

# Economies of Reperformance

## Unearthing Racial Capitalism in *Dancing at Dusk*

Rebecca Chaleff



As the very first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic ebbed in the United States, a new production of Pina Bausch's *The Rite of Spring* (1975) appeared online. Although Bausch choreographed *Rite of Spring* relatively early in her career, over time it has become central to her repertoire and integral to the Euro-American canon. Coproduced by Sadler's Wells, the Pina Bausch Foundation, and the École des Sables, this reperformance of Bausch's profoundly affective choreography to Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* featured 38 dancers from 14 different African countries.<sup>1</sup> After

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1. The dancers in this reperformance are: Rodolphe Allui, Sahadatou Ami Touré, Anique Ayiboe, Korotimi Barro, D'Aquin Evrard Élisée Bekoin, Gloria Ugwarelojo Biachi, Luciény Kaabral, Khadija Cisse, Sonia Zandile Constable, Rokhaya Coulibaly, Inas Dasylya, Astou Diop, Serge Arthur Dodo, Franne Christie Dossou, Estelle Foli, Aoufice Junior Gouri, Zadi Landry Kipre, Bazoumana Kouyaté, Profit Lucky, Vuyo Mahashe, Babacar Mané, Vasco Pedro Mirine, Stéphanie Mwamba, Florent Nikiéma, Shelly Ohene-Nyako, Brian Otieno Oloo, Harivola Rakotondrasoa, Oliva Randrianasolo (Nanie), Asanda Ruda III, Tom Jules Samie, Amy Collé Seck, Pacôme Landry Seka, Gueassa Eva Sibi, Carmelita Siwa, Armel Gnago Sosso-Ny, Amadou Lamine Sow, Didja Kady Tiemanta, and Aziz Zoundi.

being selected through an international audition process,<sup>2</sup> these dancers traveled to the École des Sables, an internationally recognized center for dance in Senegal, for a rehearsal period in which they learned Bausch's original choreography.<sup>3</sup> The group rehearsed under the artistic direction of Josephine Ann Endicott and Jorge Puerta Armenta, two dancers formerly with Tanztheater Wuppertal, which has continued to perform Bausch's works after her death in 2009. This production of *Rite of Spring* was intended to be performed live and to tour internationally to five different cities, but the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic rendered these plans impossible.<sup>4</sup> At the end of March 2020, just before their home governments set restrictions that might prevent them from returning, the dancers gathered for one last rehearsal on the beach in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal. Their final run-through of *The Rite of Spring* was filmed by cinematographer Enno Endlicher, directed and edited by Florian Heinzen-Ziob, and produced by Polyphem Filmproduktion.<sup>5</sup>

Titled *Dancing at Dusk: A Moment with Pina Bausch's The Rite of Spring*, this visually stunning recording of African dancers performing Bausch's iconic choreography on the beach at sunset became available for streaming on Sadler's Wells' "Digital Stage" for £5 (\$6.50) during July 2020. The production went viral, which was remarkable for a performance of its length available for a small (but not negligible) fee.<sup>6</sup> Unlike many live dance performances, often covered exclusively by local critics who see the performance in person, *Dancing at Dusk* was written about in journalistic publications internationally. News of the production also traveled through social media, and, at least on my own feed, was lauded by dancers, choreographers, and dance-lovers who not only shared an appreciation for Bausch's choreography, but who also found great meaning in the fact that this production featured an entirely Black<sup>7</sup> cast of African performers. As Emily May wrote in *Dance Magazine*, "the digital performance is a welcome celebration of African art and cross-cultural collaboration, feeling particularly relevant at a time when Black Lives Matter

*Figure 1. (previous page) From the film Dancing at Dusk: A Moment with Pina Bausch's The Rite of Spring, Toubab Dialaw, Senegal. Enno Endlicher, cinematographer; Florian Heinzen-Ziob, director and editor. (Film still © Fontäne Film)*

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2. Sadler's Wells Senior Producer Ghislaine Granger explained the audition process in an interview: "We put an addition[al] notice out [...] on social media. We had contacts in Africa via Germaine [Acogny] and other organizations, who [also shared the notice] on their own social media and through other networks, dance schools, etc., in various countries. [...] We held auditions in three different cities in Africa so that people could travel from wherever they were, as much as possible, to [audition]. In each city we made [a] sub-selection of [dancers] who had auditioned in that city [...]. That process lasted about three weeks, and then [...] we had a final audition in Senegal, at École des Sables, where [those] who had been pre-selected came together [and we chose] the final 38 dancers" (Granger 2021).
3. École des Sables was cofounded in 1998 by Germaine Acogny (with Helmut Vogt), the renowned Senegalese dancer, choreographer, and author of *Danse Africaine* (1980).
4. The full production, *The Rite of Spring / common ground[s]*, began to tour internationally in September 2021 and is still touring as of November 2022. Performance sites include Spain, Denmark, Australia, Canada, the United States, and Japan.
5. Descriptions of "Dancing at Dusk" are based on my viewing of the video first available via Sadler's Wells, and later, as cited, through the Pina Bausch Foundation's website (Pina Bausch Foundation n.d.d).
6. *Dancing at Dusk* was also available to stream, free of charge, on the Bausch Foundation website for a limited time.
7. I say "Black" to use a term recognizable to the audience of this US American journal, and in following with Jemima Pierre's argument for the necessity to think Blackness in African contexts. In many different African countries, however, there are several terms that refer to someone's racial and/or ethnic identities and I cannot presume that all of the dancers involved in this performance identify as "Black." The varying local politics of Blackness in Africa has been discussed by numerous scholars in the fields of African studies and performance studies. For two divergent views on this subject within the context of West Africa, see Cole (2005) and Pierre (2013).

protests around the world are fighting for the recognition of Black humanity” (May 2020). For many viewers, the casting and setting seemed to resonate with liberal practices of antiracism that have been promoted within the United States.

There is an inescapable irony to the fact that the Covid-19 virus, which, at that time, prevented the dancers from touring and performing this work internationally, also enabled the viral circulation of their dress rehearsal. Yet the virality of the video in the context of the United States, where I am situated, must also be attributed to its timeliness in relation to both an increasing awareness of the institutional whiteness of Euro-American dance performance and praxis and the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), particularly in the wake of George Floyd’s murder by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in May 2020.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the circulation and uptake of *Dancing at Dusk* seems to have been fueled by the apparent convergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and public attention to endemic police brutality and systemic racism. Yet, as Laura Edmondson argues, perceiving 2020 as a singular point of convergence minimizes the ongoing influence of the histories that formed these iterations of racial violence. As Covid-19 continually extends from a pandemic into an endemic global health crisis, it is even more timely to consider the realities of its temporal endurance. “The concept of crisis,” Edmondson explains, obscures “the *longue durée* of white supremacy, genocide, and colonial decimation” (2020:406). Taking a cue from Edmondson, I consider how the racialized economies of reperformance, and of *Dancing at Dusk* in particular, are tethered to the “quieter genres of violence that simmer below the surface of visibility and spectacularity” (406). *Dancing at Dusk* allows us to think through these entanglements as a production that both benefitted from a popular perception of converging crises and exposed the histories of colonialism and racialized violence underlying its own proliferation.

