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Judith Butler and a Pedagogy of Dancing Resilience

JOSHUA M. HALL

Abstract. *This essay is part of a larger project in which I construct a new, historically informed, social justice–centered philosophy of dance, centered on four central phenomenological constructs, or "moves." This essay, in particular, is about the fourth move, "resilience." More specifically, I explore how Judith Butler engages with the etymological aspects of this word, suggesting that resilience involves a productive form of madness and a healthy form of compulsion, respectively. I then conclude by showing how "resilience" can be used in the analysis of various Wittgensteinian "families" of dance, which, in turn, could facilitate positive educational changes in philosophy, dance, and society, with particular efficacy on the axis of gender. In brief, by teaching a conception of strength as vulnerability (instead of machismo's view of strength as apathetic "toughness"), a pedagogy of dancing resilience provides additional support for feminists (including Anzaldúa, Haraway, Butler, and Concepción) who advocate a cautious openness toward seemingly unlikely resources and allies (including analytic methodologies, Machiavellian politics, and the discourses of the natural sciences).*

This article is part of a larger project in which I suggest, based on eighteen years of experience as a dancer and choreographer, a historically informed philosophy of dance built around four central concepts, or "moves."[1]

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This article, in particular, is about the fourth move, which I have termed "resilience."

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the etymological meaning of resilience is "leaping back" or "jumping again," and the dancer's body, for example, is always springing back into shape, always ready for more, persisting through time's deformations, literally bounding and rebounding from every trial and setback. Two more facets of resilience's etymology are also worth noting. First, the Latin root verb of "to leap" (*salire*) is closely related to the verb *saltare*, which means both "to leap back and forth continuously" and also "to dance." Second, resilience, as opposed to synonyms such as "toughness," consists of a constantly renewed activity of coming forward; it is in no way static. This processual and repetitive dimension of dancing resilience also naturally aligns it more closely to education than strength-as-toughness, insofar as teaching involves repeated activities aimed as self-empowerment.

The first section of the article will explore dance and resilience in Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter*, focusing on her essay "Gender Is Burning" and introduced by brief looks at both Jennie Livingstone's film *Paris Is Burning* and bell hooks's essay "Is Paris Burning?" which jointly inspired Butler's essay.[2] Having thus constructed the move called resilience, I will end the article by showing how it can be used in the analysis of each of seven Wittgensteinian "families" of dance, which, in turn, could lead to many teachable moments for dance, philosophy, and the world as a whole, particularly regarding gender.

Concerning the latter, there are several dimensions to figuration's potential benefits. First, it explores how dance in general, as an embodied practice, has much to offer to feminist philosophy. In part, the fates of women and dance are currently entwined in the West, since so many young women in our societies are enrolled in years (often more than a decade) of formal dance education, followed by additional years of social dance. For this reason, any force that uplifts and valorizes dance has at least the potential to uplift and valorize women as well, as a result of their being associated in our cultural imaginary and practices.

Second, as I have explored in detail elsewhere, dance is of surprising importance in the work of two founding mothers of French feminist philosophy, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray.[3] To summarize, and beginning with Kristeva, I argue that dance in her work is a practice that moves across multiple borders, including the borders between the "semiotic" *chora* and "symbolic" choreography, between the rituals of religion and art, and between the symptoms of and treatments for troubled psyches.[4] As a consequence of this borderline nature, moreover, dance is also particularly relevant to Kristeva's analysis of the "borderline" personality disorder patient. I suggest that dance could potentially compensate for the borderline patient's

problematic verbal language by offering dance's own somatic, gestural language, in what I term a choreographing of the borderline soul or a new form of feminist education. The link to Kristeva's feminism here is that she understands the process of choreography as a kind of maternal function neglected in most psychoanalytic thought.

As for Irigaray, she holds the distinction of invoking dance more frequently, to the best of my knowledge, than any other canonical Western philosopher. Despite this achievement, however, dance has rarely been addressed in Irigaray scholarship (with the notable exception of Elend Summers-Bremer's "Reading Irigaray, Dancing"). In my view, dance functions in Irigaray's work in the following three ways: as (1) a symbol of a more positive potential comportment for heterosexual relationships, (2) an indication that the ambivalence in her work is self-consciously strategic, and (3) an example that teases apart the concepts of negative and positive mimesis (specifically by fleshing out the latter). In sum, dance for Irigaray constitutes a figure of positive ambivalence, whether between heterosexual lovers, participants in a philosophical dialogue, or aspects of a concept. Put differently, dance can help educate individuals into being more flourishing participants in intimate and philosophical relationships.

