Body Commons:
Toward an Interdisciplinary Study of the Somatic Spectacular

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Intro

As pedagogues of particular bodily forms, our vision is to propose a somewhat clumsy *pas de deux* between Dance and Sport Studies; and, to explore the potential for interdisciplinary exchanges therein. For some, the interdisciplinarity we suggest may seem surprising. 'Sport and dance are conventionally viewed in the West as residing within separate and even opposed cultural realms,' Dyck and Archetti (2003, 1) surmise. However, Dyck and Archetti continue:

> . . . they share not only a common status as a technique of the body (Mauss 1973), but also a vital capacity to express and reformulate identities and meanings through their practised movements and scripted forms. Sport and dance spark widespread participation, critical appreciation and endless interpretation by performers and their audiences. Indeed, the embodied practices of athletes and dancers afford not merely pleasure and entertainment but powerful means for celebrating existing social arrangements and cultural ideals or for imagining and advocating new ones.

In investigating these parallels it becomes increasingly clear that Dance and Sport Studies share many commonalities in both content and conceptualization. Both subfields are awash with similar theories and methods to help explain how certain corporeal performances dialectically interface with particular political discourses and power relations; as well as produce identity politics, constitute socio-cultural formations, and enliven historical processes.

Left alone, both dance and sport scholars would continue to do 'good work.' But let us, at least in this article, tiptoe along a tentative trail between disciplinary securities and collaborative possibilities. We respect, of course, the various advances scholars have made in their relevant domains under the auspices of academic tribalism (or 'silo-ism'). Scholars in both subfields, we also acknowledge, do their work under constant duress; responding to pressures created by the demands and designs of the academic-industrial-complex writ large (contoured by the intensification of outcome-based research imperatives, funding cuts, new corporate

sensitivities, and threats to job security). In response, scholars within most academic institutions have sought ways to fortify the standing of their particular disciplinary work within this context.

Our intent is to choreograph a few points of fertile intersection in and between the two fields that could make both disciplines more politically and heuristically potent. Our piece is a response to contemporary forces acting upon the formations of body knowledge(s) and the 'somatic ethic' more generally. Performing bodies, we believe, have become more hyperbolized, more politicized, and have thus been made more consequential than perhaps at any time in history. Like any decent *pas de deux*—whereby the economies of performance benefit from syncopatious rhythm—we suggest that such an intercourse between Dance and Sport Studies could provide novel methodological, theoretical, and metaphysical spaces which transcend disciplinary moorings.

To do so, we first establish some common ground. We traverse the historic parallels Dance and Sport Studies share in terms of their interest in corporeal forms. We also briefly contextualize the related politics of contemporary dancing and sporting bodies. We then introduce the emergent discipline of Physical Cultural Studies as a potentially-generative space for framing the overlapping interdisciplinary questions about the 'somatic spectacular.' Finally, we remind the reader of shared imperatives within which both dance and sport scholars can find common *episteme*, *techné*, and purpose moving forward.

Contextualizing the Somatic Spectacular

Our calls for an interdisciplinary intertwining between dance and sport, we understand, are not necessarily new. For some time, dance and sport scholars have acknowledged the links between these two particular, yet related, forms of bodily motility. However, we think as a result of current trends within the academy, our respective fields have somehow shifted focus away from the potentialities and possibilities previously mapped out by scholars of Dance and Sport Studies. Moreover, as many of the previous studies have been grounded in the assumption that

these fields have distinct disciplinary genealogies, many scholars in turn have asked different questions of bodies and the ways they move. This might be true, however, this has often led to dance and sporting bodies being conceived as quite different entities that require scholars to draw connections between the two. Our assumptions are somewhat different. In short, our interest *begins* and *ends* with/in the pursuit of corporeal and scholarly synergy.

Studies by Metheny (1965) and Ingram (1978) for instance, examined parallels between and across dance and sporting contexts. Where Metheny focused on movement pattern similarities, Ingram drew connections between how dancers' and athletes' used their bodies and engaged with their wider social milieu. Work such as Ingram's offered other scholars opportunities to see dancers' bodies as sites for interdisciplinary conversation. That is, the nature of dancers' bodies, the physical practices they were involved with, and the socio-cultural conditions of their existence, transcended dance spaces and Dance Studies-led enquiry. Rather, new ways of understanding dancers' bodies—that drew on an array of sport and physical activity theories and discourses—were desired. Thus into the 1980s and 1990s—while both Dance and Sport Studies continued their respective attempts to strengthen their academic spaces—a few scholars forged on with dance and sport investigations.

