

cusses so adroitly. Nonetheless, *Exhausting Dance* represents a significant development for dance studies because it does not merely put dance in dialogue with critical theory; rather, it articulates dance's potentiality as critical theory itself.

Works Cited

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Rebecca Rossen
Northwestern University

HOW TO MAKE DANCE IN AN EPIDEMIC: TRACKING CHOREOGRAPHY IN THE AGE OF AIDS

by David Gere. 2004. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. xi + 341 pp., photographs, notes, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

In *How to Make Dance in an Epidemic*, David Gere analyzes the relationship between AIDS and choreography in the United States. Gere's expansive formulation of "choreography" includes both the orchestration of movement in theatrical dance as well as the organization of bodies to produce political effects in activist interventions. By focusing on how bodies were choreographed for political means, Gere draws attention to the ways in which theatrical dance was an effective mode of activism during the AIDS crisis. Furthermore, it provides an analytic framework for understanding the theatricality of activist choreography, elucidating how the choreography of bodies made effective interventions in the social and

political culture of the United States in the 1980s and 1990s.

The objects of study range from traditional proscenium concert dance to avant-garde performances, funerals, public disruptions, and activist actions. The ephemeral nature of dance and activism, as has been much observed, makes its preservation difficult. One of the book's invaluable contributions is its archive—a documentation of events that would otherwise be lost to the future were it not for Gere's expansive research and careful attention to description, recounting, and witnessing. The sites cover territory from recollection of the dances to promotional materials and other forms of ephemera including the written word, video, photography, and oral history.

Gere sets out to read the ways in which choreography constructed networks of meaning, transgression, affirmation, mourning, and transformation through the organization of bodies, in this case, those of gay men affected by HIV/AIDS. This focus is a response to the closeting and covering of homosexuality that has been endemic to the history of dance scholarship and popular public discourse that has sought to "de-gay" AIDS. Gere asserts that the removal of queerness from the history of dance and the discourse of HIV/AIDS undermines our ability to comprehend the ways in which gay male bodies powerfully shaped our understanding of and responses to the crisis. For Gere, it was the gay male body that came to "speak AIDS" during the height of the crisis. This speech was articulated within, through, and by choreographic acts.

The strength of Gere's text is his attention to the performative speech-acts of the choreographed and choreographing gay male body. This focus elucidates the important ways that these speech-acts shaped the political culture and discourse of HIV/AIDS. For ex-

ample, Gere's semiotic analysis of body fluid in chapter 1, "Blood and Sweat," describes the process through which these fluids became a signifier for AIDS and infection when placed in contact with the gay male body. This is explicated in an eloquent reading of nervous reportage and oral history accounts of the excessive sweating of Rudolph Nureyev and Arnie Zane while dancing. Demonstrating the resignifying potential of choreography, the author turns to performances like Keith Hennessy's *Saliva*. Gere masterfully reconstructs the dance on page as he describes the dancer covering his body in the saliva of his audience. His reading demonstrates how this act transformed the sharing of body fluid from the isolating stigma of infection to a gesture of communal belonging. In another circumstance, he observes how the red hand marks on the clothes of ACT UP activists transformed blood from a verdict of infection into an accusation of murder by the state. This accusation successfully projected the blood onto the hands of a government that stood idly by, watching thousands of undesirable elements (gay men and drug addicts) die of the disease.

In chapter 3, "Monuments and Insurgencies," Gere stakes out the difference between formal and traditional acts of memorialization—termed "monuments"—and counterhegemonic acts of memory—termed "insurgencies." Insurgencies are defined as ground-level actions that rise up against normative/dominant modes of comportment, attempting to transform them. Insurgent choreography, such as the unfurling ceremony of the AIDS Memorial Quilt on the Washington Mall, ultimately may be assimilated within the very power structures they seek to unsettle. Nonetheless, these acts demand attention because of their radical potential to instigate change.