As for the third dimension of figuration's potential benefits for gendered justice, I articulate it explicitly and self-consciously as a feminist philosophy of dance. Its foremost contribution to feminism is found in one of the four "political prerequisites" that I claim figuration affirms for an ideally dance-enabling society, namely, "embodiment tolerance."[5] To unpack this phrase, figuration (a) views the body as—necessarily—a site of negotiated tensions and conflicting identities, (b) emphasizes the bodily particularity and situatedness of even the most abstract expressions, (c) envisions aesthetic flourishing as requiring sensitivity and permeability to politicized environments, and (d) refuses to accept that overnight political change is sustainable in light of the stubborn resilience of embodied habituation.

The final potential benefit of figuration for feminism concerns the specific move to which this article is devoted, resilience, as applied to its seven Wittgensteinian "families" of dance. To anticipate my analyses below, resilience buttresses the following seven points (corresponding to the seven families) that have been previously advocated by other feminist philosophers (such as Anzaldúa, Haraway, and Butler): (1) the very existence of the category of gender requires that we must never cease to struggle for justice; (2) the material, natural, and embodied ground of our being is also something against which we must struggle in order to flourish; (3) even the most irrational and petty aspects of the societal struggle for gendered justice have their pleasures and joys; (4) although many schools of philosophy employ unnecessarily oppositional and hostile methodologies that tend to dominate philosophical schools, there is nevertheless a strategic advantage in being

well trained in these tactics; (5) theatricality, role-playing dramatization, and staged conflict can be highly effective strategies in our struggle; (6) even the most abstract and natural-scientific aspects of the world constitute an actionable battleground in this struggle; and (7) the ordinary and commonsensical, as such, tend to inculcate injustice, in that they tend to resist other ways of being (defined as "aberrant" or "deviant").[6]

I will elaborate on all seven points in my final section, but there are two common threads in them that I wish to take note of at the beginning. First, we may expose ourselves to unnecessary harm if we merely assume that something that has historically been an ally of feminism (such as materialism) will always and automatically align with our struggle today and in the future. Second, by the same token, we would do well to attempt an open comportment toward particular members of groups that have historically opposed feminism, because some individuals can occasionally prove themselves worthwhile allies. This is not to say, however, that anyone has an ethical or political obligation to adopt this comportment, in part in light of past traumas, ongoing discrimination, and the justified expectation of future injustice at the hands of the groups to which such potential allies belong. In other words, our education in vetting (and being) feminist allies is always ongoing, as vividly illustrated and experienced in the resilience of dance.

I. Butler on (hooks on) Resilience

Having shown elsewhere the importance of the concept of resilience for Deleuze and Guattari, I will now begin to suggest its importance for Butler. To anticipate my conclusion, it was Butler's work that originally led me to the phrase "flourishing recirculation" in my definition of resilience. More specifically, the basis of the latter concept is Butler's insight (drawing on Nietzsche, by way of Foucault) that compulsion, repetition, and circularity need not be entirely negative or vicious.[7] Instead, one can improvise each of one's variations on one's compulsory theme. In this way, one can bend the compulsive circle into a spiral with an escape trajectory, finding therein at least a degree of agency. Butler's most famous example of this, of course, is drag, which "fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity."[8] The spiraling structure of formal education also illustrates this truth, as each period of an educational program revisits and complicates the insights of its previous periods.

The roles of mockery and laughter in such phenomena are crucial for Butler, but they must be carefully deployed so as to resist a pathological, oppressive repetition. This caution is evidenced in her subsequent claim that "parodic displacement, indeed, parodic laughter, depends on a context and a reception in which subversive confusions can be fostered."[9] Despite this

concession, some critics have objected to Butler's conception, claiming that it offers too little for political action. For my part, I hold with those of her supporters who see greater potential in her later work, including its productive engagements with other thinkers of liberation and social justice.[10] Finally on this note, Butler's invocation of drag is also an example of what I affirmed at the beginning of the present article, in terms of seeking alliances from unlikely sources (in this case, from the predominantly gay, cis-male drag performers). With her analyses of drag, Butler enlarges the field of feminism through an intersectional analysis that brings new resources to the struggle for gendered justice.

Turning now to *Bodies That Matter*, I will begin where Butler's most pertinent analyses there do—namely, with a brief look at both the documentary *Paris Is Burning* and bell hooks's commentary on it. The title of the film comes from the title of a drag ball held in 1968 by Paris DuPree, who appears briefly (and unnamed) in the film. A documentary set in the 1980s about the golden age of drag balls in New York City and the persons and communities involved therein, it has elicited strongly mixed reactions from both critics and the public, and two of the more famous academic responses have come from bell hooks and Judith Butler.

