

Bodies on Edge in a Globalized World

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KEYWORDS: exile, displacement, dislocation, dispersion, dispossession, embodiment, choreography, dance, performance, global, world

FOCUS: “The world will collapse with or without the agreement of the people inhabiting it. Indeed, the world as we know it has ended several times over, in ways large and small, whether we want to acknowledge it or not. Yes, we are doomed – doomed to adapt, to define our comforts and part with them when we must” (Hanif Abdurraqib, “Lessons for the End of the World,” *New Yorker Magazine*, February 2, 2025). In the essay, “Lessons for the End of the World,” author Hanif Abdurraqib meditates on the prescience of Octavia Butler’s science fiction in presaging worlds of human and ecological collapse and examining what it takes to survive: attending to the necessities of the moment, not (giving in to the impulse of) looking away.

In recognition of the global challenges of our time, including – ecological crises, displacement and migration, war, ethno-nationalism, work in neo-liberal economies, digitization and artificial intelligence, the place of the human condition within bureaucratic systems – and the ease with which daily life makes it possible to become inured and distracted, this special issue seeks to capture the choreographic and embodied dimensions of the tenuousness of the contemporary global moment. We seek to open a conversation stretching across borders, nationalities, ethnicities, economic conditions.

We ask: How do contemporary physical conditions and processes such as dislocation, dispersion, dispossession manifest corporeally, within artistic projects, creative processes, imagined worlds, and/or artistic and scholarly methodologies?

- Dispersion: In what ways can choreography or dance remember/chart the loss of lives that global migration or displacement produces?
- Dislocation: How do we account for the presence of bodies that were somewhere and are there no longer? That are here, and yet, not quite here?
- Dispossession: How do we account for the senses and feeling states of not belonging anywhere, not belonging to one’s own body, being left behind, and/or having no place to go.

How are dance artists and scholars responding to these and other exigencies?

SCOPE: Randy Martin’s 2012 article, “A Precarious Dance, A Derivative Society,” mapped relationships between economic instruments of capitalist productivity as a social kinesthetic: Dance “register[s] these mobilizing forces and their attendant principles of kinesthetic sovereignty, which become sensible in dance.”

In this spirit, we invite authors to consider:

- What kind of social kinesthetic (movement, physicality, choreographies) does the constant state of physical and psychological tenuousness and nervousness produce?
- How do the continuous underlying threat of loss, danger, lack of safety manifest in contemporary artistic practices, including and especially in dance, dance making and/or thinking about dance?
- How do choreographies reckon with instances of real and/or imagined loss? How does dance account for the liminal space of being here and not here?
- What kinds of strategies do artists employ to reckon with, render, and/or mark processes of loss and dispersion?

- How do artists contend with the draw and pull of distraction? What is the role of movement practices and dance making within the attention economy?
- What role does technology play in the processes of capturing bodies on the move, to identify them, to arrest them, to register their movements, to safeguard their passage, to speculate upon their whereabouts, to reconstruct their ways across land and/or the sea?
- How do choreographies stage landscapes where history has already happened as sites of memory? By means of photographs? Maps? Documents?
- How might choreographies work with derelict sites, broken infrastructure, scarred, demolished, or abandoned landscapes?
- What are embodied strategies of relocation? What prevents relocation?

PURPOSE:

This special issue assembles an array of perspectives that probe into the contemporary condition from scholarly and artistic frameworks of dance and performance practices and scholarship.

Abstracts (limit 250 words) should be submitted online, ideally by September 1, 2025:

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