How to Make Dance in an Epidemic is an act of insurgency. It is meant to challenge dominant forms of critique that would de-gay both dance and AIDS. It is a text that documents how the choreography of the specifically gay male body in the age of AIDS radically intervened in a dominant culture that offered an insufficient response to a critical crisis. The book is a study in remembering elided histories and practices of dance and activism. The title signifies a form of manual, a how-to. This "how-to" is not prescriptive but gestures to an imperative to read against the grain of historical memory and find the insurgent narratives that exist beneath the mainstream narrative. In this way, a reading of Gere's text must also be a critique.

Near the beginning of the text, Gere gestures to the impossible nature of writing a comprehensive analysis of a disease that has developed across racial, national, gender, and class boundaries. Acknowledging these limitations, he invites his reader to consider the book as part of an ongoing project rather than a definitive study. The many benefits of a focus on the "gay male body" are not without their cost. Writing against the formalist imperative of dance scholarship that has de-homosexualized the queerness of male bodies dancing together, Gere valiantly affirms the homoeroticism of works like Arnie Zane's *The Gift/No God Logic* or David Roussev's *Long Songs*. However, Gere's focus stops short of observing how these choreographic practices, or the works of Zane and Bill T. Jones, for example, also staged fecund forms of interracial, interclass, and even intergender contact, forms of contact that Samuel Delany (1999) has understood as central to queer cultural production during this era. Routinely gendering his subject as gay and male, women (both onstage and within the broader context of his analysis of the AIDS

crisis) become virtually invisible. When they are not absent, they are relegated to gendered roles as caretakers or background mourners. In addition, the racial and class specificity of his subjects become generally abstracted, if not misplaced.

The dancers and audiences in this book often become subtly coded as white, even when they are not. In one compelling section, Gere reads the street performance of Paul Timothy Diaz's 1990 *One AIDS Death* . . . he aptly describes this piece's intervention into the United States' homophobic blindness to the loss of thousands of gay men to the disease. Dance's insistence on the body, Gere argues, offered an effective form for returning the erased queer body living with AIDS to the public forum. Gere argues that Diaz's "streetside corpse" in *One AIDS Death* . . . forced a random audience of pedestrians to come into public contact and interact with the dancer's body, signifying bodies dying from HIV/AIDS (204). His reading, however, does not attend to the important interaction of race and class specificity for both Diaz and the audience during this performance.

Gere suggests that Diaz's complete immersion in a pink body bag was meant to obscure his "status" as a gay man. While insightful, this reading sidesteps the effects of Diaz as a queer *and* Latino man. Furthermore, it completely ignores the implications for interracial and interclass tensions that occur during the performance when a black, male security guard is reluctantly compelled to shut down Diaz's performance because it is occurring on private property. Gere understands the makeshift audience's defiance of the frustrated guard as an act of insurgency against regulatory power. Doing so vilifies

the guard, but only after erasing his racial and class specificity.

Diaz's performance, like many of the works Gere writes about, achieves more than a return of the gay male body with AIDS to a public forum. Such dances commonly staged the interaction of intersectional difference on the complicated social terrain of the disease. This particular performance of *One AIDS Death* . . . is as much about a queer body with AIDS in a public space as it is about a person of color (the guard) being unwillingly forced by labor conditions to intervene in the artist's/activist's performance. Here, we see how the guard is transformed into a symbol for the very state that, for deeply racist reasons, simultaneously ignored the mounting threat of HIV/AIDS to communities of color while it also was ignoring the threat to gay men (*including* gay men of color). An analysis that is more attentive to the intersectional nature of the disease and dance could powerfully elucidate how the epidemic developed not only because of homophobia but also because of racism, sexism, and classism. In turn, such an analysis can prepare the reader to develop effective future choreographies for challenging a crisis that continues to unfold globally. *How to Make Dance in an Epidemic* is one such gesture and will become an important text for the future of dance studies, queer studies, and the discourse of HIV/AIDS.

Work Cited

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Joshua Chambers-Letson
New York University