Before moving to these two critiques, however, I wish to briefly discuss the film itself, beginning with the issue of how to describe the central activity in the film, the drag ball. The interviewees in the film repeatedly use the word "ball" to describe these events, and according to the OED, the word means, first, "a dance or dancing," second, "a social gathering for dancing," and third, in "extended use," "a very enjoyable time." In other words, the drag ball is quite simply a dance itself. Furthermore, the word "ball" comes from the Old French *baler* ("to dance"), which itself comes from either the ancient Greek verb for dancing, *ballahain*, or from the French word for "ball" "on the alleged ground that, in the Middle Ages, tennis was accompanied with dancing and song." Another possibility, however, is that the "ball" of tennis, basketball, football, and other sports, is derived from *ballahain*, perhaps because dances often took place in circles, and the ball is a sphere and therefore circular. Similarly, dancers are sometimes seen as "throwing themselves through the air," much as one might throw a ball. This would also suggest an interesting connection to the dance of the celestial spheres, that is, balls, in Avicenna. At any rate, the fact that dancing is fundamental to the film should be already obvious from its title, even though it seems not to have been obvious to critics such as hooks and Butler.

There are many other indications of the centrality of dance throughout the film. At the beginning, after a few shots of the nighttime skyline of New York, the first action of the film consists of various people on the street dancing, immediately before a transition to the first shots of participants "walking"—with stylized movements and to dance music—in a drag ball. The

visual suggestion, then, is that what is going on inside, like what was just viewed outside in the streets, is also a dance. Additionally, two of the interviewees with the most face-time in the film, Willie Ninja and Dorian Corey, mention dancing as their current or past professions. Ninja makes money by teaching dance, and Corey describes himself/herself as having been a professional dancer. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, one of the longest scenes (and the middle one) in the film takes its title from a recognized dance, voguing, which is described as a core element of the ball experience. For the purposes of this investigation, this dance is worth extended attention.

Voguing is defined, toward the end of the film, as a dance form that originated in Harlem, and one interviewee explains that the name of the dance comes from its poses having been inspired largely by the magazine named *Vogue*. But voguing is first presented near the beginning of the film and is introduced discursively in the middle (in the scene titled "Reading and Voguing") by way of its genealogical relationship to ritualized, exaggerated critique, and insult at the balls. I will now discuss briefly this genealogy and what it illuminates about the role of dance in both the film and the practice of the drag ball. There are four distinct steps in the story of this criticizing practice, beginning with "insult," then "reads," then "shade," and finally "vogue." I will discuss each in turn.

First, the background on which the other three layers rest is the phenomenon of straight (especially male) persons insulting gay men in everyday life. Such insults are typically centered on the objection to gay men failing to comport themselves in stereotypically heterosexual masculine ways. Second, when such insulting comes instead from another gay man—more specifically, when an attendee at a drag ball criticizes a participant for not appearing "natural" or "real" by pointing out and exaggerating some perceived flaw or imperfection in the participant—this is called a "read" or "reading" the participant. Third, when the criticism becomes more indirect or subtle, it is dubbed "shade," which is described syntactically as being "thrown" by one person at another. Finally, when "shade" is expressed in the form of dance, typically between two dancers moving together in the spotlight, then it is called "vogue." In other words, voguing is intended to be a form of aesthetically pleasing critique, much like the practice of "signifying" in various African American artistic practices. Such practices, which in dance include the tap challenge, often focus on social criticism, as in Ralph Ellison's signifying on fellow novelist Richard Wright in Ellison's novel *Invisible Man*. Thus, since vogue is directly connected to aesthetic social critique, and vogue is a dance that pervades the film, if one does not linger over the significance of dance in *Paris Is Burning*, one misses a critical dimension of its self-awareness and political efficacy. My first example of such a failure to see is "Is Paris Burning?" from bell hooks's collection of essays, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*.

