

Editor's Note

This *DRJ* issue converges around the theme of the trace and its role in the scholarly research process. Drawn from a variety of disciplines, each article shares a commitment to situating dance at the center of inquiry and discovery. Beyond this, each offers a novel application of a basic method in humanistic studies, identifying a trace or revelatory signifier that, when tracked, illuminates a pattern over sets of data and/or the materials under investigation. Connecting scholarly practice with evidentiary praxis as a route to formulating their specific interventions, our authors employ complementary methods that reveal cultural entanglements and prevailing notions seeking, and failing, to hold dance cultural formations in place.

Tia-Monique Uzor's "Tidialectic Un/mapping and the Performance of African Diasporic Imagination in the Repertory of Katherine Dunham" considers Dunham's Brazil-based work through complementary and interlocking theoretical and methodological frameworks that place her choreographic process and artistic legacy in a new light. In innovative ways, Uzor's scholarship deploys data sets, visualization, and analyses she helped produce through her involvement as a postdoctoral researcher with the Dunham's Data: Katherine Dunham and Digital Methods for Dance Historical Inquiry project led by dance scholars Harmony Bench and Kate Elswit. Uzor refracts this digital archive through Édouard Glissant's 1989 notion of the African diasporic imaginary and Kamau E. Brathwaite's 1993 concept of "Tidialectics." She draws on Glissant's idea that "creativity is necessary for (re)constructing and (re)establishing relations between African diasporic cultures and environments" (6) and expands Brathwaite's concept of "Tidialectics" "beyond the Caribbean to the wider African diaspora and a distinctly Caribbean comprehension of diasporic imagination" (6). With these conceptual moves, Uzor seeks to "un/map" or "reposition" Dunham's choreographic legacy beyond the United States and an African American context "to global lines of Black scholarly thought through discourses coming out of the Caribbean" (7). From this vantage point, Uzor brings out Dunham's "complex positionality" as a dance artist, at once "a pioneering minoritized woman navigating the politics of race, gender, and financial precarity and someone who yielded their imperial privilege as a US citizen to gain access to knowledge and people" (6). We see that for Dunham, "choreography can function as a realm through which ruptured histories can be reckoned with and imagined anew" (6). In the process, and toward this conclusion, Uzor reexamines foundational concepts that have long underwritten research on dances of the African diaspora including Paul Gilroy's 1993 *Black Atlantic*, VeVe Clark's 2005 "memory of difference," and Halifu Osumare's 2020 "body-to-body transmission" when it comes to Dunham's body of work as a "site of preservation" (12).

Mara Mandradjieff's "Coppélia's Human-Objects: Winding Up Racialized Automata on the Ballet Stage" contributes to an ongoing conversation about ballet's racist entanglements, in this case, by focusing on racist depictions of non-human beings in Arthur Saint-Léon's 1870 *Coppélia*. Surveying nearly 50 productions of the ballet across the globe since its first production until now, Mandradjieff reaches a troubling conclusion, that racist depictions persist even in conscientious contemporary stagings and attempts to rectify these historical offenses. To get here, Mandradjieff focuses our attention on the ballet's Act 2, which takes place in the workshop of doll maker Dr. Coppélius. A conflict arises between ingénue Swanilda, her fiancé Franz, and Coppélia, a doll and Franz's *intérêt amoureux*. Amidst the love troubles are other "prop dolls," in Mandradjieff's

words: the “Chinaman,” the “Negro,” and the “Moor.” Mandradjieff’s careful contextualization and cultural and discursive analyses lead to two main takeaways. The first is how pervasive, “expansive and deeply engrained [racist] tropes are [in ballet], as they migrate across multiple continents and contexts.” In this way, the article illuminates the limits of good intentions and the difficulties involved in making a meaningful difference with anti-racist and decolonizing praxis within the ballet world. The second has to do with “the role objects, objectness, and objectification play within the processes of racialization on- and off-stage” (both quotations are on p. 31). With this line of argumentation, Mandradjieff contributes to contemporary scholarship on “objects, objectness, and objectification.” She deftly expands on the research of cultural studies scholars Bill Brown, Alessandra Raengo, Robin Bernstein, and Anne Anlin Cheng by highlighting how Coppélia’s Act 2 presents “an illuminating case study on how object-subject/human-non-human dynamics relate to—even rely on—the formation of race” (31).

Sean Mulcahy’s and Kate Seear’s research is situated within the Australian legal context of human rights scrutiny, a process that substitutes for a “national bill or charter of human rights,” and is modeled after a similar parliamentary process in the United Kingdom (47). In their article, “A ‘Tick and Flick’ Exercise: Movement and Form in Australian Parliamentary Human Rights Scrutiny,” they investigate how dance, specifically choreographic practices, can shed light on international human rights law, which “recognizes the right to liberty of movement, often conceived of as a right to move freely” (47). Two interlocking questions prompt their investigation: “[W]hat if we were to conceive rights themselves and, particularly, . . . [how] and through which they are made (through bills, charters, and other legal documents and practices of law) as themselves a form of movement? What could dance studies—a discipline inherited in movement—illuminate about the movement practices in human rights law?” (47). Mulcahy’s and Seear’s research draws on data they generated from 30 interviews with individuals involved in Australian legal systems that adjudicate over human rights. The authors theorize a correspondence between “calligraphic” and “choreographic” practices, focusing on legal documents, which are “often structured through calligraphic gestures—the strikethrough in tribunal decisions or the tick in scrutiny reports” (47). As they explain, “The calligraphic gesture of the textual symbol requires a writer to perform and action but also invites the reader to engage with it in a physical way, prompting a physical response” (48). The article goes beyond the use of choreographic practices as a metaphor to illuminate aspects of Australia’s human rights scrutiny process. Rather, they see human rights scrutiny “as a social choreography” (Andrew Hewitt, 2005), and its accompanying “choreographic process as a way of *constructing rights*” (emphasis mine, 49). In these ways, the article contributes to a growing body of work within the field of Dance Studies that illuminate intersections between dance and the law, as these authors put it, “the role of law—and human rights law, in particular—in simultaneously regulating and co-opting movement in making (quite literally) *bodies of law*” (48).