These histories are conveyed in the metaphorical resonances of the reperformance’s title. While the “dusk” of *Dancing at Dusk* ostensibly refers to the dance’s sunset scenery, “dusk” also signifies as a cyclical symbol of repetition within the work’s capacity as a reperformance of *The Rite of Spring*, which is itself a reinterpretation of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Because dusk is characterized by light fading into darkness before returning at dawn, the image also corresponds with this production’s turn to Blackness as a means of ensuring a white choreographer’s legacy. In this sense, dusk resonates with Toni Morrison’s analysis of “playing in the dark,” which calls attention to Africanist presences within white literary imaginations (Morrison 1992). In the context of *Dancing at Dusk*, Morrison’s critique encourages us to think about those African revenants that always already haunt Western modernity and its cultural reproduction, particularly through Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Stravinsky’s score enacts its own play with darkness and dusk through the influence and incorporation of ragtime and the cakewalk (Heyman 1982). The ghost of the enslaved African thus haunts all reperformances of *Le Sacre*, including *The Rite of Spring* and *Dancing at Dusk* (Zondi 2021). With this haunting in mind, we might think of *Dancing at Dusk* not as a contemporary anomaly, but as yet another iteration of the West’s cyclical return to Blackness as a source for the reproductions of modernity and its futures.<sup>9</sup>

As a site-specific reperformance, *Dancing at Dusk* simultaneously upholds and undermines the racialized imperatives of neoliberal multiculturalism as characterized by postcolonial critiques of cosmopolitan globalization. Applying the lenses of dance and performance studies in this instance helps us understand how the work performs beyond the good intentions of its producers to re-present Bausch’s work in a meaningful and timely way. The production’s material location, the beach itself, performs within the film, grounding this reperformance within histories of

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8. The video of *Dancing at Dusk* did not become available until after Floyd’s death; it was filmed approximately two months before this horrific and all too common manifestation of antiblack violence spurred an invigorated wave of protests.

9. My understanding of ghosts and haunting is rooted in Hershini Bhana Young’s theorization of the continual return of violent pasts, particularly in reproductions of modernity. She writes: “Diasporic Africans are both inside and constitutive of modernity and outside and negated by modernity: both haunted and haunting” (2006:47).

racialized violence that connect the traumas of West Africa's pasts with the futures of choreographic economies. Centering the production's geography within this interpretation brushes *Dancing at Dusk* against the grain by foregrounding how the production advances Bausch's legacy by reinvesting in neoliberal multiculturalism and unearthing the reperformance's entanglement with past and present brutalities of racial capitalism, through which such a future is secured. This reperformance does three things: (1) it responds to an ongoing, politically charged concentration on racial representation in performance; (2) it does so by conscripting the labor of African dancers to both reiterate the canonicity and extend the futures of a white European choreographer's work;<sup>10</sup> and (3) it tacitly undermines its own investments in neoliberal multiculturalism through site-specific, material references to the slave trade on which racial capitalism was built. These three points coalesce through an analysis of how the reperformance's time and place draw attention to the potential for reconstruction and reperformance projects to fortify global investments in racial capitalism and the "afterlife of slavery" through the aspirations of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hartman 2007:6).

### Grounding *Dancing at Dusk*

The producers for this reperformance of *The Rite of Spring* never planned for the work to be danced on the beach. In an interview, Sadler's Wells Senior Producer Ghislaine Granger told me that "the main project that we [the producers] all decided to work on" was not the video of *Dancing at Dusk*, but rather "the live production of *Rite of Spring/Common Grounds*. [...] That was our main objective, and what we were all working towards: opening that production and then touring it as a live production" (Granger 2021).<sup>11</sup> But when it became clear that, due to Covid-19, they would need to end rehearsals, send the dancers home, and delay the tour indefinitely, the production team decided to "seize the moment and do a run through with costumes that's being filmed." A professional filming team was on site "because they were meant to film the actual live production when in Dakar." In other words, according to Granger, *Dancing at Dusk* "was never meant to be. [...] It just happened because of circumstances" (2021).

As in Bausch's original *Rite of Spring*, this production was intended to be performed in a theatre with a thick layer of soil covering the stage. In fact, a shipment of soil for the dancers to rehearse on was scheduled to arrive in Dakar about two days after *Dancing at Dusk* was filmed (Granger 2021). But without soil at hand or under foot, the producers made the decision to film on the beach, close to where they had been rehearsing. "It was the nearest element that we could find nearby to try to recreate that feel [of dancing on soil]," Granger said (2021). In an interview with Germaine Acogny, whose husband Helmut Vogt acted as translator, Acogny clarified that the dancers had not rehearsed on either sand or soil during the entire rehearsal period, "but they immediately felt okay doing it on the beach" (Acogny 2021). Although the decision to rehearse and film the performance on the beach was made in an effort to approximate the look and feel of the original design for *The Rite of Spring*, the adjustment from a stage covered in soil to the beach in Toubab Dialaw had unplanned yet profound effects on the production.

The change in location unearthed geographic histories that resonate through the material conditions of *Dancing at Dusk*. Geography, as Katherine McKittrick describes it, is not "secure and unweaving" (2006:xi). Rather, she writes, "we produce space, we produce its meanings, and we work very hard to make geography what it is" (xi). Instead of interpreting the beach as an abstract space in which the dance is performed, then, or as a fixed background to Bausch's choreography, it is important to

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10. I use the word "conscripting" with reference to David Scott's rethinking of the relationship between colonial pasts and postcolonial futures to trouble historical narratives' romantic emphases on agency (see Scott 2004).

11. *Common Grounds* is a duet choreographed and performed by Germaine Acogny and former Bausch dancer Malou Airaud (who, during her time with Tanztheater Wuppertal, performed the role of the Chosen One in Bausch's *Rite of Spring*). This duet is paired with the reperformance of *Rite of Spring* on the international touring production.

consider how the beach's meanings, as they have been produced over time, affect the dance, and vice versa. Although McKittrick focuses specifically on Black women's geographies, her theorization of relationships between geography, space, and social production in the context of the Black Atlantic may also be applied more broadly. "The poetics of landscape," McKittrick asserts, "discloses the underside, unapparent histories and stories that name the world and Black personhood" (xxii). Attending to how a landscape is haunted by these histories "evidences the ways in which some of the impressions of transatlantic slavery leak into the future" (xvii). In its setting on the beach, what "unapparent histories and stories" does *Dancing at Dusk* — and the ways in which the choreography makes and knows space — connect to the contemporary terrain? What impressions of transatlantic slavery "leak" into the production and its futures, and for whom are these leakages apparent?