Recalling the thoughts of dance scholar Richard Geer, Vaccaro (1997), for example, argued that the disciplinary boundaries that might be assumed between dance and sport were insignificant in relation to their substantial similarities. Dance and sporting bodies are both, in their simplest sense, merely energetic expressions of the human form concentrated within distinct temporal and spatial confines. Vaccaro suggests that we might even go further, "dance and sport are linked also by performance ritual, pursuit of technical achievement, and emotion" (1997, p. 45). Vaccaro's work is a reminder, if such was necessary, of the innate disciplinary synergy as both strive toward physical perfection, technical accuracy, and sublime performance. Essentially, Vaccaro and her contemporaries suggested that Dance and Sport Studies scholarship

needed to tease out these interconnections; to demonstrate the unity between the body's form and various expressions; and, explore the shared biophysical and psychological dimensions.

Initially, synergies between the form and function of dancing and sporting bodies have been followed up not by Sport Studies or Dance Studies scholars per se, but rather, by scientists of the performative body. The focus of their interest has been varied, but one predominant research theme has been the quest for performance excellence. Starkes, Helsen, and Jack (2001), for example, found in their studies that dance and sporting bodies are united in the pursuit for perfection. Members of these groups share similar psychological qualities and modes of practice that contribute to their successful, or unsuccessful, corporeal acts. In this field, Nordin and Cumming (2008) have also done useful work. In their studies they investigated how dancers and aesthetic athletes (e.g., ice skaters) variously employed imagery to enhance performance. These athletes, Nordin and Cumming (2008) surmised, acted in comparable spatial contexts structured by temporal demands, aesthetic evaluations, and performance aspects. The disciplinary unity called for by Nordin and Cumming (2008) is also shared by many others.

Desmond (1993), for instance, was perhaps one of the first to stress for scholars within the field of Cultural Studies to embrace dance scholarship. When Dance Studies remained on the fringes of Cultural Studies research, Desmond encouraged interdisciplinary dialogue. 'Much is to be gained by opening up Cultural Studies to questions of kinesthetic semiotics and by placing dance research (and by extension human movement studies) on the agenda of Cultural Studies,' Desmond (1993) implored, 'by enlarging our studies of bodily "texts" to include dance in all of its forms—among them social dance, theatrical performance, and ritualized movement—we can further our understandings of how social identities are signaled, formed, and negotiated through bodily movement' (p. 34). Dance, Desmond stressed, is ripe for an articulatory Cultural Studies-led enquiry and critique. Such an enquiry might, Desmond conceptualized, draw together works

like Irmgard Bartenieff's movement analysis in dance with Homi Bhabha's thoughts on mimicry and colonial patterns of behaviour.

Other Dance scholars continue to reiterate Desmond's calls for better interdisciplinarity. Burt (2009), for example, accepts that the desire to seek 'friends' for Dance Studies has been borne of necessity. To ensure its survival Dance Studies should look afield to others who are also interested in modes of corporeality and mobility. Morris (2009) also notes that despite the advances made by Dance Studies over the last 20 years the discipline should not rest on its laurels. In this regard, with its emphasis on body practices and performances, Cultural Studies presents a saviour, or at least, and ideal bedfellow for Dance Studies research. Sport Studies scholars who have also gravitated toward Cultural Studies have also concurred.