Before I turn to hooks's interpretation of the film, however, I wish to briefly acknowledge my indebtedness to hooks's work in regard to feminism in general. First and foremost, as in the case of Butler's recourse to drag (and thereby queer/LGBTQ culture more broadly), I see hooks as significantly broadening the scope, and increasing the internal sophistication, of feminism by invoking (those whom some would see as) unlikely allies. In hooks's case, these allies are people of color, including men of color. Also like Butler, hooks is helpful in her focus on what she terms "spectatorship."[11] In hooks's words, "the real world of image-making is political," and "politics of domination inform the way the vast majority of images we consume are constructed and marketed."[12] Consistent with her intersectional perspective, she also advocates explicitly for differently embodied allies and for a coalitional politics (in this case, in regard to race) on that basis. "This struggle," she writes, "needs to include non-black allies as well."[13]

Turning now to the chapter of *Black Looks* devoted to *Paris Is Burning*, it might be worth noting that the title of hooks's first essay, "Is Paris Burning?" is the same as that of a 1966 U.S. film about the 1944 liberation of Paris by Allied forces during World War II. And the title of that film, in turn, is a direct quote from Adolf Hitler, addressed originally to his chief of staff, regarding whether his orders to General Dietrich von Choltitz had been carried out. As history shows, the general disobeyed, unwilling to enter history as the destroyer of the City of Light. There is no mention of any of this in hooks's essay, so it seems that the identity of the two was unintentional. One could say, then, that hooks's work inadvertently crosses paths here with an historically charged question.

Hooks herself dips into the well of linguistics for one of the essay's first criticisms of *Paris Is Burning*. "Just to look at the ways the word 'drag' is defined," she suggests, "reconnects this label to an experience that is seen as burdensome, as retrograde and retrogressive."[14] Although I concede that "drag" does, for most folks today, mean something negative, I would argue that looking into the history and other meanings of the word could productively expand our horizons. Indeed, the OED's first definition begins with "something heavy" that is "dragged," which admittedly sounds negative. The entry continues, however, by noting that this heavy, dragged thing can be "used for breaking up ground" or as "a float or raft." "Drag" is also apparently (a) the name for a kind of stage coach, (b) slang for a car, (c) a device for collecting oysters from a riverbed, (d) a street or road, (e) influence or "pull," (f) a dance event (such as a drag ball), and (g) a name for a slow dance, among other things. So, a drag can be used as something for breaking up monolithic ground (like homophobic public opinion) or getting from point A to B like a car or road or finding valuable treasure. It can be the power to make change. It can even be a dance. On balance, then, the usages of the word "drag" seem to resist hooks's suggestion that the very definition

of the word "drag" connects the practice primarily to antiquated ideas and negative experiences.

hooks then moves on to one of her central criticisms in the essay, namely, that drag is above all an exploitative racist and misogynist practice wherein black gay men duplicate feminism's "male gaze" in objectifying each other in a collective idolizing of white supremacist femininity. *Paris Is Burning* is thus, for hooks, just one more example of how "the idealized notion of the female/feminine is really a sexist idealization of white womanhood."[15] hooks also notes, as a parallel to the drag-ball phenomenon, the woman-belittling drag performances of straight black comedians such as Eddie Murphy and Redd Foxx. "Appearing as a 'woman' within a sexist, racist media," hooks claims, "was a way to become in 'play' that 'castrated' silly childlike black male that racist white patriarchy was comfortable having as an image in their homes."[16] And indeed, it seems clear at this point that the latter performances are deeply problematic.

hooks moves to a weaker position, however, with her observation that the aforementioned Dorian Corey "names it by saying no black drag queen of his day wanted to be Lena Horne," a famous black actress during the golden age of Hollywood. To wit, hooks fails to mention that Corey immediately adds that—although he didn't know it at the time—he, for one, "really wanted to look like Lena Horne." In addition to this, there are numerous other affirmations of African American female beauty throughout the film. To take one example, in the many photographs in the bedroom of one of the interviewees, along with an admitted majority of white celebrities, there is also a brief shot of a fashion photograph of African American recording artist Diana Ross. Among other cases of blindness that hooks attributes to the film due to an apparent oversight regarding something present in the documentary, one is the "the white male patriarch" that hooks claims is "never visible in the film."[17] In fact, to take two examples, there are multiple shots of both white male New York executives and white male potential clients for prostituted individuals.

The two times that hooks comes close to analyzing dancing in "Is Paris Burning?" are when she objects to a majority of (presumably white) reviewers' finding the "pageantry of the drag balls" "compelling" and when she criticizes the way that "'voguing'" "fascinate[s] white audiences" and thereby produces "a market for both Madonna's product and Livingstone's."[18] Thus, the brief moments that hooks devotes to the activity that is the primary subject of the film associate it negatively with white people and a racist, exploitative practice on the part of both filmmaker and audience.[19] This is not to say, however, that her criticisms miss the mark, as I for one am persuaded by her argument. My concern, instead, is that the baby (of the dance) is getting thrown out with the bathwater (of the racism), which is arguably significant at least insofar as many of the performers of vogue (both within and outside the film) are themselves people of color.