Building upon McKittrick's consideration of how histories and hauntings participate in the social productions of geography, Arabella Stanger proposes a consideration of choreographic space that unearths "histories of racialization, land theft, and erasure" that are conventionally unthought within Euro-American ideas of spatial production (2021:8). Through a critical approach to dance studies that considers dance's material locatedness, Stanger posits a theorization of spatial and social production and concealment that looks "beneath Euro-American theater dance's various promises of appealing, kinetic relationality [...] to the forms of spatial control and racialized disposability that ground them" (10). Applying Stanger's astute theoretical approach to *Dancing at Dusk* clarifies not only how the production can appear simultaneously valorizing and violent, but also how this apparent dichotomy is grounded in and revealed through the dance's material setting. Attending to the dance's interaction with the beach unearths histories of transatlantic slavery within the context of a choreography already suffused with violence. As the beach resituates the dance within its own histories, it grounds both the choreography and the performers within transtemporal geographies of colonial and imperial terror.

In line with Stanger's observations, *Dancing at Dusk* participates in practices of healing and political transgression at the same time that it extends histories of racialized violence (5). For Acogny, the production presented an opportunity not only for African dancers to learn and perform Bausch's iconic choreography, but also to prove that techniques and traditions of African dance prepare a dancer to perform in such work. It was of the utmost importance to Acogny that the dancers featured in *Dancing at Dusk* perform the work precisely as Bausch had choreographed it. In our interview, Acogny told me that she "insisted that [the choreography] was not changed in order to make it danceable for the African dancers. [Acogny] insisted, and the restagers, they agreed that it was really the original choreography" (Acogny 2021). Acogny believes that their reperformance ultimately

showed that the traditional dances in Africa, which are wonderful, great, are a perfect training for a dancer. It enables them to do other movements than they are used to. Really it's the same as the ballet training in Europe, the traditional dances they give the same possibility to the dancers to manage their body, to express with their body what the choreography is asking. (2021)

Acogny's assertion that African dances and techniques prepare a dancer for all genres of dance performance reflects the philosophies that drive her work as a dancer, choreographer, and educator. From Acogny's perspective, *Dancing at Dusk* disrupted the global, racialized hierarchies of dance praxis and performance that uphold European modes of training as universally beneficial and superior. "And it was Salomon Bausch" (Pina Bausch's son, who established the Pina Bausch Foundation), Acogny told me, "who said, after the presentation of the African dancers, it will now be difficult for the company of Pina Bausch and others to be on the same level as the African dancers" (2021). This is only one example of the multiple ways that *Dancing at Dusk* participates in a form of choreopolitical transgression that was felt and appreciated by those involved.

*The Rite of Spring's* original staging on a thick layer of soil transforms the conventional proscenium into a scene of nature and earth, and much of the choreography emphasizes the tactility of its setting. Particularly in the beginning of the dance, the performers interact with the soil directly,



tracing their fingers through the terrain and holding it with their hands. They have to work even harder to execute the movement in several inches of dirt, and, as they do so, their bodies become smeared with the particles of dust that cling to their sweating flesh. Yet even as the choreography emphasizes the materiality and tactility of its design, the setting remains abstract. The soil that covers the stage—which has to be shipped from another location—is there to indicate geographic terrain, but it is a terrain without any history or sociocultural context. Viewers and performers are free to imagine that *The Rite of Spring* takes place anywhere. In its setting on the beach, however, the abstraction of *The Rite of Spring* is disrupted; in *Dancing at Dusk* the choreography is resituated within the beach's geographical histories.

According to Acogny, it was also Salomon Bausch's idea to perform *The Rite of Spring* on the beach (2021). Keeping in mind that Acogny and the restagers agreed that the dance would be taught and performed without any modifications or changes, we can assume that the choreography performed in *Dancing at Dusk* is the same as the original choreography created by Pina Bausch. The precision upheld by the restagers in this project is evident not only in the dancers' movements, but also in the small adjustments made in preparation. The video of *Dancing at Dusk* (Heinzen-Ziob 2020) begins before the dancing itself. At the edges of a pristinely raked rectangular area, we see the bustle of the dancers, crew, and production staff preparing for the filming. Eventually, a dancer takes her opening position, walking into the space with a red cloth and floating it in the breeze for a moment before laying it down on the sand as evenly as possible. As she takes her place lying face down on the cloth, a crew member re-rakes the sand where the dancer has left footprints. We see the backs of two restagers (Jorge Puerta Armenta and Ditta Miranda Jasjfi) as they consider the dancer's placement. After observing from different distances, they ask the dancer to move about half a foot towards center stage. She does so, laying the cloth down as evenly as possible once again. The crew member appears, once again, to rake the sand around her. Satisfied, the restagers disappear from the view of the camera, and after a few moments the music begins. The exactitude displayed by the restagers, dancer, and crew in this moment reflects a shared devotion to the accuracy of the production. On the one hand, this attention to detail invites the viewer to look closely at the dancers' movements throughout *Dancing at Dusk*; but on the other it opens the possibility of interpreting any differences between *Dancing at Dusk* and *The Rite of Spring* on a scale beyond the exacting transmission and embodiment of Bausch's choreography. The fact that the choreography was replicated so precisely, in other words, highlights the extent to which the geographic location of this reperformance gives new meaning to the production.

Bausch's original choreography resonates differently within the context of the beach's geography. In the first moments of *Dancing at Dusk*, the only person visible is the woman described above, who lies on the red cloth. Her eyes are closed. Her hands, placed above her head, are in contact with the sand, and make the first imprints on the carefully raked landscape. She breathes visibly, her ribcage and shoulders lifting from and then releasing towards the ground. Gradually, she begins to exaggerate the swells of her breath, the movement traveling into her neck and head, which she rubs back and forth against the beach. She appears in the midst of a dream that—through her physical posture and movement—connects with the landscape. Another dancer enters, and the camera shifts its focus towards her as she runs behind the woman on the red cloth. She moves towards the ground in a deep pli $\acute{e}$ , then reaches forwards with one hand to greet the earth with the whole of her palm, which she presses into the sand and traces back and forth in front of her. In this moment, her attention is entirely devoted to the landscape, which gives way beneath the pressure of her hand and slides gently through her fingers. Several more women enter and lie face down on the beach in a position similar to that of the women on the red cloth. Without a cloth between their bodies and the beach, they slide their cheeks, shoulders, and hands directly across the sand. As the camera pans across the space, we see more and more women engaged in the same action. Sand sticks to their faces, shoulders, and hair, and they do not attempt to brush it off. Through these first movements of the dance, the beach is initiated as a landscape with which these women hold a meaningful, tactile relationship. It is introduced almost as another dancer that we may attend to throughout the performance. When the dance is performed onstage in dirt, the viewer is left to imagine a



Figure 2. From the film *Dancing at Dusk: A Moment with Pina Bausch's The Rite of Spring, Toubab Dialaw, Senegal*. Enno Endlicher, cinematographer; Florian Heinzen-Ziob, director and editor. (Film still © Fontäne Film)

landscape and its history as it is invoked as an animate aspect of the performance. But here, the dancers' movements intertwine with the physical and psychic histories of *this* beach, in Senegal, on the West African coast.

