and many colleagues, including Georgi and Kreutzberg, with the National Socialists.

These reports were first circulated by leftist dancers, who felt the most betrayed precisely because they had relied so heavily on the improvisational methods of Ausdruckstanz (figure 19). In fact, the New York branch of the Mary Wigman School was the incubator for the New Dance Group, founded in 1932 by students at the school: Miriam Blecher, Fanya Geltman, Nadia Chilkovsky, Becky Lee, Grace Wylie, and Edna Ocko. Charging ten cents for a three-hour class that included one hour of technique, one hour of improvisation, and one hour of political discussion, the New Dance Group recruited students among workers associated with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. The most committed students then joined their teachers in creating agit-prop works to perform at communist party rallies, union meetings, and benefit concerts. Their collectively composed repertory included *Satires*, with subsections titled “Parasite,” “Charity,” and “Jingoisms—traffic, politicians, peace conferences”; *Strike*, with subsections titled “Uprisings,” “Hunger,” and “War Trilogy—breadlines, war, on the barricades”; and *Van der Lubbe’s Head*, a masked dance set to a poem by Alfred Hayes that commemorated a communist martyr. One of the original founders of the New Dance Group, Edna Ocko, soon became the most important critical advocate of leftist dance, taking a role similar to that played by Martin in relation to the Bennington choreographers.⁶



Figure 19. The New Dance Group in *Improvisation*, c. 1933. Courtesy of the Performing Arts Division, Library of Congress.

In response to the leftist dancers' accusations of Wigman's Nazi affiliation, Holm changed the name of her school. As she recounted decades later:

I was not representing any faction, certainly not. I was interested in the dance. Period. [When Hitler came to power] people who were on top of the Communist party came and said I should make a statement that Wigman had nothing to do with the Hitler government though she was living over there. Well, she was left alone, and I said I'd make no statement because that might cost her head [. . .]. All right if you boycott. And they boycotted. They threw stones in the window. At the same time I wrote Wigman and I said, listen, the situation is not easy. It would be easier for me if I would use my own name and not affiliate with the Wigman School, and she said fine. (quoted in Siegel 1973, 80)



Figure 20. Hanya Holm and Group in *Trend* (1937). Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

In November 1936 the New York Wigman School officially became the Hanya Holm Studio, and the following summer Holm premiered *Trend* at Bennington. Many critics consider *Trend* to be Holm's artistic masterpiece. Interestingly, despite Holm's denial of explicit political interests decades later, the choreography of her 1937 work (figure 20) reveals an embodied politics that aligns with the Popular Front, the attempt by the US Communist Party to make common cause with socialists and liberals in the mid-1930s. Like dances by the New Dance Group, *Trend* pointed toward the ills of a capitalist society: mechanized labor, a decadent leisure class, the addiction of money. But like other dances that embodied the spirit of the Popular Front, notably Graham's *Chronicle* and Helen Tamiris's *How Long, Brethren?*, Holm's *Trend* generalized its social critique beyond communist doctrine. *Trend* also paid homage to Wigman's group works from the 1920s, notably *Szenen aus einem Tanzdrama* (Scenes from a Dance Drama).⁷

Performed to music by Wallingford Riegger and Edgar Varèse, *Trend* opened with two group sections collectively titled "Mask Motions": the first, "Our Daily Bread," represented the regimented routine of industrialized life, while the second, "Satiety," represented the ennui of the leisured class. Five "Episodes" followed, each danced by a soloist in counterpoint to the group. Their cumulative effect depicted an ever more decadent society: "The Effete" concerned the false god of aestheticism, "Lucre Lunacy" the false god of money, "From Heaven, Ltd." the fanaticism of religious revivalism, "Lest We Remember" the seduction of drug addiction, and "'he,' the great" the seduction of political cultism. Here Holm clearly intended a reference to Hitler. Next came "Cataclysm," which showed the destruction of the decadent

society. The closing sections at last introduced an affirmative note: Holm, making her only appearance, united two disparate groups in "The Gates are Desolate," and their harmonious interplay carried through "Resurgence" and "Assurance."

Like Wigman's *Scenes from a Dance Drama*, *Trend* progressed through the disintegration and reintegration of a social group. But Holm did not function as a leader whose charismatic presence unified the group, as Wigman characteristically did. Rather she functioned as a mediator who ushered in, according to the program note, the "recognition of the common purposes of men and the conscious unity of life" (Kriegsman 1981, 171). The ending representation of utopia as the dynamic interplay of individuals echoed the ending of Humphrey's *New Dance* trilogy, which had premiered at Bennington over the course of the preceding two summers. Transforming its German and American antecedents, *Trend* integrated leftist critique and liberal humanism.

Appearing in the chorus of *Trend* was Florence Warwick, a dance instructor from Spelman College, a historically Black women's college in Atlanta, who was studying at Bennington for her third summer. The following summer, when Warwick was one of two students enrolled in a special choreography program, her presence created a minor scandal, according to another student enrolled at Bennington, since "she was a 'passing' Black dancer . . . and there was a lot of difficulty over this."⁸ Did Holm realize that Warwick was a light-skinned African American when she cast her in *Trend*? It is impossible to know, but her presence in Holm's masterpiece both reinforces and potentially troubles the whiteness of modern dance as it was practiced at Bennington.

By "whiteness" I mean the performance convention whereby bodies in motion exercise the privilege of representing the culturally unmarked body, the universal or the individual body, rather than the culturally marked body, the body that bears the burden of representing a social or ethnic collective. As a performance convention at midcentury, whiteness always assumed its corollary, Blackness, bodies in motion marked by the African diaspora in the New World. Although related to dancers' offstage identities, whiteness and Blackness did not necessarily reduce to performers' skin tones. Rather, whiteness and Blackness became perceptual constructs onstage, ways for linking physical bodies and theatrical meanings, ways for reading bodies in motion.

In the US academy "whiteness" emerged as a critical concept in the humanities around 1990. As the changing demographics of the United States exposed the fiction of the Black-white binary imposed on a multiracial reality, artists and intellectuals participated in what one scholar has termed "inter-

rogating ‘whiteness,’ complicating ‘blackness’” (Fishkin 1995, 428–66). Thus during the 1990s and early 2000s dance scholars recognized how often “high art” in the US context implicitly became “white art.” As Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Shawn, and others developed the new “art of the dance” after the turn of the century, they aligned their practice with the emergent category of “high art,” implicitly and explicitly countering the “low art” and “Black art” of ragtime and early jazz. This association between high art, white art, and modern dance continued well into the century and created significant barriers for the development of Black concert dance.

The barriers took a distinctive form during the 1930s, as white critics scripted a critical catch-22 for Black dancers: on the one hand, if Black choreographers followed Eurocentric models, critics considered them “derivative” rather than “original” artists; on the other hand, if Black choreographers foregrounded Africanist elements, critics considered them “natural performers” rather than “creative artists.” Interestingly, two dancers with German training—Alison Burroughs, the first Black graduate of Hellerau-Laxenburg, and von Grona, one of the first German dancers to emigrate to the United States—deployed the improvisational basis of German *Technik* to circumnavigate this critical catch-22. In this way eurhythmics and Ausdruckstanz influenced the development of Black concert dance.

A member of a distinguished family of Harlem intellectuals and artists, Burroughs used her eurhythmics training to ground her dance career, as did so many other dancers. In 1930 Burroughs appeared with Edith Segal in the first version of *Black and White*, the interracial duet that became the most widely performed work of leftist dance after it was recast for two men. In 1937 Burroughs collaborated with Edna Guy to present the Negro Dance Evening, an event that historians herald as a milestone in the development of Black concert dance. In 1940 Burroughs cofounded the Affiliated Schools for Dance and Theater in Harlem to train the next generation of Black performance artists (Manning 2004b, 70–73, 93–101).⁹

After his arrival in 1925, von Grona participated in the fledgling modern dance scene for a few years before finding more remunerative employment at the Roxy Theater and Radio City Music Hall. Like many New Yorkers, he was drawn to the nightlife in Harlem, but he considered “dance-hall jazz and African rituals [. . .] limited dance forms [. . .] [that] have provided no outlet for the deeper and more intellectual resources of the race.”¹⁰ So he placed an ad in the *Amsterdam News*, one of two Black weeklies published in Harlem, offering free or low-cost dance training, and from the 150 aspiring dancers who showed up, he chose a group of 25. The group trained and rehearsed

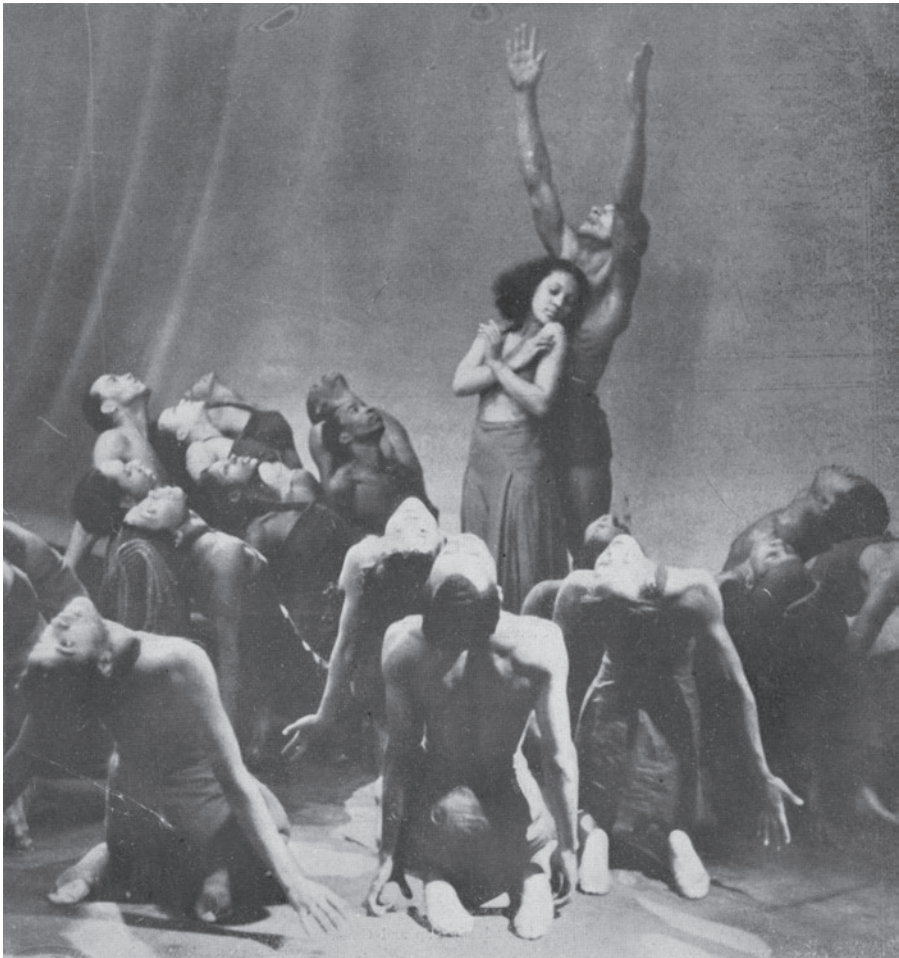


Figure 21. Eugene von Grona's American Negro Ballet, c. 1937. Courtesy of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

three evenings a week for three years before making their debut as the American Negro Ballet (figure 21). Opening at the Lafayette Theater on November 21, 1937, the American Negro Ballet drew an audience that "included a great number of the more preeminent members of society of both races in the city," according to the *Amsterdam News* (Bourne 1937, 19).

The program opened with James P. Johnson conducting his new composition "Symphonie Harlem" for the premiere performance of the New York Negro Symphony Orchestra. Then Wen Talbert took over the baton and con-

ducted the remainder of the first half of the program: *Children of the Earth*, set to music by Reginald Forsythe; *Air*, set to Bach's "Air for a G String"; and *Southern Episode*, a "simple tale [. . .] [told] in a jazz idiom [. . .] of a revival meeting, a jade who lures a husband from his wife, and the lament of the betrayed," set to Duke Ellington's "Sunday Morning" and W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Woman."¹¹ James Weldon Johnson (no relation to James P. Johnson), who had retired as executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) several years earlier, spoke during the intermission, and the *Amsterdam News* paraphrased his "brief address": "[Johnson] praised highly the work of von Grona in organizing the ballet and pointed out the important step in the progress of the Negro achieved by its formation. Dwelling also on the contribution the Negro had made to the dance, Mr. Johnson cited the occasion as an epoch making event" (Bourne 1937, 19). The second half of the program was danced to a recording of Stravinsky's *Firebird* in which Lavinia Williams and John Edwards took leading roles. Although widely reviewed in the New York and national press, the American Negro Ballet did not survive more than another season.

Nor did Holm's *Trend* remain in the repertory after two more performances in New York in fall 1937. *Trend* was too expensive to mount again, but it also was too much of its Popular Front moment. During the years of the Second World War, an interrelated set of social and artistic changes drew Holm and many other modern dancers away from social commentary and emboldened Black choreographers to create works framed as social protest, racial uplift, and the African diaspora. During the war years Katherine Dunham established Black authorship as fundamental to Black concert dance. After the American Negro Ballet disbanded, many of its dancers went on to work with other choreographers, most notably Williams, who became a leading member of Dunham's company. With Black artists now taking the lead, von Grona returned to the commercial theater after 1940, no longer as a dancer and choreographer but rather as an actor and director.

The two-way traffic over the Atlantic came to a standstill during the Second World War, but it resumed afterward. Year after year American students went to the Wigman School in Berlin or the Folkwang School in Essen to explore alternatives to the training available at home. And German students of Ausdruckstanz continued to emigrate: Pola Nirenska, Margaret Dietz, Isa Partsch-Bergsohn, Til Thiele, Helmut Gottschild, Anneliese Mertz. All these dancers contributed to the ongoing development of American modern dance. Yet none achieved an impact comparable to the German-trained dancers from the 1930s, for the simple reason that they arrived when Amer-

ican modern dance had become institutionalized and less open to outside influences. Or, perhaps more accurately, American modern dance already had integrated ideas and methods from *Ausdruckstanz*, so the new arrivals worked within established parameters.

During the 1960s modern dance experienced a rebellion from within, and many of the rebels discovered, or perhaps more accurately rediscovered, improvisation as an important resource for dance making. In the early twenty-first century Susan Foster (2002), Sally Banes (2003), David Gere and Ann Cooper Albright (2003) undertook the formidable and admirable task of writing a history of improvisation in US dance. In so doing they elevated choreographers such as Anna Halprin, Steve Paxton, and Dianne McIntyre over earlier choreographers “from Mary Wigman to Martha Graham” who “systematically rejected the idea of performing improvisationally on the public stage,” even while using improvisation as a rehearsal technique. In so doing, to quote David Gere, the earlier generation asserted “the importance of improvisation as a primary (read: primal) means of unearthing the subterranean geographies of the self” (2003 xiii–xiv). Gere’s broad distinction between the earlier and later generations holds true. Yet how could the later choreographers have developed improvisation as a means for choreographing performance onstage without the earlier choreographers having explored improvisation within the studio?

In this new history, improvisation emerges in the 1960s from a combustion of the energies of Black nationalism and the counterculture with the embrace of Africanist and Asian precepts and practices. The new history does not take into account the improvisational methods of *Ausdruckstanz* that entered American modern dance in the decade before the Second World War, perhaps rightly so given the pressures on German-trained dancers to integrate their approach with the codified movement techniques of their contemporaries. As the opening anecdote demonstrates, Martin did not value improvisational approaches to modern dance. Yet, as Kaschmann’s response to Martin’s rebuke demonstrates, German-trained dancers persisted in practicing improvisational methods learned in Dresden, Berlin, and Hamburg. Surely the Americanized versions of these methods influenced the reappearance of improvisation in the 1960s. Routes for transmission include Nikolais, who first studied with Kaschmann before working with Holm; the New Dance Group, which transmuted from a leftist collective to a multifaceted center for modern dance training during the 1940s and 1950s; and the teaching of Kloepper at the University of Wisconsin, Mertz at Washington University, and innumerable other German-trained dancers at colleges and universities. At

Howard University, Thimey continued von Grona's and Burroughs' training of Black dancers in the tradition of Ausdruckstanz.

My point here is not to bemoan the historiographic ellipsis of Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic. Rather, my point is to call for a transnational historiography of twentieth-century theatrical dance. Too often, we write that history according to national and/or generic boundaries. Hence we produce *Modern Dance*, *Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, a study of modern dance and Black concert dance in the United States, or *Krokodil im Schwanensee: Tanz in Deutschland seit 1945* (Müller, Stabel, and Stöckemann), a study of ballet and modern dance on the stages of postwar Germany. The history of Ausdruckstanz in its entirety demands more, for the improvisational methods developed in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s traveled far and wide. Transnational influences work in a myriad of directions, creating hybrids and fusions that we have barely begun to fathom.

Notes

1. A 2003 invitation from the Centre national de la danse and the Cannes Dance Festival led me to integrate my earlier research with research for my second monograph, and the resulting essay reprinted here was first published in Italian translation (2005) before it appeared in English (2007). In other words, invitations to present my research outside the United States supported my shift toward global circulation as a research paradigm.

2. Kaschmann (1906–1986) received her diploma from the Laban School in Hamburg in 1924 and joined Yvonne Georgi's dance ensemble at the Hanover Opera in 1926. From 1924 until 1933 she "spent many weeks, whenever I got a chance, at the Dresden or Berlin [Wigman] Schools." Once Hitler came to power, she and her husband emigrated to the United States, not wanting "to stay in a country where Jews were not wanted." After she settled in Hartford, Kaschmann taught at Miss Porter's School for Girls, the Hartford College for Women, and the Hartford Conservatory of Music and Dance. Information on her career comes from a questionnaire she filled out and informal conversation at the Wigman Centennial Day, which I organized on February 17, 1986, as part of the annual conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars in New York City. An oral history interview with Kaschmann conducted for the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford in 1982 is available online: <https://archives.lib.uconn.edu/islandora/object/630002%3AT0275>, accessed on October 10, 2022.

3. For a description of the improvisational methods employed by Ausdruckstanz, see my study *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman* ([1993] 2006, 52–52, 82–96).

4. Joan Acocella reviewed a 1982 concert in which von Grona (having anglicized

the spelling of his family name during the Second World War as van Grona) appeared and reconstructed several of his dances, including *Spirit of Labor*.

5. Fluent in German, Horst translated writings by Laban and Wigman during his days with Denishawn. When he returned from his European sojourn, he brought photographs of Wigman for Graham. In addition to working with Graham, he accompanied other dancers, including German immigrants and visitors Johansson, Margarethe Wallmann, Kreutzberg, and Georgi. He also wrote about Kreutzberg's and Georgi's distinctive use of music in terms that paralleled his contemporary comments on Graham's use of music. A persuasive argument can be made that Horst brought Wigman's influence to bear on the evolution of Graham's style.

6. See Graff (1997), which provides the first comprehensive account of leftist dance in New York City.

7. This description of the action synthesizes material from a scenario published by Holm, Laurerer, and Kerr (1938) and from Sali Ann Kriegsman's documentation of Bennington (1981, 161–73).

8. "Reminiscences of Faith Reyher Jackson." 1979, 45, Columbia University Oral History Research Office Collection.

9. For more on Burroughs and Segal in *Black and White*, see the essay "Archives in Collision: Excursus on Method." For more on the Negro Dance Evening, see the essays "Black Voices, White Bodies" and "Watching Dunham's Dances" in the present volume.

10. "Program, American Negro Ballet," November 21, 1937, Lafayette Theater, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York.

11. Information on the performance is synthesized from the program and from reviews. See Bourne, "SRO Sign Hung Out at Harlem Ballet Debut," *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 27, 1937; "Negro Ballet Has Performance," *New York Sun*, November 22, 1937, the latter found in the von Grona clipping file, Jerome Robbins Dance Division. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York.

Nation and World in Modern Dance (2019)

Before I could embark on a transnational history of modern dance, I needed to understand why a historiography premised on the nation-state had come to dominate the field from the 1930s through the 1990s. I also needed to survey the work of the many scholars younger than myself who had initiated the turn toward global approaches to modern dance history. This essay fulfills both tasks, serving as a review of past and present literature in its plotting of the shift from a national to transnational historiography. Although the essay does not specify the larger sociopolitical context for this shift, the literature surveyed clearly demonstrates how the imprint of the Cold War and of the decolonization of the Third World gave way in the 1990s to the impact of global flows (including digital media) across previously closed borders.

This essay began as a lecture at a conference hosted in 2016 by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, and that context is significant because it shows how Poland, a nation formerly in the Soviet bloc, was attempting to recover its own modern dance history—including the artists Janina Mieczysłowska, Halina Hulanicka, and Złota Buczyńska—by pursuing a transnational approach to modern dance history. The exhibition that had occasioned the conference and subsequent publication, *Moved Bodies: Choreographies of Modernity*, brought together material on well-known artists—Kurt Jooss, Jean Weidt, Edith Segal—with artists unfamiliar to me—Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Maria Zimpel. In this way, *Moved Bodies* remapped modernism across the divide of the Cold War and demonstrated the dynamic that José Luis Reynoso has termed “transnational nationalism” (2020). Just as earlier Polish dancers had refashioned the influences of Duncan, Dalcroze, and Wigman, so now the curator Katarzyna Słoboda had reintroduced artists and dancers nearly erased during the Cold War to both recover a national history and complicate a transnational history.¹

The final version of “Nation and World in Modern Dance” appeared in Sherrill Dodd’s edited anthology *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance*

Studies (2019a), under the title “Dance History.” Thus my account represented historical approaches to dance studies, alongside other subfields such as “Dance Ethnography,” “Popular Dance,” “Dance and Philosophy.” That modern dance history became abbreviated as “Dance History” demonstrates the privilege that the genre has accrued as a research topic in English-language scholarship over the past century.

This essay concludes with the observation that we have a plethora of case studies but are only beginning to do the comparative work necessary to crystallize the transnational historiography. “Nation and World in Modern Dance” attempts to chart the emerging paradigm, a paradigm then applied in the final essay in this volume, “Mary Wigman and Asia: Between Cultural Appropriation and Transnational Encounter.”

In the historiography of dance, there has been a decided shift over the past two decades from histories premised on the nation-state to histories promising a transnational and global approach. Investigating this shift in relation to modern dance, I first will probe the implications of the nation-state model and then summarize recent research that deliberately moves beyond this model. Whereas the nation-state model plots choreographic families, the transnational model traces networks of exchange. Whereas the nation-state model distinguishes theatrical from nontheatrical genres, the transnational model emphasizes how theatrical genres often adapt nontheatrical genres, whether social, popular, folk, indigenous, or traditional. Whereas the nation-state model follows modern dance from centers of innovation to peripheries of derivation, the transnational model demonstrates how local conditions shape the assimilation and transformation of influences from abroad. Yet I am not advocating a rejection of the nation-state model. Rather, I am calling for histories of modern dance that integrate the nuance and detail of nation-state approaches with the sweep and breadth of transnational approaches.

NATION-STATE PARADIGMS

The earliest histories of modern dance, written by critical advocates of the emergent genre, followed the movement across Europe, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States. But this incipiently transnational history soon gave way to nationalist accounts in the mid-1930s, as German and American critics scripted nationally distinct histories. After the Second World War, histories of modern dance increasingly focused on American modern dance,

as New York City supplanted European capitals as a center for artistic innovation. In fact, by the mid-1970s “modern dance” had become nearly synonymous with “American modern dance” or “modern dance in New York City.” Don McDonagh’s *The Complete Guide to Modern Dance* (1976), for example, barely mentions developments outside Manhattan. Narrating the history of modern dance in terms of “extended choreographic families,” McDonagh employs generation and genealogy as basic organizing principles.

What McDonagh overlooked were the modern dance movements taking shape in diverse contexts from Argentina, Cuba, and Jamaica to Japan, India, and Israel. As local critics scripted the histories of these movements, they too relied on the paradigm of the nation-state. Many of these critics were subsequently commissioned to write genre-specific sections of country-by-country entries for *The International Encyclopedia of Dance* (1998), edited by Selma Jeanne Cohen. Collected together, these entries construct a model of centers and peripheries to map the dissemination of modern dance. Whereas generation informed McDonagh’s *Complete Guide*, genre and nation organize Cohen’s *International Encyclopedia*.

The earliest account of modern dance was not only incipiently transnational but also blurred genres by encompassing what later critics distinguished as “modern ballet” and “modern dance.” In 1913 German poet and critic Hans Brandenburg published *Der moderne Tanz* (Modern Dance), a book that went through several editions by the year 1921. The earlier editions started with chapters on Isadora Duncan, the Wiesenthal sisters, Ruth St. Denis, Dalcroze’s Institute at Hellerau, and Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes and included material on soloists less well-known today, such as Latvian-born Sent M’ahesa, Ukrainian-born Alexander Sacharoff, and Amsterdam-based Gertrud Leistikow. Later editions added material on Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman.