In my second example of a critic of *Paris Is Burning* somehow missing the dancing, Butler affirms many of hooks's other important criticisms (which are beyond the scope of this project) and also shares several of the criticisms of hooks's appraisal that I have already discussed. Although Butler too does not give an explicit and positive account of dance (in her analyses of either the film or hooks's essay), one can already see a potential relevance for dance in Butler's work as early as the second sentence of the "Preface" to *Bodies That Matter*. "I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought," Butler notes, because "this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies 'are.'"[20] Slightly rephrased, Butler is acknowledging that she had initially attempted to make the body stand still, but since the body simply would not stop dancing, perhaps dancing is at the core of embodiment after all. Nowhere in the book, however, does Butler attend to dance as such.

In the essay devoted to *Paris Is Burning* titled "Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," Butler asserts—contra hooks—that the "compulsion to repeat an injury is not necessarily the compulsion to repeat the injury in the same way or to stay fully within the traumatic orbit of that injury." In other words, when black gay men compulsively repeat white gender norms in their dancing (inclusive of both voguing and stylized "walking" to music), this does not mean for Butler that there is no innovation, playfulness, or critique in that repetition. Indeed, this coexistence of compulsion and innovation could be considered, Butler argues, as "the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency . . . is derived from the *impossibility of choice*."[21]

In the essay's first titled section, "Ambivalent Drag," Butler concedes (to critics such as hooks) that "there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion" and that "[a]t best, it seems, drag is a site of a certain ambivalence."[22] These two moments, combined with the claim in the next paragraph that "all gender is like drag, or is drag," seem to reify the concept of drag into a stable, static substantive. This is surprising, since, throughout her work, Butler is self-conscious about the ways that grammar controls meaning and struggles to subvert problematic grammar even at the cost of clarity and readability. Here, by contrast, she appears to miss the dancing in drag, the ball of the drag ball, the music and stylization of the participants as they move across the floor. This is not to say that Butler's (and hooks's) explicit claims are not true, merely that these claims are also a site for the disappearance of dance from one of its acknowledged homes.

Moreover, Butler's use of the phrase "drag pageantry" a few pages later, perhaps following hooks, supports my reading of the previous passage.[23] To the best of my knowledge, neither the word "pageant" nor the word "pageantry" are ever used by film's interviewees; rather, as I noted above, the reference is always to the "balls" or "walking." Of course, given various aspects of the ball, analyzing the ball as a kind of pageant seems entirely

appropriate, perhaps even obligatory—*but not at the expense of eliding an analysis of the event and activity as dance*.

The primary source of confusion for me is that Butler, despite having access to her concept of performativity, does not take the opportunity—when discussing a film obsessed with dancing—to discuss dance performativity or the way that performativity per se, inclusive of gender performance, is itself a kind of dance. On the positive side, however, Butler, with help from hooks, at least directs helpful attention to this film where the connection between dance and resilience is thoroughly explored.

Synthesizing these conceptual analyses of resilience in Butler's "Gender Is Burning" yields the third and final phrase of the amplified conception of resilience for the figuration philosophy of dance—*resilience is flourishing recirculation*. The way to flourish is to keep moving, which, of necessity, means starting out on well-worn circuits while doing whatever possible to make those pathways one's own, more suited to one's own body and to one's own ways of moving through the world. Adding this to the conceptual analyses of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and combining both with etymological analyses of Frantz Fanon (that I have pursued elsewhere), I now offer the full definition of the fourth and final move of figuration: "aesthetically militant, madness-impersonating, flourishing recirculation."[24] In brief, resilience is aesthetically militant because it is a constant combat against violent and oppressive forces (Fanon); it is madness-impersonating in that it taps into a relentless, schizophrenic energy directed against late capitalist norms (Deleuze and Guattari); and it is a flourishing recirculation in that it finds well-being in accepting, while constantly modifying, the circular nature of both itself and reality (Butler).

To connect resilience to other theoretical discourses on dance, it is closely related to (a) Rudolf Laban's movement analysis's concept of "time," which involves the alternative qualities of "sudden" and "sustained"; (b) Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's concept of "linear" movement quality, which involves the use of the dancer's body to create abstract geometric lines, which, in turn, requires years of grueling training to develop and maintain; and (c) Suzanne Langer's concept of "the dynamic line," the series of sounds a choreographer/dancer makes, either aloud or in their mind, correlated with the movements of the choreography. (For example, the dynamic line for a basic "step-ball-change" in tap dancing might be performed as the series of phonemes "Bah-pah-DAH".)