In these first moments of the dance, Bausch's original choreography, performed in a different context, conjures what McKittrick might describe as the beach's "unapparent histories and stories." The audience need not fill an abstract space with imaginings of its past; the beach's histories of racialized violence and trauma are present, if not apparent, for some viewers.<sup>12</sup> Beginning in the 15th century, Senegal (part of the region that was then referred to as Senegambia) was a significant hub of the slave trade—first for the Portuguese and Spanish, then for the Dutch, English, and French. While the beach in Toubab Dialaw may not have been the exact location where captives were corralled onto ships, its shoreline extends to the ports that were. This association may be considered incidental for the production of *Dancing at Dusk*, which was supposed to be performed onstage, in dirt, in Madrid, Copenhagen, and Luxembourg. But the significance that I draw from this happenstance setting further underscores the ubiquity of histories of racialized violence. The dancers' opening movements and engagement with the landscape bring the beach's history into the life of the dance from the outset.

The geography of the landscape continues to make its presence and its histories apparent throughout the production, as the beach participates in the dance as a more and more active performer. At the outset, in the midst of a sandy, salty expanse that extends far beyond the frame of the camera, the rectangular performance space raked by the production team appears more level and even in color. Standing at the perimeter of this designated stage space, poised for their entrances, the dancers contribute to the separation of this area of the beach from the broader environment. Yet over the course of the production, the beach becomes more animate, its own life surfacing as part of the performance. A few people watch from a distance, including a horse, cart, and driver. Others are incidentally caught in the background as they move through the tasks of daily life and commerce. As the dancers tread

12. Although the geographic and historical contexts are different, my interpretation of the beach herein might be considered in relation to Édouard Glissant's theorization of the "subterranean, cyclical life" of the beach at Le Diamant in Martinique (1997:121).

upon the raked, rectangular space, churning the sand underfoot and dragging it across the previously marked perimeter, the differences in color and level that once marked the stage area fade. Slowly, the performance space blends with its surroundings. Once the spatial demarcations have been erased by the dancers' pathways, the performance appears to take place not just on a chosen segment of the beach, but simply on the beach. This lack of definition between performance space and surroundings encourages the viewer to release the idea that this reperformance is somehow set apart from the beach's geographies and histories. As waves of memory lap up against the production's physically present bodies, they situate the dancing within the landscape's past and its endurance in the present.

## Sacrifice or Abduction?

*Dancing at Dusk* drags multiple histories through the sand of the beach and into the present tense of performance. At the same time, the production points towards new futures for Bausch's choreography by continuing to build upon the canonical centrality of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. The original collaboration of *Sacre*, commissioned by the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev, between dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, composer Igor Stravinsky, and set and costume designer Nicholas Roerich, draws from elements of Russian folk iconography and portrayals of primitivism to create a dynamic tension with the modern aesthetic of the Ballets Russes. Much has been written, historicized, and theorized about Nijinsky's groundbreaking choreography for *Sacre*, but Bausch would not have seen that production or any restaging of it before creating her own *Rite of Spring* in 1975. *Sacre* has become a fixture of fascination within the Western canon not only because of its continued presence on the proscenium stage, but also because of its extended absence from it. After its famously riotous premiere, Nijinsky's *Sacre* disappeared from the stage until 1987, when Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer reconstructed the steps and costumes for a revival with the Joffrey Ballet. In the meantime, for those without access to the archives of notes, costumes, and drawings, only the music—and the mythic memory of the dance—survived.

Bausch's *Rite of Spring* responds to the structures and sounds of Stravinsky's score to offer an evocative, affective critique of the conditions of modernity and traumas of postwar Germany with a particular focus on the brutality of gender. As Susan Manning writes, in *The Rite of Spring* Bausch "made gender an issue," so that "*Sacre* became an arena not only for the contest between 'classical' and 'modern,' but also for the contention over dance and gender" (1991:146). Bausch accomplished this critique through numerous devices of dance performance, particularly costuming, set design, and, of course, movement. With the women dressed in a pale version of the semi-sheer dresses that would become a staple of Bausch's aesthetic and the men bare-chested in dark pants, power dynamics were visibly illustrated onstage through costumes that signify the women's vulnerability and the men's strength, and embodied through movements that laid brutality bare. Bausch's version stays true to the context and narrative of Stravinsky's score: a ritual that leads to a sacrificial solo in which a woman dances herself to death. As Kate Mattingly explains, "Stravinsky originally intended the *Rite* to be called *The Great Sacrifice*. According to their libretto, in order for spring to arrive and humanity to thrive, a Chosen Maiden must dance to death" (2019). Bausch's *Rite* holds this sacrifice at its center.

Since its premiere in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, *Le Sacre du Printemps* has formed a backbone of Euro-American dance history. Choreographing to this music has become a rite of its own for dancemakers who seek to establish their place within the Western canon, critique its constructs, or both.<sup>13</sup> It was, in part, her personal experience with other choreographers' versions

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13. Too many versions have been created to list here, but some prominent interpretations of this score include Maurice Béjart's *A Rite of Spring* (1959), Paul Taylor's *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)* (1980), Martha Graham's *The Rite of Spring* (1984), Molissa Fenley's *State of Darkness* (1988), Shen Wei's *Rite of Spring* (2002), and Bill T. Jones and Anne Bogart's *A Rite* (2013). Productions that could (and should) be fruitfully analyzed as critiques of the reproductions of modernity include Olivier Dubois's *Mon Élué Noir (My Black Chosen One): Sacre #2* (2015)—a solo for Germaine Acogny—and Heddy Maalem's *Rite of Spring* (2004). Both of these productions comment on the colonial histories and forms of violence represented within *Le Sacre du Printemps*.



of *Rite of Spring* that attracted Acogny to this collaboration with the Pina Bausch Foundation in the first place. As she related in our interview, when the choreographer Maurice Béjart (with whom she was “very close,” and who considered her “like a daughter”) was the artistic director of Mudra Afrique (a school that “had been created by President Senghor and Maurice Béjart in Dakar, and with students from all over Africa”), he wanted to do a *Rite of Spring* with the students of Mudra Afrique in which Acogny would “dance the role of the Chosen One” (Acogny 2021). But this project never came to fruition. Decades later, when Acogny was 70 years old, the choreographer Olivier Dubois asked Acogny “to be his Chosen One in a new creation, a different creation of course than the original *Rite of Spring*, but with the same music, and [Acogny] felt honored and excited to play this role” (2021). This collaboration, titled *Mon élue noire (My Black Chosen One): Sacre #2*, toured internationally. When Acogny saw a performance of Bausch’s *Rite of Spring* by the Paris Opera Ballet,<sup>14</sup> she noticed that “it was just all white people,” but felt that “there were a lot of elements that were related to Africa, and it could also have been African dancers that danced the piece” (2021).

