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Globalization, Habitus, and the Balletic Body

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The aim in this article is to write an evocative ethnography of the embodiment of ballet as a cultural practice. The authors draw on their fieldwork at the Royal Ballet (London), where they conducted 20 in-depth interviews with ballet staff (and watched "the company at work" in class, rehearsal, and performance). They explored dancers' ($n = 9$) and ex-dancers' (who are now teachers, administrators, and character dancers; $n = 11$) perceptions of their bodies, dancing careers, and the major changes that have occurred in the world of ballet over their professional lives. They focus on their accounts of the homogenizing effects of globalization on the culture of the Royal Ballet. Although this research is set within the elite and narrow cultural field of dance, the authors hope that it is an interesting addition to broader debates on the interrelationships between individuals and institutions, the body and society, and globalization and culture.

Keywords: *body; globalization; habitus; ballet; art; culture; ethnography*

The overall aim of this research project was to counter the overly theoretical approach to the body that remains such a conspicuous feature of the vast literature on the body, through an ethnography of the Royal Ballet Company, London. Previous papers have looked at, for example, aging and career in ballet dancers (Wainwright & Turner, 2003, 2004) and the injured dancing body (Turner & Wainwright, 2003; Wainwright & Turner, in press). In his seminal book, *Body & Society*, Turner (1996) argued that the sociology of the body is characterized by an abundance of theorizing but little empirical research. Little attention has been focused on the ways in which "specific social worlds invest, shape, and deploy human bodies" (Wacquant, 1995, p. 65). More generally, Turner and Rojek (2001) hold that such "decorative sociology" is all too common across the whole field of cultural studies. In a similar vein, Atkinson (2000) argues that the dominant strategy of research on the "culture of opera" is what he describes as "sociology at a distance." In contrast, Atkinson's ethnography of the Welsh National Opera explores the cultural production of opera as a series of social practices. Similarly, we wanted to begin to understand the balletic body as a series of social practices.

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Such research is an important counterweight to the peculiarly disembodied academic dance literature, which also echoes a similar “bias” toward theoretical work. Thus, there is a dearth of empirical research on the sociology of Western theater dance (Thomas, 1995) and especially on ballet. In brief, research on the body and dance is dominated by postmodern readings of “dance as texts” (Adshead-Lansdale, 1999; Desmond, 1997; Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999; Goellner & Murphy, 1995). Perhaps the major exception to this sociology at a distance is an ethnographic study of four ballet companies (Wulff, 1998). However, the anthropological research of Wulff says little on either social theory or the body. All of this means that theoretically grounded empirical research on the dancer’s body will, potentially, make a useful contribution to both the sociology of the body and cultural studies, to qualitative understandings of elite high culture (Atkinson, 2000; Born, 1995; Moyer & Wagstaff, 1995; Wulff, 1998), and to ethnographic studies of “grounded globalization” (Buraway et al., 2000).

Ballet in the 19th century, and well into the second half of the 20th century, was an important component of diverse projects of cultural nationalism. For example, Frederick Ashton, the arch-classicist choreographer, created the “English style” and a canonical repertoire that dominated the Royal Ballet for decades, creating a national style of lyrical, fluid dance (Bland, 1981; Edwards, 2003; Money, 1968). Our study is unusual as it is an elite ethnography of one of the world’s leading classical ballet companies. Many of our informants had spent their entire careers with the Royal Ballet, and several had been with the Royal Ballet School and Company for more than 50 years. Their lives and our interviews are therefore saturated with references to the history of the company. To help the reader make sense of our data, we will give a concise summary of the Royal Ballet.

The Royal Ballet is descended from the small Vic-Wells Ballet, founded in London in 1931 by Dame Ninette de Valois (1898-2001). The Royal Ballet has been based at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, since 1946. Many of the early ballets were choreographed by de Valois, and the distinct style of the fledgling Royal Ballet was molded by dancers schooled at what became the Royal Ballet School, which blended together the styles of French, Italian, and Russian ballet with British theatricality and dance to produce a distinct English school of ballet. Sir Frederick Ashton (1904-1988), in particular, molded both the company and his muse, Dame Margot Fonteyn, through his distinctively English style. This accentuated classical purity and expressive lyricism, as illustrated by his short ballets such as *Symphonic Variations* (1946), *The Dream* (1964), and *A Month in the Country* (1976) and full-length ballets inspired by the 19th century like *Cinderella* (1948) and *La Fille mal Gardée* (1960). The Royal Ballet style has also been shaped by the dramatic and emotionally charged ballets of Sir Kenneth Macmillan (1929-1992), especially through his three-act ballets such as *Romeo and Juliet* (1965), *Manon* (1974), and *Mayerling* (1978) (see Bland, 1981; Craine & Mackrell, 2000; de Valois, 1957; Edwards, 2003; Walker, 1987).