To rephrase these insights in a way consonant with all three of these theoretical discourses, resilience constitutes the "when" dimension of analysis, the durations of the ways of the goings from starting places of any discourse/phenomenon. The critical dimension of this final aspect of figuration for philosophy is its claim that no analysis of a practice or discourse is complete without taking into account the temporality and historicity of

that practice or discourse, which, in turn, ties directly into resilience's educational power. That is, nothing is without history, and preserving history requires the dance-like resilience of education.

II. Applying Resilience to the Seven Families of Dance

Having concluded these conceptual analyses of resilience in Butler, I now turn to the construction of resilience as a move of figuration and to resilience's application to the seven members of its seven families of dance. I will begin the analysis of each dance with the conventional or commonsensical usage of the move, then consider the two adjectival aspects and one substantive core of the amplified, philosophical construct. In the case of resilience, the commonsense meaning is the ability to rebound continually from hardships, the first amplified aspect is aesthetic militancy, the second amplified aspect is madness-impersonation, and the substantial core is flourishing recirculation. Finally, at the end of each paragraph, I will briefly describe the implications of these analyses for society in general and for gender in particular.

For ballet, the commonsensical account of resilience leads to the stamina and endurance of dancers, who endure long rehearsals and multiple performances while still performing at their peak. Resilience finds ballet's aesthetic militancy in a perpetual staging, which Langer rightly emphasizes, of a war of metahuman forces, such as gods, armies, geometric shapes, and emotional archetypes. Resilience finds ballet's madness-impersonation, relatively straightforwardly, in its presentation of (relatively) sane human beings sashaying and leaping about in a way that in any other context would appear insane. And the flourishing recirculation of ballet lies in its repeated performances, each slightly different, of the same pieces and repertoires, which continue to educate, delight, and challenge a recirculating public. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of concert dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of concert dance consists its presentation of endurance against perpetual warfare, perceptually indistinguishable from insanity but necessary for an overflowing well-being*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that the very existence of the category of gender requires that those gendered in disempowering ways must never cease to struggle for gendered justice. This is true despite the claims from those who benefit from gendered injustice that there is nothing left for which to fight, and their conclusion that it would, therefore, be insane to continue that fight. Indeed, it would arguably be helpful for us to recognize and affirm the agonistic per se as a permanent component of the good, including as part of feminist education.

For clogging, commonsensical resilience is the stamina of the dancers, despite the exhausting aerobic workout and fatiguing of the lower body.

Resilience finds aesthetic militancy in clogging's perpetual war against both the ground, which would muffle the intricate sounds of the steps without a pounding force, and also the gravity that tries to keep the dancers' knees from rising to their appropriate height, which is at least waist-high if not higher. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that clogging is extremely repetitive, seemingly compulsive, and extremely loud, like the incessant, disruptive ranting of some severely mentally ill people. And flourishing recirculation in clogging lies in the way that the literal circles described in the air by the dancers' knees, always slightly different each time, are the sources of consistent happiness for both performers and audience. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of folk dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of folk dance consists in its perpetual combat with earth and sky, a compulsive and garish circling on the ground as ground of community satisfaction*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that the material, natural, and embodied ground of our being is also something against which we must struggle to flourish and which, therefore, must remain an additional object of feminist education. Thus, we should not fall into the trap of merely reversing the Cartesian dichotomy, by condemning the mind while thoughtlessly and naively celebrating a reified conception of the (singular) "body."[25] Instead, we should remain vigilant in assessing the positive and negative dimensions of empiricism, naturalism, materialism, and other philosophical positions historically allied with feminism to educate ourselves in a plurality of traditions.

For salsa, commonsensical resilience is the discipline required to recreate the (genuine or fabricated) sexual/romantic tension between the partners by means of a variety of songs, genres, tempos, styles, and so forth. Resilience finds aesthetic militancy in salsa's ability to sustain in each couple a kind of war for control and dominance. Madness-impersonation can be found in the ability/willingness of the couple to fabricate sexual/romantic tension with a stranger, friend, or relative and/or remain on the precipice of romantic and sexual surrender each time a new song is played. And flourishing recirculation in salsa lies in how the repetition of similar moves to similar songs with similar persons on similar evenings nevertheless creates buoyancy for the societies in which it takes place. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of societal dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of societal dance consists in its repeated struggles for dominance and control, requiring quasi-delusional role-playing and intense repression, but nevertheless enjoyably greasing the wheels of society*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that we should remember that even the most irrational and petty aspects of the societal struggle for gendered justice have their pleasures and joys, including as part of the process of a feminist education. And even if, for some individuals,

there is no pleasure there, it remains true that effective striving against irrational institutions requires a certain degree of strategic irrationality. In sum, it is arguably counterproductive (both psychologically and politically) to insist on an unattainable level of "pure" rationality and to deny oneself the satisfactions and compensations of playing society's games, with all the educational potential that games offer.[26]