Despite the efforts shown by sport scientists, Sport Studies researchers, specifically those in the domains of sociology and history, have not been as interested in the possibilities of disciplinary duets between sport and dance. One exception in this regard is Michael Gard (2001; 2003; 2006; 2008; and Gard & Meyenn, 2000); who has spent considerable time conceptualizing points of union and disjuncture, especially as it pertains to masculinity and boys' social experiences and thoughts about their body and physical activity. Gard's work, which draws together the best of dance, gender, sport, and body scholarship, provides us some thoughts about the possibilities that lie in disciplinary sharing. Dance and sport are both sites, Gard believes, that present not only possibilities for corporeal exploration and celebration, but also, comprise complex physical, psychological, and emotional demands that boys/young men must try to negotiate. For Gard, it seems, the question is not simply about boys that do or do not dance or play sport, per se, but rather there is an overarching (and, we would argue, a quite interdisciplinary) concern about bodies constrained and confined to particular, socio-culturally determined, modes of being. In this case, bodies and bodily practices that are, for whatever reason, unnecessarily gendered, sexualized, idealized, and politicized. These questions/issues/or

problems about boys and dance/sport necessitate solutions that transcend disciplinary boundaries. That is, rather than operate an analysis from solely independent disciplinary standpoints of dance or sport (as has been done in the past), we would do better to approach the task collaboratively; for instance, by not drawing on the usual gender-theories of dance and sport participation in isolation, but rather, using these theories, and others on experience, identity, emotion, and human relations found in sociology and wider Cultural Studies work to essentially reconfigure boys dance/sport anew.

Gard's work brings into focus a need to articulate dancing and sporting bodies—bodies which are often set into motion for different reasons and to differing effects—to broader socio-political formations. Even a cursory reading of dance and sport cultures across various historical contexts reveals numerous instances in which bodily forms and practices have come to represent, reflect, and constitute particular social processes. This empirical commonality can perhaps be best framed by the notion of a *somatic spectacular*; whereby dance and sport draw their cross-cultural significance from each form's emphasis on the *exhibitive*, the *embodied*, the *performative*, and the *aesthetic*. In other words, and as we hope to make clear in what follows, many contemporary dancing and sporting bodies around the globe emerge from, and are made meaningful (significant, commercial, etc.) by a unique set of contextual relations; relations which produce the body as commodity, as object of the voyeuristic gaze, as ahistorical [de]racialized/sexualized flesh capital, as media spectacle. By 'somatic spectacular,' then, we are referring to body logics of a contextually-unique confluence of late capitalism, post-modern media culture, and post-national bodyscapes (transnational labour flows, the body as global consumer project, etc.) perhaps best described by Guy Debord (1968) more than 40 years ago. Both cultural forms, for instance, feature expressive corporeality and both (at least in their popular forms) involve the gaze of an audience. Both, by way of execution, evoke meanings and signifiers that link the act of moving to broader social formations.

In this way, dance and sport are unique in their common tendencies to spectacularize the body; to enflesh the very logics and poetics of the social order(s) from which the bodily act emanates. What becomes important, then, in the study of each form and in the collaborative processes we propose here, is *how* and *why* the performing body is *made into spectacle* at various socio-political junctures. In what follows, we highlight an historically-based selection of performative dances and performing dancers that exemplify how the body has been utilised within, and constitutive of, distinct social formations.

Dancing Bodies as Spectacle

During the harvest festival rituals in Feudal Europe, dances were used to demarcate significant points in the agricultural cycle. Dance was a way to embody the rhythms of life, from the *Danse Macabre* (the Dance of Death) of the Black Plague years (James 2006; Mackenbach 1995), to the regal processional *bassedanse* (five-step dance) in fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe (Wilson 2008). Somatic expression was thus linked to both material exchange and the broader underpinning relations that reinforced a particular system of land ownership and wealth production. In this way, the dancing body emerged as a site of production and contestation; enfleshing the cultural rhythms of social and economic production. Similarly in both North and South America, folk festivals—comprised of specific dance forms—were created to celebrate the significance of the local harvest (Borland 2006; Harris 2003). In these moments, dance existed as a performative activity, but also as a corporeal signifier of cultural, social, and economic fertility of the land and its people.

