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Editor's Note

The articles in the final issue of 2021 bring our attention to relationships underlying inquiry in dance studies: between the researcher and their sources, source materials and modes of analysis, and senses and manners of perspective-taking and -making. Whereas the first, second, and fourth offerings are grounded primarily in firsthand accounts of embodiment, gleaned either through ethnographic interviewing or thick description of subjective experience, the third builds an argument guided by archival materials. All of the articles bring voice to female embodiments, two to minoritized subjecthoods, another to a figure on the margins of historiography, and the last as a means of decentering subjectivity altogether.

We begin with Royona Mitra's "Unmaking Contact: Choreographic Touch at the Intersections of Race, Caste, and Gender," an article that makes a vital contribution to the contemporary decolonizing project in dance studies with a focus on Contact Improvisation, or CI. Here Mitra endeavors to "unmake" CI, by bringing to light its impact on minoritized bodies generally speaking and on Global South dance artists in particular. She then imagines how or if CI might be remade "on our own terms." Mitra orients us to her dismantling work through one of three "Touch Tales"—or accounts of her encounters with CI. The first occurs when she is a dance student at university, "experiencing the language of CI colonizing my brown body in that white dominant space, without making any attempt to acknowledge or even consider the differentials that constituted my embodiments" (2). This experience becomes both evidence of and an impetus for what has been a "lifelong" investigation of "power differentials at play in the dance studio" (2). Characterizing this inflection point as one of "disorientation," Mitra realizes how "two simultaneous power structures were operating in and upon my body: my caste privilege was confronting the racial privilege of my white lecturer and my peers" (12). In this light, a 2018 interview Mitra conducted with CI pioneer Steve Paxton, in which he acknowledges how CI's founding tenets neither resonate with nor "hold true vis-à-vis race and racially minoritized bodies participating in CI" (6), takes on new meaning. It added fuel to the questions Mitra was already asking about operative (Global North) premises attributed to CI, namely that it is a universally liberatory and democratic dance form. In fact, through the lens of her own accounts and those of four South Asian dance artist informants, we come to see the opposite: that "asymmetries of power… are foundational to the form," leading to its potential in practice to do harm on racially minoritized participants (6). Through Mitra's careful and intersectional analysis, "contact" and "touch" are shown not to be or mean the same things in the experiences of CI for South Asian dance artists; nor is all touch the same or experienced in the same ways. This owes to incompatibilities between the tenets and practices of CI and her informants' formative dance experiences in solo Indian classical forms, and "Indian caste-apartheid" socio-cultural knowledge "which is built on the very premise of who one can (and cannot) touch" (7). Deploying and further developing a method of research she has termed "new interculturalism," throughout the article, Mitra models a scholarly approach centered on "minoritized subject-driven corporeality, aesthetic, and embodied politics that decenters normative white Western ideologies, dramaturgies, and knowledge systems—leading to the generation of new epistemes" (4).

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In "Dancing to Transgress: Palestinian Dancer Sahar Damoni's Politics of Pleasure," Hodel Ophir similarly investigates the significance of minoritarian experiences in Western dance practices, in this case at the junctions of pleasure, performance, and resistance. Ophir, a Jewish-Israeli dance ethnographer, takes care to bring out the voice and experience of her informant Damoni, an Arab-Palestinian dance artist living in Israel, by employing a method of "choreographing empathy" or "proprioceptive affiliation" (Foster 2011) to develop a cross-cultural interpretation of the meanings of Damoni's performances. Ophir asks: "How do I read this dancing body from a culture that is not my own? Where does Damoni's creative-performing body meet my own observing-interpreting body?" (24). In her words: "As a woman living on this same piece of land, inscribed by regimes of bodily training, visual culture, and modern ideologies of self and identity similar to those experienced by my subjects of study, yet also shaped by a culture and life circumstances different from theirs, I intimately share their embodied spaces of performance (Mills 2017) and the production of meaning" (24). Ophir's objective in studying Damoni is to add to a larger scholarly project focused on "a small but powerful group of Arab-Palestinian women artists who use their bodies as a means of expression and agency, addressing issues of patriarchal and/or ethno-national domination, cultural anxiety toward female sexuality, denial of space and place, and gendered dichotomies of the private and the public" (21-22). What sets Damoni's artistic work apart from this group, according to Ophir, is its "expression and evocation of pleasure and sensual-erotic joy, placing her in a distinct category as a Palestinian woman dancer employing pleasure as politics" (22). Ophir argues that "Sahar Damoni's creative work opens an avenue for asking about movement and the performance of pleasure as politics. What does it mean when Palestinian (and other Arab) women utilize the artistic stage as a platform on which to celebrate their skilled, sensual, dancing bodies? What kind of social marking, or understandings, does their movement produce? When, how, and under what terms, 'can the subaltern woman dance?'" (23). Along the lines of Mitra's research methods, Ophir draws on first-person accounts and her relationship with/to her informant to read the ontological and cultural import of Damoni's concert dance practices against the grain. She concludes: "By overtly tackling social taboos and highly charged politics in her solo, sensual performances, Damoni draws attention to her political identity and feminine body, and to the multiple sources and forms of power wielded against her, courageously transgressing these controls through dance" (24).

