

Editor's Note

This final issue of this turbulent year across the globe contains a mixed set of articles, the first three of which address theories and practices to be found in “dance and . . .” through time from the late 1960s, the 1970s, and 2016. The following three articles turn the clock back again to consider particular features of American modern dance, then Ballet Russes and blackface, and Genevieve Stebbins in the period of “the Gilded Age” whom, it is argued, is envisioned as the “new” dancer.

The first article by Charmian Wells, “‘Harlem Knows’: Eleo Pomare’s Choreographic Theory of Vitality and Diaspora Citation in *Blues for the Jungle*,” examines Eleo Pomare’s construct of “vitality” and “diaspora citation” through an insightful case study of his 1966 choreography, *Blues for the Jungle*. Wells argues that Pomare’s vitality construct provides “a black aesthetic approach” to the choreography that resonates with black audiences’ everyday experience of living in Harlem that affirms a “shared cultural knowledge” that on the one hand speaks to and of “diasporic belonging,” while instigating a critical perspective on what constitutes “national belonging” on the other.

In “Conceptual Systems: The Dances, Music and Drawings of Laura Dean,” Elliot Gordon Mercer considers Dean’s minimalist artistic interrelated “creative output” in the aforementioned artistic areas. Dean’s “compositional structures” in the 1970s were exemplified as “works on paper,” which, as Mercer points out, offer an extended “visualization of her artistic experimentation of with color, symmetry, representation, and form.” He notes that Dean discards reconstruction of her dance works and instead considers the idea of dance as transient. He argues that Dean’s “choreographic legacy” is aligned with serial and conceptual art that destresses the “art object” in the service of what he terms “compositional logic.”

The third article by Siobhan Murphy, “Screendance Portraiture: Truth, Transaction and Seriality in *52 Portraits*,” examines the hybrid style of Jonathan Burrows et al. digital portrait project (2016) by drawing on three constructs that constitute the foundations of portraiture in the visual arts, and how these may be applicable to Burrows’s screendance portraits, or not as the case may be. Murphy’s compare and contrast analysis reveals that *Fifty Two Portraits* both draws on and moves away from the features to be found in the tradition of portraiture. As such, she argues that the analysis provides “an emergent framework for understanding how screendance portraits function.”

“Overcoming and Denial: Disability and Modern Dance in the United States” by Bailey Anderson questions historicist ableist histories of modern dance in the US and seeks to reconfigure how disability is considered in the dance field. The author draws on five themes that emerged from archival research such as: “overcoming narratives; symbiotic and inseparability of dance and disability, denial of disability, changing choreographic practices, and disability aesthetics.” Anderson shows how these themes are evident in primary sources including documentation about and by Martha Graham, Ted Shawn, and Doris Humphrey, which are then analyzed and discussed from a dance and disability studies theorization perspective.

The penultimate article by Hanna Järvinen, “Ballet Russes and Blackface,” draws on her understanding of Achille Mbembe’s (2017) consideration of the ways in which racial assignment operates in order to research her case study of two “blackface ballet characters” in *Schéhérazade* and *Petrouchka* across the twentieth century and the current century, on the stages, in exhibits, and in research and education. While Ballet Russes has been lauded as key to the development of modernism in the performing arts, Järvinen argues that the recurrent veneration of such works as “masterpieces” that in fact inhere “racial stereotypes,” add up to “complicity with racism” that goes above and beyond the many ballet performances on the stage over the last century and this one too.

The final article by Kelly Jean Mullan, “Forgotten ‘New’ Dancer of New York City’s Gilded Age: Genevieve Lee Stebbins and the Dance as yet Undreamed,” draws on a wide range of primary research sources to demonstrate that Stebbins’s soloist dance performances from the late 1880s were much admired in the New York “legitimate” theater world. Although Stebbins’s “new” aesthetic solo dance performances influenced the early dance work of Ruth St Denis and Isadora Duncan, her contribution to dance has been largely been neglected in American dance history. Mullen both charts Stebbins’s dance innovations and points to what she argues are misrepresentations of her foundational (new) dance work.

Afternote

This December issue is my final edition of Dance Research Journal. It has been an honor to be the editor of the journal over these four years. I have had the pleasure to meet many authors and reviewers digitally via emails and sometimes Skype. I have worked with two excellent editorial assistants, for the first year and a half with Francesca Miles, and for the past two years and a half years with Clare Thomas Powell. I would like to thank Kim Shigo and Brian Mazeski from CUP for their support in the submission and production process, and Holly O’Neill, the CUP Commissioning Editor, who has always been on hand to answer my many questions. Trinity Laban provided me with an office and with advertising and recruiting the respective editorial assistant positions under the UK equal opportunities guidelines, while the finance department ensured that I kept to budget.

Rebekah Kowal will move from the Assistant Editor’s position to the Editor of *DRJ* in January 2021 and am sure she will take the journal forward in new directions. I look forward to returning to my own research.

Works Cited

Mbembe, Achille. 2017. *Critique of Black Reason*. Translated by Laurent Dubois. Durham: Duke University Press.

Helen Thomas