In 1928 Rudolf Lämmel updated Brandenburg in his chronicle of *Der moderne Tanz*. Although Duncan and Anna Pavlova still appear as early exponents, along with Bess Mensendieck, an American-born innovator of a gymnastics system popular in Europe, Lämmel mostly focuses on German artists. He locates a first high point for modern dance in the work of Wigman and Laban and then a second high point in the work of their students and successors Vera Skoronel, Gret Palucca, and Yvonne Georgi. Limiting the geography of the movement, Lämmel chronicles what appears in retrospect as the flourishing of German modern dance during the 1920s.

Once the National Socialists came to power in 1933, state dance policy narrowed the parameters—and historiography—of modern dance even fur-

ther. Codifying its principles and renaming the genre *Deutscher Tanz* (German dance), the National Socialists mythologized the movement as an expression of the German *Volk*. This erased its past and present circulation across national borders and made monstrous the genealogy implicit in Brandenburg's and Lämmel's accounts: whereas the earlier critics narrated a progression of artists extending, rejecting, or modifying one another's innovations, the National Socialists demanded that the body politic of *Deutscher Tanz* be populated only by those who could prove "Aryan" ancestry and "cleansed" of dancers with Jewish ancestry or leftist political beliefs. Within a period of just over two decades, the German historiography of modern dance went from incipiently transnational to rabidly racist.

It thus comes as no surprise that in the years after the Second World War dancers and critics who remained in Germany repressed the history of *Deutscher Tanz*. As Europe rebuilt from wartime destruction, ballet became the predominant theatrical genre, offering an international language that enabled dancers to move again across national borders and to create a shared culture seemingly above politics. Yet at the same time ballet provided a competitive arena where Europe, newly divided between East and West, could do battle. It is no accident that one of the major texts documenting the Cold War is titled *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Caute 2003). During these years, the history of modern dance in Germany and in Europe went mostly untold.

Equally dramatic shifts marked the historiography of modern dance in the United States from the 1930s to the end of the 1970s. As in Germany, this history was written mostly by working critics, so it reflected what they saw onstage. During the 1920s and 1930s there was lots of traffic between the United States and Europe, as dancers traveled back and forth to study and to perform. But this transatlantic traffic nearly stopped altogether during the years of the Second World War. Once it started again, the two-way traffic seemed less consequential in the postwar years than in the era between the two wars, likely because the influences of German modern dance were already absorbed into the American scene.² During the 1930s US critics mostly acknowledged the transatlantic circulation of modern dance, but by the 1950s and 1960s they mostly erased the European precedents and parallels for American modern dance. Notably, they neglected to see the modern dance movements bubbling up outside the United States until the mid-1980s.

In 1933 John Martin, dance critic for the *New York Times*, published his manifesto defining *The Modern Dance* as a "point of view" ([1933] 1972, 19), highlighting the role of Wigman in innovating the genre. In 1935 Virginia

Stewart compiled a volume of essays by exponents of *Modern Dance*, including Wigman, Palucca, and Harald Kreutzberg alongside Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm. That same year Elizabeth Selden published her account of the aesthetics of modern dance, titled *The Dancer's Quest*, highlighting the work of Wigman, Humphrey, and Graham along with Russian-born Benjamin Zemach and Munich-based artist Maja Lex.

In 1936 Martin published *America Dancing*, a history of modern dance that effectively wrote Wigman, along with Palucca, Kreutzberg, Zemach, and Lex, out of a genealogy that now started with Duncan, proceeded to Denishawn, and culminated in the "Bennington group" (1936, 175), which included Graham, Humphrey and Weidman. Although Martin also discussed the fourth principal artist at Bennington, Holm, a German immigrant and associate of Wigman, he did not devote a separate chapter to her, since he believed that she still was in the midst of "assimilation into the American scene" (1936, 182). Within a few years, however, Martin believed that Holm had "[accepted] the rhythms of American life as her own" ([1939] 1978, 268), and his 1939 survey *Introduction to the Dance* presented Holm as an equal to Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman. Wigman too reappeared, and Kreutzberg and Kurt Jooss warranted inclusion as artists who explored a "middle ground" between the "expressional dance" of Wigman and her American contemporaries and the "spectacular dance" of ballet and jazz. In this way, *Introduction to the Dance* recalled the transatlantic historiography of Martin's *The Modern Dance*, Stewart's *Modern Dance*, and Selden's *The Dancer's Quest*.

Ironically, *America Dancing* was the only one of Martin's three books from the 1930s not reprinted in the postwar years, and yet its focus on an exclusively American genealogy for modern dance anticipated the postwar historiography. In 1949 Margaret Lloyd, critic for the *Christian Science Monitor*, published *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*, an account that traces the movement from its "forerunners" Duncan, Wigman, and Denishawn to its "new leaders." She declares that "Wigman's dance was as essentially German as Isadora's (for all the time she spent in Europe) was essentially American" ([1949] 1974, 12). Her chapter on Wigman also discusses Laban, Kreutzberg, Georgi, and Jooss, noting their earlier accomplishments but concluding "that the American modern dance has shot way past the Central European" movement (21). She ascribes this partly to "America's escape from war's effect on its territory" (21), but more so to the American ideals of freedom and democracy. In this way, Lloyd's history of modern dance echoed the emerging rhetoric of Cold War liberalism. This rhetoric also informed her inclusion of two African American

choreographers, Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, among the “new leaders.” About Dunham, she wrote, “Like many members of the younger generation, Katherine is an eclectic modern, drawing on all forms within her experience” (249). About Primus’s solo *Strange Fruit*, “It comes through to different people in different ways—the right way for modern dance” (271).

More than twenty-five years later Don McDonagh, one of the critics to succeed Martin at the *New York Times*, published *The Complete Guide to Modern Dance*. At the height of the 1970s dance boom, McDonagh witnessed the postwar avant-garde’s rejection of the “Bennington group” Martin had lionized in his writings, and his *Complete Guide* followed his earlier volume *The Rise and Fall and Rise of Modern Dance* (1970) in its emphasis on the generational shift from the “founders” to the advocates of “freedom and new formalism”: Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Alwin Nikolais, Paul Taylor, among others. A chart printed inside the front and back covers illustrates the “extended choreographic families,” organizing members of all generational cohorts according to their primary teacher or mentor.

Individual entries follow on the more than one hundred artists named. It is a history premised wholly on the United States: no European modern dancer appears on the chart, although the text notes in passing Wigman, Kreutzberg, Georgi, and Jooss as teachers or inspirations for an American dancer profiled. Thus McDonagh’s *Complete Guide* details what became a standard narrative of generational succession from the mid-1960s through the 1980s: Duncan and Denishawn beget Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman, who beget José Limón, Cunningham, Hawkins, and Taylor, who in turn beget Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk, Twyla Tharp, and many others.

Like Lloyd’s *Borzoi Book*, McDonagh’s *Complete Guide* integrates African American choreographers within the lineage of modern dance. On the chart of “extended choreographic families,” Dunham is noted as an “independent” and the progenitor of Talley Beatty, whereas Primus and Donald McKayle are placed in a line of descent from Graham. Alvin Ailey, George Faison, and James Truitte are listed in the Lester Horton lineage, while Rod Rodgers is placed under Hawkins and Eleo Pomare under Limón. Strikingly, the *Complete Guide* takes no account of the historiography of Black Dance that had flourished over the previous decade, a historiography that was implicitly transnational in its account of how multiple genres of American dance transformed Africanist precedents. In Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer’s *Black Magic: A Pictorial History of the African-American in the Performing Arts* ([1967] 1990), Dunham, Primus, Ailey, among others, enter a multigenre history of Black artists in dance, drama, opera, and film that starts with an account of the

Middle Passage and ends with tours of US artists abroad. The genealogy scripted by Hughes and Meltzer pays less attention to teacher-student transmission than to the transmission of cultural memory.

The Black Arts historiography built on two foundational essays by pioneering artist-scholars. In 1934, two years after Zora Neale Hurston staged *The Great Day*, based in part on her ethnographic research in the Bahamas and the American South and in part on her reaction against Black musicals catering to white audiences, she published "Characteristics of Negro Expression" in Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology* ([1934] 1969). In 1941, one year after Katherine Dunham and her company staged *Tropics and Le Jazz "Hot"* on Broadway, a concert introducing her movement language fusing Afro-Caribbean rhythms and gestures with basic ballet and modern dance, she published "The Negro Dance" in Sterling Brown's anthology *The Negro Caravan* ([1941] 2005). Whereas Hurston's essay emphasizes the roots of Black cultural expression within the jook and the church, Dunham's essay emphasizes the routes of Black cultural expression from Africa to the Americas. As Black Studies developed from the late 1960s to the present, Hurston's and Dunham's doubling of roots and routes has informed a wealth of literature from Robert Farris Thompson's *African Art in Motion* (1974) to Brenda Dixon Gottschild's *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance* (1996) to Thomas DeFrantz's and Anita Gonzalez's *Black Performance Theory* (2014).

Since the 1970s, the historiography of modern dance has responded to the historiography of Black Dance in several different ways. Whereas McDonagh integrated Black artists within his "extended choreographic families," critic-historians in the late 1970s and early 1980s whitened the historiography of modern dance, in effect assigning Black artists to the literature on Black Dance. In the 1990s, once Dixon Gottschild and others reopened the question of how white dancers and critics engaged Black dance and dancers, white writers broadened their histories of modern dance to include artists of color. More recently, as "African diaspora dance" has replaced Black Dance as a field designation, its historiography to some extent parallels the shift to transnational approaches to modern dance. But whether these parallel lines ever meet remains an open question.

In the late 1980s and 1990s working critics became less influential as historians of modern dance, as university-based scholars took over this role. Borrowing and adapting critical theories in the humanities, these scholars challenged the Greenbergian narrative of dance modernism, the US focus of modern dance history, and the whiteness of the modern dance canon. My own scholarship was part of this move. My first monograph, *Ecstasy and*

the Demon ([1993] 2006), focused on the dances of Mary Wigman in part to recover the vital German modern dance movement that had been written out of the postwar historiography. My study traced how Wigman's choreography responded to the changing sociopolitical conditions and patronage structures of the nation-state, from the years of the Wilhelmine Empire, when her early choreography crystallized while in voluntary exile on Monte Verita; to the years of the Weimar Republic, when her choreography reached its artistic high point within a vibrant cultural scene; to the years of the Third Reich, when her choreography conformed to the dictates of Nazi policy; to the postwar years of the Federal Republic, when her choreography grappled with the Cold War division of Germany. At the dramatic center of the narrative was Wigman's complex collaboration with the National Socialists. In this way, *Ecstasy and the Demon* addressed what had been a glaring repression in the postwar historiography of German dance, which had remained silent about the many leading choreographers who had participated in the redefinition of modern dance as *Deutscher Tanz*.

German writers were involved in similar inquiries during the 1980s and 1990s. Recovering the multifaceted dance scene from 1900 through the interwar years, they necessarily confronted the vexed years of the Third Reich. Many were inspired by the emergence of a new mode of dance modernism in the 1970s and 1980s called Tanztheater (dance theater), whose innovators Pina Bausch, Susanne Linke, Gerhard Bohner, and Arila Siegert had studied with Wigman, Jooss, and Palucca during the postwar years (Müller and Stöckemann 1993). Other scholars extended Holocaust research to encompass theatrical dance (Karina and Kant 1996, 2003). These histories, like *Ecstasy and the Demon*, remain focused on developments within the nation-state.

So too did my second monograph *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (2004b). Compelled by seeing Bill T. Jones and other Black postmodernists, I aimed to dismantle what seemed a segregated historiography of American modern dance by historicizing the viewing conventions for works by Tamiris, Graham, Humphrey, Limón, and Cunningham on the one hand, and works by Asadata Dafora, Hemsley Winfield, Dunham, Primus, and Ailey on the other hand. In my argument, it was a series of social and artistic changes from the Red Decade of the 1930s to the Red Scare of the 1950s that shaped the representation and performance of race in American modern dance.

My study was one of a number of revisionist works that incorporated Black and white choreographers and pushed against the divide between (white) modern dance and Black Dance. John Perpener's *African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (2001), Julia Foulkes's

Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (2002), Mark Franko's *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s* (2002), Gay Morris's *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945–1960* (2006), Anthea Kraut's *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (2008), and Rebekah Kowal's *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (2010): all these studies bring new critical perspectives to modern dance history, and all remain bound by the historiographic paradigm of the nation-state.

Tellingly, revisionist studies that move beyond the Black-white binary also move beyond the borders of the nation-state. Tracing how US performers from Buffalo Bill to Lester Horton “played Indian,” Jacqueline Shea Murphy's *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (2007) ends with an account of contemporary Native choreography in the United States and Canada. Examining how Limón's identity as a Mexican immigrant shaped his work, a topic the choreographer himself rarely addressed, Patricia Seed's edited volume *José Limón and La Malinche: The Dancer and the Dance* (2008) interprets his 1949 work from both sides of the border. Probing what Ruth St. Denis learned from immigrant South Asian dancers and students in 1905–1906 and the pedagogical methods of Indian classical dancers after 1965, Priya Srinivasan's *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (2012) demonstrates the multiple ways that “offshore labor” has supported US performance. In fact, almost all the artists profiled in histories of modern dance can be viewed from transnational perspectives, and more recent scholarship does exactly that, as will become clear in the subsequent section.

During the postwar years the nation-state paradigm also structured histories of modern dance outside the United States. This becomes clear in the history of modern dance narrated by the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, conceptualized by Selma Jeanne Cohen in the 1970s and 1980s and revised and edited by her associates in the 1990s. The *International Encyclopedia* profiles just over a hundred countries, and these national entries are organized according to genres, typically a first section or sections on folk, ritual, traditional, popular, and/or social dance (categories differ according to country) and then a section or sections on theatrical dance, at times further subdivided by period or by the genres of ballet, modern, and/or contemporary. Ten countries have a section devoted to “modern dance”: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cuba, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Japan, Korea, and Yugoslavia. These ten sections all highlight the influence of modern dancers from Germany and the United States on the development of a national style. Strikingly,

neither the entry on Germany nor on the United States has a separate section titled “modern dance.” Rather, overview entries direct readers to entries on individual artists, on *Ausdruckstanz* (“dance of expression,” as German modern dance was called after the Second World War), and on modern dance technique (US choreographers only). In this way, the *International Encyclopedia* implicitly narrates German and American modern dance as major traditions, the centers from which modern dance was disseminated across Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific Rim.

Several variations appear within this model of centers and peripheries. In the entries on Great Britain and France, modern dance is presented as a belated development: dancers were first influenced by Wigman and her contemporaries and then by US dancers (specifically Graham in Britain, Nikolois and Cunningham in France) before coalescing distinctive styles of their own in the 1970s and 1980s. The entries on Japan and Korea also trace how dancers first absorbed influences from Germany in the 1920s and 1930s and then from the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, but do not posit a time lag; rather, Japanese and Korean artists are seen creating forms that fuse Asian and European influences all along. The entries on Argentina and Brazil roughly follow the same pattern, dating modern dance from a Latin American tour by Duncan in 1916 to internationally recognized companies and choreographers emerging in the 1970s. In the entry on Hungary, the years of communist rule are presented as a state-imposed interruption from the end of the Second World War until the mid-1980s, when diverse styles of modern dance re-emerged and flourished.

All these variations assume that German and American modern dance were distinct practices and imply a progress narrative, which sees developments before the 1970s as inherently derivative and celebrates developments after the 1970s for realizing a national style through the efforts of native-born, not migrant, practitioners. In other words, the *International Encyclopedia* parallels the historiography scripted by American critics from the 1930s through the 1970s and by German critics in the 1980s and 1990s. But what if the transnational history glimpsed in Brandenburg’s *Der moderne Tanz* more accurately reflects the circulation of the genre? Reading across entries in the *International Encyclopedia*, it is possible to discern alternate histories of modern dance.

TRANSNATIONAL PARADIGMS

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, English-language scholars have turned their attention to global circulation. Some studies highlight the devel-

opment of dance modernisms in the Global South, often within the frame of a postcolonial nation: Cuba (John 2012; Schwall 2021), Jamaica (Thomas 2002; Sörgel 2007; Reid 2020, 2022), Haiti (LaMothe 2015), Argentina (Fortuna 2018), Mexico (Reynoso 2014, 2023), Brazil (Rosa 2015), Palestine/Israel (Spiegel 2013), Australia (Card 2015), Morocco (Borni 2017, 2018), Senegal (Castaldi 2006; Swanson 2019), South Africa (Cole 2020; Katrak 2021), India (Meduri 1988, 2005; O'Shea 2007; Katrak 2011; Purkayastha 2014), Bangladesh (Rahman 2013), China (Ma 2016, 2023; Wilcox 2016a, 2018a), and Taiwan (Kwan 2013; Chen 2013). Other studies take a comparative approach to contemporary dance in the Global South (Chatterjea 2020; Sörgel 2020; Kwan 2021; Wilcox and Yoon 2023) and raise the question, implicitly if not explicitly, about how the earlier circulation of dance modernisms inflected more recent developments.

Yet other studies attend to international tours under private management or state sponsorship, whether by well-known artists such as Graham, Dunham, and Ailey (Croft 2015; Geduld 2010; Von Eschen 2010; Phillips 2020; Yoon 2024) or by lesser-known artists such as Tórtola Valencia (Clayton 2012, 2014), Kawakami and Sadayakko (Rodman 2013; Scholz-Cionca 2016), and Choe Seung-hui (Park 2006). Still other studies re-examine the careers of dancers who migrated across national borders both voluntarily and involuntarily: Valeska Gert (Elswit 2012), Kurt Jooss (Elswit 2017), Hanya Holm (Randall 2012), Lotte Goslar (Mozingo 2012), Si-lan Chen (Sine 2016), Yuriko Amemiya (Hayakawa 2018), and Anna Sokolow (Kosstrin 2017a). And many more inquiries into the transnational and global dimensions of modern dance are underway.³

Amid this plethora of case studies, does an alternate historiography become evident? Broadly speaking, the transnational paradigms now in formation trace networks of exchange, explore how local conditions shape the assimilation and transformation of influences from abroad, and highlight how modern dance and dance modernism often adapt nontheatrical genres. While studies of individual artists emphasize local interactions and networks of exchange, regional studies emphasize the intersection of theatrical and nontheatrical genres. Yet even the best single-volume summary to date, *The Modernist World* (2015), coedited by Stephen Ross and Allana Lindgren, does not present a single model, but a gamut of possible models. Hence I attempt to elucidate the parameters of an emergent historiography.

Recent scholarship on Michio Ito exemplifies how an artist whose career unfolded on three continents became central to the new historiography. Born in Tokyo to an artistic family, Ito studied Japanese and Western styles of music and dance, and in 1911 he traveled to Berlin at age eighteen to pursue further study. Seeing performances by Duncan and the Ballets Russes compelled

him to focus on dance, and he enrolled at Dalcroze's Institute at Hellerau in 1913; his training there became an important basis for his later choreography. When the First World War broke out, Ito left Germany and moved to London, where he began to present his solo dances for both intimate salon audiences and large commercial audiences. His salon performances led to his meeting W. B. Yeats, and Ito played a decisive role in Yeats' *At the Hawk's Well* (1916), a dance drama that adapted and modernized Japanese *noh*. Later that same year Ito moved to New York City, and over the next twelve years he toured his repertoire of solos, codified and taught his movement language, and collaborated with theatrical modernists, notably Eugene O'Neill and Graham. In early 1929 he resettled in Los Angeles, continued his teaching and mentoring (Horton was a student) and staged large-scale pageants. Detained as a Japanese national in 1941, he was deported to Japan during the Second World War and later staged works for the American occupation forces and for Japanese television.

After his death in 1961, students in Japan and in the United States preserved Ito's movement language and repertoire. In a biographical profile for the *International Encyclopedia*, Helen Caldwell, a student from his California days, called the artist a "Japanese exponent of American modern dance" (1998, 558); her language reveals her debt to the historiography of the nation-state. In 1994 Satoru Shimazaki, a student of Ryuko Maki, who taught Ito's method in postwar Tokyo, cowrote an essay with Mary-Jean Cowell, a US dancer and scholar who also had studied Ito's method, and they followed Ito's writings in seeing his work as "[bringing] together the East and the West" (1994, 11). Although Cowell and Shimazaki recognize what Ito might have borrowed from Japanese dance, they emphasize what he contributed to modern dance in Europe and the United States, pointing out that his codified technique predated that of Graham and Humphrey. Like Caldwell, they shape their argument in accord with the historiography of the nation-state that prioritizes US and German practices.

Not surprisingly, more recent scholarship has emphasized Ito's transcontinental itinerary. In a 2009 essay, "Artistic Utopias: Michio Ito and the Trope of the International," Yutian Wong contextualizes his career within Asian American immigration and labor history, focusing on the policies that allowed the artist to enter the United States in 1916 as a "gentleman" but then deported him in 1943 as an "enemy alien." In her account, Ito becomes an exemplar of how the international artist, then and now, "is mythologized as a solution to racism" (2009, 157). Tactfully critiquing Cowell and Shimazaki, Wong shows the complex interplay of race, class, and nationality in Asian American sub-

ject formation, concluding that “Ito’s racially marked dancing body, invested in social privileges allowed an ‘international artist,’ could never become an ‘American’” (153). Although Wong pays little attention to Ito’s career in Europe or in Japan, her argument foregrounds how race, ethnicity, and the unacknowledged whiteness of the modern dance canon structure the reception of artists of color across national borders.

Complementing Wong, Carol Sorgenfrei looks at Ito’s career from the perspective of Japanese Studies in her 2014 essay “Strategic Unweaving: Itō Michio and the Diasporic Dancing Body.” Illuminating the worldview of artists and intellectuals like Ito’s family, Sorgenfrei sees his choreography extending the belief that Japan, never colonized and economically strong, served as a repository for Asian culture and excelled “in the realms of culture, spirituality, and philosophy while deeming the West, though technologically fecund, to be culturally, philosophically and spiritually sterile” (2014, 209). European modernists like Yeats espoused a similar view for different reasons, and in wartime London, when Japan sided with Britain against Germany, Ito’s performances in *Hawk’s Well* resonated with both Japanese and European ideas. Relying on photographs and reviews, Sorgenfrei reads Ito’s performances as suggesting “*simultaneously* the masculine, militaristic superiority of the Japanese body *and* its feminine, nonthreatening universality” (213, italics in original).

Making this argument, Sorgenfrei plays off Erika Fischer-Lichte’s (2014) proposal to adopt the metaphor of “interweaving” to describe performances that bring together artists and elements from different cultures. Determined to understand Ito as the subject of his own artistry rather than as an Oriental Other, Sorgenfrei argues that he “ultimately engaged in aesthetic *unweaving*, a political and cultural strategy valorizing the uniqueness and superiority of Japan and the Japanese body” (2014, 201, italics in original). In fact, Sorgenfrei authored her essay as a fellow at the International Research Center in Berlin headed by Fischer-Lichte, an institute funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research from 2008 to 2018 that convened artists and scholars to theorize new understandings of global performance. Wong also pursued her Ito research in the context of an institutional initiative, a three-year series of meetings convened by Susan Foster at the University of California–Los Angeles designed to “think collectively and with global perspective about something called ‘world’ dance” (2009, 1). Strikingly, these institutional efforts in Berlin and in Los Angeles to undo the historiography of the nation-state happened in the two countries where that historiography had reached its pinnacle: Germany and the United States.

Neither Wong nor Sorgenfrei engages Ito's practice as it has been passed down from dancer to dancer. This transmission becomes an important resource for Carrie Preston, whose essay "Michio Ito's Shadow: Searching for the Transnational in Solo Dance" (2012) analyzes the dances as currently performed and whose book *Learning to Kneel: Noh, Modernism, and Journeys in Teaching* (2016) reflects on her own experiences of learning Ito's dances. In both, Preston questions what she calls "our tendencies to assume *bad* orientalism and appropriation, as opposed to *good* multiculturalism and hybridity" (2016, 11, italics in original). Simply put, she asserts that "Ito's desire for cultural fusion coexisted with his orientalism" (2012, 9) and that "cultural exchange is problematic and inevitable, shaped by both misunderstanding and remarkable creativity" (2016, 12). Thus Preston counters Wong's frame of Asian American studies and Sorgenfrei's frame of Japanese studies, arguing that Ito never saw himself in these terms but rather freely pursued "strategic cultural syncretism and strategic orientalism" (2016, 284).