In this article, we draw on our ethnographic research at the Royal Ballet to explore the relationship between globalization, individual dancers, the institution

of the ballet company, and the dominant forms of choreography within this institutional setting. We examine these ideas in the first part of our article by drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus. We describe three types of habitus, namely, individual, institutional, and choreographic habitus, which we discuss using examples from both books on ballet and our own interview data with Royal Ballet dancers. We then draw on these types of habitus to illustrate dancers' views on the globalization of ballet. We argue that the Royal Ballet of today is very different from the Royal Ballet of 30 or 40 years ago and that although the company remains unique, the rise of other ballet companies in the West and the mixing of dancers and choreographers between companies have resulted in an increased homogenization both of the Royal Ballet and of the global field of ballet.

Bourdieu and Habitus

Bourdieu's corpus of work is widely viewed as a productive approach to both theory and research on the body (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992). In essence, Bourdieu links agency (practice) with structure (via capital and field) through the process of habitus. Habitus is, basically, an acquired scheme of dispositions, for "when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water' . . . it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). Moreover, "the way people treat their bodies reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190). Bourdieu, in brief, argues that physical capital (in the form of body shape, gait, and posture) is socially produced through, for example, sport, food, and etiquette. Moreover, Bourdieu's concept of habitus "illuminate[s] the circular process whereby practices are incorporated within the body, only then to be regenerated through the embodied work and competence of the body" (Crossley, 2001, p. 106). From our ethnography, we suggest that it is possible to tease out three forms of habitus (individual, institutional, and choreographic) in the field of dance. Furthermore, this threefold structure is an important corrective to one of the common criticisms of Bourdieu, namely, that (Shilling, 1993)

the concept of habitus has a lot of work to do in Bourdieu's conceptual scheme. It is something of an overburdened concept whose meaning tends to slip, slide and even disappear, as it is deployed in different contexts. (p. 149)

As a brief illustration of our tripartite distinction, the British dancer Wayne Sleep's stature, speed, and remarkable ability to turn, or his individual habitus, were accentuated by his schooling (Royal Ballet School) and training (Royal Ballet), which together formed his institutional habitus (Sleep, 1996). This was further reinforced in the roles created for him at the Royal Ballet (via his choreographic habitus; e.g., as Kolya in Ashton's *Month in the Country*; Brinson & Crisp, 1980). Sleep's height (5'2") meant that he was seen as a demi-caractère dancer rather than as a danseur noble (Sleep, 1996). In other words, his stature meant that he danced the Jester and not the Prince (in Ashton's ballet *Cinderella*, for

example). His balletic body sealed his dancing destiny. In the following sections, we briefly outline the shifting notions of individual, institutional, and choreographic habitus as a prelude to our discussion of the interactions between these forms of habitus and the increasing globalization of ballet.

Institutional Habitus

The institution of the Royal Ballet was a very different organization some 40 years ago from the rather beneficent employer of today (Lebrecht, 2000; Tooley, 1999). Megan, now a leading dance coach, vividly recalls the physically exhausting but life-enhancing Royal Ballet tours of the United States in the 60s:

I just remember that I went to work every day and I loved every second of it and I danced my socks off, I suppose for years and years and years it seemed. Touring to America, and being on trains for 5 months away from home, and loving every moment of it. Being absolutely exhausted. Completely exhausted, like I'd never imagined. But I was not the only one. All of us in the corps de ballet [chorus] were worn to a frazzle. I think we were used and abused, probably, but we didn't mind.

The current Royal Ballet dancers would not tolerate such treatment and, equally, the current company management would not attempt to impose such working conditions on dancers. However, such tours reinforced the institutional habitus of the company as dancers felt a vital part of the family of the Royal Ballet.

The corps de ballet is in many ways seen to represent the institutional habitus of a company such as the Royal Ballet. Here, Jessie, who has responsibility for selecting new corps dancers, discusses the care with which such selections are made:

When we are looking to take a dancer in from outside who hasn't been through this school, we would know by looking at them whether or not they were too far away from us stylistically. If anybody, I mean however fabulous a dancer they were, if they had come straight from the Kirov or the Bolshoi and they were excessively, you know, Russian in training, then it's sort of pointless because . . . they'd stick out like a sore thumb. So, obviously their style has got to lend itself to form a part of a whole.