According to Acogny and several of the dancers who performed Bausch’s choreography in *Dancing at Dusk*, the ritual sacrifice at the core of *The Rite of Spring* provided a point of commonality between the cultures of two continents—Europe and Africa—that are often positioned as fundamentally different. Exploring this point of commonality may have even inspired Acogny’s previous investments in being cast as the Chosen One in Béjart’s and Dubois’s versions. In her interview with *Dance Magazine*, Acogny explains that “seeing *The Rite of Spring* highlighted historical, cultural similarities between Africa and Europe,” namely the sacrifice of young, female virgins (in May 2020). In a separate interview with *The Guardian*, dancers Serge Arthur Dodo and Anique Ayiboe (the latter of whom performs the role of the Chosen One in *Dancing at Dusk*) articulate a similar perspective: “In Africa as a whole, [animal] sacrifices are part of cultural tradition,” says Dodo. “So we feel that link when we’re performing the piece.” Ayiboe agrees: “When I dance the Chosen One’s solo, there’s a very strong connection between my traditions, my culture and the dance” (in Winship 2020).

It should be noted, however, that human sacrifice was an extremely rare occurrence in both European and African cultures. In fact, the reason that staged depictions of sacrifice—for example of Iphigenia in Greek mythology (as in *Iphigenia at Aulis*) and, of course, the virgin sacrifice in *Sacre*—are so dramatic is because they were so uncommon. In their stretch to imagine cross-cultural commonalities, Acogny’s interpretation and the dancers’ accounts both refuse the temporal displacement of Africa as outside of contemporaneity (a refusal that is central to Acogny’s pedagogical philosophies) and suggest that *Dancing at Dusk* in some ways realizes the promises of intercultural collaboration that inspired its production. In their efforts to mitigate the differences between Europe and Africa, however, these artists appear to overlook how European philosophies created this “difference” in the first place (Zondi 2021).

The universalism of these statements obfuscates the colonial maneuvers that created European-African entanglement and ignores any potential questions raised through attention to colonial histories (Zondi 2021). These quotes from Acogny (who is Senegalese), Dodo (who is Ivoirian), and Ayiboe (who is Togolese) also paint a portrait of Africa that fails to account for the many forms of difference within the continent that are also represented within the cast. In the press and promotional material for *Dancing at Dusk*, differences between the dancers’ nationalities, histories, and cultures disappear. These reflections on the production thus demonstrate how multiculturalism strategically erases certain differences in order to emphasize others. While the reperformance appears to celebrate racial difference by showcasing an entirely Black cast, it also contributes to the West’s imagination of Africa as a homogeneous entity—an imagination formed by and in service of colonial histories and imperatives. As anthropologist Paulla Ebron argues, performance works to

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14. Acogny did not specify when exactly she saw this performance, but I posit that it was when the Paris Opera Ballet performed Bausch’s *The Rite of Spring* at Palais Garnier in November 2017.

produce what she calls “The Africa”: “a term that collectivizes Africa and marks the importance of representations that fix the continent as a homogenous object” (2002:1; see also Mbembe 2001).

What I find most surprising about these interviews in particular, and in popular responses to the reperformance in general, is that the most obvious connection between Europe and West Africa’s shared histories of human violence—colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade—is not mentioned or even suggested.<sup>15</sup> This curious omission may in part be explained by what Sandra Richards describes as the “anomaly” that “lies at the heart” of perceptions, performances, and retellings of West African involvement with the slave trade (2005:626).<sup>16</sup> In her research on African American travel to sites that memorialize the transatlantic slave trade, Richards offers an ethnographic study of Ghana’s Elmina and Cape Coast castles, where captive Africans were held in horrific conditions before being shipped across the Atlantic. Although Richards focuses on Ghana, aspects of her analysis are relevant to how involvement in the slave trade impacts West Africans’ figurations of history and identity more broadly. “Slavery is not integral to how most Ghanaians define themselves,” Richards writes (626). “To attract tourists, Ghanaians must remember a history that they learned to forget” (626). Europeans, who preferred to avoid spending extended time on the African continent, needed local partners; they found them in Arab and West African slave traders, who captured Central and West African people and sold them to Europeans.

In the context of the interviews for *Dancing at Dusk* the word “sacrifice” seems insufficient to inspire remembrance of this forgotten history. This was also not a history that Acogny acknowledged in our interview, despite my questions focused specifically on the role of the beach in the performance. She noted, instead, that the beach was “a surprise that probably even gave them [the dancers] a certain strength to do the performance” (Acogny 2021). But Stravinsky offers a possible reframing; the third section of the score, which contains the selection and death of the Chosen One, is titled “Ritual of Abduction.” According to Mattingly, a sense of abduction, “meaning to forcibly take someone against their will, exists in many versions of *Rite*,” including Bausch’s (2019). In *Dancing at Dusk*, the notion of abduction, more so than sacrifice, connects the dance to the traumatic histories of its setting. On the beach, reperformed by Black African dancers, the choreography of abduction reverberates with a different meaning than in Bausch’s original *Rite of Spring*. As the dancers knock one another down, toss or drag each other over the sand, clutch one another’s shoulders and forcibly push each other across the space, their movements recall the conflicts of African involvement in the slave trade. In such moments, the beach’s histories of violence—whether or not they are recalled by the dancers in the moment of performance—rupture the production’s multicultural ideals of unity and collaboration.

There are several moments in *Dancing at Dusk* where Bausch’s staging of sacrifice appears to transform into choreography of capture and enslavement. This alternate interpretation is clearest just before the Chosen One begins her dance to the death. The music comes to a climax as a man selects the sacrificial virgin by clutching her shoulders; immediately the other members of the cast, frozen in anticipation until this point, explode in movement that includes weighted jumps, women launching themselves onto men’s shoulders, and the frantic recapitulation of earlier phrases. There is a deeply anxious energy to this choreography—an excitement tinged with dread. After the man helps the Chosen One change from her nude-colored slip into a red one, they separate for a brief period. The Chosen One looks at her community with horror as their dancing gains momentum,

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15. These or related associations may also have been edited out by the magazine or interviewer to exclude or refuse engagement with histories of the slave trade. Elsewhere in her work, Acogny offers connections between Greek mythology and the transatlantic slave trade, specifically in and around Senegal. As Ananya Chatterjea writes in her description of Acogny’s performance in *À un Endroit du Début* (2015): “Bits of the archetypal Greek tragedy of Medea are remixed with imagined moments from a slave auction on Gorée island as the tension mounts with the layering of text and movement” (2020:133).

16. Europeans exploited the conflicts between African tribes and nations as a source for captives of war, who could be sold to slave traders. Exchanges such as these are perhaps most famously recounted in Alex Haley’s *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976).

observing their dance from several different vantage points as an outsider for the first time. The man approaches the Chosen One once again. This time, instead of taking her by the shoulders, he grips the back of her neck and pushes her upstage. In the original staging of Bausch's choreography, this push creates distance between the Chosen One and the audience but does not necessarily move towards anything in particular. But replicating this spacing on the beach means that the man pushes the Chosen One towards the Atlantic Ocean in a slow, halting walk. In this moment, the shoreline of the Atlantic gives new meaning to the Chosen One's fate. Gorée, a small island just off the coast of Dakar where, during the transatlantic slave trade, captive Africans were corralled and held before being shipped across the ocean, looms beyond the scope of the camera. As the female dancer is pushed towards the Atlantic, her weight pitched back and her feet digging into the sand in front of her, her movement traces the pathways of the beach's traumatic histories.