Learning to Kneel focuses on the complex process of cultural exchange that created Yeats' and Ito's 1916 production of *At the Hawk's Well*. This process of exchange involved corporeal knowledge as well as textual knowledge, and Preston analyzes how Ito drew from his earlier training in Japanese classical dance and Dalcroze's eurythmics in choreographing his role as the Hawk and how Yeats, in turn, responded to his dancing by cutting more and more text from the climactic scene of *Hawk's Well*. In Preston's account, this exchange occurred within "a series of intercultural, homosocial, and often homoerotic collaborations" (2016, 35), a network that included Yone Noguchi, a bilingual poet and critic who first introduced Yeats to noh (and father of Isamu Noguchi, who later collaborated with Graham); Ernest Fenollosa, a US art historian and collector resident in Tokyo, whose widow gave his noh translations to Ezra Pound; Hirata Kiichi, a colleague of Fenollosa in Tokyo who had produced literal translations of noh for his friend; Pound, whose published translations of noh (created without a knowledge of Japanese) spurred Yeats' adaptations; Kume Tamijurō and Kōri Torahiko, London friends of Ito, who accompanied his early demonstration of noh dancing with noh chanting; and Edmund Dulac, a French artist who designed the masks and costumes and wrote the music for *Hawk's Well*. The London production in turn prompted further networks of exchange as Ito staged versions of the work in New York (1918), Los Angeles (1929), and Tokyo (1939) and as European and Japanese artists continued to stage modernist noh.⁴

Wong, Sorgenfrei, and Preston all cite influential theorists of globalization in their work, from Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Kwame Anthony Appiah

(2006) to Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and Jahan Ramazani (2009). While these theorists typically use literature as illustration, scholars of Ito confront the challenge of how to translate their theories into useable methods for dance studies. Taken together, Ito scholars model methods for tracing corporeal and intellectual exchanges across multiple registers and for situating these exchanges within overlapping local contexts: early twentieth-century Japan, London during the First World War, New York during the 1920s, Los Angeles during the 1930s, and Japanese internment during the Second World War.⁵

In many ways, scholarly approaches to Ito's career parallel other recent inquiries on individual artists in transit. Michelle Clayton has followed the Spanish-British dancer Tórtola Valencia on her tours of Latin America from 1916 to 1930, highlighting how local critics of her performances, aware that audiences across Europe and the Americas also had witnessed her dancing, projected their own positions within transnational networks. Clayton understands this not as "modernist cosmopolitanism," but as "comparative particularisms," "particularisms performed by moving bodies and resignified by their shifting publics" (2014, 31). Kate Elswit has followed both Kurt Jooss and Valeska Gert from their involuntary exiles during the Nazi years to their voluntary remigrations to Germany following the Second World War. She proposes the idea and method of the "micropolitics of exchange," the "intricate, personalized crosscurrents, catalyzed by survival strategies that registered in the work itself and left traces in history, both marked and unmarked" (2017, 419). Thus Elswit challenges an earlier conception of exile studies that highlights one-way movement away from Germany, a center-periphery model that informs Patricia Stöckemann's 1998 cluster of articles on the topic.

Like the scholars of Ito, Elswit traces migrants' complex moves after leaving home. What Elswit and Clayton share with Wong, Sorgenfrei, and Preston is a determination to account for the multiple networks for production and reception that dancers encounter and alter as they cross national borders. Embodiment, pedagogy and person-to-person transmission become central to these border crossings.

If the local provides one alternative to the historiography of the nation-state, then the regional provides another. *The Modernist World* exemplifies the regional approach, with entries on dance alongside the other arts in sections devoted to East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Australia and Oceania, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and the Arab World, and Canada and the United States. In contrast to Cohen's *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, there is no implicit progress narrative; rather, the years before the 1970s are considered fascinating in their own right as

dancers, practices, and ideas ceaselessly crossed national borders. Also in contrast to the *International Encyclopedia*, dance modernism is not divorced from social, popular, indigenous, and traditional dance. On the contrary, many of the essays demonstrate the way that diverse genres mingle and fuse in dance modernisms.

In “Modern Dance in East and Southeast Asia,” Jukka Miettinen notes that the term “modern” in the region can mean either “artists who were in direct contact with the Western modernist dance movement” or the Westernization of dance that “started earlier in Asia than the modern dance movement evolved in Europe and in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century” (2015, 42). He holds that “the various strategies of negotiation between the indigenous traditions and modernist tendencies” account for “the present pluralism and richness of Asia’s contemporary dance scene” (2015, 43). In “Dance in South Asia” Ketu Katrak relies on Charles Taylor’s concept of “multiple modernities” to plot modern dance in the region as “a palimpsest of old and new, traditional and contemporary” (2015, 118). Focusing on India and its diaspora, Katrak sees influences traveling from East to West to East in the choreography of Rukmini Devi (influenced by Pavlova on tour), Madame Menaka (influenced by St. Denis), and Astad Deboo (influenced by Murray Louis). In contrast, Chandralekha, who trained in Bharatanatyam, “rejected its superficial religiosity, over-ornamentation, and reliance on epic stories and myths” in favor of abstraction and the “Indian psychophysical tradition” (2015, 123); in this way, her cross-fertilization of traditions within India empowered several generations of innovators in India, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.

Essays on Africa and Latin America also highlight the interplay of “indigenous traditions and modernist tendencies.” In “Modernism and African Dance: Reinventing Traditions” Kariamu Welsh describes how “African dance companies served as cultural ambassadors for newly independent African countries and thus ushered in a wave of African dance to Europe and the West” (2015, 183). These companies constructed a national culture in Ghana, Guinea, and Senegal by adapting dances from various ethnic and tribal groups for stage presentation. Welsh emphasizes the intellectual and financial patronage extended to the dance companies by leaders such as Léopold Senghor, the first president of Senegal, and Fodéba Keïta, the first minister of the interior in Guinea. In “Racialized Dance Modernisms in Lusophone and Spanish-Speaking Latin America,” José Luis Reynoso demonstrates the role that race and class played in constructing dance modernisms in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico. He explains how “as dancers relied on ballet,

modern dance, and indigenous and Africanist forms of expressive culture while participating in the formation of hybrid national identities, they simultaneously naturalized hierarchies of racialized class relations while marking and indigenizing whiteness" (2015, 398).

Strikingly, the essays on modern dance in Europe and the United States, the centers posited in the earlier historiography, radically revise the historiography of the nation-state. In "Embodied Modernism: Dance in Canada and the United States" Allana Lindgren (2015) weaves together the histories of modern dance in both countries, histories that are remarkably parallel and yet have been told separately. In "Inventing Abstraction? Modernist Dance in Europe" Juliet Bellow and Nell Andrew (2015) take as their starting point a 2012 exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City that included Nijinsky, Laban, and Wigman in a narrative of how abstraction developed in modern art. Critiquing the show for grafting images of and by the three artists onto an existing narrative, they offer "a counter-history of abstraction" (330) that includes a broader range of dancers (Fuller, Duncan, Valentine de Saint-Point, Sophie Taeuber, Oskar Schlemmer, and Ballets Suédois) and promises "to redefine the central principle of modernism" (331). In their counterhistory, dance does not simply reflect the modes of abstraction created in the visual arts but demonstrates how "actual bodies, bodily surrogates or images, and tactile or kinesthetic sensations . . . all played key roles in the urge to abstraction" (Bellow and Andrew 2015, 331).⁶

Taken together, the essays in *The Modernist World* dismantle the narrative of centers and peripheries that structured the history of modern dance in the *International Encyclopedia of Dance*. Yet there remains much work to be done before we achieve a fully rounded account of modern dance in transnational circulation.⁷ At present we have a wide array of new studies but few accounts that attempt to synthesize, compare, and map the transnational historiography. In a 2016 essay in *PMLA*, Harsha Ram proposes the concept of scale to interlink local, national, regional, and global histories of literary modernism. Might the concept of scale apply to dance historiography as well? Is there a way to nest the significant insights that result from studies of individual artists, collective networks and centers for experimentation, cultural policies of nations, and shared regional histories of colonialization and modernization?

This would seem to be the next step for the historiography of modern dance: to integrate these different levels of analysis. In the end, the historiography of the nation-state and the historiography of transnational circulation are not antithetical, but complementary, as dancers and spectators make meanings in local, national, regional, and global contexts.

Notes

1. The bilingual Polish-English publication *Moved Bodies* includes an early version of “Nation and World in Modern Dance” as well as valuable essays on the history of Polish modern dance. See Sloboda (2017).

2. See the essay “Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic” reprinted in this volume.

3. Although I have updated this list of texts since the essay’s earlier publication, it is still far from complete.

4. Contemporary British visual artist Simon Starling reimagines Yeats’ production in his multimedia installation *At Twilight (After W.B. Yeats’ Noh Reincarnation)*, exhibited at the Japan Society in New York City in 2016–2017. See Sheppard (2016).

5. Tara Rodman (2020, 2024) adds new dimensions to our understanding of Ito and significantly revises earlier accounts through her intensive research in Japanese-language sources.

6. Nell Andrew expands on this argument in her book *Moving Modernism: The Urge to Abstraction in Painting, Dance, Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

7. In an interactive website and series of essays (2016, 2020, and 2023) Harmony Bench and Kate Elswit have explored digital approaches to questions of transnational circulation in relation to Katherine Dunham. This is one crucial model for future research.

Mary Wigman and Asia

Between Cultural Appropriation and Transnational Encounter (2025)

This essay answers the call in “Nation and World in Modern Dance” to integrate modern dance histories on varied geographic scales. Assembling an extended case study of “Mary Wigman and Asia,” this essay examines the German choreographer’s work across the registers of the local, the national, and the regional. Hence this essay juxtaposes a reading of Wigman’s works—her dances and writings—with a mapping of her networks, the many dancers who saw her in performance or enrolled in her school or a school led by one of her students. Whereas a focus on her works reveals an orientalism edged with primitivism, a focus on her networks demonstrates how Asian dancers engaged her ideas and methods for their own ends.

This approach could be extended to Wigman’s networks in the Americas and Australasia, as well as to the networks of her predecessors, peers, and successors. How might we map the multidimensional influences of Sadayakko, Michio Ito, Tórtola Valencia, Raden Mas Jodjana, Uday Shankar, and Choe Seung-hui alongside Wigman, Harald Kreutzberg, Martha Graham, Katherine Dunham, José Limón, and Alvin Ailey? How do we move away from reductive models that trace influences only from the West to the rest without erasing the power dynamics of imperialism and colonialism? How do we mobilize a network of scholars to research the interchange between the Global South and Global North?

This long essay, not published in its entirety until now, began as an invited talk at the Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum in January 2016. Partly in response to my stay at the Institute for Interweaving Performance Cultures two years earlier, I talked about “Exoticism and Interculturalism in Early Modern Dance,” suggesting that the Denishawn company not only exemplified orientalism in its dance repertoire but also may well have exerted an impact on Asian dancers who witnessed the company’s 1925–1926 tour of China, Japan, India, and Java, among other stops. The invita-

tion to Berlin also gave me the chance to revisit the Wigman Archive and to look at its holdings on Asian dance and dancers. Thus “Mary Wigman and Asia” brings primary sources from the Wigman archive, many not discussed elsewhere, into conversation with new secondary research on dance modernisms across Asia.¹

The Julius-Hans-Spiegel-Zentrum was also where I saw Nelisiwe Xaba’s *Fremde Tänze*, and the connection between Xaba’s critique of the white gaze of the Black dancer and the transnational historiography proposed here is more than coincidental. For as contemporary dancers like Xaba tour their works to the Global North—works that intentionally subvert expectations of dancers from the Global South in their juxtaposition and combination of movement styles—spectators with an eye to history recognize that their predecessors in the first half of the twentieth century did something similar. Surely not all earlier spectators in the Global North recognized the fusion of traditional and modern elements in the dances of Jodjana or Shankar—Wigman did not, as noted in this essay—and yet as contemporary scholars reveal these fusions, we realize the connection between the transnational itineraries and movement vocabularies of modern and contemporary dancers.

In the emergent historiography of global circulation, one issue that demands collective consideration is the question of nomenclature. In this volume, I have used the terms “dance modernisms,” “modern dance,” “modernist dance,” and “global modernities” interchangeably, but that choice demands interrogation. How far can we stretch the meaning of “modern dance” without the term becoming meaningless? Should we follow the example of Allana Lindgren and use the term “modernist dance” instead? And if so, do we then understand Ausdruckstanz, Bharatanatyam, Butoh, and Tanztheater as interrelated genres of “modernist dance”? Or should we adopt a term such as “global modernities” or “dance modernisms” in order to emphasize commonalities across disparate cultural contexts? And where does “modern” or “modernist” stop and “contemporary” begin? SanSan Kwan (2017) and Ananya Chatterjea (2020) have written incisively on the variant meanings of “contemporary,” but the question remains of how to articulate contemporary dance in relation to the variant modernisms. This is one of many challenges as we consolidate a transnational historiography.

Today’s historians of modern dance inevitably confront the conundrum of cultural appropriation and transnational encounter. More than two decades into the twenty-first century, it has become commonplace that white mod-

ern dancers freely borrowed and adapted without attribution elements from cultures and subcultures they did not inhabit, from Ruth St. Denis's and Ted Shawn's use of costumes and movement styles across Asia to Shawn's and Martha Graham's very different deployments of Native American cultures. Yet as scholars have focused on modern dance in a global context, they have uncovered more subtle dynamics of transnational encounter. Scripting a history of Indian modern dance, Prarthana Purkayastha (2014) explores encounters between Rabindranath Tagore and St. Denis and between Uday Shankar and Kurt Jooss. Emily Wilcox (2018a) demonstrates how Dai Ailian, pioneer of modern Chinese dance, took inspiration from seeing Jooss's *The Green Table* in London (20–21), while Nan Ma (2016) demonstrates the impact of Japanese dancer Eguchi Takaya's Wigman-inspired teaching on Wu Xiaobang, who pioneered modern Chinese dance alongside Dai. Matthew Isaac Cohen (2010) narrates the career of Indonesian dancer Raden Mas Jodjana in Europe, highlighting the mutual influences of Jodjana and French theater reformers Jacques Copeau and Charles Dullin (121–22).

Drawing on this recent literature and on new archival finds, this essay examines the relations of Mary Wigman and Asia, not only the impact of Asian performers on her own works, but also her impact on Asian performers who saw her work or studied with her or her disciples. In so doing, I follow the lead of scholars who have proposed that humanities research in a global era highlight “not works but networks” (Greene 2006). While my previous research on Wigman focused on her works (1993, 2nd ed. 2006), this essay also brings into view her networks, networks that included a circle of artists and intellectuals she befriended in Dresden, where her residence and school served as a gathering place. Her networks encompassed a wide range of artistic collaborators and students at affiliated schools across Germany and Central Europe, and her students in turn established their own schools further afield, circulating her methods well beyond those who had experienced her pedagogy firsthand.

As I will argue, whereas a focus on Wigman's *works* reveals her own variation of the orientalism widespread in interwar Europe, attention to her *networks* reveals a different dynamic, a dynamic that understands *Ausdruckstanz* as integrally related to Asian dance forms and as empowering to Asian dancers who created their own distinctive genres of dance modernism. Viewed within the parameters of the nation-state, Wigman's *works*—her writings and dances—incorporate references to Asian cultures, a continent that she never visited and that she saw in binary terms as the opposite of Europe. But when viewed via the transnational circulation of her pedagogy and methods, Wigman's *networks* contributed to the formation of dance modernisms across Asia.

In making this argument, I run the risk of reinforcing the narrative that transnational histories of modern dance intend to dismantle: the dissemination of modern dance from the West to the rest. Whereas Purkayastha, Wilcox, Ma, and Cohen situate their histories within local contexts across Asia, I refocus on Wigman's location in Europe from a new perspective informed by research in and on Asia. In fact, I am arguing for multidirectional influences: that Wigman's encounters with Asian dancers in Europe arguably impacted her evolving aesthetic and that her aesthetic in turn impacted Asian dancers. My contribution to the emerging historiography of global circulation highlights exchange between the Global North and the Global South.

What follows is an extended study in three parts. The first part looks at Wigman's career in German-speaking Europe, and how her works—especially her solos from the 1910s and 1920s—incorporated elements from Asian dance styles. In many ways, her solos participated in the widespread orientalism evident in the works of her peers. Yet the orientalism of her works coexisted with a range of other allusions, including to Africanist dance, and thus her solos blurred the line between what we now recognize as orientalism and primitivism. On Monte Verita, where Wigman spent the years of the First World War in voluntary exile, and in Weimar Germany, where she repatriated after the war, her dances reveal traces of her encounters with Asian and Africanist performance.

The second and third parts turn to Wigman's networks of artists from Indonesia, India, Japan, Korea, and China. Whereas the second part narrates how Asian dancers made direct contact with Wigman in Europe, the third part narrates how dancers encountered her ideas and methods in Asia through study with dancers who had engaged Wigman in Europe. For some of the artists profiled—like Fred Coolemans, Zohra Segal, Eguchi Takaya, and Miya Misako—study at the Wigman School laid the foundations for their careers. For others—like Ishii Baku, Rabindranath Tagore, Uday Shankar, and Kuni Masami—contact with Wigman reaffirmed their own artistic inclinations. For still others—Choe Seung-hui, Wu Xiaobang, Hijikata Tatsumi, Ohno Kazuo, Eiko and Koma—exposure to Wigman came through their teachers, who already had modified her principles. Adapting Wigman's ideas and methods, the artists profiled here fashioned dance modernisms by fusing elements of their own creation with elements from Asian classical and folk dances, German and American modern dance, and European ballet.

WIGMAN'S WORKS

In contrast to her contemporaries St. Denis and Shawn, Alexander Sacharoff and Clotilde von Derp, Harald Kreutzberg, Ruth Page, and Graham, Wigman never visited Asia. Yet Wigman did encounter Asia in Europe through artifacts collected in museums and galleries, through performers she saw on tour, through students at her school, and through her own research in visual and print sources. In fact, during the final years of the Second World War and the few years after, Wigman occupied herself with writing a global dance history, never published, which had sections on Asian and "primitive" dance cultures. Indeed, contemporary critics and the artist herself recognized these influences on her dance works.

Wigman and her critics wrote about these influences at different times. Whereas critics noted the Asian and Africanist influences on Wigman's solos during the 1910s and 1920s, the artist herself did not acknowledge these influences in public until later. In her 1963 choreographic memoir *Die Sprache des Tanzes* (translated in 1966 as *The Language of Dance*) she reminisced about the Asian musical instruments and Asian-inspired masks that had inspired her solos *Ceremonial Gestalt* (1925), *Monotony: Whirl Dance* (1926), and *Witch Dance* (1926). Strikingly, her memoir did not include her impressions of Asian performers she had seen on tour, notably Jodjana and Shankar, or her memories of an "African ballet." These memories surface only in unpublished essays and in an interview conducted months before her death. In other words, critics recognized the Asian and Africanist elements in Wigman's dancing decades before the choreographer confirmed their interpretations.

As I will demonstrate, critics during Wigman's performing career and subsequent scholars have read the orientalist and primitivist dimensions of her dance in myriad ways: as alternately embodying and undermining her achievement of "absolute dance," as providing a bridge "from expressionism to abstractionism," as paralleling her radical reconfiguration of the female body in motion, and as bolstering her susceptibility to fascist aesthetics. Hence there is no single consensus on how Asian and Africanist elements functioned in Wigman's dances. The gestalt of her dances left spectators then and commentators now to draw their own conclusions.

ORIENTALISM MEETS PRIMITIVISM ON MONTE VERITÀ

Wigman's early artistic encounters with Asia happened on Monte Verità, a colony of artists, pacifists, and rebels in the Swiss Alps where she spent the years of the First World War in voluntary exile with Rudolf Laban and his circle of dancers. Breaking with Western conventions in the midst of the war's seeming destruction of European culture, the artists on Monte Verità looked to non-Western art as source material and inspiration, not only to Asia but also to Africa and to indigenous art of the Americas. In fact, these regions mingled in the artists' imaginations, blurring what later commentators would call orientalism and primitivism. Working with Laban and associating with Dadaist artists in exile in Zurich, Wigman created her earliest works in a milieu imbued with the imaginative force of the non-Western Other.

In differing ways, Laban and the Dadaists employed percussive accompaniment and masks in their performances, elements that had little precedent in nineteenth-century European theater dance but ample precedent in Asian, African, and indigenous American performance. Laban's interest in non-Western cultures came from his theosophical belief in "a system of truths that is fundamental to all the religions of the world" (quoted in Doerr 2008, 69). In August 1917 he and his dancers presented a lecture-demonstration titled *Ancient Rites and Dances*. Although few details of the work survive, it likely used the range of percussive instrumentation characteristic of Laban's practice at this time—"hand drums, tambourines, gongs, clappers, cymbals, castanets, wood blocks, [and] wooden flutes" (Doerr 2008, 34)—and perhaps masks similar to those in the all-night performance *Sun Festival* that Laban premiered the same month as *Ancient Rites and Dances*. In fact, both works were part of a congress organized by Theodor Reuss, founder of the Ordo Templi Orientis on Monte Verità, an association of believers in the "occult sciences" who aimed "to represent a higher concept of life than the current material one" (Ball and Lewer 2013, 405). Dadaists Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings were in attendance at *Ancient Rites and Dances*, and Ball commented in print: "Seldom will one have heard such convincing explanations of the origins of artistic ritual, or mimic-theatrical cult action, and of the hieratic dance than in the lectures given by R. von Laban, and seldom will one have seen cultic dances from Old Mexico, Central Africa and the Orient danced with a more intuitive comprehension than in his school" (Ball and Lewer 2013, 406). In the same essay, Ball singled out Wigman as one of the most talented dancers of "Laban's school," who "brings the spiritual back to a rhythmic, bodily basis" (Ball and Lewer 2013, 406–7).

Laban and Wigman reciprocated and attended Dadaist performances, while other members of their circle—Suzanne Perrottet, Claire Walter, Katja Wulff—became even more engaged as performers. For a Dadaist soiree in April 1917, five of Laban's dancers performed in *Negro Music and Dance*, with masks designed by Marcel Janco. Ball took an active role in the rehearsal process, and his diary noted that the dancers appeared as "Negresses in long black caftans and face masks. The movements are symmetrical, the rhythm is strongly emphasized, the mimicry is of a studied, deformed ugliness" (Ball 1974, 104). The Dadaists' intentions were less mystical than Laban's and more committed to a strategy that we might position halfway between expressionism and deconstruction. As Ball wrote in his diary about *Negro Music and Dance*: "Our present stylistic endeavors—what are they trying to do? To free themselves from these times, even in the subconscious, and thus to give the times their innermost form" (105).

What were the sources for Laban's and the Dadaists' interest in non-Western cultures? Growing up in a military family stationed in the outposts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Laban encountered Dervish dancing at an Islamic monastery in Mostar, located in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, and sword dancing in a Slavic mountain village. He also was fascinated by the formations of military drill, which he himself experienced as a cadet. Indeed, his biographer Evelyn Doerr (2008) suggests that his mature choreography drew from the "rational-abstract" element of military drill combined with the "ecstatic-organic" element of Dervish dancing (6). Laban also read voraciously on non-Western dance—early anthropology, writings on Buddhism and Taoism—and in 1920 he published his dance philosophy, *The World of the Dancer* (*Die Welt des Tänzers*). Aphoristic, poetic, and nearly untranslatable, *The World of the Dancer* includes reflections on the underlying symbols of gestures and rituals from diverse cultures, the subject of Laban's lecture-demonstration on *Ancient Rites and Dances*.²

Like Laban, the Dadaists relied in part on early anthropology for their understanding of non-Western art. At a soiree in May 1917 Ball and Tristan Tzara recited "poems" based on a 1910 account of Australian Aborigines by Lutheran missionary Carl Strehlow (Kaufmann 2016, 96). Tzara also adapted texts from Karl Bücher's *Work and Rhythm*, a study of the origins of music and poetry from the work rhythms of "primitive peoples." Laban also was influenced by Bücher's study and, in fact, instituted its basic findings on Monte Verità, when he asked students at his school to start their day doing chores to appropriate rhythms (Doerr 2008, 32–33).

In addition to early anthropology, ethnographic museums were an

important source for the Dadaists and likely for Laban and Wigman too. The Ethnographic Museum in Zurich, established in 1889, followed the precedent of museums founded in Munich (1868), Berlin (1873), Dresden (1875), Vienna (1876), and Hamburg (1879). These museums drew their collections from expeditions to German colonies in Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, as well as from art dealers who had contacts in French and British colonies across Asia and Africa. Non-Western art also fascinated private collectors such as Han Coray. In fact, Coray exhibited African sculpture alongside Dadaist art at the Dada Galerie in 1917 (Oberhofer and Francini 2016).