This quote illustrates the ways in which some dancers' bodies are perceived as just too different to meld into the unified body of the Royal Ballet corps de ballet. So, some dancers would just be "too alien" as dancing bodies to even be called for an audition, whereas others would be auditioned but some of these would subsequently be rejected for being "too far away" from the company style. This is a good example of the way in which the disposition of the dancer, his or her individual habitus, is gradually erased by the embodiment of an institutional habitus. Moreover, the institutional habitus itself is (by definition) something that varies between institutions. As a dancer, what you learn at ballet school is developed and modified by what you learn when you become a part of a ballet company. The way you dance, your individual habitus, is gradually transformed. At the same time, as

we will discuss in more detail later, the recent influx of ballet dancers from the European Union (around half the company is now from the EU; Snelson, 2003) means that the uniqueness of the Royal Ballet style has been eroded.

Individual Habitus

In the previous section, examples were given of the institutional habitus dominating the individual. There are cases, however, where this position is reversed and where the individual habitus can dominate the institutional habitus. The individual habitus is evidenced in star dancers, in particular, whose very individuality is an essential part of their charisma as dancers. Great teachers recognize this and attempt to facilitate a dancer's search for his or her own interpretation of dance roles. For example, Dexter, who was a star dancer and who is now a leading ballet coach, argues,

I don't say to them, "Well, you've got to do it the way I did it." I think that's fatal. You've got to treat everybody as an individual, and you do it the way they do it best. You don't say, "I used to do it like that. . . ." Good choreographers like Kenneth [Macmillan] and Fred [Ashton] use you as putty. They don't tell you what to do, they get something out of you and you feel that you are contributing. . . . I don't think I've ever felt, "Oh, I can see me in that performance." I love it when they [dancers] come up with something of their own. I love that. I don't want them to come on looking like me. If they're not very good, they do; if they're very good, they don't.

In a similar vein, the idea of the distinct voice of the star student is something that academics see in their best students, where it is often obvious which students have the ability, imagination, and drive required to become, say, tenured academics. In high culture, as in academia, individuality can also be a source of conflict. Many great artists are almost better known for their artistic temperament than for their performances. In the field of opera, for example, Maria Callas is the classic example of someone who acted like a diva (Galatopoulos, 1998; Tooley, 1999). Dudley, in the quotation below, talks about this in relation to four star dancers, where he argues that "being difficult" is often an outsider's perception of what is, really, the internalization of very high standards:

Gelsey [Kirkland], she was impossible, impossible. Misha [Baryshnikov] was impossible. Margot [Fonteyn] was impossible. Rudolf [Nureyev] was difficult. But when the curtain went up on the stage, then you knew why they were difficult, and why they wanted it this way. They were difficult people, not because they were difficult, but because they wanted a certain level—and in getting a certain level, you've got to insist that everyone around you does what you want. I can remember when Gels [Gelsey Kirkland] was doing *Romeo and Juliet* and Gerd [Larsson] said to her, "We've been doing this ballet for 20 years," and she said, "That's just what it looks like!" And Gerd, her mouth fell open and she came to me afterwards and said, "I don't know what we are going to do." I said, "All you have to do is answer Gelsey's questions and she's fine."

In this example, the individual view of Gerd is, effectively, the institutional view, or habitus, of the Royal Ballet. In contrast, Gelsey Kirkland, who had come from the United States to dance with the Royal Ballet as a guest dancer, saw the production of *Romeo and Juliet* with fresh eyes and so forced some aspects of the 20-year-old production of this ballet to change (Kirkland & Lawrence, 1990). Her dancing in these productions, incidentally, earned her and the Royal Ballet rave reviews (Kirkland & Lawrence, 1990; Tooley, 1999).

Choreographic Habitus

Many of the world's great dance companies are associated with the style of dance of great choreographers, for example, New York City Ballet (NYCB) with Balanchine, the Royal Ballet with Ashton and Macmillan. The strong choreographic habitus within the individual dance company has been, perhaps, the major factor in molding a dance company's institutional habitus. Lisa, for example, reflected on her own training at the Royal Ballet School, her career as a (principal) dancer with the company, and her career today as a dance teacher with the Royal Ballet.

I'm sure when I was in the school, I was not an Ashton dancer. I'm sure I was a de Valois dancer, because she taught us. And I know for a fact that Fred [Ashton] particularly thought of me as very stiff. Well, he isn't going to have stiff dancers because he likes bendy girls, and it's a life-long process trying to be that. How [as a ballet coach] do you explain that to someone who is so centered, that can perform these wonderful technical feats [such as multiple pirouettes], that you would like them to be slightly more give in the top? They look at you as if to say, "Well if I do that I'm going to fall over!" That's what ballet's up against. But you know, from a visual point of view, you want to see them do all this, marvelous turning and everything; and also all this wonderful jumping. But you also want this, sort of, abandon to the music and the sheer luxury of dancing as well. You want all that; I'm hungry for everything!