Next, in "Madame Mariquita, Greek Dance, and French Ballet," Sarah Gutsche-Miller offers a resonant counter-narrative of turn-of-the-19th-century French choreographer Madame Mariquita, a figure renowned in her own time only to be lost to dance historiography. Mariquita choreographed ballets both in the context of her role as ballet mistress at the state subsidized Opéra-Comique and for commercial music-hall venues in Paris, and was credited in contemporaneous press accounts as "ushering in a new era for French ballet through dances inspired by ancient Greek imagery" (42). Through rigorous archival research and historical and cultural contextualization, Gutsche-Miller convincingly shows how "Mariquita was instrumental in fostering a vogue for Greek dance before Duncan, Fokine, and Nijinsky appeared on the French stage. Her ballets are central to understanding dance in Paris at a pivotal moment in dance history, and to understanding early modernism" (43). What's more, Gutsche-Miller illuminates what she sees as Mariquita's "shrewd understanding of her role within the Paris Opéra-Comique and … her awareness of France's cultural insecurities in the years following the country's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (Gutsche-Miller 2021)" (45). Mariquita's Greek ballets accomplished the cultural and political expectation that French artistic creation extend a "lineage" from classical antiquity to contemporaneous France. At the same time, turning to ancient Greece opened up artistic opportunities for Mariquita, in which she could plumb "erotic-exotic" themes, settings, and subject matter, ripe for "commercial possibilities" as forms of popular entertainment. Notable are Gutsche-Miller's imaginative efforts to bring to life an artistic voice since lost to the past, through the incorporation of pithy quotations including by Mariquita and contemporaneous critics and the inclusion of a number of evocative studio photographs drawn from her archival research. These give further credence to Gutsche-Miller's claims that Mariquita's experiments with Greek dance both revitalized dance at the

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Opéra-Comique and helped set the stage for "new forms of modern ballet" during the 1910s and 1920s, thus "predating" Duncan, the Ballets Russes, and "Rouché's experimental dance works at the Théâtre des Arts and Châtelet" (58).

In "Movement as Matter: A Practice-Based Inquiry into the Substance of Dancing," Alison D'Amato seeks ways of relating contemporary materialist theories to a consideration of dance, perhaps paradoxically, by plumbing her own experiences in performance. As she puts it: "I was not only concerned with the body's materiality—its flesh and sinews and bony anatomical signposts—but that of movement, the 'things,' or even 'objects,' that might be understood to manifest in and from a body's dancing" (65). In conversation with dance research "offering crucial insight into the complicated inter-temporalities at play in performances that limn past, present, and future" (eg. Franko, Schneider), she "wonders … if, at the horizon of the post-ephemeral, we might find not only new temporalities but also new materialities? And in what ways … these materialities [might] be asking for disentanglement from the blurry boundaries between past/present and presence/absence?" (66). The article productively rides and plumbs the contradictions of its own premises: the concept of attending to a purely material body through subjective experience. The material under investigation—three of D'Amato's embodied performance experiences—are rendered as if called to memory, and through "descriptive language [which] centers [her] as authoritative witness" (66). Yet D'Amato seeks to mine and mind the places in which her perceptions of subjectivity and objectivity might be teased apart. Firsthand accounts of dancing intentionally move away from a subject-oriented perspective and towards a rendering of moments that illuminate both the senses of the body's materiality and also its relationships to "objects," including audience members, things in the environment, and aspects and technologies of its mediation. In her words: "I burrow into my memories of these dances, perhaps quixotically, in order to decenter subjecthood, suggesting the ways in which the dances enact, desire, and circulate independently of any particular body associated with them." As such, D'Amato seeks to de-center consciousness as evidence of human being, and, instead, bring our attention to how "movement's materiality" leads to new ways of thinking about how movement "matters." In her words: "It is from within that nexus of entanglements that I glimpse the way in which movement's mattering could contribute to a renewed ethics for performance in a precipitously changing world, one that does not fix the human experience at its center." Along with the other authors whose work is featured in this issue, D'Amato endeavors to derive a "critical framework" from "dance itself," in this case "grounded in a notion of materiality capacious enough to accommodate its multifaceted presencing" (67).

In *The Wake: On Blackness and Being*, literary scholar Christina Sharpe uses the metaphor of "the wake" to evoke a consciousness that encompasses the past, present, and future—all that remains in the long afterlife of Atlantic chattel enslavement—a metaphor for our shared cultural inheritance of social and cultural structures and systems of racism, bias, and inequity. She writes: "In this work, I want to think 'the wake' as a problem of and for thought. I want to think 'care' as a problem for thought. I want to think care in the wake as a problem for thinking and of and for Black non/being in the world" (2016, 5). I reference Sharpe's work as a gesture toward a standard of care to which we are holding ourselves as dance artists and scholars in the wake of our disciplinary racial reckoning and movement for social justice. Here Sharpe also calls to mind the problem of and for thought in our and adjacent disciplines and the invocation that we keep our minds in "wake time towards inhabiting a blackened consciousness that would rupture the structural silences produced and facilitated by, and that produce and facilitate, Black social and physical death" (2016, 22). Executive Co-Editor of *DRJ* Nadine George-Graves evokes these capacities for work in our field in her *DRJ* special issue (53:2): *Arms Akimbo: Black Women Choreographing Social Change*, thus: "Dance has always been more than choreography. Movement has always moved minds as well as bodies. Black women in dance traverse myriad aesthetics, skills, emotions, politics, epistemologies, and identities to produce vast and complex performance histories" (2021, 2). Applied to scholarship in dance studies, Sharpe's and George-Graves's ideas bring into focus critical questions that ground and mobilize inquiries founded upon caretaking: What is at stake and for whom or what in a

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research project? Who and/or what are we asking? How do we practice being with our sources? How does what we learn and glean from our sources and source materials guide our research and help us find what we ultimately want to say about them? Such questions, prompting consideration about how we position ourselves in relation to our sources and inside our artistic and scholarly inquiries, are necessary if we are to bring into being in the broadest senses of inclusion, expansive definitions of what is possible in the ways we think, do, make, and write change toward the projects of anti-racist praxis and de-colonizing the field.

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