The Dadaists did not aim at ethnographic accuracy in their borrowings from non-Western cultures. For example, Janco's masks freely mixed elements from African and Oceanic examples widely displayed at ethnographic museums with the masked folk dances from his native Romania. Dadaist dance amplified the hybrid design of Janco's masks, borrowing and mixing elements from the artists' imagination of non-Western cultures. As Dada scholar Mona De Weerd (2016) concludes, "Dada artists used interest in the 'original,' the 'primitive,' and the culturally foreign to establish a new avant-garde performance and movement aesthetic" (40).³

Does this conclusion also hold for Wigman's early solos created on Monte Verita? From one perspective, Wigman's early solos, like Janco's masks, made allusions to diverse non-Western sources and in so doing introduced a new aesthetic that her earliest critics, including Ball, called "absolute dance." From another perspective, Wigman's allusions to non-Western sources constituted part of what I have called the feminist subtext of her dances, her challenge to "the (heterosexist) duality of gender" (Manning 1993, 44). As *Ecstasy and the Demon* elaborates my argument:

At times Wigman used actual facial masks, but more often her costume or her facial expression, or both, functioned like masks. And in another sense her dancing became a metaphoric mask . . . [as she] staged her self-transformation into an other. She conceptualized her body as a medium and her dancing as a channel for subconscious drives and supernatural forces, for ecstatic and demonic energies, for the abstract designs of time, space, and motion. . . . In forcing spectators to give up familiar categories, Wigman's dancing invited their projection of unfamiliar categories. If the dancer appears neither "feminine" nor "masculine," as [more than one critic asserted,] then how does one conceptualize personhood outside the (heterosexist) duality of gender? (Manning 1993, 42–44)



Figure 22. Mary Wigman in *Idolatry* (*Götzendienst*), part of the solo cycle from *Ecstatic Dances* as revised for her first solo tour in 1919, photograph by Hugo Erfurth. Courtesy of the Mary Wigman Archive, Academy of Arts, Berlin.

It is important to note that Wigman's staging "her self-transformation into an other" never took the form of a recognizable Other, as was true of her contemporaries St. Denis, Maud Allan, and Sent M'Ahesa. Rather, her self-transformations layered a range of allusions to "a godhead, the demonic, the Freudian subconscious, the ecstatic, the Germanic" (Manning 1993, 44) and—what went largely unmentioned in *Ecstasy and the Demon*—the non-Western.

Critics of both her early solos created on Monte Verità and her later solos created during the Weimar years commented on the range of references. Strikingly, different critics recognized different allusions, as each made sense of Wigman's self-transformations in their own way.⁴

Consider *Idolatry*, part of the solo cycle *Ecstatic Dances* (1917). A photograph (figure 22) shows her costume-as-mask: a long, stiff ruffle of straw hanging around her neck, a close-fitting cap over her hair, a dark bodysuit covering her legs and feet and arms to the wrists. Her hands flail out from the mass of spinning straw, the only reminders of bare human flesh. Whereas some critics interpreted the solo in terms of Wigman's departures from expected gender norms, other critics saw allusions to non-Western cultures. As one critic commented: "Mary Wigman's work begins where charm leaves off—generally understandable, direct, and primarily sensual charm. She doesn't want to work with feminine means: she is impersonal and objective" (quoted in Manning 1993, 67).

Taking a different approach, a Dresden critic characterized *Idolatry* as "nerve-jarring" due to the "monotony" of the "Indian sequences, amplified by the gong and its droning pauses"; at the same time, the critic associated her costume, made of "rustling straw," with "primitive culture." Yet another critic—Hans Fischer, who later published several book-length studies of dance—described how "the grass costume of the South Pacific Islander rustled and billowed under the masked face with the bloody mouth." Fischer concluded that the "eerie action was not for a moment mimetic or representational . . . not a copy, but an archetype."⁵ Similar to Dadaist performance, Wigman's dances on Monte Verità alluded to a flickering array of non-Western Others in their rebellion against pre-existing conventions.

ASIA AND AFRICA IN WEIMAR CULTURE

After Germany's defeat in the First World War and the founding of the Weimar Republic, Wigman repatriated to Germany in 1920 and settled in Dresden. With funding from her intimate associate Berthe Trümpy, she purchased a villa in an upper-middle-class neighborhood and opened a school. The Wigman School grew quickly and became a leading training center in Germany, drawing students from abroad as well as from German-speaking Europe. A degree from the school carried great weight in the dance world of the time, and many graduates went on to open their own schools.⁶ Other graduates joined Wigman's dance group, and she created and toured new group works

every year from 1921 to 1928. She also continued creating solos, more than seventy in all between 1920 and 1930, and her solo tours ventured further afield than did her group tours, reaching London, Paris, Montreal, Toronto, New York, Chicago, and other major cities in the United States.

During the Weimar years, critics continued to see allusions to Asian and Africanist cultures in her dancing, most especially her solos and to a lesser extent in her group works. By the middle to late 1920s the Asian influence seemed particularly pronounced in her solos, especially in the extended solo cycle *Visions*, although her orientalism never lost its primitivist edge. *Visions*, created over a four-year period from 1925 to 1928, encompassed eight solos, including *Ceremonial Gestalt* and *Witch Dance*, both performed in masks carved by the Latvian-born artist Viktor Magito and accompanied by percussive scores by Will Goetze. During these years Wigman had contact with visual artists, art historians, and curators with extensive knowledge of non-Western art. She saw Asian and African dancers on tour in Germany. She welcomed visiting artists and students from Asia at her school. Although she continued to envision Asia from the perspective of Europe, Wigman's exposure to Asian performance became less imagined and more embodied.

Wigman's friend Ernst Scheyer, an art critic and historian, had expertise in Chinese and Japanese art. He later recalled evenings with friends and colleagues in her apartment located on the second floor of her school. "The chief décor," he recounted, "consisted of a grand piano and two old Javanese bronze gongs from a gamelan orchestra" (Scheyer 1970, 13). Wigman was acquainted with curators at the Ethnological Museum in Dresden, which had an extensive collection of art and artifacts from Indonesia and New Guinea. She also knew Felix Tikotin, a collector of Asian art who had a gallery in Dresden from 1922 to 1927, before moving to Berlin. During his days in Dresden, Tikotin's shows featured a broad range of non-Western art: one show included "Japanese prints . . . Noh masks . . . a mask from Java and one from Africa" (Jirka-Schmitz 2012, 47). Scheyer implies that Wigman purchased the "two old Javanese bronze gongs" either from Tikotin or through contacts at the Ethnological Museum.

Wigman's interest in Javanese culture may well have come from her fascination with the dancer Jodjana, whom she saw in performance during the mid-1920s and wrote about in an unpublished essay. A well-known performer in continental Europe during the 1920s and 1930s, Jodjana performed in Berlin in 1925, in Frankfurt in 1927, and at the Second Dancers Congress in Essen in 1928. In 1930 Jodjana published an essay "On Javanese dance" in *Schrifttanz*, and in 1930 and 1931 he presented three full-evening programs in Berlin. Thus



Figure 23. Raden Mas Jodjana, dancing as Shiva. Courtesy of Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam.

there were any number of occasions when Wigman could have seen Jodjana, and their paths may well have crossed more than once (figure 23).

As Cohen documents, in 1914 Jodjana had immigrated at age twenty-one from colonial Indonesia to the Netherlands, the colonial power in Indonesia. Although intending to study business, he soon devoted himself to the arts, working with an association of other Indonesian students to showcase the distinctiveness and dignity of their arts to the Dutch public. Within a few years Jodjana had dropped out of business college and devoted himself to

a professional career in the arts, freely adapting Indonesian subject matter and artistic principles. As Cohen notes, “while he applied the principles of Javanese movement, dressed in Javanese dance costume and used a version of gamelan to accompany his works, his choreography was entirely novel” (2007, 20).

Wigman’s essay, titled “Two Dance Experiences,” contrasts her memories of Jodjana with her memories of seeing ballerina Anna Pavlova. (From internal evidence, it seems that Wigman saw Pavlova during the runaway inflation in 1923.) Describing the two artists, Wigman’s prose shifts in telling ways between the first, second, and third person. The essay starts with her reminiscences of Pavlova. At first addressing the ballerina in the second person (*Du, Dich*), Wigman sees Pavlova as an intimate, albeit a rival. She writes:

Bin ich nicht Tänzerin wie Du? Und liebe den Tanz wie auch Du ihn lieben musst? Auch du hast gekämpft, gelitten, erobert, hast Dich durchsetzen müssen inmitten Vieler, gegen Viele. . . . Warum leide ich bei all meiner Freude auf Dich?⁷

Am I not a dancer like you? And do I not love dance as much as you? You too have fought, suffered, conquered, prevailed despite and amidst many obstacles. . . . Yet why do I suffer despite my joy in seeing you?

Wigman then unfolds her despair at watching Pavlova perform the “dead art” of ballet, wasting her potential for expression. Her discussion of Pavlova ends by shifting to the third person (*sie, sich*), distancing the ballerina from herself, and posing a final rhetorical question:

Was wäre Anna [Pavlova] geworden, wenn sie die Freiheit kennen gelernt, den Tanz ihres eigenen menschlichen Seins in sich entdeckt und geformt hätte?

What might Anna Pavlova have become if she had discovered and created dance within her own self?

The second half of the essay then turns to Wigman’s reminiscences of Jodjana. Her description begins with a portrayal of Jodjana in the third person as fremd (strange, foreign), echoing the orientalist trope of the Asian Other:

Ein tanzender Körper spricht seine Sprache. Sie ist uns *fremd*, kommt von weither, gleitet durch unser Sehen und klingt in uns weiter. Asien spricht.—

Keine Frage nach dem Tänzer taucht auf, Persönlichkeit, Individualität, wir fragen nicht darnach. Javanischer Tanz.—

A dancing body speaks a language that is foreign (*fremd*) to us, that comes from far away, that slides into our vision and resounds in us. Asia speaks—

It is not a question of the dancer's personality or individuality. Javanese dance—

As Wigman describes Jodjana's dancing, she contrasts his style with Western conventions, and in so doing separates herself from the other spectators in the audience, whom she believes do not appreciate his artistry to the same degree that she does. She writes:

Die Gesten gleiten vorüber in dauerndem Wechsel, monoton gereiht. Kein Anfang, kein Ende, Keine Steigerung, Keine Dynamik im Sinne europäischer Gestaltung. Monotoner Gesang des Körpers in unendlichem Fluss . . . Beschwörung der Ruhe, Seligkeit der Versenkung. Kein Rausch, kein Taumel. Und so unsagbar schön.

The gestures glide past in constant alternation, monotonously sequenced. Without beginning, without end, without dynamic in the typical European sense. Monotonous chant of the body in endless flow. . . . Incantation of calm, bliss of immersion. Without intoxication, without dizziness. And so unbelievably beautiful.

As Wigman concludes her description of Jodjana, she shifts to the second person, reversing her shift from second to third person in her description of Pavlova. Articulating her appreciation for his "gift," her rhetoric nonetheless extends her orientalist assumptions, viewing Asia as a "dream land" seducing the European spectator. Yet even as Wigman distances Jodjana, she also addresses him with the intimate second person (*Du, Dir*). The essay closes:

Für eine Stunde nimmst Du meine Seele, trugst sie davon in ein fernes Traumland, hieltest mich verzaubert in ungekanntem Sein. . . . Aber ich möchte Dir danken für das was Du schenktest.—

For an hour you take my soul, bewitched in a distant dream land, enchanted in an unknown existence. . . . I would like to thank you for your gift.

How to interpret this juxtaposition of intimate address and orientalist rhetoric? The juxtaposition is reminiscent of what Eric Lott famously termed the “love and theft” of blackface minstrelsy, a dynamic whereby the white artist desires and appropriates subject matter from artists of color. Yet Wigman’s embrace of Jodjana’s intoxicating aesthetic cannot be disentangled from her disdain for Pavlova’s “dead art” of ballet. So often the emergence of modern dance is narrated as artists’ rejection of ballet. Indeed, this is how Wigman’s biographer Hedwig Müller deploys Wigman’s unpublished comments on Pavlova (Müller 1986, 116–17). Yet the essay “Two Dance Experiences” interconnects Wigman’s disdain for ballet with her embrace of Jodjana’s aesthetic, his gestures “without beginning, without end.” Rejecting European ballet, Wigman narrates her encounter with Jodjana as formative for her aesthetic.

If Jodjana’s modernist take on tradition influenced Wigman directly, then an encounter with Black dancers in Europe impacted her indirectly. In an interview conducted six months before her death, Wigman recalled her realization that her “discovery” of a movement technique she called *Vibrato*—a dynamic energizing of one or more body parts—was in fact a “rediscovery” of what she later observed performed by “an African ballet.” In spring 1924 she tore a muscle in performance, and after that she lost her ability to jump as powerfully as before. Hence she had to find another way to create dynamics in performance, and in her studio she “one day discovered a quiet vibration up and down . . . through my whole body, from my feet to my head. I thought, how wonderful!” (quoted in Schumann and Wigman 1982, 48). But then at a later point she saw “an African ballet” and recognized her discovery mirrored by the dancers: “They can vibrate with such magnificence that I was nearly bursting with envy—and I thought: Oh my God! You idiot, you think that you invented something!” (quoted in Schumann and Wigman 1982, 48). In contrast to “Two Dance Experiences,” where Wigman balances her disdain for ballet with her appreciation of Javanese dance, here she mocks herself for not realizing that her discoveries in the studio had precedent in a form that she and her contemporaries considered primitive. In this interview, she acknowledges the primitivism that shadowed the orientalism of her dances.

What was the “African ballet” that Wigman saw? Which Black dancers took the stage in 1920s Germany? One possibility is that Wigman saw a performance of one of the many *Völkerschauen* (shows of native peoples) staged across Germany from the 1870s through the early 1930s (Dreesbach 2012). This form of commercial entertainment had parallels with the “native villages” displayed at many world’s fairs during the same decades: performers were recruited from European colonies in Asia and in Africa and then staged their cultural “backwardness” for the European gaze (Corbey 1993). In fact,

more than four hundred such shows were presented across Germany over a sixty-year period, featuring groups from Ceylon, Samoa, India, Somalia, Cameroon, Nubia (present-day Sudan), and Dahomey (present-day Nigeria).

Another possibility is that Wigman saw Josephine Baker on tour in Germany in 1926 or 1928. Having made her name in Paris with the 1925 premiere of *La Revue Nègre*, Baker brought the work to Berlin in 1926 and then another show *Bitte Einsteigen!* (Please Climb Aboard) in 1928. That Wigman described the African dancers she saw as an anonymous collective rather than as individual artists suggests that she viewed a *Völkerschau*. But her use of the term “ballet” suggests that she saw a stage work, such as Baker’s appearance in 1926 at the Theater am Kurfürstendamm or in 1928 at the Theater des Westens, both established theaters, rather than a *Völkerschau*, ongoing exhibits housed at Zoological Gardens in Berlin, Dresden, and elsewhere. Whether the referent for the “African ballet” was a *Völkerschau* or Baker, Wigman’s comments echo the association of modernism and primitivism also evident in Count Kessler’s description of *La Revue Nègre* as “a mixture of jungle and skyscraper elements. . . . Ultramodern and ultraprimitive” (Kessler 1999, 282).⁸

Given the ample evidence in Wigman’s unpublished writing and postwar interview on the Asian and Africanist influences on her work, it is no surprise that Weimar critics recognized the embodied sources. What is striking, however, are the varied ways that critics interpreted the orientalist and primitivist motifs in her solos. If most critics during the early 1920s considered these motifs as integral to her multivalent gestalt—as evidenced by the reviews of *Idolatry*—then at least some critics by the late 1920s considered these motifs formulaic or outdated. Reviewing a Berlin concert in April 1929, Joseph Lewitan, editor of the journal *Der Tanz*, saw a “stagnation” in Wigman’s dances, whereby “the intended abstraction degenerated into a cultic act of an oriental-exotic character, which stood in contrast to the true artistic intention of the artist” (Lewitan 1929, 20). He saw “innumerable motifs” evoking “Siamese and Cambodian” dance, even critiqued one passage of *Space Gestalt*—part of the same *Visions* cycle as *Ceremonial Gestalt* and *Witch Dance*—for its resemblance to a “Chinese juggler on the variety stage” (21).

Armin Knab, a music composer and occasional dance reviewer, reviewed the *Visions* cycle the same year that Lewitan did. In his account, Wigman’s outdated aesthetic recalled Jugendstil at the turn of the twentieth century (Knab 1929, 55). About *Ceremonial Gestalt* Knab wrote:

An orange hoop skirt, a severe imperious Eastern mask. Movements consciously capricious, barely a sense of life, rather an animate figure, Asia is near. (55)

About *Witch Dance*:

Horror becomes rational form. A silver and red garment, a ghastly mask somewhat reminiscent of a Japanese ghost. (55)

About the overall cycle, Knab commented:

Her movement sequences are . . . Asian in character. On the one hand, they belong to a certain period in art which is inspired by ecstasy alone, on the other hand they resemble the ancient and timeless rhythms of Indian dance.⁹ (56)

Like Lewitan, Knab saw resonances with several different Asian styles in Wigman's solos from the mid-1920s. Yet despite his evocative description of her dancing, he associated her solos with a visual style from the turn of the century.

A contrasting view was voiced by Scheyer, who emigrated during the Nazi period and became an art historian at Wayne State University in Detroit. He resumed contact with Wigman during the last decade of her life and published an extended essay about her work in 1970. Applying a Greenbergian conception of modernism, he narrated her choreographic career as progressively moving toward the ideal of dance about dance, a stripping away of representation and a revelation of medium specificity. Like critics on Monte Verità and during the Weimar years, he saw influences from several Asian cultures and performance traditions in her work. Taking a retrospective view, Scheyer wrote:

Under the stimulation of the Far East, the *Witch Dance*, first conceived during the Laban years, underwent a transformation. The original version [from 1914] had been rather angular-Gothic. . . . The 1926 version . . . incorporated features from Javanese and Japanese cultures. . . . The mask . . . stilled the wildness of the gestures, controlled them, making them impersonal and universal. . . . From the middle twenties onward [Wigman] made increasing use of percussive instruments . . . such as gongs from the Javanese gamelan orchestra, drums of different shapes and sizes, wooden sticks. . . . Overwhelmed by the effects of the masks, Wigman's costuming gradually lost its illustrative, story-telling character. . . . Wigman's language of dance became more pure, more abstract, as it came to depend on the essence of dance rhythm. This was her way from expressionism to abstractionism. (Scheyer 1970, 20, 23)

Scheyer saw Wigman's engagement with Asian art as instrumental for her aesthetic shift "from expressionism to abstractionism," a shift evident in Weimar visual art as well.

Around the time that Scheyer reconnected with Wigman, she published her choreographic memoir *The Language of Dance* (1966). In a parallel to Scheyer's account, Wigman's memoir acknowledges the Asian influences on her masks and musical accompaniment during the mid- and late 1920s. She notes that Magito, who carved the masks for *Ceremonial Gestalt* and *Witch Dance*, had experimented with noh masks (34), and she recalls the "Oriental-like" motifs in the percussive scores composed by her accompanist Goetze. Her memoir suggests that she was inspired directly by the sounds of instruments in her collection—the "softly singing Siamese gong" (33), the "deep droning sound" of the Chinese gong (37)—and by the contours of Magito's masks, "an oblong shape with a mere suggestion of human features" (34) for *Ceremonial Gestalt* and "an almost demonic translation of my face" (34) for *Witch Dance*. Omitting her encounters with Asian artists, Wigman's published memoir highlights the inspiration she took from Asian and Asian-inspired artifacts.

ORIENTALISM AND PRIMITIVISM BECOME CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Scheyer's essay was published eight years before Edward Said's paradigm-shifting study *Orientalism* (1978) appeared, demonstrating how the West typically has viewed the East in terms that reflect more on European assumptions than on Asian realities. It did not take long for Said's concept to be applied to early modern dancers whose works staged facsimiles of Asian dances, notably St. Denis (Desmond 1991) and Maud Allan (Koritz 1994). It took a while longer for Wigman's choreography to come under scrutiny, since the orientalism of her dances was more implicit than in works by her peers, however explicit it was in her memoir and unpublished essays. In my own research during the 1980s and early 1990s, the convergence of feminism and nationalism in her works seemed more in urgent need of explication than her orientalism and primitivism.

Later scholars corrected my oversight. In the most direct application of Said's theory, Lito Tsitsou and Lucy Weir (2013) argue that Wigman's "Orientalism constitutes a demonising process, one of creating distance from the inferior, but also a process of exoticising and valorising the non-Western 'Other' for the benefit of the West" (56). Their analysis focuses on Wigman's

signature solo, *Witch Dance*, one of her few works to survive on film, and they highlight the solo's allusions to Japanese performance culture. Hershini Young (2020) interrelates Wigman's orientalism and primitivism, describing her "hodge-podge reliance on ecstatic 'tribal' rhythms, contorted facial expressions, and exaggerated eye movements" that resulted from her "conflation of the tropes of the primitive African with Orientalist mysticism." Although she notes that these elements "supposedly derived from kabuki theatre, noh drama, and Egyptian hieroglyphics," Young concludes that "the broad brush of Orientalism shows little regard for geographic and historical specificity" (Young 2020, 80).

Other scholars ascribe the orientalism of Wigman's work with varying levels of meaning. Sally Banes (1998) emphasizes a myriad of possible influences on *Witch Dance*, from Japanese noh and kabuki to silent film of the Weimar era to German conceptions of the witch. In the end, she argues that Wigman's image of the witch became "an extreme paradigm of woman as Other . . . the image of the female as outsider . . . key to the ideal of spiritual and artistic regeneration" (Banes 1998, 135–36). Amplifying Banes' contextualization of the witch figure in German culture, Alexandra Kolb (2016) demonstrates how Wigman's three versions of *Witch Dance*—1914, 1926, and 1934—reflected shifting "cultural-political circumstances": Monte Verità, the Weimar Republic, and the Nazi years, respectively. "At first sight," she notes, the 1926 version "might seem to gesture to a more progressive and pluralistic approach" (Kolb 2016, 39). Yet in the end, she argues that all three versions embodied "an antipathy to modernity that was shared by reactionary voices in Germany and Japan" (Kolb 2016, 39). Whereas Banes interrelates Wigman's orientalism with her feminism, Kolb interrelates her orientalism with her antimodernism. Yet, like Tsitsou and Weir, Banes and Kolb note only the Japanese allusions in Wigman's work. The one scholar to acknowledge Wigman's engagement with several Asian cultures is Carole Kew (2019), who suggests that the "creative pause" in many of her works parallels Asian performance practices that enable the spectator to glimpse a sacred reality. In this regard, Kew's argument recalls critics from the 1910s and 1920s who saw traces of several Asian performance cultures in Wigman's dances.

From Hugo Ball's 1917 review of Wigman performing on Monte Verità to contemporary scholars' analyses, writers concur that Wigman alluded to, adapted, or appropriated Asian and Africanist performance forms. Yet none of these writers turns the focus toward Asian artists' engagement with Wigman. What happens when we look beyond Wigman's works to her networks? How did Asian artists encounter Wigman and what did they take from their

encounters? How did they develop her ideas and methods in a range of local contexts across South and East Asia? And how do we rewrite the histories of modern dance to encompass multiple modernities around the globe?

What follows are profiles of nearly twenty artists, including all artists of Asian descent present in the Mary Wigman Archive, in addition to a representative selection of artists who studied with Wigman or with her students. These profiles, essentially brief career narratives, emphasize the artists' engagement with Wigman's ideas and methods while also contextualizing their engagement within the broader arc of their careers.¹⁰

FRED COOLEMANS, A JAVANESE-DUTCH DANCER AT THE WIGMAN SCHOOL

Fred Coolemans, a dancer of mixed Javanese and Dutch heritage, studied at the Wigman School in 1926–1927 and worked as an assistant instructor there in 1927–1928. In December 1927 Coolemans danced a solo on a program at the school celebrating the building's renovation and expansion. Around this time a photograph shows him playing a drum set in the center of a large ensemble of women playing percussion instruments in the Yellow Studio, the largest of three new studios. The photo resembles images of Wigman's group work *Celebration*, which featured dancers playing musical instruments as part of the action and which also was performed on the program in December 1927. Only women performed in *Celebration*, and most students at the school were women. Hence Coolemans was one of the few male students, and one of the few male teachers on the faculty.¹¹

While teaching at the school, Coolemans joined with a member of Wigman's dance group, the Brazilian-born Friedel Ullmann, to present an evening of their choreography titled "Exotic Dances." Berlin-based critic Artur Michel reviewed the concert in February 1928, concluding that Coolemans was more successful than Ullmann in fusing dance styles from their homelands with their Wigman training. Michel wrote: "Still to this day Fred Coolemans stands between worlds. He seeks . . . to infuse the heroic and precious style of Javanese dance with the austere pathos and compositional principles of Mary Wigman. With his eminent dancing, his straightforward and supple corporeality, he achieves something admirable, even sometimes enchanting" (Michel 2015, 229). Michel singled out for praise Coolemans' solo *Monotonous Rhythm*, its title recalling Wigman's own solo *Monotony: Whirl Dance*, originally performed as part of *Celebration*. In contrast, Michel wrote that Ullmann had

not yet found a way to “translate” exotic dance styles into expressive form. Perhaps, he suggested, that was because she attempted a range of styles, not only from Brazil but also from Cambodia (*Phantasie*) and from Black culture (*Vibrato*, its title also recalling Wigman’s practice).