In other words, as a dancer, what you learn at ballet school is developed and modified by what you learn when you become a part of a ballet company. The way you dance, your individual habitus, can be gradually transformed as your career develops within a ballet company, and this is especially so if there is a very strong choreographic habitus within your new dance company.

More recently, this choreographic habitus has conflicted with the individual habitus of the increasing number of guest dancers invited to dance with the Royal Ballet Company. The earliest and possibly best-known exemplar of this was Rudolf Nureyev, who defected from the USSR to the United Kingdom, from the Kirov to the Royal Ballet (Solway, 1996). Despite his undoubted brilliance as a dancer, Ashton only created two roles for Nureyev (Vaughan, 1977). In both roles, Ashton made little attempt to mold Nureyev into an Ashton/Royal Ballet dancer (Kavanagh, 1996). Dominic, who was a young male dancer when Nureyev joined the Royal Ballet in the 1960s, recalls,

I can remember [names ballet coach], who was new in the company, having a real go at Rudi [Nureyev], because he couldn't do this [demonstrates] in *Rendezvous* with Fred [Ashton]. He wasn't very good in that, or in *Symphonic Variations*; and we can say that because he was brilliant at what he did. But there were certain things that he was not good at, and *Symphonic* was one of them.

Nureyev himself realized that his body, his Russian style, was at odds with the proper English style of Ashton, and he was therefore reluctant to allow himself to be molded into an Ashton/Royal Ballet dancer, as it may have diluted the charismatic embodiment of the exotic Other that contributed to his phenomenal dancing career (Solway, 1996).

The Globalization of Ballet and the Evolution of Habitus

In this section on globalization, we begin with further discussion on the ways in which the choreographic and institutional habitus of the Royal Ballet Company has been challenged by the influx of both principal and corps dancers who have a different schooling. We then focus on the globalization of the ballet repertoire and the economic imperative behind this.

Import of Dancers Into the Company

The increased influx of dancers trained in schools other than the Royal Ballet School was seen to be one of the major factors producing a change in the Royal Ballet's dancing style (Jordan & Grau, 1996). The following quote from Dudley begins with a reflection on the change in the body type of the corps de ballet, brought about by the shift to being a company that draws on a much wider international pool of talent than it did even a decade or so ago:

It's totally changed, totally changed, totally changed; because half of the people in the company now are from Europe, not from the Commonwealth. You see the Commonwealth was very different. Most of the people in the Commonwealth had come from England and gone to there, so . . . Those people went out, and they trained the dancers and then they came back. Now you've got the Italian influence and the French influence and the Belgian and the Dutch and the Spanish—so it's like Heinz 57 varieties. So at one point . . . if you ever looked at the girls' feet from the calf down, they were all the same shape—this was the same shape, the foot was the same shape. So when they stood like this [strikes a pose] in one long line, you would swear it was one girl reproduced—even though they were all different sizes. Now there's not two of them with the same in the leg. They were picked to look like that. And the strength of the Royal Ballet was its ensemble work . . . its corps de ballet.

In terms of the increasing number of guest principals, many of the ballets created for the Royal Ballet by Ashton and Macmillan have become standard repertoire for ballet companies throughout the world (Craine & Mackrell, 2000), so guest principals arrive at the Royal Ballet generally knowing the part they are to

perform. However, part of the role of leading dance coaches is to attempt to preserve the company style and to “iron out” any major deviations from this element of the institutional habitus that individual star dancers may attempt to import into the company (Fay, 1997). Some dance coaches gain tremendous authority in upholding a choreographer’s intentions through having been present when ballets were created and through having danced in dozens of performances of roles in particular ballets. In this way, the cultural capital of the coach is used to maintain the choreographic habitus of the company. Dexter, who has been with the Royal Ballet for almost 50 years and has been a leading ballet coach with the Royal Ballet for the past 20 years or so, discusses this aspect of his work:

More and more people are doing repertory Ashton and Macmillan. I mean, the Kirov are doing *Manon* so people can slip backwards and forwards or can interchange—a bit like the operas. . . . Igor [Zelinsky, Kirov Ballet], who’s going to do *Romeo* here, came to do *Manon*, and I coached him in *Manon* and it’s quite hard to get rid of all that Kirov heroicness and do Macmillan. He keeps on throwing in all these kind of heroic poses [demonstrates]. . . . I’ve worked quite hard on him.

