

the Sacred, and the Earth," which documents how displaced Cambodians who escaped the Khmer Rouge staged dance events in refugee camps as a way to connect with a Cambodian cultural history that the Khmer Rouge attempted to stamp out. Shapiro-Phim stresses the importance of dance as one of the few ways that inhabitants of refugee camps could exert control over their daily lives when every other aspect of camp life was determined by outside aid agencies and camp officials. Essays by Carol Anderson, Alito Alessi with Sara Zolbrod, and David Gere shift to a North American context and consider dance in relationship to the economic circumstances of elderly dancers, disabled dancers, and people living with AIDS. The final essay by Yehudit Arnon, "If I Survive: Yehudit Arnon's Story," is an autobiographical narrative about dancing to motivate herself and other Jewish women to survive in a Nazi concentration camp.

Although the concept of human rights in itself could be explored in more depth, the editors have brought together a diverse collection of essays that, when read together, situate dance centrally within ideological discussions of what constitutes notions of freedom and social justice. More importantly, the essays will also spark discussion on who gets to define such concepts. *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice* is an ambitious and inclusive anthology that marks an important resource for anyone interested in dance, politics, and social activism.

Yutian Wong

San Francisco State University

Note

1. For a discussion on the appeal of Middle Eastern dance in post-9/11 America, see Sunaina Maira (2008). Maira argues that the increased popularity of belly dance in the United States after 9/11 continues to trade on outdated perceptions of Middle Eastern culture. For other discussions on danced encounters between Other and Empire, see Imada (2004) and Srinivasan (2009, 2007).

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RHYTHMIC SUBJECTS: USES OF ENERGY IN THE DANCES OF MARY WIGMAN, MARTHA GRAHAM AND MERCE CUNNINGHAM

by Dee Reynolds. 2007. Alton, Hampshire: Dance Books. \$44.95 paper.

This book by Dee Reynolds focuses on a theme that is fundamental to an understanding of twentieth-century dance, namely, the fact that energy, rhythm, and kinesthesia are central to the discourse on modernity and modernism. Since the innovative deployment of energy enabled choreographers and dancers to take an active part in the processes of modernization, Reynolds, by analyzing the role of energy in the thinking of three pivotal choreographers—Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham—has made a groundbreaking and long overdue study of a key aspect of dance in the modernist and postmodernist periods.

At first glance, the title *Rhythmic Subjects* would appear to be contradictory, as it was precisely the categories of subject and identity that modernism—whether in art, philosophy, or psychology—had tended to undermine by subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Rhythm, movement, energy, and the limits of the individual had been the subject of debate since the end of the nineteenth century. It is this aspect of the rhythmic—the potential for opening up, for shifting, for overstepping boundaries—that is the focus of Reynolds's study. This enables her to raise the issue of "kinesthetic imagination as the activity of a split subject" (11), the questions of the relationship between "movement quality" and energy, and the related discourses.

In the introductory chapter and again in the concluding section, Reynolds elucidates at length and with great erudition the theoretical and methodological complexity of attempting a historical description of modern dance in terms of energy, variously conceived. Proceeding from the phenomenological theories of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, including such modernist studies of perception theory as Theodor Lipps's theory of "Einfühlung"

(empathy) based on “inner mimesis” as well as current neurological studies, Reynolds traces in her first chapter, “Life Rhythms,” the highly variegated state of discourse on the subject of energy that is central to modern dance. In a concentrated summary of the vitalistic theses on the relationship between “rhythm” and beat advanced by Ludwig Klages, Rudolf Bode, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, and many others, Reynolds identifies the central parameters of the energy debate and the contradictory positions of the “rhythmic movement” in the Germany of the 1910s and 1920s. This is only one example of Reynolds’s staggeringly comprehensive knowledge of the subject. The book is a profound survey of the very extensive research that has been done on free dance and modern dance. It also offers historians specializing in this field a great deal of information gleaned from an intensive study of the sources (especially the material on Mary Wigman and free dance in the Berlin archives). The profound scholarly basis of the entire study is accompanied by a very well-considered and transparent approach to questions of methodology and their theoretical reflections.