For Tae Kwon Do, commonsensical resilience is the discipline required to attend classes regularly and repeatedly attempt to pass tests in order to attain higher ranks of mastery. Resilience finds aesthetic militancy in Tae Kwon Do's very essence as a martial art; it is an art, and thus a kind of aesthetic pursuit, of excellence in combat. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that most of the practice of Tae Kwon Do takes place without an opponent, which would give the impression to the untrained observer that the practitioner is fighting an invisible or imagined enemy. And flourishing recirculation in Tae Kwon Do lies in the fact that victory in a real-life conflict is quite simply a modified version of the practitioner's repetitive circling through an enormous number of moves, forms, and sparring techniques. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of agonistic dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of agonistic dance consists in preparation for combat through aesthetic perfection, often by the seemingly insane avoidance of other combatants, with the goal of making actual combat nothing more than a variation on cyclically repeated practice*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that fighters for gendered justice would do well to invest more heavily in mock verbal "combat." Although many feminists are rightly critical, in principle, of the unnecessarily oppositional and hostile methodologies that dominate certain schools of philosophy, there is nevertheless a strategic advantage in being well trained in the tactics of one's frequent adversaries. Arguably, one can both train in a discipline and remain critical of its history, associations, and the logical conclusion of applying it universally and thoughtlessly (in this case, in a purely aggressive, rather than self-defensive, application). Argument should, therefore, remain part of feminist education.

For the pollen dance of the honeybee, commonsensical resilience is the indefinite repetition of enabling the search for nectar (and thereby pollen). Resilience finds aesthetic militancy in the pollen dance in its aesthetically rich dramatization of the conflict between the bee and the environmental factors (such as wind, limited sunlight, and so forth) that stand in the way of the forager. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that the pollen dance appears, to an uninformed human, as the spastic and confused fluttering of one bee surrounded by a group of her more-controlled hivemates. And flourishing recirculation in the pollen dance lies in the fact the literal circles and swerves of the dancing bee make the well-being of future inhabitants of the hive possible. To paraphrase these insights at the level of

the family of animal dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of animal dance consists in hyperbolic imitations of actual conflict, which appear random and insane beyond those familiar with the species, consisting often of physical circular movements enabling temporal cycles of life to continue*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that theatricality, role-playing dramatization, and staged conflict can be highly effective and should, therefore, also be emphasized in feminist education. Moreover, the repetition involved in such phenomena is invaluable, although at first glance such repetition might seem pointlessly circular. One helpful example of this truth can be found in Concepción and Eflin's article on their theatrical approach to teaching a course on feminist ethics and epistemology.[27]

For "falling stars," commonsensical resilience is the unwavering movement of light across the sky, until the moment it suddenly ends in darkness. Resilience finds the aesthetic militancy of "falling stars" in the way that they compete with the "stationary" stars for the attention of human observers by fighting their way brightly and beautifully across the cosmos. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that "falling" in this context can suggest "falling to one's death," and thus a kind of "suicide" of the "star," which likely seems crazy from a human perspective, according to which being a star is one of the greatest kinds of being imaginable. And flourishing recirculation in "falling stars" lies in the fact that their periodical "fallings" mark interesting cycles in the rhythms of the cosmos, thus increasing the stargazer's satisfaction with existence. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of astronomical dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of astronomical dance consists in an ongoing fight for terrestrial attention, at the cost of apparent insanity in the cosmos, which nonetheless makes human life seem more bearable*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that even the most abstract and natural-scientific aspects of the world, and the educational spaces in which those aspects are discussed and transmitted, constitute an actionable battleground for the fight for gendered justice. In fact, criticisms of those discourses have generated some of feminist philosophy's most ambitious criticisms of biased philosophical orthodoxy, as in Donna Haraway's work in the philosophy of biology. In other words, it seems important to continuously challenge antifeminists' repeated claim that gender operates only within certain narrowly constricted societal parameters (and is thus of only minimal importance in most areas).