In this instance, Dexter points out the vital distinction between teaching a soloist the steps of a full-length ballet and producing an authentic and embodied production of, in this instance, Macmillan’s *Manon*. The theme of “working to get it out of him” as the coach endeavors to modify a dancer’s ingrained institutional habitus (the Kirov heroics) is also developed in another quote from Dexter below. Macmillan created his *Romeo and Juliet* for the Royal Ballet in 1965, and the company has danced it almost every year over the past 36 years (Bland, 1981; Tooley, 1999). Dexter has seen, and danced in or coached, virtually every one of these performances. In the next quotation, he talks about his experience when coaching a guest principal who is already a star in the American Ballet Theatre (ABT) production of Macmillan’s *Romeo and Juliet*. However, he was dancing the role in a radically different way from the one that is the “official Royal Ballet interpretation”:

I know *Romeo* isn’t the same as ours at ABT because we have had a boy come over to do the balcony pas de deux and I just was speechless. It was awful! I was supposed to rehearse them, but it was two rehearsals and he’s a guest artist and I thought, “Where would I begin?” I was horrified. The solo goes [sings the theme at the Royal Ballet speed and then twice as fast!], and he did the whole thing with a grin and there was no change in the music—and it was because he couldn’t jump. He could turn and he could move quickly. It was frantic not romantic. It wasn’t romantic. It wasn’t joyous. It wasn’t emotional. There was no time to have any emotion!

This is a vivid example of someone’s individual habitus and physical capital (“he could turn but he couldn’t jump”) usurping the authentic choreographic habitus of a different ballet institution. However, Dexter also illustrates the contrasting situation, in which the institutional and choreographic habitus are maintained, in the following quote, where he recalls a clash between a great choreographer and a great dancer:

With Kenneth [MacMillan] here, Sylvie [Guillem] changed a lift in the pas de deux [in *Romeo and Juliet*]. She put in—it's a very hard lift to do—one of those low ones right at the end when you're really tired . . . and they had a big argument. She said, "I'm doing one of your lifts! It's from your ballet!" And he said, "Yes, I know. But one's a virgin, and the other's a whore!" It was exactly true, it's like, "take me," the *Manon* lift; and the other was beautiful. It has a meaning you see. It makes sense. He did that lift in *Manon* because she was a tart and a whore, and he did the other one because she was a sweet virgin, you know, so they look totally different. So you've got to preserve all that I think. . . . Every time I teach *Romeo* or whatever, I do try and do what Kenneth [Macmillan] wanted.

Here, Sylvie Guillem's distinct and forceful individual habitus attempted to change the Macmillan element of the choreographic and institutional habitus of the Royal Ballet. Choreographer and coach combine to preserve the authentic differences between interpretations of *Juliet* and *Manon*, and in the process, Guillem's own individual habitus becomes metamorphosed into the institutional habitus of the Royal Ballet. If she chooses to coach dancers in these roles once she retires, then it seems likely that she will pass on this embodied knowledge of the Macmillan heritage to the next generation of leading ballet dancers. However, this preservation of choreographic and institutional habitus relies on the presence of key individuals who have themselves been steeped in the choreographic and institutional habitus of the Royal Ballet Company, and as time passes, there are decreasing numbers of such individuals.

Global Exchange of Ballet Repertory

Another key factor recognized by our respondents as affecting the globalization of ballet is the increased global exchange of the ballets created by choreographers. As recently as the 1960s, the ballet companies themselves exported their unique repertory so that the NYCB danced Balanchine in Europe, and the Royal Ballet danced Ashton in the United States. This global export of the work of major choreographers *by* their ballet companies has largely been replaced by the global exchange of the masterpieces of the classical ballet repertory *between* ballet companies. In broader terms, these increases in the velocity and circulation of goods reflect one of the defining features of the globalization process (Giddens, 1999; Held, McGraw, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999). In this case, the balletic goods are the bearers of physical and cultural capital. This global flow of successful ballets has resulted in key Royal Ballet works by Macmillan and Ashton becoming an important part of the repertory of the major ballet companies in Europe, North America, and elsewhere, as Oscar remarked:

From the Royal Ballet point of view, unfortunately and understandably, Macmillan ballets and Ashton ballets are so popular that other companies have put on their version and taken them into their company. So, now, if we go to America and we go to do *Manon*, American Ballet Theatre do *Manon*, Canadian Ballet do *Manon*—the

same version, Macmillan's *Manon*. So why should they want to see *our Manon*, why should they? [In the past,] when we went abroad, we were bringing something totally unique. Our own ballets were totally unique. It's not the same now; everyone's doing them, which has cut our chances.