The disintegration of feudal labour structures, the arrival of industrialisation and urbanisation, the rapid onset of capitalistic systems, and the far reaching colonial processes during the late seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries continued to challenge how bodies were used. As Western societies moved through the early stages of modernity, dance

became an important site for celebrating various class and cultural politics. The formation of classic ballet is one particular example. In France, Russia, and other parts of Europe, the rigid repertories of ballet were part of a distinct cultural aesthetic. This aesthetic privileged, among other things, notions of beauty, decadence, social stratification, and hetero-normative gender relations. In transcending the stage, and becoming both a symbol for and reproducer of what has been termed 'high' culture, ballet can thus be framed as a constituent of a specific set of class and politic relations (Kolb 2009). Later, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, individual dancers sought ways to respond to the new social contexts or systems created by the 'juggernaut' of modernity (Giddens 1991). Practitioners such as Mary Wigman, Isadora Duncan, and Rudolf van Laban—each of whom understood how bodies could be employed as vehicles for expression and thought (in ways that could also be, on occasion, political and politicised) — created choreographies, schools, methodologies, and steps that challenged the conditions of modern life and disrupted the normative practices of traditional dance (see respectively, Newhall 2009; Daly 2002; and Vertinsky 2010).

Dance has also been used in other contexts, at other times, to negotiate, resist, and challenge hegemonic ideologies. In parts of South America, the Caribbean, and the Southern United States, for example, dancers, dances, and dance styles have been used by various groups to confront the stifling, oppressive, totalizing, and demoralizing practices enforced upon them by ruling colonial elites; many of which hark back, and pay homage to, the tribal African roots (Cruz Banks 2010; Sörgel 2007). Yet, many of these dance forms, for example the samba, lindy hop, and more recently, forms of street dance, are also modified to reflect the idiosyncrasies of the local contexts in which they operate. In so doing, these dance forms not only come to symbolise specific cultural identities, but are also by their very nature symbolic of historic corporeal discourses and representative of political relations in the present. For example, as respected Caribbean scholar Rex Nettleford's (1985; 1995) proclaims of indigenous Jamaican dance; performing bodies have been active constituents in the nation's continued decolonization

tensions. In these plights, and to fortify the historical significance of their work, dancers have ritualistically evoked spiritual elements and cultural narratives central to their tribal heritage. To politicize their plight in the present (namely the struggle for independence and indigenous recognition), dancers have matched these traditional movement motifs with contemporary choreographies. In so doing, they have also resisted western-colonial tendencies that have sought to trivialise and mock their intentions and movement patterns, and, created a platform upon which they can advocate for their own cultural destiny.

We also note various instances where dance has formed part of radical cultural projects or been an element in political activism. Most infamously perhaps, we can turn to the life and times of Josephine Baker to illustrate the importance of contextualising the body somatic. As Mary Dudziak (1994) and Anne Cheng (2011) remind us, Baker was, at various times, a dancer, entertainer, civil rights and feminist activist, political pawn, and genuine spectacle. Her gendered, sexualized, racialized, and ultimately *politicized* moving flesh enlivened axioms of capital, identity, subjectivity, performativity, and public pedagogy. Whether it be her provocative *Danse Banane*, or her latter advocacy for racial equality in the U.S., Baker's life and work is, in and of itself, an excellent example of how the dancing body in informed by, and actively a producer of, particular social contexts.

These few (albeit selective) examples point to the ways in which the dancing body is always-already political and politicized; thrust into contextually-specific formations of social, economic, and symbolic struggle. Today, one might argue that more than at any point in history, contemporary dancing physicalities have increasingly come under the sway of (colonizing) global market forces. Indeed, the dancing bodies that matter most within what Douglas Kellner (1995) calls the 'global popular' are those that authorize dominant logics of *spectacular consumption* and *cultural citizenship* within the global free-market. Through popular television programs *Dancing with the Stars, Dancing on Ice, Boogie Woogie, Got to Dance, Dance India Dance, Strictly Dance Fever,* or *So You Think You Can Dance*, intermediaries are able to weave highly-mediated body texts into

international corporeal currency. These spectacularized dancing bodies naturalize public pedagogies of celebrity, deportmental consumerism, embodied competition, and hyper-sexualised glamorization, and also transform corporeality into commodity.