Tellingly, a comparison of Michel’s review of Coolemans with his reviews of Jodjana demonstrates a common trope of the choreographer negotiating two worlds, the Asian and the European. Reviewing Jodjana at the height of his German popularity in 1930 and 1931, Michel described his solo repertoire as divided between works that embodied the “age-old” traditions of Javanese dance, works that created modern expressions from the gestures of Javanese dance, and dances that somehow managed to combine tradition and innovation in equal measure. About the latter, Michel wondered aloud: “Is this evidence for the continued evolution of Javanese dance in its homeland? Or are these dances the personal creations of Jodjana, inflected by European subjectivity?” (Michel 2015, 384). Cohen would answer both questions in the affirmative, noting that Jodjana freely adapted tradition and that his free adaptation, if not invention, of tradition combined Javanese and European elements. Although Michel did not praise Coolemans to the same degree as he lauded Jodjana, he did find a similarity of method in their works.¹²

After his year teaching at the Wigman School, Coolemans received a contract as a soloist at the municipal opera in Hagen, and after a year in that position, he became balletmaster at the municipal opera in Gera for two seasons from 1929 to 1931. He also continued to present his own choreography independently, including on a program of Young Dancers at the Third Dancers Congress in Munich in 1930 and on a program shared with dancers from the Berlin Municipal Opera and from Vera Skoronel’s group in 1931. (Skoronel was a former student of Wigman and member of her dance group in the early 1920s, who became codirector of the Berlin school run by Trümpy in 1926. Trümpy had parted ways with Wigman two years earlier, and the Trümpy-Skoronel School housed Skoronel’s dance group, similar to how the Wigman School in Dresden supported Wigman’s dance group.)

On the February 1931 program Coolemans appeared with a female colleague from Gera, the Finnish-born dancer Irja Hagfors, and this time Michel was less impressed than he was three years before and found his dancing “often monotonous” (Michel 2015, 386). As dancers trained in the improvisational methods of Wigman began to take positions in the well-funded municipal and state theaters in Germany, critical expectations changed, and Michel framed his review of the Berlin program with a discussion of the differences between “theatre dancers” in the government-funded theaters such as the

Berlin Municipal Opera and “concert dancers” in the tradition of “new dance” such as Skoronel and Coolemans.

The municipal opera in Gera closed at the end of the spring season 1931, likely due to the effects of the economic depression. Now unemployed, Coolemans traveled abroad, gave a few concerts in Germany, and made guest appearances at the municipal opera in Cologne. In September 1932 he rejoined the staff of the Wigman School, an offer he surely welcomed for the steady income and the promotion to instructor, although it did represent a step down from the lofty title of “balletmaster.” He did not, however, complete his contract with the school, for after Hitler came to power in January 1933 and Wigman returned from her third US tour two months later, she began the process of accommodating school policies with the National Socialist regime. A few days before the Wigman School enforced the new policy and dismissed staff of Jewish heritage in April 1933, Coolemans left the school, and students protested his abrupt departure.

Born Frederik Willem Cohen to a Dutch-Jewish official in colonial Java and his Javanese wife, Coolemans left Germany soon thereafter. By December 1933, he managed to organize his American debut at the Forrest Theatre in New York, performing a mix of solos and duets with a female partner, Catherine Marcus. This format was similar to his 1928 and 1931 concerts in Germany. In addition to three dances in a legibly Javanese style—*Song*, *Kriss Dance*, and *Ardjuna*—Coolemans and his partner performed to contemporary European composers—including Debussy, Mussorgsky, Bartók, and Satie—as well as to a few earlier composers including Liszt and Scarlatti. Pianist James Quillian accompanied his dances set to scores by European composers, while an expert in South Asian music, Sarat Lahiri, and two percussionists accompanied the Javanese dances.

Reviewing Coolemans’ debut, John Martin, the influential critic of the *New York Times*, found his concert disappointing. Noting “a certain exotic quality of his own” combined with “many evidences of influence by the Wigman method,” Martin nonetheless found that “his compositions are not couched in terms of dance form, but rely for whatever shape they possess upon the design of the music to which they are in effect accompaniment” (Martin 1934). From Martin’s perspective, Coolemans’ reliance on the musical design to give form to his compositions linked his dancing with the outmoded “school of interpretive [dance],” rather than with the emergent genre of modern dance, for which Martin served as an influential advocate. Although Martin did consider Wigman an exemplar of modern dance, he believed that American dancers realized the genre more fully during the 1930s than did vis-

iting artists from abroad. His bias is clear in his opening paragraph: "Fred Coolemans, another of many foreign dancers to elect to appear in America this season, made his local debut last night. . . . He has spent most of his professional career in Germany, where he is said to have enjoyed some success. It is extremely doubtful if so fortunate a prospect awaits him here, if his recital last night is to be taken as a basis for judgement" (Martin 1934).

Martin liked best his "three Javanese dances to native music," preferring them to compositions set to European composers. This preference reveals another of the critic's biases, for he often dismissed modern dance compositions by artists of color, believing them more suited to "native" subject matter (Manning 2004b). Perhaps if Martin had penned a more positive review, Coolemans might have made a career in the United States. Certainly, other Wigman-trained dancers did so. Here it is important to note that Martin's biases against Coolemans were not shared by the New York audience at the 1,100-seat Forrest Theatre, which the *New York Times* critic described as of "good size" and "entirely friendly" (Martin 1934).

Having risked staging a full-evening concert in New York, Coolemans returned to Batavia, the city in Java where he grew up. There he died of pneumonia in 1935, at age thirty-one. In April 1935 Wigman wrote to her associate Hanya Holm, who had emigrated to the United States and opened a New York branch of the Mary Wigman School:

I don't know whether the news has reached you of the sudden passing of Fred Coolemans in Batavia. Pneumonia. . . . It touches me. However things went, Fred was one of the "gifted," and close to us through studies and collaboration. Strange fate! Maybe death is good! Maybe not much would have happened, would have grown within Fred. Maybe he was too weak to carry through a task all the way. Who knows? (quoted in Gitelman 2003, 58, quotation marks in original)

On the last page of one of her large scrapbooks, Wigman memorialized Coolemans, pasting a head shot several times larger than other images in her scrapbook. His high forehead with thinning hair brushed back into a curl at the nape of his neck, Coolemans looks resolutely beyond the picture frame, his gaze tinged with sadness. Wigman must have added the inscription later, for she misdated his death as 1936.

What conclusions can be drawn about Wigman's relationship with Coolemans? First, that she trained, hired, and mentored the Dutch-Jewish-Javanese dancer during the years of the Weimar Republic evidences the breadth of her

network during the years before the Nazis came to power. Many Jewish dancers trained at the school, and Wigman's circle included many Jewish artists and intellectuals, including Scheyer and Tikotin. And she welcomed many international students and artists at the school. As she wrote to Holm after Coolemans' early death, he was "close to us through studies and collaboration."

Yet writing to Holm two years after the National Socialists came to power, Wigman sounds decidedly ambivalent about Coolemans. "Maybe not much . . . would have grown within Fred. . . . Maybe he was too weak to carry through a task all the way." Now she questions his skill, his talent, his gift. Ambivalence marked Wigman's career during the Nazi years, as I argue in *Ecstasy and the Demon*. There I portray her choreographic ambivalence as both her limited resistance to fascist aesthetics and her means for coming to terms with her assent to National Socialist policy. Wigman's ambivalent eulogy for Coolemans may well have functioned similarly, justifying her school's adherence to Nazi policy by undermining Coolemans' artistry: "How-ever things went. . . . Who knows?"

What conclusions can be drawn about Coolemans' relationship with Wigman? Like innumerable other dancers, Coolemans launched his professional career on the basis of his training at the Wigman School. His own choreography explored a range of motifs, from costumes and gestures that read as legibly "Javanese" to compositions that read as legibly "modern." In other words, Coolemans aspired to a cosmopolitan choreography that could reflect his dual heritage as Asian and European. At the Dresden school, Coolemans was one of several artists who aspired to a hybrid cosmopolitanism and found support in Wigman's mentorship. Yet after he was forced to leave Germany, the critical assumptions of a critic like Martin limited his career in the United States. And his early death cut short the development of his artistry. His affiliation with Wigman both made and broke his career.

INDIAN DANCERS ENCOUNTER WIGMAN

Among the other artists in Wigman's network who realized a hybrid cosmopolitanism were Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar. Both made time during their tours of Germany to visit the Dresden School. Tagore and Shankar shared an interest in developing dance as neither "Indian [nor] oriental [nor] occidental," as Tagore wrote to Shankar in 1933 (quoted in Purkayastha 2012, 50). Thus their encounters with Wigman confirmed their pre-existing interest in integrating Asian and European influences in their dance works.

The Bengali poet, musician, and painter Tagore visited the Wigman School in October 1926, along with his son Rathindranath and daughter-in-law Pratima Devi. The first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, Tagore was well-known for his ideas about integrating the best of the East and West, and he made several extended tours of Europe, visiting Germany each time. In Dresden, as in other cultural capitals, he gave lectures and poetry readings, exhibited his paintings, and met artists and public dignitaries.

As recent scholarship by Prarthana Purkayastha has demonstrated, Tagore—and his daughter-in-law Pratima—played a vital role in the construction of modern dance in India. Hence his interest in visiting the Wigman School, where he did not make a public presentation but rather observed class and rehearsal. Five years earlier in 1921 Tagore had created a new university, Visva-Bharati at Shantiniketan. Right before Tagore and his family departed on their 1926 European tour, students at Visva-Bharati premiered Tagore's dance drama *Natir Puja* (Worship of the Dancing Girl) with choreography by Pratima and Manipuri teacher Nabakumar Singh. The protagonist is a court dancer who converts to Buddhism and renounces her previous career. When the Hindu king forces her to dance, she removes her costume to reveal her robing as a Buddhist nun, at which point she is killed by the king's men. There are fascinating parallels here with the many Salome dances popular in Europe and the United States during the years before the First World War, as well as with the reformation of court dance in South India that became known as Bharatanatyam. *Natir Puja* was the first of a number of dance dramas Tagore created before his death in 1941.¹³

There was also a direct connection between Visva-Bharati and Dartington Hall, the experimental arts school in Britain founded in 1925 by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst. Leonard had worked with Tagore at Shantiniketan from 1921 to 1923, and Tagore's belief that dance formed an integral part of a well-rounded education in the arts impacted the curriculum at Dartington, which later became the home for Jooss and his dance company after they were forced into exile from Nazi Germany. In fact, Devi recalls the impact of Jooss's teaching on her own choreography when she observed him teaching at Dartington Hall in 1935 (Nicholas 2007, 94).

Like Tagore, Shankar visited the Wigman School after he had established his own interest in combining influences from Asia and Europe. Interested in the arts from a young age, Shankar studied painting and music in Bombay before moving to London in 1920, where his father was living. Enrolled at the Royal College of Art to study painting, he also danced at private soirees

and public events, and this is how Anna Pavlova came to hear about him. She had just returned from an Asian tour in 1923 and wanted help staging Indian dances for her company. Thus Shankar choreographed two dances, *A Hindu Wedding* and *Radha-Krishna*, for Pavlova's company and toured with the troupe for a year. Then, after deciding to shift his focus from painting to dance, Shankar moved to Paris, where he developed his own style, creating solos for himself and duets and trios for himself and female partners in a style that one commentator has called "an indigenous orientalism" (Bhattacharjya 2011, 483).¹⁴

In 1926 Shankar premiered a full-evening program in Paris and toured variations on this program to Germany over the next few years. Costumed in Indian garb, he and his female partners portrayed Indian subject matter to piano accompaniment. Several of the dances redeployed subject matter and musical scores from his choreography for Pavlova—*Wedding Dance* and *Krishna et Radha*—while others introduced new topics, such as *Danse de Shiva*, *Indra*, *Nautch Danse*, *Vaisya*, and *Danse du Diable*. Just as Jodjana had created his modern version of Javanese dance from the resources at hand in Europe, so too did Shankar construct his vision of modern Indian dance. Reviewing a November 1929 concert in Berlin by Shankar and his French-born partner, Simkie, née Simone Barbieri, Michel noted the influences of revue dance and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, writing that the dance partners would be "at home somewhere between Delhi, Ascona, and Paris." Yet he also found some of the dances so evocative of Indian culture that "we no longer ask from which river banks they flow" (Michel 2015, 314).

Shortly after the Berlin concert, Shankar embarked on an extended trip to India from January through October 1930 in order to study firsthand the varied dance styles of his homeland. He also collected more than fifty musical instruments and recruited members of his extended family to form a company of musicians and dancers, including his youngest brother, nine-year old Ravi Shankar. Upon his return to Europe, his new company, "Uday Shankar and His Hindu Dancers and Orchestra," made its debut in March 1931 in Paris. The repertoire included a new ensemble dance, *Tandava Nyritta*, which freely adapted elements of Kathakali, along with several dances for Shankar and Simkie from earlier concerts. Yet with a significant difference, for now these dances were accompanied by professional Indian musicians.

Analyzing the one surviving sound recording of Shankar's company from the 1930s, musicologist Nilanjana Bhattacharjya (2011) notes that the musical ensemble combined Northern (Hindustani) and Southern (Carnatic) musical traditions in simplified form. Several of the musical selections also incor-

porate instrumentation that evokes the Indonesian gamelan. Bhattacharjya concludes that Shankar “did not represent any previously defined tradition,” but rather “[integrated] the strongest elements from distinct traditions [to] form a new art” (497). Just as Shankar’s music integrated elements from diverse traditions, so too did his dance, drawing freely from several different styles of Asian dance and from the conventions of oriental and modern dance in Europe.

Shankar’s company performed at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, and it was there that impresario Sol Hurok saw the company and signed the troupe to a six-month US tour, the first of three Hurok-sponsored American tours. In December 1932 Shankar’s company appeared in New York at an International Dance Festival alongside Wigman, also under Hurok’s management. There the two artists became reacquainted, for Shankar and his troupe had visited the Wigman School earlier that year when they had performed in Dresden. A photograph in Wigman’s scrapbook shows her and Shankar surrounded by members of their companies. Her dancers are in costume for *Women’s Dances*, a group work then in rehearsal, while Shankar and members of his company are in elegant street clothes, even fur coats. Perhaps Shankar’s company had watched the Wigman dancers rehearse sections of *Women’s Dances*. It doesn’t look as if Shankar’s company had reciprocated by presenting a work from their repertoire, likely because Wigman and her dancers could see them in the theater.¹⁵

In her unpublished dance history, Wigman wrote about how Shankar revealed to her the breadth and depth of Indian dance. Following ten pages of evocative description of the gestural language, sculptural plasticity, and mythological subject matter of Indian dance, she concludes: “This dance, which could be read similarly to the reliefs of the Ramayana, I saw myself. It was danced by Uday Shankar. His gestures were glorious, his strength radiant, and his visible transformation from godlike rapture to the world of fated humans was incomparably beautiful. It was the most shattering experience that I have ever had through dance.”¹⁶

Only at the end of the account of “Indian dance” does the reader realize that Wigman has been recalling her impressions of Shankar’s performance. Just as she believed Jodjana revealed the essence of Javanese dance, so she believed that Shankar epitomized Indian dance. Thus Wigman essentialized Jodjana’s and Shankar’s dancing, in contrast to a critic like Michel, who recognized the combinations of elements that composed their hybrid modernisms.

Another artist who became part of Wigman’s network is Zohra Mumtaz Segal, an Indian Muslim student at the Dresden school in the early 1930s. Her

memoirs include a particularly rich description of her time at the school and of her later use of Wigman's pedagogy in her career as a dancer, actress, and educator. Among the artists profiled here, Segal is the only woman to have encountered Wigman on her own, rather than in the company of a male partner, as was the case with Devi. In this regard, the predominance of men in Wigman's Asian network differs from her US and European networks, which were predominantly female.

When Shankar and his company visited the Wigman School in January 1932, they crossed paths with Segal, then in her second year of study at the school. In her memoirs, Segal recalls seeing Shankar's company twice during her two and a half years studying in Dresden. At the first performance, the same month they visited the school, she admired his solo as a snake charmer and two of his duets with Simkie—the Sword Dance and the Peasant Dance—because of the “masculine” quality of Shankar's dance and his references to costumes and music from folk traditions of Uttar Pradesh, where she was born. But Shankar's performance as the god Shiva in *Tandava Nritya* “incensed” her, evoking her prejudices against Hindu “sacrilegious beliefs.” She was also “horrified” by Shankar's effeminate appearance in his “very tight fitting golden panties.” When the company returned one year later in spring 1933, Zohra's attitude had “changed greatly,” as she realized that perhaps her family's bias against Bengalis had informed her earlier disdain (Erdman and Segal 1997, 14–15). Backstage she met Shankar, and he told her to stay in touch after she had completed her studies, because he would be interested in working together. In fact, the two worked closely together from 1935 to 1943, after Shankar relocated his company to India.¹⁷

Segal came from an aristocratic Muslim family, and her father worked for the British colonial administration. Although she observed purdah after reaching adolescence, her family believed in educating their daughters, and she spent ten years at a girls' boarding school in Lahore. (Growing up, she had worn a burka when in public, but after her return to India in the 1930s, she recalls, her family had given up the practice.) After graduating at age seventeen, Segal announced to her family that she did not intend to follow custom and marry but rather desired a career. Her family agreed, and she set off with an uncle on a three-month overland tour from India to Europe in fall 1929. Her declared interest was in an acting career, but after reading Isadora Duncan's posthumous memoir *My Life*, she shifted her interest to dance. Arriving in Germany, she and her uncle visited several dance studios before deciding on the Wigman School, where she enrolled in January 1931.

Boarding with a local family, Segal spent twelve hours a day at the school,

pursuing the certification program for dance educators, rather than for professional dancers.¹⁸ Yet much of the curriculum was similar for both programs, for Wigman's pedagogy was premised on improvisation and movement analysis. Along with her cohort of fifteen students, Segal studied technique, solo and group composition, music, and pedagogy. Her teachers included Holm, Tina Flade, and Elisabeth Wigman. (Although Coolemans was on staff during her last year in the program, she does not recall him in her memoir.) Although Wigman no longer handled the day-to-day teaching at Dresden, she was very present, especially commenting on students' own compositions and overseeing the final examinations. In her memoirs, Segal recalls Wigman as "the kindest of teachers," an attitude quite different from the majority of students who she believed "were terrified of her." She also recounts Wigman's advice to not imitate German dancers but to "try and evoke an inner flow, fused with my inherent rhythm," a suggestion echoed by other teachers at the school (Segal 2010, 45).

Photos in Wigman's scrapbook evidence the rapport between teacher and student, for only a few of the many dozens of students who completed the professional programs in Dresden are pictured among the staff and dance ensemble. In one image Segal sits on the banks of a river, perhaps the Elbe, the river that flows through Dresden and is within walking distance of the Wigman School. Dressed in a sari, she holds a parasol, smiling at the camera. Undoubtedly, Segal's Indian Muslim heritage made her stand out among the many international students from Europe and the Americas. Yet she turned her difference into "an advantageous position," as she recalled, for the faculty were "almost awed by my nationality" (Segal 2010, 45).

In her memoirs, Segal traces how she deployed her Wigman training through the remainder of her career, first as a close associate of Shankar and then, pursuing her earlier interest, as an actress onstage and onscreen in India and in Great Britain. After her return to India in September 1933, Segal first took a teaching position at her former boarding school, calling her course "Musical Drill" in order to not raise anxiety over young Muslim women studying dance. But during her second year there, Shankar wrote asking if she could join his company, and she leapt at the opportunity. Preparing for her debut as a professional dancer in Calcutta in April 1935, Segal had to learn the repertoire in a short time. Here she found her Wigman training invaluable, for having learned "to appreciate my body as an instrument . . . I could observe other people, see how they moved, note their postures . . . and this capacity to analyze movement and pose helped me to learn quickly" (Erdman and Segal 1997, 74).



Figure 24. Uday Shankar with Zohra Segal and Simkie at Dartington Hall. Bequest of Alice Boner © Museum Rietberg, Zürich, Photo: Rainer Wolfsberger, Courtesy of Museum Rietberg.

Over the next few years Segal became a leading dancer of the company on its tours of the Middle East, Europe, and the United States (figure 24). The company spent the summer and fall of 1936 at Dartington Hall, for the Elmhirsts were patrons of Shankar and their school gave the company a place for extended rest and rehearsal. There Segal's path crossed with other artists supported by the Elmhirsts, notably Jooss and Michael Chekhov. In exile from Nazi Germany, Jooss took over the dance department at Dartington, training a generation of modern dancers and staging his repertoire. Hence Segal had the chance to see the choreographer's signature work *The Green Table*. Chekhov, trained as an actor and director at the Moscow Art Theatre, had left the Soviet Union in the late 1920s after falling out with the Stalinist government, and then worked short stints in several European capitals and New York before the Elmhirsts invited him to establish his own Studio at Dartington. There Segal observed Chekhov's acting pedagogy and attended his lectures and performances.

After several years of extensive touring, Shankar decided to create an arts center in India, where he could further the development of his choreography and educate the next generation of Indian artists. Both Tagore's Visva-Bharati and Dartington Hall were models for the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre located in Almora, a hill town in northern India. Shankar's vision was to train "a group of thirty to forty students, selected with regard to ability but without regard to caste, religion or social status, and train them first of all in dancing and music, but also in other forms of artistic expression" (quoted in Purkayastha 2012, 61). Shankar invited established teachers of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, and Manipuri to complement his own dance method. Segal took the lead in developing the syllabus for Shankar's method, a task for which, as she recalled, "my Wigman training proved of great use" (Erdman and Segal 1997, 97). Both Shankar and Segal also adapted acting principles from Chekhov's pedagogy to infuse their dancing with emotional depth. Classes every morning and evening were devoted to Shankar's method, which was based on improvisation, as was Wigman's technique. In her memoirs, Segal recalls these classes:

A dancer must be able to walk properly before attempting to dance; the walk should be confident, unaffected and rhythmic. Hence, for one hour every day all the students and we group members walked round and round the vast studio hall to the beat of a gigantic drum made of rhinoceros hide. This rhythmic walking would evolve into simple dance steps, reverting again to natural walking. We would do this alone, in pairs and in groups, till each student felt no inhibition in facing a big crowd or occupying such a large space. . . . Evenings we held what was known as the Improvisation Class in which students extemporised to given themes of rhythm and music [again to Shankar's beating of a drum], sometime including pieces of pure mime, since Shankar believed that an actor must be a dancer and vice versa. (Erdman and Segal 1997, 98–99)

Classes in classical Indian dance, music, aesthetics, psychology, and literature rounded out the curriculum, designed as a five-year course of study (Munsi 2022, 89–90).

For one year before the school's official opening in March 1939, Segal and other members of the company worked with Shankar to create new works, which the troupe toured through India in 1938–1939. Among the new works was *Labour and Machinery*, a dance that imitated the deadening rhythms of

industrialization, similar to the imagery of the machine in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*. Segal recalls the rehearsal process as the time when "the realization of [Shankar's] true genius dawned on me." She continues:

Previously I had admired him as a dancer and his intricate knowledge and mastery of stage presentation. . . . But the themes were all based on Hindu mythology and Indian folklore. Sometimes I felt a bit impatient with their childish and naive content. . . . Whatever I had gleaned from my Wigman training . . . made me keen to venture into the realm of "modern" dance, breaking away from tradition—and that is exactly what [Shankar] was now attempting to do. (Erdman and Segal 1997, 95)

Segal recalls her years at Almora as a time of intensive work and collaboration, "teaching and touring, creating and learning, and thinking about dance night and day" (Erdman and Segal 1997, 101). She premiered her own compositions, and she became close to one of the students, Kameshwar Segal, who had earlier studied painting and became a designer of costumes and props for the company. In 1942 Segal married Kameshwar, a Punjabi Hindu, and the following year the two left Almora and established their own dance school and company in Lahore.

Their school and company did not last long, nor did the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre. By 1945 Shankar had closed the center and turned his attention to film, and Segal had turned her attention to theater and acting, her "real love" (Erdman and Segal 1997, 117). For the fourteen years from 1945 to 1959 Segal worked with the Prithvi Theatre, founded by film actor Prithviraj Kapoor in Bombay and associated with the leftist Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). Originally hired as dance director for the theater company, Segal also took on leading roles in the repertoire of politically radical plays written for the company, which toured more than a hundred towns in India. As Segal recalls, the Prithvi company traveled in third class rather than in first class as she had enjoyed with the Shankar company, an experience that rid her of "a lot of snobbish nonsense" (Erdman and Segal 1997, 124).

From 1959 to 1962 Segal directed the newly established Natya Academy for Dance and Drama in New Delhi. Planning the curriculum for amateur students, Segal drew on her Wigman training, her dancing with Shankar and her teaching at Almora, and "the gist of [Kapoor's] advice and guidance," together with her reading of Chekhov's *To the Actor* (1953) and the ancient treatise on dance and drama, the *Natyashastra*. As she recalls, "I probably profited more from the course than my pupils, since my approach was perhaps too

advanced for training beginners” (Erdman and Segal 1997, 156). During these years Segal also appeared onstage and in radio and television in New Delhi, and in summer 1962 she undertook a lecture tour of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. She visited Dresden and was shocked by how much the city had changed from her time there thirty years earlier. She did manage to visit the state dance academy directed by Gret Palucca, another former student of Wigman who had become a leading dancer between the two world wars and a leading educator during the postwar years in East Germany. She also planned to visit Wigman in West Berlin, with whom she had corresponded one year earlier. But the erection of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War politics of the time prevented her from seeing her “old Guru” (Segal 2010, 178).