This example illustrates a point made by Bauman (1998): "Globalization divides as much as it unites; it divides as it unites" (p. 2). The global ballet trade has an inexorable homogenizing effect on world ballet as companies now dance an increasingly similar repertoire of ballets, and this inevitably reduces the difference between ballet companies as less of the distinct repertoire that made ballet companies unique remains. For example, much less Balanchine is now danced by the NYCB (Ramsey, 1998) and far less Ashton is now danced at the Royal Ballet (Edwards, 2003; Grau & Jordan, 1996). Dudley, a famous dance teacher who had taught leading ballet companies in 15 countries in the past year alone, was particularly forthright in his views on the global changes in ballet. We asked,

RESEARCHER: What are the main ways in which you think ballet has changed?

DUDLEY: The biggest problem is that it's become homogenized. It's a very good question because each company now is—they're all like the same. They all have a Fred [Ashton] piece, they all have a Balanchine piece, they all have a Kylian piece, they all have a Cranko piece and whoever is the up and coming—the guy who was here doing ballets all over the place [Christopher Wheeldon, Royal Ballet trained, resident choreographer with NYCB]. They're all the same. Years ago, the thing that made New York City Ballet interesting was that it was all Balanchine. . . . The thing that made us [Royal Ballet] interesting was that it was Ashton and Macmillan. The Kirov, when they were here last year, their biggest success was *Jewels*, which is a Balanchine piece. They've all become the same.

The Royal Ballet also imports successful ballets, so for instance, around a dozen classic Balanchine ballets (NYCB) and several key works by Forsyth (Ballet Frankfurt) are mainstays of the Royal Ballet repertoire (Snelson, 2003): The importation of ballets into the Royal Ballet, and the subsequent expansion of the repertoire, was recognized by Megan as another factor that had brought about the transmutation of the Royal Ballet style of dancing. As a consequence, the imprint of the three major architects of the English style—Ashton, de Valois, and Macmillan—has inevitably faded over time (Bull, 1999; Bussell, 1998; de Marigny, 1990; Mosse, 1995), as Megan notes:

Although there still is an identifiable way that we like things done here in our ballets, it's less so because the two people who made the style of the Royal Ballet were Ninette de Valois and Frederick Ashton, and Frederick Ashton particularly. But Kenneth [Macmillan] was in that same line of thought. . . . And the kinds of ballets that he created made people want to move slightly differently. . . . [Whereas] Balanchine worked with dancers in a completely different way. He has a totally different view of dance. So you bring those ballets in and you are required to dance them in a different way. You can't dance them like Americans, because you weren't trained like that. The way you have been trained to use your arms is different. . . . I think now we are so linked

up with one another. We've all pinched from everything, so it all becomes a little less particular to itself because it's so much more global now.

These changes have recently been corroborated in a new book of in-depth interviews where 18 of the world's leading figures in ballet, from England, France, Denmark, Russia, and America, reflect on the changes in the world of ballet in the past 20 years (Newman, 2004).

Economics of Global Ballet: Ballet and the "Culture Industry"

Many see economics as the engine of globalization (Held et al., 1999). One of the driving forces behind the global homogenization of the ballet repertoire is undoubtedly an economic one. Once again, this is an example of the way that the social world of ballet is largely constrained, and to a lesser extent enabled, by the tectonic changes in British and international society. In the excerpt below, Dudley talks about the economic imperative to make as much money as possible in the world's ballet theaters:

Say there's a big date that comes up and they [ballet theater] call San Francisco [Ballet], Paris Opera [Ballet], Royal Ballet, Royal Danish [Ballet]. The repertoires are all the same. So then they come down to how much are you going to charge. So, if San Francisco can come in at \$200,000 or \$300,000 less than the Royal Ballet, then they've got it, 'cause the repertoire's the same. They do *Sleeping Beauty*, they do *Swan Lake*. And most people when they see *Sleeping Beauty*, they don't see Helgi Thomason's version [San Francisco Ballet], they just see *Sleeping Beauty*. I mean the balletomanes will know that it's a different version, but the general public will think it's just *Sleeping Beauty*. *Swan Lake* is *Swan Lake*. . . . The choreography you can see it anywhere. So why come to the Royal Ballet if I can see Ashton in American Ballet Theater? No need!

