racism abroad in a way that she had more difficulty achieving domestically. In an astonishing example, Dunham initiated social change when she and her company were denied reservations at an exclusive hotel in São Paulo because they were black. Dunham filed a lawsuit against the hotel and Dunham's Brazilian lawyer, mobilizing the publicity, then successfully cosponsored a bill in the legislature that made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race in Brazil. Das also discusses Dunham's performance of *Southland*, an antilynching dance drama that was performed across the world, to the dismay of the American government. *Southland* resonated with global audiences during a period of global movements for decolonization. Dunham, therefore, not only brought aesthetics of the African diaspora to global stages, but also inspired newly decolonized populations to create space for self-representation and cultural expression.

The final two chapters of Das's book explore Dunham's work as a cultural ambassador in Haiti and Senegal (chapter 7) and as a critical figure in the Black Arts Movement and the arts more broadly in the United States (chapter 8). Upon relocating to Haiti full-time in the early 1960s, Dunham attempted to fashion herself as a development consultant, a venture for which she was ill-suited. Dunham's proposed projects to revitalize Haiti through the arts were well intentioned, but she lacked the institutional support and financial management skills to see the projects through. Dunham traveled to Dakar in 1964 for the Dakar Festival, a project of various state institutions both in the United States and Senegal. Dunham's visions for "developing" Senegal's cultural institutions, again, proved to be too much to take on, prompting her return to the United States. Dunham then turned her focus to East St. Louis, where she founded the Performing Arts Training Center (PATC) in 1967. PATC students performed nationally, creating a sense of pride for Africanist performance traditions and inspiring generations of youth and adults, alike. While Dunham identified with a "radical humanist" approach that diverged from more radical forms of black activism, Dunham leveraged her position as a board member of mainstream cultural institutions to advocate on behalf of black history and black performing arts organizations and institutions, creating the foundation for a worldwide diasporic community of artists.

Das brings together compelling performance analysis and previously unknown archives—particularly personal correspondences and unpublished manuscripts—to flesh out a portrait of one of the twentieth century's most venerated and complex performers. *Katherine Dunham* is an important addition to the field of dance studies, critical race studies, and transnational American studies, as the book, like its subject, defies easy categorization. At once a cogent biography and an exemplary case study in the messiness and, often, the riskiness of diasporic politics and performance, *Katherine Dunham* will no doubt prove instructive to scholars and students across disciplines.

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Playable Bodies: Dance Games and Intimate Media

by Kiri Miller. 2017. New York: Oxford University Press. 256 pp., 39 halftones, notes, reference, index. $29.95 paper, ISBN: 9780190257842. $99.00. cloth, ISBN: 9780190257835, companion web site: www.oup.com/us/playablebodies.
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Technological advancements continue to redefine the ways we engage with others and the world around us. As Kiri Miller suggests in her ethnography, *Playable Bodies: Dance Games and Intimate Media*, technology has a lasting visceral effect on human experience. Miller's term "intimate media" expresses this complex relationship between technology and humans. Miller engages a posthuman lens that gives credence to technological and human roles and their overlap, paying close attention to two dance video game series: *Just Dance* and *Dance Central*.

Miller describes the effects of the games' technological designs on players' dance experiences. For example, *Just Dance* uses the Nintendo Wii video game console and tracks movements based on players' manual control of the Wii Remote. Such movements are limited to the upper body. Additionally, the *Just Dance* screen characters are voiceless, nameless, and

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"depicted with blank faces, promoting players to imagine they are occupying the screen dancers' silhouettes" (14). *Dance Central*, on the other hand, functions through the Xbox Kinect interface, which uses a motion-sensing camera to track the player's movements. Because of the ability to assess the player's full body (albeit mainly frontally oriented), *Dance Central* advertises itself as creating a more "authentic" dance experience. *Dance Central* also displays "realistic" dance characters on screen with names and detailed physical features.

Outside of these differences, Miller articulates their two important similarities: "*There are no conventional avatars*" (14) and "*These games evaluate players on the basis of their actions in the actual world, not the virtual world*" (15, italics in original). In other words, the screen characters are separate from the players. Players are not represented on screen as avatars; instead, technology captures and assesses their actual movements. Such a dynamic raises questions as to who is controlling what, and vice versa (45–46). In typical video games, humans manipulate technology and screen characters. *Just Dance* and *Dance Central* flip the script, placing the game in the position of guiding the player.

Miller delves into issues of surveillance and spectatorship to better understand this technology-to-human training system, sparking larger questions about the role of "failed" dance as both embarrassing and fun. It requires courage to attempt new dance choreography. Although these games provide the opportunity for dance and play in private, they foster group participation. Players can take turns attempting the dance moves and even play side-by-side. Miller explains that a player typically faces the screen and dances while a group of friends observe the attempt. The possibility of failing, usually described by the gamers as "flailing" one's body around, creates a space of vulnerability (36). While this might cause humiliation, it offers a type of social bonding as well.