It is also precisely at this moment that the sun, which had been setting all the while, drops to the point where it causes the colors of the sky to change color rapidly. More than any other moment in the dance, it appears now that the choreography is shrouded in dusk. Amidst the scenery of the beach and the darkening sky, the Chosen One's abduction and resistant path towards the Atlantic resonate with metaphors of slavery and its afterlives as perpetual dusk. As Saidiya Hartman notes, "W.E.B. Du Bois described this [...] enduring moment of injury as dusk" (2002:759). Hartman continues: "It has been dusk for four hundred years. If this past does not pass by it is because the future, the longed for, is not yet attainable. This predicament and this yearning are centuries old" (2002:760). If the beach itself contextualizes the dance within the histories and afterlives of the transatlantic slave trade, the descending arc of the sun both strengthens and lengthens the implications of this connection between choreography, geography, and history. The synchronicity between the moment of abduction and the onset of dusk signifies the trauma of the slave trade as well as its enduring injuries.

Rethinking *Dancing at Dusk* as a depiction of abduction and capture also attunes us to the aspects of this production that trouble its attachment to the ideals of intercultural collaboration. Restaging *Rite of Spring* on Black African dancers morphs Bausch's critiques of a European work into a reiteration of the presumptively natural relationship between Africa and primitivity. This is a fundamental misfire of the reperformance. When performed by a cast of mostly European dancers, Bausch's choreography exposes the "barbarism" lurking in the heart of Western civilization.<sup>17</sup> But when the same choreography is performed by those whose countries and cultures have historically been figured by Europeans and Euro-Americans as "barbaric" or "uncivilized," the central critique of modernity is diminished by, if not ceded to, racist tropes that displace Africans from history and civilization.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the reperformance further relegates the Black dancer to the space of the atavistic while reinforcing Bausch's modern subjectivity. *Dancing at Dusk's* unintentional coupling of the beach's violent histories and an investment in the continuity of Bausch's choreography effectively resituates the reperformance within the enduring context of racial capitalism. The production, in other words, is itself enveloped in the same dusk that commenced with the transatlantic slave trade and that endures through its afterlives.

## Racializing Reperformance's Pasts and Futures

The capacious temporality of dusk as a metaphor for the onset and duration of racial capitalism compels consideration of both how *Dancing at Dusk* relates to the geographic histories of the beach in Toubab Dialaw as well as how the production invests in new futures for Bausch's work. These histories and futures are bound through the persistence of racial capitalism within the promises of neoliberal multiculturalism. *Dancing at Dusk* furthers my interest in de-idealizing<sup>19</sup> dance and

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17. Here, I refer to an oft-cited passage from Walter Benjamin's essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of *barbarism*" (1968:256).

18. This trope is famously iterated in Hegel's claim that Africa is ahistorical. For a critical anthropological study on the formative relationship between colonialism, history, and time, see Fabian ([1983] 2014).

19. Here, I apply a term coined by Kadji Amin to look beyond the histories and theories upheld by academic fields in order to explore alternative methodologies (see Amin 2017).

performance studies' shared view, broadly speaking, that the ways in which reperformance interacts with the past complicates the linear temporality of capital (see Freeman 2010; Schneider 2011; Heathfield and Jones 2012; Lepecki 2016).<sup>20</sup> There is much to unpack through analyses of reperformance's relationship with futurity within the context of liberal and neoliberal capitalisms, particularly as they converge with and sustain the ideologies of multiculturalism.<sup>21</sup> Through the promise of infinite possibilities for repetition and continuity, imaginings and reimaginings, legacy plans and reperformance projects maintain an economic bond with the speculative and promised futures at the center of contemporary neoliberalism.<sup>22</sup> Through this temporal orientation, reperformance generates choreographic productivity and reproductivity, even after the choreographer has died (as is the case with the Pina Bausch Foundation). *Dancing at Dusk* both supports and complicates this model: it exemplifies how contemporary reperformance's presumptively postracial present and multicultural futures may still be troubled by the endurance of the past.

While investing in futures has always been integral to the production of capital, contemporary mutations of liberal capitalism—including neoliberalism and German ordoliberalism, which characterize the environment in which the Bausch Foundation is situated—center futurity with pronounced and slightly different emphases (Das 2021). The entanglement of social and economic valuations of risk, innovation, and speculation is a crucial component of neoliberal imaginings of the future. Michel Foucault argues that within German ordoliberalism and austerity politics, in particular, “there is only one true and fundamental social policy: economic growth” ([2004] 2008:144). The purpose of policy, he explains, is to provide individuals with enough economic space to “take on and confront risks” (144). According to André Lepecki, one of the primary modes through which contemporary choreography traffics in and reproduces neoliberalism is the display of disciplined bodies that negotiate precarity, risk, and flexibility (2016). The rhetoric of risk illuminates a central principle through which dance performance and reperformance align with the futures of capital. Moreover, as Anusha Kedhar argues in the context of migrant dancers in Europe, “risk-taking among dancers was and often is racialized” (2020:142). There is no such thing as a professional production of concert dance that does not participate in the economy, especially those that viewers must pay to see (as was the case with the original distribution of *Dancing at Dusk*). But it is specifically the way that this production invests in Bausch's legacy that it aligns with contemporary formations of neoliberalism.

The mission of the Pina Bausch Foundation, as published on their website, drives towards the future.<sup>23</sup> “The task of the Pina Bausch Foundation,” the site states, is “keeping her artistic legacy alive and carrying it on into the future” (Pina Bausch Foundation n.d.a). The website further clarifies the Foundation's investment in futurity:

The Foundation's goal is to ensure that Pina Bausch's pieces are performed again and again on stage, all over the world.

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20. My intervention to de-idealize reperformance is consonant with more recent efforts to dislodge repetition from the center of performance studies (see Colbert, Jones, and Vogel 2020).

21. In its analysis of the relationship between capital and futurity, my argument inherently draws from the work of queer theorists who have taught us how emphases on futurity align economic progress with heteronormative and patriarchal values (see Edelman 2004; Ahmed 2010; Berlant 2011).

22. In the United States, neoliberalism is often characterized by an emphasis on privatization and possessive individualism. Globally, however, neoliberalism manifests with different variations. Wendy Brown speaks to the ubiquity of neoliberalism, defining it as “a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms,” distinguished by its “‘economization’ of political life and of other heretofore noneconomic spheres and activities” (2015:17).

23. As Peggy Phelan explains, the foundation's mission also encompasses an organization of Bausch's past. She writes: “In the immediate aftermath of her death, Rolf Salomon Bausch, Pina's son, who had inherited all the licenses to his mother's work, established the not-for-profit Pina Bausch Foundation (hereafter PBF), and he bequeathed the copyright to her works, and those of Borzík's, to the Foundation. In the years since her death, the Foundation has established a mission and has begun the work of digitizing recordings, programs (in many languages), indexing which dancers performed what roles in what venue, and cataloging costume and set design information” (2017:306).

Many dancers shall receive the opportunity to dance the choreographies. This way they can experience the work of Pina Bausch on a personal level. Also, as many people as possible shall be able to see the work of Pina Bausch on stage.