These changes in global classical ballet inevitably reflect changes in society as the world becomes less differentiated through a process of MacDonaldisation (Ritzer, 2004). In an age where we are almost drowning in images, some suggest that we are becoming anesthetized to difference. War and famine are interrupted by ads for football and food: "In one hour's television viewing, one is likely to experience more images than a member of a non-industrial society would in a lifetime" (Fiske, 1991, p. 58). The deadening hand of mass culture is squeezing the life out of the ephemeral body of ballet, and as a consequence, booking tours for major ballet companies is much more difficult than it was, say, 40 years ago. At that time, the Royal Ballet toured North America for between 2 and 5 months almost every year, very profitably (Bland, 1981; Edwards, 2003; Tooley, 1999; Walker, 1987). In contrast, over the past decade, the company usually goes on its annual international tour for a few weeks only (Bull, 1999). Furthermore, the number and standard of ballet companies throughout the world have contributed to this dramatic shift in the deployment of this company of dancers (Schonberg, 1990), and in the

quotation below, Dominic bemoans the apparent effect of this on some dance audiences:

Well, there are so many fine companies all throughout the world now that the competition is incredible. Like they say about football, "There's no easy matches any more!" So where we could go to places and they had hardly ever seen anything, like America on 5-month tours, now they've become much more sophisticated. In many cases, too sophisticated. You see brilliant performances and people just sit on their hands. What do they want, blood!? Don't you realize what you've just seen? That was it, baby! It doesn't come better than that! So that's a big problem.

In Adorno's terms, ballet as a global art has become just another part of the culture industry that Adorno (1991) so presciently predicted would lead to the suffocation of individuality via the commodification and the standardization of art and the ubiquitous banality of mass culture. For Adorno, the ideology of capitalism distorts reality, so that "the individual is wholly devalued in relation to the economic powers. . . . The flood of detailed information and candy-floss entertainment simultaneously instructs and stultifies mankind" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1978, pp. xiv-xv). Rudolf elaborates on this theme of economics driving taste:

The public are very narrow in what they will go out to see. . . . I suppose in a way, if you're going to go out for a good night out you want to know that you are going to have a good night out, don't you? If you go to the cinema you'll look through, and unless you are an art house fan, you're not going to search out those specialist things are you? As a night out in London is becoming increasingly expensive, can the public afford to take that risk? So, *Nutcracker* every Christmas. You'll have no problems with *Cinderella* and *Swan Lake*, and *Mayerling* is now becoming a mainstay, *Romeo and Juliet* another one, *Fille Mal Gardée*, etc.—you'll be able to sell that.

To put this in a more political context, we live in a world dominated by neoliberalism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999), where market forces eclipse artistic innovation. As Rudolf comments at some length below, there is no longer the time and money to spare on expensive artistic experiments in dance:

RESEARCHER: Do you think that sharing ballet coaches and dancers is contributing to the production of a more homogenized type of global ballet?

RUDOLF: I think that's finance driven. It's buying the proven, rather than taking a risk. I mean what happened when we had a resident choreographer here was that it allowed that person, Kenneth Macmillan, to experiment. To not always get it right first time. I think that ability has now become less and less possible. The ballet *Isadora* was a major experiment—loved by some and hated by others. *Mayerling*, when it was first done, was a major experiment. *Manon*, which now has become one of the signatures of this company, was not a great success on its opening, but because it's been organic and grown and changed, it's become the success that it is. I think that's where we are currently lacking at this moment in time. The ability to have someone who is working with a main corps of people that he or she knows well and has the ability to work with them to experiment and not come in and create a ballet in 3 months. *Manon*,

for example, was in rehearsal for 18 months, *Mayerling* nearly 2 years. It's the ability to build slowly that I think is sadly lacking.

Alas, one of the main problems facing classical ballet is the dearth of world-class choreographers. Moreover, the shift from an artistic to an economic imperative reflects the globalized nature of the late-modern world. In Giddens's (1999) terms, rather than the artistic future of ballet "being under our control, it seems out of control—a runaway world. . . . For globalization is not incidental to our lives today. It is a shift in our life circumstances. It is the way we live now" (p. 2). In Bourdieu's argot, it is a part of our evolving habitus.

To summarize the main arguments of our article, we contend that ballet is important for theories of globalization for at least four interrelated reasons. First, classical ballet provides a powerful illustration of the accelerating process of cultural globalization. Second, the interweaving of national and global forms of dance offers a sociologically informative case study of *glocalization*—the reciprocal process of the globalization of the local and the localization of the global (Robertson, 1992). Third, social struggles over dance, especially in the high culture form of classical ballet, illustrate global pressures toward democratization. Fourth, although we live in an age that is dominated by global violence and destruction, "artistic critique" has been co-opted into a neo-liberal "enterprise culture" (Chiapello, 1998) so that art and money are merging into one economic cultural field (Welsch, 1997). Although high art can form a powerful critique of the contemporary world, it can also act as a palliative to the pain around us and within us (Harrington, 2004).