And finally, for Pablo Neruda's poetry, the commonsensical resilience is the poet's prolific struggle to enunciate his world in an enormous variety of ways. Resilience finds aesthetic militancy in Neruda's constant wrestling of new meanings and effects from old words and usages. Madness-impersonation can be found in the fact that anyone adopting Neruda's condensed, provocative, and surrealistic poetry as part of their everyday speech

would be thought insane. And flourishing recirculation in Neruda's poetry lies in the fact that an individual, a generation, multiple generations, and even multiple cultures (through translation) can return to Neruda's work and find new meanings and new ways of being joyfully in the world. To paraphrase these insights at the level of the family of discursive dance in general, *according to figuration, the resilience of discursive dance consists in an infinite war against ordinariness, funded by the deliberate courting of folly, in order to pioneer new circles of reading and living well*.

One important implication of this conclusion for gender is that the ordinary and commonsensical, by their very nature, tend to inculcate injustice, because they are resistant to other ways of being defined as aberrant or deviant (in order to prop up the worth of the ordinary). Consequently, there is virtue in actively exploring that which is considered silly or ridiculous, on the assumption that certain good and novel phenomena will always be sequestered there (due to the threat posed by those phenomena to the current order of things). One good example of this approach can be found in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. In short, and in conclusion, my hope is that we as feminists will do our best to dance with the weird and the strange, including in feminist education. For on that dance floor, a more justly gendered world may yet await.

Notes

1. For excerpted chapters of this dissertation, see Joshua M. Hall, "Core Aspects of Dance: Aristotle on Positure," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 53, no. 1 (2019): 1–16; "Core Aspects of Dance: Schiller and Dewey on Grace," *Dance Chronicle* 40, no. 1 (2017): 74–98; and "Core Aspects of Dance: Condillac and Mead on 'Gesture,'" *Dance Chronicle* 36, no. 3 (2013): 352–71.
2. See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011); *Paris Is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston, DVD, 1990; Elend Summers-Bremer, "Reading Irigaray, Dancing," *Hypatia* 15, no. 1 (2000): 90–124; and bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: South End, 1992).
3. See Joshua M. Hall, "Self-Mimetic Curved Silvering: Dancing with Irigaray," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2014): 76–101; and "Choreographing the Borderline: Dancing with Kristeva," *Philosophy Today* 56, no. 1 (2012): 49–58.
4. Kristeva was recently invited to speak on the relationship between her work and dance by a Swedish choreographer, but her remarks from the occasion elide dance almost entirely (with just a couple of brief gestures toward it at the beginning and end). See Julia Kristeva, "Stockholm: Going beyond the Human through Dance," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2013): 1–12.
5. For in-depth analyses of the intersection of dance, gender, and race, see Susan Foster, *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* (New York, Routledge, 1995).
6. For more on analytic philosophy as an ally of feminism, see Ann Garry, "A Minimally Decent Philosophical Method? Analytic Philosophy and Feminism,"

Hypatia 10, no. 3 (1995): 7–30. For a brilliant application of theatrical powers to feminist pedagogy, see David Concepción and Juli Thorson Eflin, "Enabling Change: Transformative and Transgressive Learning in Feminist Ethics and Epistemology," *Teaching Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2009): 177–98. For a detailed feminist genealogy of a natural science, see Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York, Routledge, 1990). And for my favorite example of a feminist embracing and celebration of the unordinary as such, see Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/la Frontera*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007).

7. For more on Butler's indebtedness to these two thinkers, see Alison Stone, "Towards a Genealogical Feminism: A Reading of Judith Butler's Political Thought," *Contemporary Political Theory* 4, no. 1 (2005): 4–24.
8. Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 174.
9. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177.
10. See Seyla Benhabib. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Kathy Dow Magnus, "The Unaccountable Subject: Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency," *Hypatia* 21, no. 2 (2006): 81–103.
11. hooks, *Black Looks*, 6.
12. hooks, *Black Looks*, 5.
13. hooks, *Black Looks*, 7.
14. hooks, *Black Looks*, 146.
15. hooks, *Black Looks*, 147.
16. hooks, *Black Looks*, 146.
17. hooks, *Black Looks*, 148.
18. hooks, *Black Looks*, 152.
19. Dance functions similarly, unfortunately, in hooks's next essay in the collection, the subject of which is Madonna, the popular U.S. entertainer.
20. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, ix.
21. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 124 (italics in original).
22. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 125.
23. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 128.
24. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); and Joshua M. Hall, "Revalorized Black Embodiment: Dancing with Fanon," *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 3 (2012): 274–88.
25. For more on the complexity of the relationship between feminism and Descartes, see Susan Bordo, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Descartes* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
26. One obvious example of an embracing of these strategies is Butler's own valorized conception of drag in Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
27. Concepción and Elfin, "Enabling Change."