The analyses of the choreographies are based on a differentiated and clear application of Laban’s effort/shape system (and its further development by Lawrence and Bartenieff). This approach involves not only an analysis of movement but also a historical logic, being first and foremost an *energy model*, that gave rise to the question of the kinesthetic *quality* of movement, from which Laban’s effort system was developed in the 1920s and 1930s. The difficulty of making “energy” the subject of analytical discourse and visualizing it in specifically aesthetic and kinesthetic analyses of choreographies is probably the greatest challenge confronting Reynolds in this study. Yet she is adept at seeing through these difficulties and solving them. Reynolds introduces the felicitous concept of “kinesthetic imagination,” which enables her not only to capture the complex phenomenon of the kinesthetic in terms of subjective perception, of self-awareness/proprioception, and the phenomenology of the turbulent body-space relation in keeping with philosophical phenomenology but also, by combining the various embodied-subject theories with concepts of “imagination,” to incorporate the social, historical, and political dimensions of the kinesthetic, to view its varieties as specific forms of a *habitus* (Bourdieu) and the historical changes of cultural imaginations of energy or energetic bodies, for example, before, during, and after the Second World War. Thus, the term “kinesthetic imagination” becomes an analytical category facilitating the methodologically

difficult balancing act of combining the subjective aspect of kinesthetic awareness with that of its reception and the discourses on energy and rhythm.

In chapters 2–4 Reynolds shows in exemplary fashion how closely the choreographic work of Wigman, Graham, and Cunningham is bound up with vitalistic concepts of rhythm and energy. By giving a very exciting reflection of a microscopic perspective—the close reading of selected choreographies—complete with cultural analysis and historical contextualization of the reception of the dancers/choreographers in a given energetic-kinesthetic discourse, she manages to show how extremely complex the links between theories of energy, body politics, and gender issues are. The chapter on Mary Wigman—the most closely argued chapter, in my opinion—shows, for example, how the energetically charged idea of a “sweep” or “sweeping movement” (as in Wigman’s *Schwingende Landschaft* [Sweeping Landscape], 1929) is bound up with the contemporary concepts of strength, tension, and fluidity of movement, while at the same time generating a model of a “female self.” Reynolds’s assessment here follows Susan Manning’s critical reading of Wigman’s aesthetic of the *Hexentanz* (“Witch Dance II,” in the 1926 film version). She advances the thesis that Wigman in the witch dance creates a rhythmic body that runs counter to the essentialist notions of a dancing style defined in male/female terms, as would later be laid down by the Nazi ideology in the 1930s. Reynolds stresses that in *Schwingende Landschaft* Wigman succeeds (before she adapted to the “guidelines” of the Nazis in the 1930s) in balancing the “kinesthetic imagination” as a “relationship between body and space” in such a way as to “evoke an impersonal dimension embodied in a female persona which challenges the exclusion of feminine subjectivity from the ‘universal’” (87).

In contrast to Wigman, Martha Graham—especially in her early choreographies of the 1930s, *Heretic* (1929) and *Frontier* (1935)—appears to be characterized by a new rhythmic quality: “percussive energies of an aggressively masculinist and Americanist modernism, which she appropriated for the empowerment of the female dancer” (91). There is no space here for a detailed examination of the results of the complex re-readings of the development and elaboration of Graham’s re-modelling of an energetic style of movement, which combined “effort-shape rhythms” with elements of resistance, twisting, and spatial extension. The same applies to the chapter on Merce Cunningham. Whereas in Graham’s case Reynolds emphasizes the pattern of “virile rhythms” as the paradigm of a new, national body politics, an

“Americanist” version of “kinesthetic imagination,” she looks at Cunningham’s work from the point of view of “punctual rhythms.” It is not the basic idea of organic process that fills his work with body, space, and movement but a radical break with the rhythmic practices of modern dance. Fragmentation becomes a key factor in coping with energy. In this chapter Reynolds not only combines subtle analyses of choreographies from various phases of Cunningham’s work (from *Rune* through *Variations V* and *Fractions I to BIPED*) but also opens the rhythmic discourse on those media that in the twentieth century gave crucial impetus to the notions of movement and rhythm in dance: the media of chronophotography, film, and video up to current electronic programs as, for instance, “life forms,” which became significant for Cunningham’s late choreographies.