Conclusion

The dance quotations above, gleaned from our interviews with staff of the Royal Ballet, provide a useful insight into the bodily habitus of classical ballet dancers. Moreover, they begin to illuminate the relationships between the body, self, society, and culture within the field of dance. To oversimplify, we saw earlier how the so-called "lyrical style" of the Royal Ballet is less suited to the "attacking athletic allegro style" required for the ballets that Balanchine produced for his NYCB (Clarke & Crisp, 1981). In many cases, there is a fusion of individual, institutional, and choreographic habitus in one dancer, for example, the contrasting styles (balletic habitus) of, say, Allegra Kent with the NYCB (Kent, 1997) and Antoinette Sibley with the Royal Ballet (Newman, 1986). Dancers who move between companies, and especially those who attempt to move between classical ballet and modern dance, like Nureyev (Solway, 1996), provide useful insights into these differing habituses. As they grapple with new ways of dancing, they are, effectively, attempting to acquire sufficient physical and artistic capital to adopt a new balletic habitus. The ex-Kirov dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, therefore, invested 2 years with the NYCB to attain his Balanchine habitus (Ramsey, 1998).

We recognize, of course, that our account in this article of globalization, habitus, and the balletic body reads like a realist account of objective materials and that there is a huge literature that reflexively problematizes the relationship between researchers and their data. There is an increasing recognition that *how* research is presented is as important as *what* is presented (Smith, 1998), and so, the writing of ethnographies is now seen as an important interpretative task (Van Maanen, 1988). There is also a trend toward postmodern ethnography that challenges the claim that objective findings are produced through ethnographic research (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). For Denzin (1997), the postmodern text “is a text based on a parallax of discourses in which nothing is ever stable or capable of firm and certain representation” (p. 36). Postmodern ethnographies attempt to move beyond the dispassionate monologic accounts of realist ethnographic tales (Van Maanen, 1988) via techniques of dialogic and polyphonic ethnography (Clifford, 1988).

In other words, the role of the author in collecting data (dialogic) or allowing a polyphony of voices to speak through the text (polyphonic) becomes key. In this article, we hope our quotations and interpretation are persuasive and, above all, evocative, thereby “seducing the reader into our authorial power” (Skeggs, 2002, p. 369). We accept that “the self and the field become one—ethnography and autobiography are symbiotic” (Coffey, 2002, p. 320). We have all been changed by our research on the balletic body. Moreover, we are sympathetic toward postmodern ethnography that excludes any “theoretical commentary” (Krieger, 1983). In fact, one of our interviews has been published in a highly edited format, so that all of the researcher’s questions (and about two thirds of the interview) have been deleted, leaving a “postmodern continuous stream of consciousness” on the nature of the balletic body (Wainwright, 2001).

In contrast, the burgeoning literature on globalization contains few qualitative inquiries and is silent on the globalization of ballet, in particular, and of high culture, in general (Franklin, Lury, & Stacey, 2000; Held et al., 1999). Globalization is associated with both standardization and democratization and so illustrates the sociological argument that democracy has a leveling effect on culture (Adorno, 1991). However, the balletic body is, to some degree, still an icon of high culture. Ballet is, therefore, a site of contestation between the social forces of high culture and the forces of a more popular culture. Within the arts as a whole, there is an ongoing and acrimonious debate, which is a largely generational battle between “keepers of the traditional flame” and “democratic modernizers” (see, for example, Drummond, 2000; Isaacs, 1999; Lebrecht, 2000; Tooley, 1999).

On an even broader scale, the politics and the national origins of modern ballet in, say, Russia, Britain, and America have yet to be addressed in systematic and comprehensive research. One argument that could be explored here is the tensions between national ballet as an expression of national culture, and the rise of what is, effectively, the cultural industry of a globalized classical ballet. The embodied dancer has become the carrier, first of national sentiment and more

recently of global cultural forces. In its high culture forms, dance has been constitutive of nationalism (Grau & Jordan, 1996). By contrast, the curriculum and financial organization of modern ballet companies are now deeply globalized. Coaches and performers are part of a global flow that connects the major centers and makes the reproduction of national dance cultures virtually impossible (Newman, 2004; Wulff, 1998). We need, for example, to understand the cultural evolution of European dance as a dialectic process of national and global identities. These themes, of globalization, democratization, celebrity, and charisma, are all topics that we intend to pursue in further research.

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