Mercedes Alvarez San Román’s “Is Mademoiselle Mercédès Always Julienne Mathieu? The Challenges of Using a Stage Name to Reconstruct the Career of a Parisian Belle Époque Music Hall Dancer” tracks the recurrent adoption of the stage name “Mercédès” by female performers in Parisian music halls from the late 1800s to the early 20th century. While conducting archival research, Alvarez San Román observed a puzzling prevalence of this name cropping up in press and photographic collections “related both to popular theaters, such as the Folies-Bergère and the Olympia” between 1867 and 1910. She reasons that “[a]part from the unlikely nature of anyone enjoying such a long career, various clues point to the use of this name by more than one person” (66). According to Alvarez San Román, the fact that the name survived for so long within music hall circles could lead only to one explanation: that it had been adopted by many. This observation raises the question: “How many people used this pseudonym and why did it survive for four decades?” (66). One explanation comes via the author’s cultural analysis of the name “Mercedes” as it is written in Spanish and consideration of why it may have been deployed by and served the self-promotional needs of many performers. We learn that “Mercedes” was a “traditional woman’s name in the Hispanic world.” However, when Francophied—e.g. translated to

“Mercédès” and adopted by French dancers, the pseudonym became a signifier of all things commonly associated with Spain within the socio-economic context of French Romanticism. In the author’s words, on the one hand, the name stood for “a reputation for backwardness that combined fierce traditionalism with inflamed emotion,” and on the other, it stood for what France was presumed to have lost during its industrial transformation: “Spain provides what we lost” (quoting Pageaux 1989, 465; ms p. 68). Julianne Mathieu was one such woman who claimed “Mademoiselle Mercédès” for her own, and the appearance of her name as associated with her pseudonym provides a trace for Alvarez San Román to track through the archive: “Mathieu, who, after her career in the music hall, went on to become one of the most prolific actresses of the golden years of the Pathé Frères company (1905–1909), a world leader in the nascent film industry” (67). Alvarez San Román’s project provides a snapshot of the dance world at an important juncture in the history of concert dance in Paris, the interregnum so to speak between the reigns of the Paris Opéra and Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. In both her method and her findings, Alvarez San Román demonstrates the benefits to dance research of “studying the lives of . . . lesser-known figures can offer a broader picture of the evolution of dance in different socio-economic and cultural contexts” (66).

David Kaminsky’s “Leading the Other: Gender and Colonialism in Partner Dancing’s Long Century” focuses on the challenges Africanist principles of polycentricity posed to the “European lead/follow system” within global North social partner dancing. Kaminsky writes as a musicologist and an avid *tanguero* and social dance practitioner in Sweden. Kaminsky’s research builds on his 2020 book investigating the long history of the lead/follow system, in his words, “a single supercultural phenomenon developed over centuries in conversation between a European elite and its class and colonial Others” during “the long century from 1844 to 1960” (87). This article seeks to address what Kaminsky acknowledges as a lacuna in the book, an explanation as to why, in his words, “the man’s protective control over the woman’s body in lead/follow dancing became increasingly thorough over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (88). As an answer, the article views this question through the lens of what Kaminsky calls “haptic cultural interplay,” or the proprioceptive power dynamics exerted through touch and partnering. Kaminsky argues that “[w]hen partner dancing became popularized throughout the Americas in the wake of the mid-nineteenth century polka craze, . . . it met with an African polycentric aesthetic brought by enslaved people” (88). One of the article’s multiple interventions builds on precedent research on the history of the lead/follow system in social partner dance by Kaminsky and others (Savigliano 1995, Robinson 2009, Malnig 2009, McMains 2015). Kaminsky offers an account of when and how conventions changed, as well as the impact of the changes on practices of partner dancing, which he calls “two intertwining yet mutually opposing trajectories of development.” He continues: “On the one hand, new opportunities to intensify the lead and micromanage the women’s articulated body parts facilitated a colonizing bourgeois heteropatriarchal, *civilizing* response to this challenge. Conversely, increased capacities to dissipate and defy the man’s haptic impulses enabled a syncretizing unsettling of lead/follow equilibrium, fomenting the system’s disruption and eventual social decline” (88). With these findings, Kaminsky reveals what he has experienced, observed, and gleaned through interviews, as a “hidden transcript” (James Scott, 1990), “encoded not orally,” as Scott would have it, “but intercorporeally” as expressed, felt, and enacted proprioceptively and with social, political, and cultural repercussions (89).

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