Interestingly, some players have expanded this bonding experience past their own living rooms, enlarging the game's communality. Players committed to refining their dance skills or showing their virtuosity will record themselves playing the game and post the video to YouTube. Miller looks at the virtual discussions such videos prompt and the nature of "public privacy," the "ability to hide in plain view," on which this practice thrives (55). Technology generates both distance and proximity, and dance video game players take advantage of this range to explore movements they might otherwise feel uncomfortable trying in a traditional dance class or out at a club.

This leads one to consider why a movement may or may not feel comfortable. Miller points to a relationship between one's comfort level and one's perception of the appropriate body type for a particular style of movement. A main component of these games allows players to embody movements that do not necessarily align with their self-identified gender or race (63). For instance, some male players complain about having to perform "girly" movements, while others take on the feminine repertoire as a challenge. Yet, outside of a handful linking their poor dance skills to "whiteness," many players seem less inclined to mention issues of race regarding *Just Dance* and *Dance Central* (70–71). Miller, however, articulates the games' highly racialized designs at different moments throughout the book. She shows the games' ties to "African American, Latin Caribbean, and/or queer club cultures" via movement, music, voices, phrases, movement labels, and screen characters (65). She analyzes how the gaming systems stream these cultural resonances through a multisensory experience, one that "privilege[s] the idea that there are actual human bodies at the beginning and end of the chain of technical mediations" (149).

From a dance perspective, Miller's deconstruction of this human-technology-human chain is possibly the most fascinating part of her text (mainly chapters 4 and 5). Here, she considers the interconnectivity of archival practices, embodiment, dance pedagogy, choreographic labor, and dance copyright laws. Donning LED-covered suits, hired choreographers create steps and movement sequences for electronic screen dancers. Miller argues that the screen dancers act as the choreographers' digital archives. She relates this idea to Harmony Bench's claim that "motion capture is inherently nostalgic, resolutely oriented toward the archive" and connected to "a rhetoric of loss" (2009, 35). However, through interviews with *Dance Central* choreographers

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Marcos Aguirre and Chanel Thompson, Miller reveals a "focus on transmission" rather than loss or nostalgia (170). Dance games archive the choreographer's expression of embodied movements with the goal of transmitting those experiences to others rather than saving them as memories. Aguirre and Thompson describe the process as a way to "choreograph-at-a-distance" (171) and share their dancing as a type of "gift" (173–74). Miller notes, "While this gift paradigm does not resolve the thorny questions about appropriation and commodification that dance games raise, it does shed light on how choreographers imagine their own positions in this process and their relationships to players" (174). Technology mediates the relationship between the choreographers and players on multiple fronts, including the actual games and social media. In addition to posting videos of themselves dancing to the games on YouTube accounts, fans follow dance game choreographers on Facebook and Twitter. These connections allow the choreographers to witness how players appreciate their "gift." It also highlights the games' pedagogical capacities.

Miller investigates the pedagogical aspects of *Just Dance* and *Dance Central* to decode what type of dance these games teach and exactly how they teach it. Part of the method, Miller claims, involves the "aural/kinesthetic experience of music" (93). Miller is an ethnomusicologist at Brown University and dedicates chapter 3 and some of chapter 4 to music's role in dance video game marketing and instructional practices. She posits that dance games teach players to listen to music like a dancer or choreographer (93). Players begin to encounter music in a new way, which brings up complex layers of embodiment: how music embodies cultural meaning, how dance embodies music, how players embody movements, how movements embody cultural meaning, how technology facilitates this process, and how game designers utilize this to create successful games and turn a profit.

Miller's analysis of embodiment practices inclusive of technology is incredibly rich throughout the entire text. This scholarly commitment to materialized lived experience resounds in her methodology as well. I recommend *Playable Bodies* to anyone looking for a solid model of virtual ethnography, which values one's interaction with technology as a complex embodied experience. With help from Tom Boellstorff (2008), who wrote about the online virtual world *Second Life*, Miller disrupts the binary between "virtual" and "real" (21). Miller's DIY/DIA approach—"*Do it yourself, and do it again*"—prioritizes understanding the sensation of an activity through multiple attempts (22, italics in original). This works to dissolve the separation between virtual and real because it articulates the repetitive practices that turn the virtual *into* the visceral over time (22). Following the playful approach of Miller's final chapter, I will finish by writing: #technologydance #virtualtovisceral #embodiment #playablebodies #greatread.

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Shapes of American Ballet: Teachers and Training Before Balanchine

by Jessica Zeller. 2016. New York: Oxford University Press. 216 pp., 25 images. $36.95 paper. ISBN: 9780190296698.
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For many, George Balanchine's arrival in Connecticut in 1933 marks the beginning of the history of American ballet. Jessica Zeller's *Shapes of American Ballet: Teachers and Training Before Balanchine* demonstrates just how unofficial a designation that date is and provides an important corrective to histories of ballet in the United States that, implicitly or explicitly, begin with the founding of Balanchine's School of American Ballet in 1934. Arguing that the development of "American ballet" during the first part of the

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