At the end of her trip through the Soviet bloc Segal spent extended time in London, and this period inaugurated the final long chapter in her career acting on the British and Indian stage and screen. Having started her career as a young woman in purdah acting in British plays at a boarding school for daughters of the Muslim aristocracy, she continued to act into the twenty-first century. (One of her last major film roles was in the 2002 release *Bend It Like Beckham*.) In the long arc of her career, her study at the Wigman School was a first step, and as a dancer, choreographer, educator, and actress she built on that foundation, adding what she had learned from her intensive collaborations with Shankar and Kapoor and from her encounters with Chekhov and with the rich diversity of theatrical and folk dance in India. Well into her eighties, Segal still practiced vocal and physical warmups each morning. What embodied practices might have remained from her days in Dresden, her years dancing and teaching with Shankar, her years offering a daily dance class to the members of the Prithvi Theatre, and her stint teaching students at the Natya Academy for Dance and Drama?

JAPANESE DANCERS IN GERMANY

Wigman and Ausdruckstanz exerted a more wide-ranging influence on dance modernism in Japan than in any other Asian nation. From the early 1920s to the late 1930s, a number of Japanese dancers made their way to Germany, some to study at the Wigman School, others to observe the innovations of Ausdruckstanz. Each integrated what they had experienced into their own practice and, after their return to Japan, passed on their understandings of German ideas and methods to their students. Examining the encounters

between Wigman and Ishii Baku, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Shigyo Masatoshi, the Umemotos, Eguchi Takaya, Miya Misao, and Kuni Masami reveals the diverse paths of transmission between Germany and Japan.

Like Tagore and Shankar, Ishii found Wigman's example a confirmation for his own artistic practice. Born in 1886, Ishii was Wigman's exact contemporary, and like her, he started his formal dance training at a relatively late age. Ishii first studied literature and then violin, but he shifted his focus to ballet in 1912, soon after the first Western-style theater opened in Japan. From age twenty-six to twenty-nine he studied at the Imperial Theatre Opera School with Giovanni Rosi, an Italian dancer who had previously served as balletmaster at London's Alhambra Theater. Becoming dissatisfied with "the previously prepared technique and form" of ballet, Ishii left the Imperial Theatre in 1915, determined to create a new form where "our own philosophy and emotion are primary" (quoted in Shiba 2006, 118). Collaborating with composer Yamada Kosaku and theater artist Osanai Kaoru, Ishii called his new genre "dance poems" (*buyôshi*). Both Yamada and Osanai had spent time in Europe, and both were part of the movement to reform and modernize Japanese performance. Yamada had been particularly impressed by a visit to Jaques-Dalcroze's Hellerau Institute: he introduced Ishii to eurythmics and the two experimented with the interplay between music and movement in the studio. Although Ishii's formal collaboration with Yamada and Osanai proved short-lived, his subsequent career reflected their shared aspirations.¹⁹

From 1916 to 1922 Ishii choreographed and toured dance poems in Japan. Then he decided to go to Europe, "not to study dancing, but to have my dance evaluated" (quoted in Shiba 2006, 118). He invited his sister-in-law Ishii Konami to accompany him, and the two presented concerts of solos and duets, similar to the format that Shankar and Coolemans would deploy in subsequent years. In 1923 and 1924 the pair toured Europe, and Wigman attended a performance, likely in Dresden; she went backstage afterward and talked with Ishii, even invited him to visit her school. Although he did not take her up on the invitation, he did attend her performances during his time in Germany, commenting: "Dancing is placed above music by supplementing the music. The composition of group dance was excellent and the use of solely percussion was novel. But I found that there was more to dance than what Wigman had shown me. The exposure to Wigman's dance made me more conscious of the path I should follow as a dancer of the East" (quoted in Shiba 2006, 119). What constituted the "more to dance" that Ishii found missing in Wigman? Was it the research into Asian folk dance that he undertook after his return to Japan? If so, then Wigman's performance became a

negative prompt for Ishii to become “more conscious of [his] path . . . as a dancer of the East.”

Alongside other artists, Ishii and Wigman appear in the 1925 documentary *Ways to Strength and Beauty*, a compilation of Weimar culture’s fascination with dance, physical culture, and sport. The black-and-white silent film includes both a solo for Ishii, *Prisoner*, shot on a theatrical set with strongly contrasting lighting, much like an expressionist film scene, and a duet for Ishii and Konami, *Dance of the Seagulls*, shot within a room-like set with windows overlooking a distant mountain peak, much like a Japanese print of Mount Fuji. Taken together, these filmed excerpts show the range of Ishii’s choreography created in Europe, the geometric formalism of *Dance of the Seagulls* contrasting the gestural expressionism of *Prisoner*. In fact, Michel’s review of the pair’s Berlin performance in April 1923 suggests that a tension between “grotesque and naturalistic gestures” and “elegant lines” marked the concert as a whole (2015, 85).

In *Prisoner*, originally set to Rachmaninoff, Ishii first appears with his hands tied behind his back, his legs and chest bare, staggering across the stage and falling to the ground; he struggles to rise to kneeling, falling back again and again to the ground. Finally, he manages to stand and to free his hands, yet he collapses forward several more times, as if exhausted by the effort. At the end, the quality of his movement transforms, as he finds a relaxed position reclining on the ground and raises an arm hopefully toward the sky. In *Dance of the Seagulls* Baku and Konami appear in identical costumes, a cap with long side flaps, a cape over blousy knee-length pants belted at the waist. They dance in unison, wheeling into and away from the center of the space, their costumes fluttering and billowing, as if suggesting the flight of birds. At the end, both huddle together on the floor. *Dance of the Seagulls* was originally set to a composition by Tamezō Narita, a colleague Ishii had visited in London during his European tour.

Comparing Ishii’s dances to other performances documented on *Ways to Strength and Beauty*—excerpts from Wigman’s group dance *Scenes from a Dance Drama*, Laban’s group dance *The Living Idol*, and Niddy Impekoven’s solo *Life of the Flower*—demonstrates how his dance poems both paralleled and diverged from his German contemporaries. Like many of Laban’s and Wigman’s dances, Ishii’s composition for *Prisoner* explores the levels of standing, sitting, and lying down. *Dance of the Seagulls* remains within the standing plane through most of the excerpt, finding closure with the dancers on the floor at the end. This was a common ending for Wigman’s solos, and was also evident in Impekoven’s solo.

Yet in other ways, Ishii's choreography departs from Wigman and her contemporaries. Whereas Wigman rarely impersonated an identifiable character in her solos, Ishii impersonates the title character of *Prisoner*, bound by a rope tying his hands behind his back, and the duet with Konami displays a recognizable image of seagulls in flight. Ishii also departs from Wigman by importing recognizable ballet moves into his solo, at one point in *Prisoner* swaying in a bourée on half-pointe as his torso collapses forward. *Dance of the Seagulls* relies on symmetry, a hallmark of ballet, in a way that was rare in Wigman's choreography. As Ishii later commented, New Dance in Japan developed from "the self-reflection of the dancer in relation to existing Japanese traditions, the impact of the guest performances by Western dancers, the experience of dance in the West, and the development of dance criticism and theory" (quoted in Son 2014a, 81). In other words, Ishii developed his choreography in counterpoint with his research on Japanese folk dance, his study of ballet and eurythmics, and his encounter with Wigman and her contemporaries.

In November 1924 Ishii left Europe and sailed to New York. There he met Michio Ito, a colleague from his time studying at the Imperial Theatre Opera School who had established his own career as a dancer in the United States.²⁰ With Ito's support, Ishii and Konami performed in New York, and they continued to tour Ishii's dance poems in the United States until their return to Japan in April 1926. Back in Tokyo, Ishii continued to develop his choreography, and over the next thirty-five years, he also trained many modern dancers at his school, the Ishii Baku Dance Poem Institute, which also housed the Ishii Baku Dance Company. This institutional structure for integrating dance training with choreographic production resembled the Wigman School in Dresden and its many affiliates.

The year before Ishii arrived in Europe, visual artist Murayama Tomoyoshi spent the year in Berlin, and over the course of 1922 he attended performances by the leading dancers of the time. Decades later he recalled his impression of Wigman: "I've never seen such a serious dance before. Her skeletal face and serpentine body were brimming with ghostly power from fingertips to toes. She was at times nearly naked, with her discerning eyes closed to refuse the notion of interpretation, throwing her limbs to the floor and crawling. Always with astonishing solemnity and an exquisitely refined taste" (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2020, 84).

Murayama was especially intrigued by Impekoven, and when he returned to Japan in 1923 he decided to choreograph and perform himself. He also founded the avant-garde group Mavo, which engaged artists from a range of

disciplines in performance. Within a few years, however, Murayama turned away from choreography to focus on theater and visual art, yet the impact of seeing German modern dance arguably informed his multidimensional career.

During the early 1930s a number of Japanese dancers traveled to Germany. Inspired by Spanish dancer La Argentina's 1929 appearance in Tokyo, Shigyo Masatoshi departed for Germany in September 1930, and six months later he enrolled at the Berlin branch of the Wigman School. In February 1932 he staged a concert of his own works in Berlin. From Michel's perspective, the concert realized neither the qualities of "ancient" Japanese dance nor of Wigman's tutelage. Nonetheless, Shigyo pursued a successful career as a choreographer and dancer after his return to Japan in May 1932.²¹

Michel responded more favorably a few months later when Umemoto Rikuhei and his wife Tokisho presented a concert of their works in Berlin. Trained in traditional Japanese dance, the Umemotos sought out training in modern dance, and while in Berlin they took the opportunity to study with Laban (Son 2014a, 78). Although Michel recognized that the two were not the "greatest artists" of their time—an appellation he reserved for Kabuki artists Kikugoro and Uzaemon—he appreciated the "pure joy" of their "folkloric" dances presented in May 1932 (Michel 2015, 463).²²

Taken together with his other reviews of Asian dancers over a fourteen-year period, Michel's responses to Shigyo and to the Umemotos raise the question of whether he held different expectations for dancers from Japan than from other Asian countries. Strikingly, his reviews do seem more invested in an "ancient dance art of Japan" than in the traditions of Indonesian and Indian dance. Whereas his reviews of Jodjana and Shankar embrace the hybridity of their choreography—their combinations of Asian and European elements—his reviews of Japanese dancers in Germany do not. Rather, starting with his review of Ishii in 1923 and continuing through his reviews of Japanese dancers in the early 1930s, Michel scripts a critical conundrum: Japanese dancers can never fulfill his expectations for the tradition of ancient Japanese dance, nor can they fulfill his expectations for contemporary innovation.

Dance historian Okju Son argues that the contradictory expectations scripted by Michel and other German critics created an experience of "self-alienation" (*Selbstverfremdung*) for Japanese dancers in Germany. For Son, the experience of self-alienation led artists to respond in one of two ways: either they emphasized the traditional Japanese elements in their works, staging their auto-exoticization, as she sees in the career of Umemoto, or they adopted the methods of German modern dance as a foundation that could

be transformed by adding Japanese elements, as she argues characterized the careers of Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako (2014a, 84). Son's insight is astute, although the dynamics of transnational encounter may well be more complex than she suggests, for Japanese dancers not only responded to European expectations but also adapted European practices to their own ends.

The career of Eguchi vivifies this point. Born in 1900, Eguchi began his study of dance with Takada Masao and his wife Seiko in 1929. Masao and Seiko had studied alongside Ishii and Ito at Tokyo's Imperial Theatre Opera School with Giovanni Rosi and later opened their own studio. Eguchi managed to study with the Takadas for only a few months before Masao's unexpected death. Eguchi then resolved to continue his studies with Wigman.²³

In December 1931 Eguchi and his wife Miya arrived in Germany. Sources are unclear if they studied at the Wigman School in Dresden or in Berlin or in both locations over the next two years; a photograph of the two with Wigman in the studio, surrounded by percussion instruments, evidences that they indeed had direct contact with her.²⁴ This was a time when international students flocked to the Wigman School in Dresden and to its branch schools in Berlin and elsewhere. American students were drawn by the success of Wigman's first solo tour of the United States in 1930–1931, European students by her renown and the reputation of her school. During the two years when Eguchi and Miya were in Wigman's orbit, Coolemans taught at the Dresden School, Segal was a student there, and Shankar visited with his troupe.

In October 1933, Eguchi and Miya premiered a concert of solos and duets in Berlin, just a month before they returned to Japan. Under the headline "Dance Between Races," Michel expressed ambivalence about their performance, characterizing his response as "depressed and impressed." On the one hand, he saw gestures and movements derivative of Wigman and her associates Kreutzberg and Skoronel as well as of her antagonist Valeska Gert. (In fact, Eguchi and Miya had taken a summer course with Kreutzberg in Salzburg.) On the other hand, Michel found their dancing, especially Miya's in her solos *Tango* and *Waltz*, compelling. Placing their performance at a "cross-roads of Western form and Eastern interiority" (Michel 2015, 515), Michel amplified his view articulated in earlier reviews of Japanese modern dancers: that modern dance cannot simply be "imported" from one nation to another, but must emerge from a culture's distinctive corporeality (*Körpergefühl*).

Photographs of Eguchi and Miya give a sense of their movement language in duets such as *Study*, *Striving for Hope*, *Forgetfulness*, and *Spring in the Country*, all titles from their Berlin program. In one photograph they appear about to launch or land from a weighted jump, with one leg, strong and stretched,



Figure 25. Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako. Courtesy of Sammlung/collection Kujawski, Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, University of Cologne.

making contact with the ground, the other leg sharply bent with toes pointed. Their torsos are broad and open, with Miya's twisted away from her legs, Eguchi's expanding the stretch of his jump. Their arms are angled with fists closed, and their gazes turn away from the camera. Their positions are variations on a theme, Miya's closed body center contrasting Eguchi's open center. Nearly identical costumes—briefs and dark long-sleeved tops that cover only their upper torsos—highlight their musculature, particularly Eguchi's. Their movement language appears abstract, athletic, angular, their bodies' mass and lines creating dynamic forms (figure 25).

After Eguchi and Miya returned to Japan in December 1933, they reprised their concert from Berlin. At this time, the Japanese dance world was enthralled by the new German dance: Kreutzberg and Page performed on tour in 1934, as did Gertrud Bodenwieser's troupe and Clotilde and Alexander Sacharoff, who had also toured Japan three years earlier. Capitalizing on this interest, Eguchi called his practice *Neue Tanz*.²⁵ As he later explained what he had learned from Wigman and her contemporaries and adapted for his

own practice: "Modern dance prizes the 'construction of space'. . . . One creates (on the basis of intuitive calculations) that which will make the place of the stage come alive: how, where, and when the movement will unfold, what kind of organization, what movements, what progression, what feeling will be contained therein, and the presentation of things which have what kind of nuance" (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 27). Eguchi insisted that his training enabled students to create their own movement language and to discover "that the movements of humans are infinite" (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 27). He stated that "what I acquired in the West was fundamental methodology. I found it not worthwhile to imitate the Western dance. I had long wanted to do what the Westerners can never do" (quoted in Shiba 2006, 122). Contrary to Michel's assertion that Eguchi and Miya were imitating Wigman and her colleagues, Eguchi countered that he was adapting a methodology that would allow Japanese modern dancers to create from their own corporeality.

When Eguchi and Miya started teaching and presenting their work in Tokyo in 1934, their approach complemented Ishii's teaching and choreography over the previous eight years. As Japanese dance historian Kazuko Kuniyoshi notes, while Ishii understood modern dance "to reach a universal world that transcends the individual," Eguchi and Miya "felt such exalted dramatic dance is unnaturally forced" (2019, 27). "In sum," Kuniyoshi concludes, "Eguchi and Miya learned a very analytical approach from Wigman." The differences between Ishii and Eguchi in part reflected changes that Wigman's method had undergone from the early 1920s, when Ishii had seen her performances, to the early 1930s, when Eguchi and Miya studied her pedagogy in Germany. As her friend Scheyer noted in his account of her development during these years, expressionism gave way to abstractionism.

Given the importance of Wigman to both Ishii and Eguchi, as well as their peers Murayama and Shigyo, it is noteworthy that none of these dancers appear in Wigman's own archive. This is especially striking in regard to Eguchi and Miya, who built their careers in Japan in part on their extensive training with Wigman. A photograph does show the two dancers with Wigman, so there was direct contact, but her scrapbooks do not document the connection, in contrast to the photos she included of Tagore's and Shankar's visits to the Dresden School, of Segal, and of Coolemans. Nor do her unpublished writings, which include her tributes to Jodjana and to Shankar, encompass extended commentary on Japanese dance.

What conclusions can we draw from Wigman's personal archive? Perhaps she simply abandoned her global dance history before she got to the

section on Japan. Perhaps she was confounded by the varieties of hybridity performed by the many Japanese dancers in Germany. (She believed that Jodjana and Shankar presented the “essence” of Javanese and Indian dance, respectively, but she could not make this same claim about the many Japanese dancers performing in Germany, whose range of approaches undermined any assumption of an essential national style.) Perhaps the presence of Japanese dancers amid the international student body at the Dresden School during the early 1930s—a time when Wigman was frequently away on tour in the United States—was less remarkable than, for example, Segal who noted that her teachers at the Dresden School were “awed” by her nationality. Or perhaps Wigman simply did not make the same sort of personal connection with Eguchi and Miya that she did with Segal.

The one Japanese dancer whom Wigman did come to know personally, as documented by her personal archive, was Kuni Masami, who spent the years from 1937 to 1945 in Berlin. Born in Korea as Park Yeong-in just two years before Japan colonized the peninsula in 1910, Kuni became known by his Japanese name after moving to Tokyo in the late 1920s. There he studied aesthetics at the prestigious Imperial University, while also studying modern dance with Ishii. He made his choreographic debut at a concert in January 1933, presenting mostly “abstract and expressive” works with titles such as *The Genesis* and *Fin de siècle* (Son 2020, 203). The following year he saw Kreutzberg and Bodenwieser on tour. In fact, Bodenwieser also saw a concert by Kuni while in Japan, and her engagement with his work and his fascination with Kreutzberg heightened his interest in German modern dance and culture. In September 1936 he left Tokyo for Berlin. Two months later Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, an early step toward their alliance in World War II.²⁶

In Berlin, Kuni continued his professional dance career while also working as a journalist, writing in German and in Japanese for audiences in both countries. Shortly after arriving in Berlin, he gave a first concert in March 1937 and a second concert three months later in June. Over the next eight years, he gave more than twenty concerts, not only in Germany but also in other Axis countries such as Italy and Hungary. In contrast to his early repertoire of “abstract and expressive” works, his European repertoire emphasized themes from Japanese folklore, with an occasional reference to Korean themes. His June 1937 concert, for example, included *Mountain Priest*, *Dance of a Korean Bridegroom*, and *Daydreams of a Fisherman*. In an undated essay, Kuni wrote about the relations of Asian and European dance:

As far as body technique is concerned, West and East have been going their own ways for many centuries. The New Dance Movement initiated in the Central European countries, however, has changed this disparate phenomenon and extinguished the line between East and West once and for all. The New Dance—*Der Ausdruckstanz*—advocated the expression of feeling through total body movement. . . . At once, East and West, past and present, rediscovered one another, and so the course was set for future innovation and delight. (quoted in Son 2020, 101)

Like Tagore and Shankar and like his teacher Ishii, Kuni proposed that contemporary dance integrate elements from Asia and Europe.

Yet, as was true for other Asian artists, German critics' interpretations diverged from Kuni's stated intentions and to some extent from his artistic practices. As Okju Son argues:

While [Kuni] regarded his dances as a kind of "new dance" that emphasized its Western philosophical and artistic roots, a German journalist nonetheless introduced [Kuni] to the German audience as a paragon of "ancient Japanese dance culture and mime art." On the one hand, [Kuni's dances] represented a specific understanding of antiquity that corresponded to the stereotypes the German audience had of Asian art. On the other hand, [Kuni] recognized the antiquity or tradition of Asian dance as a creative source for his own choreography. In this sense, [Kuni] demonstrated on stage the intertwined relationship between tradition and modernity by creatively and intentionally Asianizing his dance program.²⁷ (Son 2020, 104)

Here Son highlights Kuni's strategic use of the "self-alienation" that Japanese dancers experienced in Germany. In fact, Kuni was hired by the German Master Institute for Dance in Berlin to teach Asian dance. Fritz Böhme, a leading critic during the interwar period who taught dance history at the Master Institute, credited Kuni and German-Japanese author W. K. Nohara for illuminating traditional Japanese dance for German audiences, highlighting Kuni's contributions not only as a dancer but also as dance scholar, writer, and lecturer.²⁸

Kuni also made contact with Wigman. He studied with her at the Master Institute, where she regularly appeared as a guest teacher. He also saw her perform the solo program "The Most Beautiful Dances," a program that eschewed Wigman's masked solos from the mid-1920s and instead presented newly created and repertoire solos that presented a more lyrical, womanly,

and classical aesthetic. In an essay published in *Der Tanz* in July 1937, he wrote, “Not long ago, I saw Mary Wigman dancing . . . a pleasure for me. . . . beauty itself” (quoted in Son 2014b, 8). Wigman’s scrapbook includes photos of Kuni: in one image, he leans against a bridge with mountains in the background, a tourist engaged by the surrounding landscape. Perhaps he had sent her this photo from one of his many tours. Like Segal, Kuni appears in Wigman’s scrapbooks as part of her circle of friends and colleagues.

During his eight years in Berlin, Kuni’s dancing and writing were entangled in German-Japanese political relations. During these years Japanese were considered “honorary Aryans,” and yet after Germany broke the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, there were tensions between the two nations for the duration of the Second World War. Kuni worked for the Dōmei News Agency, contributing news on Germany to Japanese publications and on Japan for German publications. Yet the agency also served as a cover for espionage, and the US Office of Strategic Services called Kuni “one of the most clever agents” since he was able to spy on his travels through Germany and Europe using the “cover of his profession” as a dancer (quoted in Hoffmann 2015, 112). At the same time Kuni performed under the auspices of Strength through Joy, the National Socialist organization that presented cultural events at reduced prices, and he also performed for German troops during the war. As Son notes, Kuni occupied an “ambivalent position as a pro-Nazi artist on the one hand and as a spy on Nazi Germany on the other hand” (2020, 113).

Did Wigman have any inkling of Kuni’s espionage? Did his friendship with her have an ulterior motive? Or did he exploit the Japanese propaganda and intelligence services in Berlin in order to pursue his passion for dance? His 1993 memoir, *War in Berlin*, asserts his political naivete during these years. Yet historian Frank Hoffmann believes that Kuni played “the smooth operating agitprop fighter role until the very last days of Nazi rule in Germany and Japanese rule in Korea” (Hoffmann 2015, 113). Similar to Wigman’s career, Kuni’s career raises complex questions about to what extent he was motivated by opportunism, to what extent by true belief in Japanese imperialism and National Socialism, and to what extent by a determination to develop his dance artistry at any cost. Perhaps part of the bond between Wigman and Kuni was a recognition of their shared mission to promote dance as an expressive art under governments that saw art as an extension of ideology.²⁹

After Germany surrendered, Kuni returned to Japan, where he became a naturalized citizen. In 1961 he immigrated to the United States, and he continued to work in both the United States and Japan over the next several decades. From 1964 to 1975 he taught dance at California State-Fullerton.

The same year he started teaching at Fullerton, he reunited with Wigman in New York. Kuni was there with a group of Japanese dancers to perform at the 1964 World's Fair, and Wigman was visiting old friends and giving guest lectures. One photograph in her personal archive shows her and Holm with Kuni. Another photograph shows Wigman surrounded by twenty dancers, costumed in traditional kimonos, under Kuni's direction. On the back of the photo all twenty sign their names, under the inscription, "We honor you, Mrs. Mary Wigman!" As these photos demonstrate, Kuni and Wigman maintained a relationship long after the Korean-Japanese artist left Germany.³⁰

WIGMAN'S NETWORK IN GERMANY

From the 1920s through the 1940s Wigman crossed paths in Germany with Raden Mas Jodjana, Fred Coolemans, Rabindranath Tagore and Pratima Devi, Uday Shankar, Zohra Segal, Ishii Baku, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Shigyo Masatoshi, the Umemotos, Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako, and Kuni Masami. These dancers from colonial-era Java and India and from imperial Japan all had a different connection with Wigman, some fleeting, some sustained. What conclusions can be drawn about their journeys between the Global South and the Global North?

First, and not surprisingly, European expectations for Asian artists could be limiting. Okju Son shows the power of European essentializing on the reception of Japanese and Korean dancers in Germany, which she calls "self-alienation." Her argument finds support in Artur Michel's reviews of Japanese dancers and in Wigman's unpublished writings on Jodjana and Shankar. In fact, the latter extends Son's argument to dancers from India and Indonesia.