The Foundation grants licenses (permits) to the Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch and international companies that want to perform Pina Bausch's pieces. For transmissions to international theaters, the Foundation works closely with former and current dancers of Tanztheater Wuppertal. They repeatedly transmit their roles to new generations of dancers. [...] Passing on this knowledge is very important to be able to perform the pieces in the long-term. (Pina Bausch Foundation n.d.a)

There is much to be celebrated in this mission statement, particularly a generosity concerning who is able to learn and experience Bausch's dances.<sup>24</sup> The Pina Bausch Foundation is also in the process of digitizing and cataloging their archives to make more material available to access freely on their website (Pina Bausch Foundation n.d.b). Yet an emphasis on the continuity of transmission and reperformance is undeniable, as the Pina Bausch Foundation promises that the choreographer's work will be realized "again and again," transferred to "new generations of dancers," and performed "in the long-term." The Pina Bausch Foundation further reiterates this point in a webpage devoted to the question "What is a transmission?" "This is important for the future of Pina Bausch's work," the last paragraph states, "so that the pieces can be shown on stage again and again. For this, they have to be passed on to younger generations repeatedly" (Pina Bausch Foundation n.d.c). For the Pina Bausch Foundation, *Dancing at Dusk* is a model transmission project, and it is considered so successful because it clearly enacts their agenda. As Sarah Crompton explains in the program notes, this restaging of *The Rite of Spring* "looks back to Bausch's heritage and puts down a marker for a way of presenting her work in future" (Crompton 2020).

The Pina Bausch Foundation's orientation toward the future demonstrates a temporal bond between economies of transmission, reperformance, neoliberalism, and, more specifically, neoliberal multiculturalism.<sup>25</sup> The desire to make Bausch's work available to performers and dancers around the world belies a commitment to multiculturalism ("as many people as possible" seeing the work and/or experiencing it "on a personal level"), specifically in relation to the underlying influence of imperial ideologies (through an emphasis on a global scale and "transmissions to international theaters"). This pairing grounds the Foundation's promises within a racialized economy that is fundamentally bound to its projected futures. Yet *Dancing at Dusk* also demonstrates how these futures are enmeshed with past and present systems of capital. In *Queer Times, Black Futures*, Kara Keeling connects neoliberalism's fascination with futurity to the persistent presence of racial capitalism's violent pasts. Neoliberal capital, she explains, "exists within a longer history of racial capitalism, itself undergirded by and maintained through the socioeconomic and cultural relations set in motion by the technological innovations and exploitation of risks that spread chattel slavery in the Americas" (2019:26). The Pina Bausch Foundation's "task" must therefore be contextualized within both contemporary neoliberalism and its formative histories; reperformances and transmission projects that propel and are propelled by neoliberal economies also sustain an entanglement with the racialized violence of their origins.

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24. Numerous dance foundations and trusts, particularly those that support the work of ballet choreographers, continue to guard the work of a central artist by only allowing dancers of a certain level and a certain physique to perform the choreography. The Balanchine Trust, for example, polices licensing and restaging projects in this manner (see Picart 2012:687; see also Kraut 2016).

25. According to Jodi Melamed, neoliberal multiculturalism is distinguished by its tactic of employing difference and diversity within particular settings in a way that ultimately reinforces the biopolitical hold of global capitalism and white supremacy. As Melamed writes, the procedures of neoliberal multiculturalism, "which convert the effects of differential value-making systems into normative orders of difference, continue to explain and make acceptable inherent and systemic inequalities within historical formations of US global ascendancy and capitalist development" (2011:41). Moreover, neoliberal multiculturalism "has disguised the reality that neoliberalism remains a form of racial capitalism" (42).



At the same time that it participates in contemporary formations of racial capitalism, however, *Dancing at Dusk* also appears to protest some artistic manifestations of racialized violence. *Dancing at Dusk* represents a good-faith effort by its producers to offset the predominant whiteness of Bausch's canon, even while practicing methods of intercultural exchange that historically privilege white collaborators. In restaging *The Rite of Spring* with a group of African dancers, the producers appear to have responded to recent calls for more diverse representation within dance performance through casting. Because conventional modes of dance spectatorship remain ocularcentric, visible representations of difference (especially race) onstage have become increasingly prevalent as critiques of the institutionalized whiteness of ballet and modern dance have gained traction.

Thinking about how representation functions in relation to the ideals of neoliberal multiculturalism also invites questions concerning the limits of casting and collaboration as strategies for cultural and political change (see Catanese 2011). As Jodi Melamed has argued within the context of American studies, neoliberal multiculturalism is yet another form of racial capitalism that employs racial difference to disguise its systemic inequalities (2011:42). Further critiques of multiculturalism within dance and performance studies have demonstrated how practices of diversity and inclusion that are not grounded in decolonial methodologies potentially reinforce the economic, political, and cultural imperatives that uphold the supremacy of whiteness on a global scale. As Anusha Kedhar succinctly asserts, "multiculturalism mobilizes difference as capital" (2020:20). Within the context of a neoliberal economy, Kedhar explains, "race and ethnicity become especially useful visible and performative markers of difference that can be mobilized, by the state and its citizens, to compete for public resources and audiences" (20). With attention to these important critiques of how multiculturalism functions within a global political economy, we might view the decision to feature 38 African dancers in Bausch's *Rite of Spring* as a way to garner resources and audiences—gathering momentum for the foundation's task of extending Bausch's legacy into the future. On the one hand, the casting of Black African dancers in *Dancing at Dusk* offers a challenge to the dominant whiteness of the Western canon; but on the other, it also mobilizes difference to protect Bausch's past, present, and future status within it. The reperformance's investment in racial difference simultaneously obscures and secures the project's promotion of yet another white choreographic future.

Looking back at *Dancing at Dusk* with this critical awareness contextualizes it as one of many contemporary performances and reperformances that traffic through collaborations with Black and African dancers and dancemakers. As Mlondolozzi Zondi explains, "Black dance in the post-1990 era is characterized by increased transnational and multicultural collaborations and residences for Black dancers" (2020:259). Zondi clarifies that while it is important to celebrate the mobility of Black dance that such collaborations facilitate, it is also crucial to consider how such encounters obscure the anti-Black power dynamics that continue "alongside and *through* performance" (260). "Collaborative transnational performance," Zondi argues, "is also a medium or a maneuver through which anti-Blackness congeals and proliferates globally" (260).<sup>26</sup> As a transnational collaboration that employs Black African dancers and collaborators to promote white futures, *Dancing at Dusk* reproduces these tendencies in some ways while undermining them in others.

We may remember that one of the reasons Germaine Acogny became interested in this collaboration was because of its potential to subvert global, racialized hierarchies of dance technique and praxis.<sup>27</sup> In her interview with *Dance Magazine*, Acogny reiterates the importance of featuring an all-Black cast of African dancers in this reperformance of a canonical, European work: "It shows that Black people, in this case from Africa, have the same abilities to do fantastic work [...] It's so important to make people feel like we all belong together in this one world and that we can

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26. See also Joja (2014).