Take pop music phenomenon Lady Gaga. As postmodern pop icon, representations of Lady Gaga make use of various somatic and aesthetic elements in what French philosopher Claude Levi-Strauss (1987) might refer to as the production of a de-historicized, contextualized 'floating signifier.' Her MTV-spectacularized movements incorporate choreographic elements from various cultures and historical periods, and yet only to anchor her celebrity to specific local consumer sensibilities. She speaks French, English, and Spanish in her videos, and dances about the imaginary spaces of the globe freely and without constraint. In this way, Lady Gaga is able to evoke the meaningful qualities of various dance forms with aesthetics stripped of their political affectations or contextual moorings. But, with her computer-generated, flexibly aesthetic, schizo-corporeality, she does so in ways that coalesce with her own identity constructions and performative (re)gendering (Capulet 2010; Meyer 2010).

Sporting Bodies as Spectacle

Similarly we can look at particular moments in sport wherein socio-cultural conditions have coalesced and given rise to specific sets of power relations. Sport, with its emphasis on strict codes of social conduct, rigid rules, and imbued civil(ising) values, has long been an important technology in forging various forms of subjectivity. It not only served to help maintain social hierarchies, but also enabled certain racial, and often racist, assumptions based on misguided bioscientific logic which often normalized and privileged white colonial practices, while also marginalizing the lives and experiences of minority groups. Consider the events of the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand; a set of moments in which the politics of South Africa's violent, oppressive, and racist Apartheid regime clashed with the ghosts of New Zealand's own colonial past. The event prompted unforeseen civil unrest, as 'Pro-tour' and

'Anti-Tour' advocates fumed over the mixing of sport and politics, as well as the broader issues of indigenous affairs, women's rights, and government expenditure (Pringle 2009; MacLean 2010). Divisive and incisive as the event was, the 1981 tour perfectly exemplified how sport spectacles transcend the sporting banal and often come to play important roles in creating broader social-political transformations. Essentially, comrades turned corporeal combats in a series of ideological struggles that comprised the hallows of historical discourses of the past and important power relations of the present.

As with race, there are a plethora of instances in sport in which bodies have become tools for mobilising, representing, and reproducing the dominant ideologies within particular nation-states. The mass callisthenic exercises that were seen throughout much of Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (as well as today in parts of Asia) were not just part of a nationally-organized health-campaign welfarism. Rather, by mobilising bodies *en masse*, these ventures spectacularized the nation's health, vitality, and physical capacity in ways that reflected the success, power, and might of its current political regime. Take the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games for example (Keys 2006; Lennartz 1994). Within pre-World War Two Europe, and at the beginning stages of Hitler' brutal reign, the so-called 'Nazi Olympics' became the ultimate symbol of a particular, and peculiar, politic and corporeal ideology. Here, Hitler and his sycophants sought to demonstrate national cohesion to both internal German as well as external international audiences. The Berlin Olympics were an exercise not only in precision and domination, but a moment in which a series of social, economic, political, and ideological concerns were mobilised around a set of particular beliefs about (perfect and imperfect) bodies.

Here and in other moments, sporting bodies have acted as *dispositifs* for particular gendering practices. During the first early half of the twentieth century, for example, international sports organisations, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), sought to limit women's participation in the Olympic games. In so doing, the IOC perpetuated the patriarchal formations of the day and maintained sport as an essentially 'male preserve.' Consider

the recent case of Caster Semenya. The young South African runner who was subjected to an onslaught of media criticism and inhumane scrutiny by the International Athletic Federation and the IOC based on perceived inconsistencies between her outward physical appearance (which, in the opinion of some, tended toward overtly 'masculine') and her particular biological composition (which involved a perhaps peculiar, yet entirely explainable, set of genetic anomalies that did not fit conventional sexual dimorphic classification). Semenya's case again brought to the fore debate over sex and gender and the power of sport-media in perpetuating sport as a sexualizing field the freedom for athletes to negotiate their own body's politics (see Nyong'o 2010). Caster joins athletes such as David Beckham, the Williams sisters, Tiger Woods, or Dan Carter, who, irrespective of their wants and needs, are now stretched across the free-market sportscape. As a consequence, their high-profile athletic bodies become predominantly market entities; hyper-commodified and sculpted in ways that will maximize its capital accumulation and effectively serve to fuel corporate agendas and drive consumer desires.