Yet these limitations do not tell the whole story, for Asian artists deployed Wigman's ideas and methods for their own ends. What present-day critics consider the orientalism and primitivism of Wigman's solos, artists like Tagore, Shankar, Coolemans, and Kuni saw as affirmation for their own ambitions to integrate Eastern and Western influences. In the early 1920s Murayama and Ishii were drawn to Wigman's expressionism, while in the early 1930s Takaya and Miya were drawn to her abstraction; hence these artists pursued the dimensions of Wigman's practice that accorded with their own inclinations.

In the end, however, Wigman's Asian legacy was shaped not only by the artists' own interests but also by sociopolitical developments. In colonial-era British India the innovations of Tagore and Shankar resonated with local

audiences, but after independence in 1947 their interest in East-West fusions drew less support than did the classicizing of indigenous traditions such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Kathakali. Only after classically trained artists in India and the diaspora broke with the strict classicism of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and began exploring hybrid movement vocabularies did scholars recover the significance of Tagore's and Shankar's innovations.

If sociopolitical changes in India diminished the legacy of Tagore and Shankar during the immediate postwar years, the sociopolitical formations of imperial-era Japan heightened Wigman's influence, not only in Japan but across Asia, for the Japanese alliance with Germany during the Second World War supported the broad dissemination of Wigman's ideas and methods. Hence, the third and final part of this essay narrates how Ishii and Eguchi participated in imperial Japanese dance culture, training dancers from Korea, China, and Taiwan in *Neue Tanz*. These dancers then built on and broke from *Neue Tanz* as they developed nationally distinct versions of dance modernism after the defeat of imperial Japan. A similar process happened within Japan, as Ohno Kazuo and Hijikata Tatsumi transformed *Neue Tanz* into *Butoh*. In other words, *Neue Tanz* supported the development of dance modernisms across East Asia.

GERMAN MODERN DANCE AND THE COLONIAL EAST ASIAN CULTURAL SPHERE

In 1912 the Japanese government embarked on a fourteen-year period of liberalization and democratic reforms known as the *Taishō* era. These were years when Ishii, Yamada, Osanai, and artists in many disciplines freely experimented with new forms and functions for art. The climate changed in 1926, when the government adopted a more militarist approach. The impact on the arts during what was known as the *Shōwa* era was not apparent overnight, but over the next twenty years Japanese militarism significantly impacted the careers of Ishii, Eguchi, and their contemporaries and students. Building on the country's earlier colonialization of Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910, *Shōwa*-era Japan more aggressively sought to acquire territory, invading Manchuria in 1931 and then launching the Asian front of World War II by invading other areas in China in 1937. From 1940 to 1942 Japan conquered a broad swath of Asia, including French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos), Thailand, British-controlled Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore, US-controlled Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). These lands

became known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and Japanese officials planned a corresponding Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere.

In Tokyo, Ishii and Eguchi had established their own dance schools and companies, and as Japan embarked on full-scale mobilization for war in the late 1930s, both became involved. Their companies made comfort tours through Japan and the colonies, performing for soldiers and for laborers. In 1939 Ishii published a book *Imperial Army Comfort Tour from Northern China to Middle China*, commenting on a two-month tour that ten members of his company had undertaken the previous year, performing in Beijing, Guangzhou, Harbin, Korea, and outer Mongolia. In 1942 Miya Misao published a similar book *Dancing in the Battlefield*, documenting the tours undertaken by Eguchi's company.

In 1940 Ishii and Eguchi collaborated on a large-scale work commemorating the history of Japan over the 2,600 years since its first emperor took the throne. The first part, titled *Creation*, was choreographed by Eguchi and depicts the creation of the world according to Shinto legend, with Eguchi and Miya performing the "Birth of Men." The second part, titled *Song of East Asia*, was choreographed by Takada Seiko—an early teacher of Eguchi who had continued her career after her husband's death—and provided an allegorical sketch of the relationship between Japan, China, and the West. The third and final part, titled *Pulsation of Forward*, was choreographed by Ishii and showed scenes of modern life, highlighting conflict between the leisured classes and the working classes. At the finale, as described by Yukihiro Yoshida:

There was a powerful sound of dashing . . . associated with strong advancing footsteps. . . . Lights on the stage brightened, and the . . . industrial labor corps systematically merged into the volunteer labor corps. . . . A huge advancing flow of people . . . streamed like a torrent. The privileged class was confused and caught up in the stream. The new order advanced like surging waves. (Yoshida 2011, 61)

As in Nazi Germany during these years—and not only there but also in other countries that deployed the mass dance techniques innovated by Laban—Japanese choreographers used large groups of dancers as a metaphor and means for nation building.³¹

In fact, Japanese artists and cultural officials were directly influenced by developments in Nazi Germany. Strength through Joy, the National Socialist organization that engaged the masses in cultural and leisure activities,

particularly impressed Japanese cultural reformers. The closest corollary to Strength through Joy was the Welfare Movement, which included Welfare Dance, a form of amateur dance designed to promote relaxation, especially for workers working long hours in factories. Welfare Dance was intended as a substitute for ballroom dance, which was prohibited by Japanese cultural policy, along with tap dance (Park 2009).

After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, Ishii and Eguchi continued their careers as established artists. Similar to how Wigman and her many contemporaries who collaborated with the National Socialists pursued their careers unhindered during the postwar period, so too did Ishii, Eguchi, and their many contemporaries who had supported Japanese imperialism, including Kuni. Having cofounded a dance journal *Buyo Geijutsu* in 1935, Ishii continued writing about dance. In 1953 he premiered *Story of Gautama*, considered his masterpiece, and two years later received a medal from the Japanese government for his significant contributions to dance artistry and scholarship. In 1950 Eguchi premiered *The Fire of Prometheus*, considered his masterpiece, then from 1953 to 1972 founded and edited a dance journal titled *Gendai Buyo*. He also became the first university professor of dance in Japan at the Women's College of Physical Education.

In striking contrast, dancers from Japanese colonies who had studied and performed with Ishii and Eguchi during the Shōwa era were not always granted the same immunity after Japan's defeat in the Second World War. These dancers' careers also demonstrate the complex dance politics of the Shōwa era, for on the one hand their participation in Japanese modern dance bolstered the mandate of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere. Yet on the other hand, these dancers also had the potential to undermine Japanese imperialism, and in the postwar world they effected the decolonization of Japanese modern dance as they established distinctive modern dance traditions across East Asia. This complexity is evident in the careers of Choe Seung-hui and Wu Xiaobang.

In March 1926 Ishii performed the first of many concerts in colonial-era Korea, and in the audience was Choe, a fifteen-year-old high school student with an interest in music who had never encountered modern dance before. She was fascinated and determined to move to Tokyo to study with Ishii. Although her parents initially opposed the idea, her older brother Choe Seung-il, who had studied in Japan and was engaged in proletarian literary and theatrical circles in Seoul, encouraged her to do so. From 1926 to 1929 Choe studied intensively with Ishii, and then returned to Seoul to start her

own school and launch an independent dance career. She married An Mak, who like her older brother had studied in Japan and was actively engaged in the proletarian art movement in Korea.

During these years, Choe conceptualized her dance mostly in relation to Western models, although she also began to experiment with integrating traditional Korean dance with modern dance under the rubric *Sinmuyong* (“new dance”). In 1930 she wrote to her brother that “the classical dance from the Russian imperial dance school must be dissolved and instead an art of dance must emerge, which takes as its subject the power of the masses and the poetry of labor” (quoted in Son 2014a, 165). In the same letter she also wrote that “I want to watch dance that is no longer subordinate to the music, as in Duncan or Nijinsky, but rather Wigman’s independent dance without the intervention of the music.” Although Choe did not have the opportunity to see Wigman in person, she took her as a model for how dance should develop.³²

In 1933 Choe returned to Tokyo and, encouraged by Ishii, furthered the integration of traditional Korean and modern dance, and indeed made it her signature style. This was in keeping with Japanese cultural policy at the time, which promoted Japanese leadership in preserving the cultural forms of its colonies. Photographs show the transition from works Choe created as a student of *Neue Tanz* to works that became her signature style. In a photo of a solo from the early 1930s (figure 26), titled *With No Path to Follow*, Choe balances on half-toe, twisting and tilting her torso, her angled arms and wrists both continuing and breaking her upward and backward motion. Cradling her head against an upraised arm, she peers intently in the distance, her bobbed hair style and dark makeup evoking the image of the Modern Girl. The lines of her costuming—a crisscross halter top and asymmetrically cut skirt—accentuate her off-kilter pose, punctuated by her splayed fingers, a signature gesture of expressionist performance. Compare the photo of *Monk’s Dance*, a solo from 1934, that swathes Choe in costuming evocative of a Buddhist ritual. Again tilting her torso, she peers to the side, but this time with a smile and bright makeup. With one arm angled overhead, the other arm crooked behind her back, Choe balances on her back foot, with her front foot jauntily stepping forward. The long sleeves of her costume extend well beyond her hands, providing the means to create trace patterns in space through whirling and manipulating the cloth, much as Loie Fuller did in a different key.³³

Making her solo debut in Tokyo in 1934, Choe toured Japan and Korea over the next few years. In addition to *Monk’s Dance*, her repertoire included *Seokguram Wall Carvings*, which evoked the figures of guardians carved into the walls of an eighth-century Buddhist cave temple in Korea; *Hourglass*

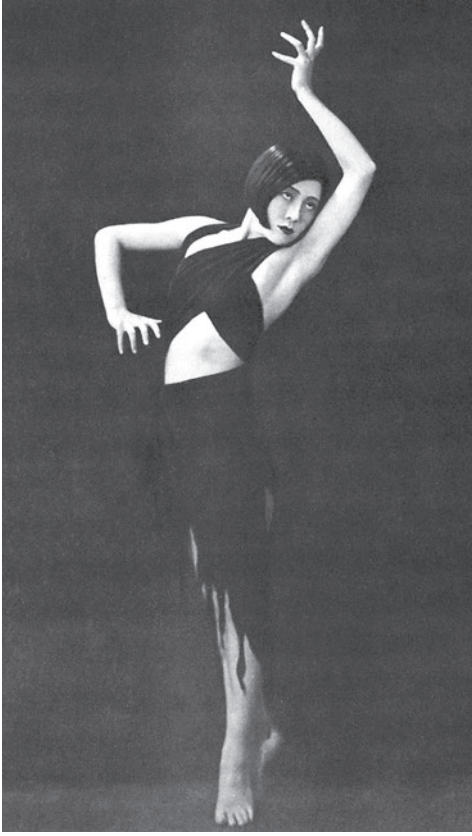


Figure 26. Choe Seung-hui in *With No Path to Follow*, photograph by T. Hagoshi from *Seiki no bijin buyōka*. Courtesy of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum.

Drum Dance, which recalled courtesan and folk dances accompanied by the traditional Korean drum known as *changgo*; and *Eheya noara*, which featured a humorous impersonation of a drunken young bridegroom. During these years, Choe's writings embraced the integration of Korean and Western dance. In a volume published in Japanese in 1936 and in Korean in 1937, she defined her intention "to lessen the distance between Chosen [Korean] and Western dance. . . . I would like to make my Chosen [Korean] dance richer and more sophisticated by using the techniques of modern dance, and, if possible, to enhance it to the international level. And I would like to unify Chosen [Korean] and modern dance" (quoted in Park 2006, 612).³⁴

Embarking on an overseas tour with the support of the Japanese government in 1938, Choe made good on her promise to take her dance "to the international level." For two years she toured the United States, Europe, and Latin

America. Although audiences abroad did not necessarily recognize the distinction between elements adapted from Korean traditional dance and from modern dance, they did appreciate her as an exemplary “Oriental dancer.” Sang Mi Park calls her concerts abroad “tactical Orientalism” and notes that audiences in different regions saw Choe in different ways, “in Korea, generally as a figure of national pride; in Japan, as a representative cultural figure of the empire; in the United States, as an exotic symbol. Embracing all these intercultural features, Choe appeared to represent the East and embody Pan-Asianism” (Park 2006, 626).

When Choe returned to Japan in December 1940, she became involved in the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere, alongside Ishii and Eguchi. As Emily Wilcox notes, her style changed during the early 1940s as she supplemented her earlier repertoire of Korean-themed works with newly created works that drew on Chinese and Japanese sources both in terms of subject matter and movement style. This move was in keeping with changes in Japanese cultural policy that espoused a “pan-East Asian dance repertoire” during the war years (Wilcox 2018b, 73). New works included *Consort's Song*, based on the tale of first-century Chinese courtesan Wang Zhaojun; *Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*, based on a Japanese painting from the Heian era (795–1185); and *Song and Dance Buddha*, based on a Japanese painting from the Kamakura era (1185–1333). Choe embarked on three successive tours of East Asia, performing for Japanese soldiers and for local audiences. A Chinese-language review of a 1943 concert celebrated her art for “the mixture of three elements: the colors of Japan, the forms of China, and the lines of Choson [Korea]” (quoted in Wilcox 2018b, 74).

In 1944 Choe founded the Oriental Dance Research Institute in Japanese-controlled Beijing. In keeping with the mandate of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere, she articulated her vision for the institute “to become a bridge between the dance arts of the various nationalities, making Chinese and Japanese art blend together into a dance art that is unique to the Orient.” She continued: “Russian ballet and German ballet can represent European culture. However, in the Orient, although China has Chinese form dance, Japan has Japanese indigenous dance, and Choson [Korea] has Choson [Korean] dance, there is still no one kind of dance art that can represent the Orient as a whole” (quoted in Wilcox 2018b, 82). Having started her career pursuing a modernism inflected by Ishii’s incorporation of Ausdrucksstanz, Choe next embraced an integration of Korean and Western dance before rejecting Western models in favor of an integration of elements from Japanese, Chinese, and Korean dance. Yet this wartime vision of “Oriental dance” did not survive the end of the Japanese Empire.

After Japan's defeat, Choe returned to Korea with her husband An Mak, who had worked as her manager over the previous dozen years. They settled in Pyongyang in the North, and Choe became director of a new dance school in 1946. Although she was criticized in some quarters for her collaboration with the Japanese, the changing politics of the Cold War reoriented the meanings of her dance. With "Korea's independence from Japan," Emily Wilcox notes, "a new political space opened up in which Choe's dances took on new meanings as the patriotic protection of Korean culture in the face of Japanese and also later Western imperialism" (2020, 513). Chinese students trained with Choe in Pyongyang, and after the Korean War broke out and bombs destroyed part of the school, Choe was invited to set up a school in the newly established People's Republic of China. In 1951–1952 Choe led a research course in Beijing that encompassed training in Korean classical and folk dance, Soviet ballet and folk dance, "southern dance" (inspired by South and Southeast Asian sources), dance movements adapted from Chinese theater, "new dance" and improvisation. As Wilcox notes, this curriculum created the foundations for what became known as Chinese classical dance. This curriculum extended the reorientation of Choe's practice from the early 1940s and her wartime dance institute in Beijing, as her vision "crossed over" from the imperial time of pan-Asianism to [the] revolutionary time of socialist internationalism" (Wilcox 2018b, 91). Starting her career under the Japanese Empire and ending her career in North Korea, Choe straddled opposing ideologies, shifting her repertoire over time and encountering spectators around the globe who interpreted her dances in accord with their own changing contexts.³⁵

Although many dancers from Japan's colonies choose to study with Ishii, Eguchi also mentored students from across East Asia.³⁶ His most influential student was Wu Xiaobang, who along with Choe played a pivotal role in establishing a distinctively Chinese genre of modernist dance. Born to a wealthy family in Suzhou, Wu secretly joined the Communist Youth League as a student. In 1929, at age twenty-three, he moved to Tokyo intending to study violin and Western classical music. Seeing a modern dance performance by students at Waseda University changed his focus, and from 1929 to 1936 he studied dance with Takada. During these years Wu traveled back and forth to Shanghai on several occasions, hoping to launch his dance career in China but without much success. In July 1936 he took a three-week course with Eguchi, whom he had earlier met at Takada's studio. According to scholar Nan Ma, this course was a turning point for Wu, providing "the theoretical and methodological basis of his dance choreography and teaching practices for the rest of his life" (2016, 139). In Eguchi's analytical approach, Wu found a compositional method that enabled him to use movements for



Figure 27. Lü Ji, student of Wu Xiaobang, performing *Qi meng* (A strange dream), Shanghai, 1939 (Yu/Feng 2006: 9). © China Dancers Association. Courtesy of Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Image Archive.

the entire body “to systematically ‘invent’ the dance movements of ‘modern people’” (139).³⁷

In fall 1936 Wu returned to Shanghai and relaunched his career. The first dance he created after his return was titled *A Strange Dream* (1937), a solo danced by his student Lü Ji. As Ma describes the solo: “The dancer, in ordinary clothes and barefoot, plays the role of a young revolutionary who has a strange dream one night in which he becomes a giant ticking clock. His two arms serve as the two hands of the clock, moving in a mechanical manner; lighting, and the shadows it casts, create a dark and uncanny ambience onstage” (Ma 2016, 150). Within this “strange dream” are two further dreams: in one the protagonist hears gunshots and “runs out into the street, where he witnesses enemies shooting down ordinary people. Angered, he rushes toward them, finally capturing their weapons.” In the other dream-within-a-dream, the protagonist proudly gives a political speech, only to be inter-

rupted by a fatal shot that awakens him from his “strange dream.” A photograph shows the revolutionary protagonist cowering with arms and hands crossed, as if warding off an imagined enemy (figure 27).

In addition to choreographing his own dances, Wu became involved in theater circles in Shanghai, teaching movement for actors and composing dances for plays. In fact, it was his theater work that mostly paid the bills for the next decade. As Wu wrote in a 1940 essay: “Nowadays, what the practitioners of the stage need urgently is dancing, especially the practitioners of theater, who everywhere feel the need to learn it right now, because it provides stage-theater actors with the necessary onstage bodily conditions in terms of rhythm, expression, and composition” (quoted in Ma 2016, 141). Like Segal in Bombay and New Delhi, Wu adapted his training in Wigman-inflated modern dance to train actors.

After the Japanese invaded Shanghai and the surrounding region in fall 1937, Wu joined the underground National Salvation movement dedicated to resisting the Japanese occupation. In this context too, he worked within theatrical circles as the one dancer in a forty-member theater group, the Fourth Branch of the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Performing and Theatrical Troupes. The group toured towns and villages outside Shanghai, “using performing arts—mainly spoken drama and singing—to mobilize people to join the war effort” (Ma 2016, 158). One of the songs performed by the Fourth Branch was “March of the Volunteers,” which Wu decided to choreograph or, as Ma states, “to kinestheticize . . . line by line,” using moves from martial arts and military exercises and gestures from visual propaganda against the Japanese (159). The solo became a signature work for Wu and the Fourth Branch, and the song later became the national anthem for the People’s Republic of China.

The success of “March of the Volunteers” led Wu to choreograph other dances on military themes, such as the full-length antifascist work *Poppy Flower* in 1939. Yet Wu also continued to create dances on themes similar to his earlier works, expressive reflections on themes such as “the sorrow of love . . . the confusion of a poet . . . autumn melancholy” (Ma 2016, 165). And he also created dances based on his research into folk dances in Mongolia and other regions of China. In all his choreography, Ma argues, Wu deployed a strategy of “reverse integration,” a process whereby dance integrates narrative themes into the heightened kinaesthesia of modern dance rather than integrating dance into theatrical spectacle. As Wu later wrote, it is crucial for “the somatic body” to “paint the picture, play the music, and do the literature” (quoted in Ma 2016, 142).

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, Wu took a leading role in formulating its dance culture. In 1951–1952 he joined Choe as codirector of the year-long course in Beijing that trained the first generation of dance artists in the People's Republic. But his antipathy to ballet as an integral part of the dance curriculum led him to decline a position as director of the Beijing Dance School. Instead, he founded a small experimental company in 1957 known as Sky Horse Studio and focused on researching and documenting folk dances. During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 he came under criticism for his works departing from revolutionary themes. After his rehabilitation he published a number of works, including his memoir.

As these profiles of Choe and Wu demonstrate, the engagement of East Asian dancers with Wigman cannot be disentangled from the cultural policies of imperial Japan, which sponsored the dissemination of *Neue Tanz* across the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere. Dancers trained in *Neue Tanz* during the Shōwa era contributed to the emergence of nationally distinctive versions of dance modernism in the postwar era, as Choe and Wu did in the People's Republic of China, and Kuni and Choe in Korea.

FROM NEUE TANZ TO BUTOH

A related development happened within Japan, as Ohno Kazuo and Hijikata Tatsumi first trained in *Neue Tanz* and then collaborated to create the genre of Butoh. Ohno was more than twenty years older than Hijikata, and he studied *Neue Tanz* during the 1930s, when the practice was newly transplanted from Germany to Japan. Hijikata did not study *Neue Tanz* until the decade after World War II, when many artists were challenging its precepts across East Asia. Working together and separately, Ohno and Hijikata eschewed the movement vocabularies of Ishii and Eguchi. At the same time their works reanimated the gender and sexual dissidence of German modern dance during the 1920s, an aspect of Wigman's practice that Ishii and Eguchi had de-emphasized in Shōwa-era Japan.

In 1929, Ohno saw La Argentina perform at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo, an experience he later credited with awakening his interest in a dance career. (This was the same performance that inspired Shigyo to take up dance.) Ohno had just graduated from the Japan Athletic College, where he studied the system of expressive exercises developed by German movement educator Rudolf Bode, and had taken a position as a girls' physical education instructor. Four years later in 1933 he enrolled at the Ishii Baku Studio in order to incorpo-

rate dance in his teaching, yet he found the training there too “theatrical” and “pantomimic” (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 25). The following year he saw Kreutzberg perform and also encountered Eguchi and Miya after their return to Tokyo from Germany, “the first dance in Japan which was truly abstract,” he later recalled. “I had the feeling that without a doubt, I had finally found what I was looking for” (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 26). Yet he delayed two years before embarking on study with Eguchi and Miya, likely due to financial constraints, and not until 1936 did he enroll at their studio.³⁸

The outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War interrupted Ohno’s dance training, for he was drafted in 1938 and served in the military for nine years, including one year as a prisoner of war. In 1946 he resumed his study with Eguchi and Miya and began to perform in their works, while also returning to his full-time job as a physical education instructor. Three years later in 1949, at age forty-three, he made his choreographic debut and opened his own dance studio. Reviews and photos of his solos over the next five years show him moving away from the abstraction of Eguchi’s style and toward an expressive interiority and idiosyncratic movement style that anticipated his later realization of Butoh. As one critic wrote in 1954, “The peculiar interest of the dance lies in freely using the techniques of expression, and distorting the emotions of movement to render them into artistic shapes” (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 29).

Compare photographs of Eguchi in the work considered his postwar masterpiece, *The Fire of Prometheus* (1950), and Ohno in his solo *The Honeybee’s Song* (1951). The angular lines of Eguchi’s pose—elbows and one knee bent at square angles, weight balanced in a forward lunge—recall images of Eguchi and Miya from fifteen years earlier, yet his pose has become flattened and heroic, its angles creating a single plane, composed to guide the viewer’s eye upward to the flame Eguchi holds aloft. The dynamic abstraction of Eguchi and Miya’s earlier images is lost (figure 28). From one perspective, Ohno’s pose in *The Honeybee’s Song* recovers that dynamism, his body lunging away from the camera, his torso twisted and tilted away from his limbs. Yet at the same time, there is an expressivity in his pose that contrasts with Eguchi’s earlier and later images (figure 29). Crouching forward while throwing his arms behind him, fingers splayed, Ohno looks beyond the frame of the image. In fear? In acquiescence? The titles of this and other solos from the early 1950s—*First Flower of the Linden Tree* and *Downtown Rain*—are decidedly unheroic and focus instead on everyday objects and events.

During the early 1950s Ohno crossed paths with Hijikata. More than twenty years younger than Ohno, Hijikata grew up in Akita in northern Japan,



Figure 28. Eguchi Takaya in *Prometheus* (1950). Courtesy of Yukihiro Yoshida.

where he saw Ishii's company perform in the late 1930s. After graduating from high school in 1945, he began studying modern dance in his hometown with Matsumura Katsuko, a student of Ishii and Eguchi.³⁹ He also began traveling regularly between Akita and Tokyo, where he saw Ohno's debut concert in 1949. Three years later Hijikata settled in Tokyo, and in 1953 he enrolled at the studio of Andō Mitsuko, a student of Eguchi and associate of Ohno. Andō's studio offered ballet and jazz along with *Neue Tanz*, thus broadening the training for dancers of Hijikata's generation. In fact, Hijikata and Ohno performed together on programs choreographed by Andō in 1954, 1955, and 1956.

After leaving Andō's studio in 1958, Hijikata studied with Tsuda Nobutoshi, a student of the German modern dancer Max Terpis. Terpis had studied with Wigman in 1922 before taking positions as ballet master in Hannover and at the Berlin State Opera. Terpis also taught at his own school in Berlin, and Tsuda studied with him in 1937.⁴⁰ Another student of Tsuda was Motofugi Akiko, who became Hijikata's collaborator and later his wife.