Although Reynolds touches on these questions in the closing chapter of this book, the way she deals with the question of how far the development of and competition between energy discourses marks the “kinesthetic imagination” in both dance and the modern media of the twentieth century leaves something to be desired. Is it not the case that the fragmentation, the *break* with such key rhythmic ideas such as “swing,” “flux,” and female identity began back in the 1920s (and not just with Cunningham)—against the background of a cinematic “kinesthetic imagination” geared to disruption, the torsion and bottling up of energy, and oriented to the “mechanical” model, as may be found in such abundance in the works of Valeska Gert? Perhaps a comparison of Gert and Wigman, or the inclusion of the Bauhaus aesthetic, would have made it clearer that one of the most exciting aspects of the “kinesthetic imagination” in modernism is the extent to which it characterizes *multiple* rhythmic models that are historically parallel. Nevertheless, the great merit of this study of three key figures in modern dance is that it marks the first time that the central significance of energy for twentieth-century dance has been presented so comprehensively and in such penetrating, multilayered detail.

In the concluding section Reynolds dissects the options that offer both a historical and systematic approach to a phenomenon as hard to pin down as “energy” for dance and cultural studies. In addition to the theories of kinesthesia based on the homeopathic approaches of the “embodied subject” in phenomenology, poststructuralist approaches are also discussed, albeit in brief referentializations. At the same time the transfer of Derrida’s ideas of “différance” and processes of spatialization and temporalization to sensory-kinesthetic phenomena of rhyth-

mic movement, its interruption and repeated shifts, is perfectly plausible; as is the reference to Roland Barthes’s concept of the “punctum” as an “energetic shock” to the kinesthetic imagination. Merce Cunningham is a good example of this. Furthermore, the author includes—convincingly and to the point—the theories of Georges Bataille and Pierre Bourdieu in her arguments regarding the “kinesthetic imagination.” While the theoreticians mentioned here belong in a sense to the standard set of critical reading (important and still indispensable), Reynolds adds to her line-up Julia Kristeva, a theoretician of whom somewhat less has been heard in recent times. And it immediately becomes evident how fundamental Kristeva’s approach of a semiotic—that is a *pre-symbolic* and *pre-linguistic* sensory movement—is to the concept of a “kinesthetic imagination.” At this point one might have wished that Reynolds had gone more deeply into Kristeva’s idea of the semiotic chora. The extreme relevance of this approach to a kinesthetic theory of rhythm gives an exciting, pioneering impetus to dance studies.

There can be no doubt that in this study Dee Reynolds has presented an extremely stimulating, brilliantly formulated, and fundamental work on the large subject of “energy” in modernism. It shows clearly how decisive the role of dance is in the discourses on rhythm, temporality, and energy it actively—in the truest sense of the word—sets in motion. It also shows how dance uncovers—and is able to thwart—the power discourses implicit in body politics. In this sense Reynolds’s *Rhythmic Subjects* is not only indispensable as a standard work for dance scholars but also an inspiration to research in other arts and cultural studies.

Gabriele Brandstetter

Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, Berlin

CHOREOGRAPHING THE FOLK: THE DANCE STAGINGS OF ZORA NEALE HURSTON

by Anthea Kraut. 2007. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press xiv + 304 pp., appendices, notes, index, illus. cloth \$75.00, paper \$25.00.

In the hands of a less able and adventurous scholar, Anthea Kraut’s *Choreographing the Folk* could have been executed exclusively as a salvage mission, to unearth and reclaim Zora Neale Hurston’s Depression-era work for the dance stage. Known for her literary work, as novelist, playwright, and folklorist, Hurston has been largely absent from the dance historical literature, in spite of her path-breaking choreographic stagings of Africanist folk mate-