The Spectacular Somatic

Our aim in offering these exceptionally-selective twin genealogies of dance and sport is two-fold. First, we emphasise that within each of their respectively diverse histories, dance and sport share significant commonalities; each showcases the performative body and locates it as both influenced by, and influential of, broader social, political, and economic forces. That is, as two distinct fields constantly eliciting the somatic spectacular, sport and dance shift in dialectical rhythm with the socio-political context.

Empirically, it is clear that the rigid boundaries that once existed between sport and dance are now quickly dissolving. In sports we increasingly find elements of what might be considered a dance aesthetic. For instance surfing, Booth (1999) elucidates, comprises specific visual, kinaesthetic, and performative qualities akin to those found in dance. In highlighting the technological and cultural conditions of its praxis, Booth notes also that, like dance, surfing

performers and their performances are products, and reproducers, of concomitant historic, political, social, and economic constituents. Think also about stylistic changes to various codes of football and rugby, for example, which have performative qualities akin to that we might find in dance. Today, try-scorers and goal scorers alike incorporate dance rhythms into their performances during play and celebration (such as after scoring a goal). The International Rugby Sevens tournaments, for instance, have become infamous not only as a mega-sporting event, but more so for the various theatrical performances that occur both on and off the field. Amidst a carnival-esque atmosphere, players occasionally indulge in impressive displays in which competitive intentions become subsidiary to performative flair.

Similarly, contemporary popular dance has increasingly taken on sporting characteristics. Popular television programs such as *Dancing with the Stars* or *So You Think You Can Dance* exhibit competitive and production qualities that have long been part of the media-sport-complex (Maguire 1999). The former program, which garners extraordinarily high ratings in the US, the UK, and elsewhere, often recruits athletes from hypermasculine sporting domains such as American football onto the tele-mediated, mass broadcasted dance floor. Muscular, oversized footballers such as Warren Sapp and Emmitt Smith perform the samba, foxtrot, waltz, salsa, and various other somatic forms in an often-awkward juxtaposition of body mass, muscular physicality, and a lack of dexterity needed to pull off the dance steps. Dance also features in popular prime time television show *Glee*. The show depicts members of a fictitious high school's glee club successfully recruiting athletes away from popular sports such as American football and into the competitive world of performance-based singing and dancing. The basic premise of the show follows these students as they struggle with the demands of training for regional national glee club competitions.

We can look to a number of instances where sport has inspired dance, dance has been unified with sport, or, conjointly, the two disciplines have been consumed within a larger somatic spectacular. Consider the 2006 performance by the *Royal New Zealand Ballet Company*, entitled *'The*

Wedding', which included a beautifully choreographed rugby sequence. Rugby formed an integral part of the narrative, in particular, by firmly entrenching performative motif within New Zealand's cultural landscape. Even more explicitly, in 2011, San Francisco-based dance company, *BodyGram*, created a 45 minute piece entitled '*For the love of the game – dating as sport'* which used the competitive and combative elements of a variety of sports as a metaphor for the angst of dating and love in current society (Nataraj, 2011). The choreographers drew inspiration from working in sport bars and having close proximity to sports fanatics and participants. There is also the work, entitled *'Tracking',* by British company, *StopGap*, commissioned to produce a work inspired by the London 2012 Olympic Games and its associated cultural Olympiad. The work is an eclectic mix of movement that demonstrates the vibrancy of the city's culture, including its passion for sport and physical activity. Most recently, there have also been a range of dance performances, such as '*The body festival of dance and physical theatre'*, developed to coincide with the 2011 Rugby World Cup being held in New Zealand. Dance festivals around the country have sought to capitalise on the popularity of the event and increased interest in displays of physical culture.

In this context, it has also become clear that we require new tools to explain these confusing, fluid, complex, dialectic dance and sport junctures. Acknowledging our own limitations, we believe sport specific paradigms are not going to offer the synthetic heuristics we desire. Moreover, we likewise feel Dance Studies could benefit from new paradigmatic dialogues. What we are proposing in the following, then, are new paradigms to help us conceptualise and frame the epistemological bases and contextual complexities of the somatic spectacular.