For five years from 1954 to 1959, Ohno stopped presenting his own choreography and retreated to the studio to find a new movement language. During this period Hijikata began to choreograph. These were years of change in the Japanese dance scene, when Martha Graham's tour in 1955 and Katherine Dunham's in 1957 introduced versions of modern dance that differed from *Neue Tanz*. By 1959, dance historian Kazuko Kuniyoshi writes, "the collision between the pre-war modern dance and the postwar avant-garde came to the surface" (2019, 35). That was the year Hijikata made his choreographic debut in Tokyo while Ohno emerged from his years of artistic research to present a new work, and the two started a collaboration that lasted for the next two decades.

In April 1959 Ohno premiered *The Old Man and the Sea*, a dance directed by Hijikata and based on Ernest Hemingway's 1952 novel of that title. Ohno performed the novel's protagonist, whom one critic called "a deteriorated-almost-to-the-point-of-pain fisherman" (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 33). A photo shows Ohno and a group of three women, whose movements Ohno envisioned as evoking the image of a boat that "becomes part of the old man," as he wrote at the time (quoted in Kuniyoshi 2019, 31). The camera captures Ohno off-balance, falling and flailing at the same time. Compared to his grounded pose in *The Honeybee's Song*, Ohno's pose moves even further away from Eguchi's aesthetic, blurring what dancers call "line," the visible traces of spine and limbs. As in the earlier solo, Ohno's facial expression suggests several different emotions at once, both terrified and exultant.⁴¹ While Kuniyoshi considers *The Old Man and the Sea* Ohno's last work created in the genre

of Neue Tanz, it is also possible to see an anticipation of his later works, not only in his throwing away of technique but also in the themes of frailty, pain, and aging.

One month after the premiere of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hijikata made his choreographic debut in Tokyo with *Forbidden Colors* (*Kinjiki*), a duet for himself and Ohno's twenty-one-year-old son Yoshito. Four months later in September 1959 Hijikata presented a revised version that also cast Ohno and a small group of men. The work was titled after Mishima Yukio's 1951 novel, *Kinjiki*, and staged the theme of same-sex desire that grounded Mishima's fiction. In the revised work, Ohno enters from the audience in the first act, dressed as an aging male prostitute, a figure loosely based on Divine in Jean Genet's 1943 novel *Our Lady of the Flowers*. The second act then reprises the action of the dance's first iteration, with Hijikata as the man who threatens to sodomize the young man played by Yoshito and who directs him to kill a chicken by suffocating it between his legs.⁴² Dance historians concur that *Forbidden Colors* marks the emergence of Butoh.

Photos visualize the work's departure from Neue Tanz and the gender and sexual dissidence that shocked audiences at the time. In the first act Ohno, cross-dressed as a transvestite and "down-and-out male prostitute" (Baird 2012, 34), stands with his head arched slightly back and his hands open, as if submitting himself to the viewer's gaze. In this sense, the image positions the viewer as a voyeur, even as the prostitute's client. The stillness of Ohno's pose is striking, especially in comparison with the dynamism of his poses in *The Honeybee's Song* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. He looks less like a dancer than like a persona in an obscure play.

After *The Old Man and the Sea* Ohno again withdrew from his own choreography, and for the next seven years he appeared in many of Hijikata's works. These works—*Secret Ceremony of a Hermaphrodite in the Early Afternoon* (1961), *Masseur* (1963), *A Rose-Colored Dance* (1965), *Instructional Illustrations for the Study of Divine Favor in Sexual Love: Tomato* (1966)—developed motifs from *Forbidden Colors*: stillness and slow motion, nudity and near nudity, same-sex eroticism and cross-dressing, ambiguous action rather than recognizable dance moves. Cultural historians emphasize how much Hijikata took from the artistic avant-garde of the 1960s, from his acquaintance with Mishima and other writers, from experimental theater and happenings, from filmmakers and photographers, from his reading of Artaud (*The Theatre and Its Double* was translated into Japanese in 1965), and from surrealist writers both Japanese and European (Eckersall 2019).

In 1968 Hijikata premiered his extended solo, *Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese People: Rebellion of the Body*, a work that many critics see as emblematic of his aesthetic. In the work the dancer-choreographer takes on a wide range of roles, as “a bride, an old woman, a male burlesque dancer, a flamenco dancer, a scoliosis patient, a nattily dressed sailor, and a young girl” (Baird and Candelario 2019, 4). Dance scholar Katherine Mezur calls *Rebellion of the Body* “a catalogue of gendering,” noting that the concepts of “parody, masquerade, or drag seem too simple for [Hijikata’s] fluid gender audacity” (2019, 365). In a widely reproduced photo, Hijikata appears nearly nude, except for a golden phallus strapped onto his body. His torso stretched, his arms crossed over his head, his face turned away from the camera and nearly hidden by his long hair, the image of Hijikata draws the viewer’s attention to the symbolic body part.⁴³

A few years after Hijikata premiered *Rebellion of the Body*, Ohno returned to his own choreography. At age seventy-one in 1977, he premiered an evening-length solo *Admiring La Argentina*, directed by Hijikata. The opening two scenes recall his role as the aging male prostitute in *Forbidden Colors*; in a later section he dances an extended homage to Argentina, evoking the shapes of tango and flamenco; in the final section his moves, now less dance-like, are accompanied by Maria Callas singing an aria from Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*. A photo shows Ohno in the final scene, his stance recalling his appearance in *Forbidden Colors*, yet his body less open to the viewer’s gaze, more self-contained and inward-focused.⁴⁴ As Rosemary Candelario writes, *Admiring La Argentina* “refigured aesthetics, transforming his gnarled joints, aging body, and angular yet playful movement into a dance of sublime beauty.”⁴⁵ From 1980 to 1999, Ohno toured the solo and other late works internationally, and he continued performing in Japan until 2004, finally retiring from the stage at age ninety-eight.

Although more than twenty years older than Hijikata, Ohno outlived his collaborator by nearly twenty-five years. Reflecting on their works in tandem, Katherine Mezur comments:

Could we consider that Hijikata and Ohno were performing a male gender revolt because of their histories or experiences with repressive nationalisms, the forced militarization of their wartime lives, and then the humiliation of American military occupation? Wearing dresses, female kimono, suits, underwear, wrapped loin cloth, and sometimes smeary and caked white paste all over their bodies, they were messy, dirty, and surreal, commuting

between female-likeness and male-likeness, Japanese-y kitsch, and disturbing frailty; they danced a corporeal revolt. . . . Was this also a queer gender revolt? (Mezur 2019, 364)

Here Mezur locates Hijikata and Ohno's "queer gender revolt" in relation to Japanese history in the mid-twentieth century. Their rejection of *Neue Tanz*, she implies, was a rejection of the ideals of masculinity undergirding imperialism and militarism. Mezur also notes another specifically Japanese context for "male performers playing all gender, class, age, and race roles": the traditional performing arts of *noh* and *kabuki*, where actors often cross-dressed as female characters. Although neither Ohno nor Hijikata had trained in traditional forms, their avant-garde works extended the "male body dominated world" of Japan (Mezur 2019, 364).

Mezur's contextualization of Hijikata and Ohno within Japanese history and culture is well-taken. Yet there is another deep source for the gender and sexual dissidence of their work: the formative years of German modern dance in the early 1920s, when both Kreutzberg and Terpis studied at the Wigman School. While Terpis went on to a career as a choreographer and educator, Kreutzberg became an acclaimed soloist, touring widely outside Germany, including in April and May 1934 to Japan. Accompanied by dancer Ruth Page and by his accompanist and life partner Friedrich Wilckens, Kreutzberg and his party were greeted upon their arrival in Tokyo by Eguchi, Miya, and Shigyo. Their programs featured solos by both Kreutzberg and Page, along with duets, although critics paid the most attention to Kreutzberg's dancing. In the audience were Kuni and Ohno.⁴⁶

Impersonating a series of characters—much as Hijikata did years later in *Rebellion of the Body* and Ohno in *Admiring La Argentina*—Kreutzberg used masks, swirling robes and capes, and dramatic lighting to create comic, abstract, and androgynous personae. On his Japanese tour he performed *Jester's Dance*, *Waltz Parody*, *Three Mad Figures*, *Angel of Annunciation*, and *Kings' Dance*, among other solos. Reviewers commented on his expressive range, a range evident within each solo as well as across his repertoire. A photograph of Kreutzberg in *King's Dance* (1930) demonstrates the layering of qualities characteristic of his work. Standing in a wide and grounded stance, Kreutzberg tilts his torso and head to one side, his face turned upward with eyes closed, his arms stretched as if pulling an invisible bow and arrow. A metallic cape attached to his forearms cuts across his body like a bullfighter's mantel, yet his curved wrists and inward gaze suggest no external antagonist. Steel bands encircle his head and face, abstracting the shape of a king's crown and



Figure 29. Ohno Kazuo in *The Honeybee's Song* (1951), photographer unknown. Courtesy of NPO Dance Archive Network and Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio



Figure 30. Harald Kreutzberg in *King's Dance* from 1937 souvenir program, photograph by Siegfried Enkelmann, © 2023 ARS/Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild Kunst Bonn.

a soldier's helmet, yet also bisecting and imprisoning his face. The image suggests a king enabled and disabled by power (figure 30).

What did Ohno take from Kreutzberg's performances in 1934? Certainly, a powerful image of what a male dancer could accomplish in the genre of *Neue Tanz*. As Mezur reminds us, Japanese culture long had allowed male performers to take on a broad range of roles, including female roles, in contrast to European culture in the mid-twentieth century, when Kreutzberg's artistry was at its height. Yet Mezur also finds a "queer gender revolt" in Ohno and Hijikata's performances. In a perhaps apocryphal story, Kreutzberg's signature baldness prompted later Butoh performers to shave their heads. Whether true or false, the story testifies to the belief that Kreutzberg's performance left traces in Japan that inflected the shift from *Neue Tanz* to Butoh. These traces, I contend, were the gender and sexual dissidence of German modern dance during the Weimar years.

This account of Wigman and Asia ends with Eiko and Koma, renegades from Butoh. In a roundtable published in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh*

(2019), Eiko recounts that she and Koma studied with both Hijikata and Ohno in 1971. Interested in their teachers' predecessors, Eiko and Koma went to a performing arts library, where they saw photos of Wigman and of Dore Hoyer, a dancer who studied with Palucca and performed with Wigman. Hoyer was a powerful soloist who was devastated that postwar Germany found modern dance less relevant than ballet, a feeling that many believe contributed to her suicide in 1967, just a few years before her images drew Eiko and Koma's attention. Eiko recalls that she saw in Hoyer's photos "a hardness of life, conflict" (Elswit et al. 2019, 133). She and Koma sensed a parallel between Japan and Germany, particularly around how both cultures had dealt—or not dealt—with defeat in World War II and citizens' complicity with malevolent regimes. Traveling to Germany in 1972, the two studied with Wigman's student Manja Chmiel for six months, an experience Eiko credited with "finding . . . our voice as artists" (134).⁴⁷ In a fascinating way, Eiko and Koma reversed the trajectory of the shift from *Neue Tanz* to *Butoh* by leaving the studios of Hijikata and Ohno to seek out training in Germany. After a few years back in Japan, where they continued their study with Ohno, they settled in New York in 1976–1977. Needless to say, their transnational itinerary reveals the insufficiencies of dance histories based on the nation-state.

Yet the critical category of the nation-state is not irrelevant to a transnational historiography. Indeed, as this essay has demonstrated, a transnational history must take into account the registers of the local, the national, the regional, and the global. Drawing students and visitors from many countries, the Wigman School in Dresden became a hub for international exchange. At the same time Wigman and her contemporaries in Europe creatively responded to their encounters with Asian performance. Graduates of the school then disseminated Wigman's practices across Europe, Asia, and the Americas, and students of Wigman's students further adapted, modified, and circulated her ideas and methods. This dancer-to-dancer exchange did not happen in a vacuum, but was inflected by European colonization of India and Indonesia, the rise of National Socialism in Germany and Japanese colonization of East Asia, decolonization across Asia, and the Cold War divisions of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, North and South Korea, and East and West Germany.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The network sketched in this essay could be expanded in many directions. Any one of the artists featured could become the central node for an array of

other artists. To tell the full story of the global circulation of modern dance—not just of Wigman but also of her predecessors, contemporaries, and successors—requires a network of scholars. Scholars fluent in different languages and with familiarity with different local contexts and archives could contribute to a collaborative project tracing the many connections across genres, across national borders, and across continents. Scholars who could compare how dancers transplanted methods and ideas from one context to another, probing which elements dancers highlighted and developed further and which elements they eschewed as unsuited to their new context. Scholars who could compare how dancers integrated diverse methods, created new methods, and adapted methods from and for other artistic disciplines.

Building on the many scholars who have initiated a transnational historiography of modern dance, this essay calls for further collaboration to deepen and broaden histories of dance modernisms. Differently stated, I have accessed, compiled, and interpreted as many sources here as are possible with my skill set, and now call on a network of other scholars to continue this inquiry into the intersecting networks of the Global North and Global South.

Notes

1. Early and abbreviated versions of this essay are published in Museum Folkwang's bilingual German-English exhibit catalogue *Global Groove* (2021) and the bilingual Polish-English collection *Rewriting Dance Modernism: Networks* (2022), edited by Julia Hoczyk and Wojciech Klimczyk. In the introduction to the latter volume, Klimczyk further develops the concept of networks as a keyword for a transnational historiography of dance modernisms.

2. Evelyn Doerr (2008) and Dick McCaw (2011) make valiant attempts to summarize *Die Welt des Tänzers* for Anglophone readers.

3. Theater scholar Adrian Curtin (2013) furthers the discussion of how the Dadaists deployed the association between primitivism and percussion in their performances. Contrasting Richard Huelsenbeck's "aggressive, confrontational style" (232) of drumming to accompany his self-composed "*poèmes nègres*" at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 to the "open-ended significations" (236) of the percussive accompaniment to Sophie Taeuber's dancing at Dada Galerie, Curtin emphasizes that "avant-gardists did not dance to the beat of a single drum" (229). Curtin and Nell Andrew make a persuasive case for how dance and music differed at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 and at the Galerie Dada in 1917. Nonetheless, the inspiration of the non-Western Other informed performances at both venues.

4. There are several reasons why *Ecstasy and the Demon* glossed over the orientalism and primitivism of Wigman's solos. First, I explicitly differentiated Wigman's representational strategy of alluding to non-Western cultures from St. Denis's and other

dancers' strategy of recreating Oriental dance. Second, my focus on the intersection of feminism and nationalism in Wigman dances emphasized her group works as much as her solos, and her group works in general made fewer allusions to non-Western cultures than did her solos. Finally, the trajectory of my argument highlighted Wigman's complex accommodation with National Socialism rather than her changing relation to non-Western cultures, which is the focus of the present essay.

5. All reviews not listed in the bibliography are found at the Mary Wigman Archive at the Academy of Arts in Berlin. Translations not attributed are my own. Many thanks to my research assistant Phoenix Gonzalez for doing a first translation of many passages included in this essay.

6. For more on the Wigman School, see the essay "Archives in Collision" in this volume.

7. Mary Wigman, "Zwei Tänzerische Erlebnisse," eight-page undated typescript, no. 1277. Mary Wigman Archive, Academy of Arts, Berlin. All the quotations that follow come from this document.

8. Funkenstein (2020) is particularly illuminating on Baker in Berlin.

9. This is my own translation of Knab's review, which differs from the translation published in *Schrifttanz: A View of Dance in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Susanne Lahusen (1990).

10. Wigman's personal archive does not include dancers of African heritage. But, as noted in my essay reprinted in this volume, "Ausdruckstanz across the Atlantic," Black dancers did study with students of Wigman who settled in the United States. In addition to the Negro Ballet led by Eugene von Grona from 1934 to 1939, Wigman student Erika Thimey taught at Howard University from 1944 to 1954. Several decades later, Ralph Lemon studied and performed with Nancy Hauser from 1975 to 1979. Based in Minneapolis, Hauser had studied at the New York branch of the Mary Wigman School nearly as soon as it opened and had performed in Hanya Holm's company from 1932 to 1936. This list is by no means exhaustive, but rather the start of an account of where and when Black dancers encountered Wigman's methods.

11. Wigman's musical collaborators, Will Goetze and Hanns Hasting, also taught at the Wigman School. My account of Coolemans' career synthesizes material from Heide Lazarus (2000), Hedwig Müller (1986), and Claudia Gitelman (2003); reviews by Artur Michel (2015) and John Martin (1934); and primary research at the Mary Wigman Archive and the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. The photograph referenced in this paragraph is found in Müller (1986, 128–29). Email correspondence with Müller on May 30, 2022, clarified the details of Coolemans' departure from the Wigman School.

12. Among the many dance critics in Weimar Germany, I have chosen Artur Michel to illustrate how one dedicated dancer viewer interpreted Asian dancers on tour in Germany. A huge fan of Wigman, Michel reviewed dance and theater for the *Vossische Zeitung* in Berlin from 1922 to 1934. The newspaper had a storied history and was considered a voice for democratic and liberal reform. Michel's dance reviews have been collected and published by Frank-Manuel Peter (2015), with a biographical sketch by Marion Kant.

13. While Purkayastha documents Tagore's seminal contribution to Indian modern dance, photos in Mary Wigman's scrapbook at the Mary Wigman Archive and the essay by Gabriele Gorgas document Tagore's visit to the Dresden School. Additional sources on Tagore's dance creations are Chakravorty (2013) and Bhattacharya (2019). Another dancer in Tagore's circle who studied German modern dance was Shrimati Hutheesing, who married Tagore's great nephew Saumyendranath, one of the leaders of the Indian Communist Party.

14. My account of Shankar's career synthesizes material from Ruth K. Abrahams (2007), Nilanjana Bhattacharjya (2011), Diana Brenscheidt (2011), Joan Erdman (1987, 2008), Urmimala Sarkar Munsî (2008, 2022), and Purkayastha (2012, 2014). Munsî's book-length study of Shankar (2022) is particularly good on the methods developed and taught by Shankar and his associates.

15. Dating and details on Shankar and Wigman's encounter come from primary research at the Mary Wigman Archive at the Academy of Arts in Berlin and at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The photo of Shankar's dancers visiting the Wigman School is featured on the cover of this volume.

16. Mary Wigman, "Indien Tanz," eleven-page undated typescript, no. 1392. Mary Wigman Archive, Academy of Arts, Berlin, 28.

17. Zohra's maiden name was Mumtaz, and Segal her married name, the name under which she published her memoirs. My account of her career is pieced together from her first memoir, coauthored by Joan Erdman (1997), and her second memoir, published only under her name (2010), as well as primary research at the Mary Wigman Archive and secondary sources on Shankar and on Dartington, most especially Purkayastha (2012), Munsî (2008), and Young (1982).

18. Although Segal and her biographer Joan Erdman refer to her training in Dresden as "eurhythmics," the Wigman School did not offer training in the method that Émile Jaques-Dalcroze had developed at Hellerau, where Wigman had studied from 1910 to 1912. At the Wigman School Zohra pursued the certification course for dance educators.

19. This account of Ishii's career synthesizes material from Mariko Shiba (2006), Yukihiko Yoshida (2016b), Naomi Matsumoto (2017), Okju Son (2014a), and Artur Michel (2015). Email correspondence with Yukihiko Yoshida on January 8, 2021, and March 9, 2021, noted Baku's meeting with Wigman. Secondary sources give alternate spellings of Rosi and Rossi.

20. For more on Ito's career, see discussion in my essay "Nation and World in Modern Dance" reprinted in this volume.

21. Artur Michel's review gives depth to Okju Son's brief profile of Shigyo (2014a).

22. As with Shigyo, Michel's review supplements Son's profile of the Umemotos (2014a).

23. This account of Eguchi's and Miya's careers synthesizes material from Mariko Shiba (2006), Yukihiko Yoshida (2016a), Okju Son (2014a), Kazuko Kuniyoshi (1997 and

2019), Artur Michel (2015), and photographs from the Deutsches Tanzarchiv and the Theatermuseum Köln.

24. Shiba notes that Eguchi and Miya studied in Berlin, while Son and Yoshida state that they studied in Dresden. It is also possible that Eguchi and Miya spent time at both schools.

25. The transliteration “Neue Tanz” is not grammatically correct. “Neuer Tanz” or “der neue Tanz” are the correct ways to write “new dance” in German. Nonetheless, “Neue Tanz” is the accepted term in the literature on German modern dance in its Japanese version. Perhaps the grammatical inelegance can be seen as underscoring how significantly methods change as they move across national borders.

26. This account of Kuni Masami’s career relies heavily on the research of Okju Son (2014a, 2014b, 2020) and Frank Hoffmann (2015), in addition to primary sources at the Mary Wigman Archive.

27. Son uses Kuni’s Korean birth name Park Yeong-in and hence writes him into the history of Korean modern dance (*Simmuyong*). In fact, Korean newspapers reported on his dance career in Germany. In this essay I call Kuni by the name he chose to use throughout his career.

28. After 1934 Artur Michel, although still living in Berlin, was no longer allowed to publish in German newspapers due to his Jewish heritage. In fact, the Jewish owners shut down the *Vossische Zeitung* that year, rather than submit to forced “Aryanization.” Michel turned his attention to writing a history of European dance, a project he also continued in US exile from 1941 until his death in 1946.

29. For an overview of Wigman’s career during the Nazi years—and varied interpretations of her collaboration—see my essay “Modern Dance in the Third Reich, Redux” (2017).

30. Decades later Kuni unexpectedly resurfaced in the US public sphere when actor Fred Armisen learned that Kuni was his grandfather on Henry Louis Gates’s PBS series “Finding Your Roots.”

31. This section on Ishii and Eguchi during the war is based on the path-breaking research of Yukihiro Yoshida (2009, 2011). Mass dance had precedents not only in Laban’s work—a direct influence on its Japanese deployment—but also in Soviet performance and was redeployed by dancers in diverse national contexts, including British Mandate Palestine. See Ericka Fischer-Lichte (2005) for the range of midcentury deployments of mass dance.

32. My discussion of Choe synthesizes material from Yeounsuk Lee (2018), Emily Wilcox (2018b, 2020), Sang Mi Park (2006), Okju Son (2014a), Yukiyo Hoshino (2016), and Judy Van Zile (2013). There are different transliterations of Choe’s name in English; I follow Wilcox in my usage.

33. The photograph of *Monk’s Dance* is reproduced in Wilcox (2020).

34. During the colonial period Korean was known as “Chosen,” “Chosun,” or “Choson,” depending on the transliteration from Asian languages. From 1934 until 1945 Choe appeared under the Japanese version of her name Sai Shoki, although viewers in East Asia always recognized her Korean ethnicity and identity.

35. Suzy Kim (2020) illuminates the twenty-plus years that Choe spent in North Korea.

36. Due to the limitations of space, I cannot include the Taiwanese dancers who studied with Ishii, including Tsai Jui-Yueh. See Ya-Ping Chen (2013, 2016).

37. My account of Wu's career relies on Nan Ma (2016) and Emily Wilcox (2016b and 2018a). Ma (2023) extends her discussion of Wu to other modern dancers in China.

38. My account of Ohno's career relies on Kazuko Kuniyoshi (2019), Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno (2004), Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (2019), Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura (2006).

39. My account of Hijikata's career draws from Bruce Baird (2012), Kurihara Nanako and Jacqueline Ruyak (2000), Tatsumi Hijikata (2000), Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (2019), Stephen Barber (2010), Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura (2006). Whereas Baird notes that Matsumura had studied with Eguchui, the chronology posted on the official Ohno website notes that she had studied with Ishii; hence it is likely she had studied with both leaders of *Neue Tanz*.

40. Yukihiro Yoshida, 2021 email to author, March 9.

41. Ohno and Ohno (2004) reprints this photo on page 108.

42. Bruce Baird has an illuminating analysis of the differences between the two versions in *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh: Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits* (2012). Hijikata's use of the chicken might have been indebted to Katherine Dunham's *Shango*, performed on her 1957 tour of Japan. See Michio Arimitsu, "From vodou to butoh: Hijikata Tatsumi, Katherine Dunham, and the Trans-Pacific Remaking of Blackness" (2019).

43. This photo is reprinted in the unpaginated portfolio of photos in Barber (2010).

44. This photo is reprinted on page 165 of Ohno and Ohno (2004).

45. Rosemary Candelario, "Kazuo Ohno," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism* (2016), accessed July 18, 2023 <https://www.rem-routledge-com.turing.library.north-western.edu/articles/kazuo-ohno-1906-2010>

46. This account of Kreutzberg in Japan draws from Kuniyoshi (1997), Meglin (2009), Toepfer (1997), and Elswit et al. (2019).

47. This account of Eiko and Koma draws from Joan Rothfuss (2011), Rosemary Candelario (2016), and Kate Elswit et al. (2019).

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