Somatic Spectacles and the Physical Cultural Studies Imperative

Indeed, these are times of serious consequence for the performing body. To meet the changes brought about by and through the somatic spectacular, we argue that Dance and Sport Studies scholars must join forces, if you will, and work toward a collaborative study of cultural

physicality *that matters*. For many of us on the sport side, this urge to look beyond the confines of sport sociology and sport history has led us to the emergent intellectual destination of Physical Cultural Studies (PCS); a meeting place where those critical scholars of body culture—be they sport, dance, labour, aesthetic, cultural kinematics, fashion, or a host of other fields of inquiry—might share ideas, collaborate, and debate the politics of the performative moving body.

The imperatives of Physical Cultural Studies can, in large part, be attributed to the work of self-identified Cultural Studies scholars such as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E.P. Thompson—as well as many other key agents within the University of Birmingham's *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies*. From the 1950s onward, these scholars argued, in their various ways, for a turn toward context, hegemony, and the politics of representation (see Hughson, Inglis, and Free 2005). They stressed scholars needed to understand people's everyday lives, interests, and experiences. Their underlying design for Cultural Studies was to illuminate the myriad social-political constituents that comprised culture in its varied forms But, also, more importantly to analyse the ways in which these elements came to bear on the conditions of human existence. Their focus thus was not merely on cultural performances of, and in, the present, but in contextualising the performative act within broader historical systems (of meaning, of power, of structuration, etc.). It was not enough, Cultural Studies scholars proclaimed, merely to interpret and explain culture, but, by adopting a radically contextual methodology, academics needed to advocate for changes to existing regimes.

Out of that political and conceptual legacy emerged the fledgling field of Physical Cultural Studies. In the simplest terms, Physical Cultural Studies is a Cultural Studies of the active body, its movements, and the politics generated, subordinated to, and challenged through those movements. Physical Cultural Studies encapsulates the plethora of physical practices within cultures, but also, how those physicalities act as embodiments of distinct social and historic conditions, enflesh particular social relations, and comprise specific forms of power. In Physical Cultural Studies, the physical not only refers to how various bodily practices represent and

reproduce meaning, but denotes how bodies resist, negotiate, and challenge social and political structures, and transcend normative boundaries. A broad, and invariably tentative, schema for PCS has been developed by Giardina and Newman (2011) in their recent chapter located in the Handbook of Qualitative Studies (Denzin, 2011), which readers may wish to follow for further exploration. In brief, Giardina and Newman encourage body scholars to engage in a new pedagogy centred on a few key (and certainly debatable) themes. Essentially, interdisciplinary bodily explorations, Giardina and Newman contend, need to attend to 1) the radically contextualized politics of the body; 2) the messiness of researching active bodies that often comprise complex, confusing, and at times dangerous subject matter; and, 3) the necessity for reflexivity about the bodily politics that comprise embodied research performance. In so doing, they hope, we might better comprehend the forces that contour bodily research and researchers' bodies.

Conclusion

Our aim has been to chasse from the twin geneologies of sport and dance into the possibilities that exist within Physical Cultural Studies. Within this domain, we believe, lie new exigencies to conceptualise the corporeal. We have offered the notion of a *somatic spectacular* as both a moment and a space through which such a transdiscplinary project might emerge (and only one of what are surely many such spaces). We are calling for a framework that respects the differences, but acknowledges the undeniable commonalities, that now exist between sport and dance forms. Physical Cultural Studies not only offers us a means through which to interpret and advocate for the fluidity of sport and dance forms, but provides a way to investigate—in the radically contextualised, emancipatory, reflexive way we suggested above—their intrinsic exhibitive, embodied, performative, and aesthetic qualities.

Our aim was to move closer toward a body commons; an interdisciplinary space amenable to a productive sport/dance dialectic. A conversation we might have about spectacular

formations of the body somatic not bound by our disciplinary regimes, stifling theoretical frameworks, or messy methodologies, but rather committed to shared political projects that would advocate for alternate corporeal meanings and understandings. By merging critical/contextual thought with embodied experience and reflexive research praxis, our work might then might offer liberatory renderings of the vessels which constitute inequity and power within the human condition (what situationists might refer to as corporeal *détournement*). In the most progressively generative way, our intention is to advocate for objectified, oppressed, tortured, and marginalised bodies, and, through celebrating the power of physicalities and bodily expressions, bring to light a new, more progressive, equitable, loving social order.

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