27. These global, racialized hierarchies of dance technique and choreographers have also been attended to by dance theorists and historians (see for example Savigliano [2009]).

all enrich each other” (in May 2020).<sup>28</sup> Underlying Acogny’s expression of liberal philosophies of universalism is a vision of Pan-Africanism deeply influenced by theories and practices of anticolonialism that draw from Léopold Senghor’s concept of Africanité.<sup>29</sup> This transnational, collaborative spirit of the production seems to have had a considerable impact on the performers.<sup>30</sup> And while Acogny’s universalizing philosophies of dance performance and pedagogy harmonize with the unifying ethos of the production on one level, on another the decolonial epistemologies of her technique may have impacted the reperformance in other, perhaps unintentional, ways.

*Dancing at Dusk*’s more nuanced portrayal of the relationships between racial representation, imaginations of Africa, and the contemporary global stage is not cultivated by the beach setting alone but through the dancers’ interactions with it. And while many of these interactions take place because they are staged within Bausch’s original choreography, they are qualitatively enhanced by the dancers’ performances. Indeed, forming embodied relationships with nature and the landscape is a foundational principle of the training that many of these dancers received at the École des Sables—the same training that Acogny said prepared them so well for this performance. In our interview, Acogny told me that “half to three quarters of the dancers in the piece” were former students of the École des Sables (Acogny 2021). So even though it was not Acogny’s decision for the dancers to perform on the beach (or, as she said, “there was no special relation between [her] and doing the performance on the beach”), their training in Technique Acogny may have influenced their readiness to perform on and interact with the landscape throughout the performance (Acogny 2021).

École des Sables literally translates to “school of sands.” This name indexes Senegal’s shoreline as a location crucial to students’ engagements with the dance forms, traditions, and techniques taught there. At the Écoles des Sables, African dance and movement imagery are centered within techniques and practices that also incorporate Western forms (such as classical ballet and Martha Graham technique) (Swanson 2019:49). Placing these techniques next to, and in conversation with, one another disturbs the pervasive physical and temporal hierarchies that privilege Western forms (which are commonly privileged as being of this time) over Africanist forms (which are all too often displaced into the pastness of tradition). As Ananya Chatterjea argues, Acogny’s aesthetic for contemporary African dance requires “balancing an embodied location in the deep structures of traditional practices, while staging a pan-African urban identity that asserted its difference, addressing global audiences, and insisting on an Africa that refused to remain in the clutches of stereotypes” (2020:139). Acogny’s use of both universalist and specifically “African” rhetoric, Amy Swanson writes, simultaneously “puts forth an embodied multiculturalism” and centers “Africanist aesthetics and local symbols” (2019:49). Chatterjea theorizes that it is the relationship between the landscape and embodiment developed in Technique Acogny that centers Africanness by insisting that students and practitioners connect with the topography and history of the land (2020:146). In her ethnographic study of the Acogny Technique, Swanson demonstrates how Africanist aesthetics and symbols are tied to local flora and fauna, including the baobab tree, chameleon, and frog (2019:52). Some classes take place in the studio, but many take place outdoors by the school “to situate certain movement sequences in the natural environment that inspired them” (52). These environments include the beach.

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28. This quotation also demonstrates how Acogny navigates the terrain of multiculturalism in order to secure funding and opportunities for African dancers. The assertion that these dancers must perform Bausch’s choreography to show that they “have the same abilities to do fantastic work” is troubling, as it perpetuates the idea that fantastic work is derived from and centered in Europe. Unfortunately, this appeal maintains, rather than subverts, the cycle of African performances with European funding that continue to conceal colonial power dynamics in service of Western neoliberal demands.

29. Senghor’s theory of Africanité advocates for a united Africa through shared values and cultural convergences (see Senghor [1967] 2009).

30. As dancer Gloria Ugwarelojo Biachi reflected in an interview with *Hyperallergic*, “It is dynamic in its simplicity. I have never seen a work that accepts you for who you are, as long as you move and believe” (in Chen 2020).

Acogny told me that “there has always been a relation between the dancers, [her] technique, and the sea” (2021). This relation is exemplified in the practice of the *etoile de mer*, or starfish, which is performed “with the movement of the waves, the movement of the arms of this animal” (Acogny 2021). During her fieldwork, Swanson participated in the starfish sequence, which she describes as taking place “while seated amongst crashing waves that pulled our bodies off the sand, forward and back” (2019:54). If half to three-quarters of the dancers who performed in *Dancing at Dusk* were trained at Écoles des Sables, then presumably they have participated in this exercise, as well, and have devoted time, energy, and focus to considering how the landscape and its histories become part of their movement. And it is likely that the dancers drew from this previously cultivated connection with the beach in their performance of Bausch’s choreography. At the same time that the Pina Bausch Foundation incorporates *Dancing at Dusk* within its forward-moving stream of transmission and legacy, therefore, Acogny’s decolonial epistemologies and practices create meaningful bonds between the dancers and the landscape to form another, powerful current within the reperformance.

In *Dancing at Dusk*, there are several choreographic contact zones at play.<sup>31</sup> The first is the beach itself, which elicits both the histories of slavery and the lasting effects of racial capitalism. The second contact zone occurs within the individual bodies and the collective body of the performers—African dancers embodying European choreography. This more corporeal contact zone is the site of the reperformance’s multicultural aspirations. These two contact zones do not interact harmoniously. Instead, their discord creates tensions that ultimately reveal the production’s asymmetries of power.

Attention to Acogny’s pedagogy, as it has been developed and taught at the Écoles des Sables in relation to the surrounding landscape, sharpens the edge of decolonial possibility within this intercultural collaboration. And it foregrounds the histories that many of the collaborators may have preferred to forget. I interpret the dancers’ performances in *Dancing at Dusk* as an instance of unearthing “the forms of spatial control and racialized disposability” that ground Euro-American dance’s “promises of appealing, kinetic relationality” (Stanger 2021:10). *Dancing at Dusk* makes many appealing promises: promises for intercultural collaboration between African and European countries; promises for the artistic and cultural possibilities of multiculturalism; and promises for the future of transmitting and presenting Pina Bausch’s work. The problem with *Dancing at Dusk* is not that it aspires to fulfill these promises. As SanSan Kwan reminds us, intercultural encounter is inevitable. “We must engage with our cultural others,” she writes. But she also asks, “How do we do so without repeating the dynamics of violence and imperialism that have historically structured our global relationships” (2021:12)? The problem with *Dancing at Dusk* is that it attempts this engagement without adequately addressing the histories of colonialism and racialized oppression that structure it. These histories are nevertheless present within the production. Performed on Senegal’s shoreline, *Dancing at Dusk* resituates Bausch’s *The Rite of Spring* within the beach’s formative histories of racialized violence, colonialism, and white supremacy. The dancers’ embodied relationships with the geographic setting unearth these histories in a way that recontextualizes the production’s promises and possible futures within global, racialized economies. Yet the production’s failure to fulfill the impossible promises of neoliberal multiculturalism cultivates ground for critical engagement with racial capitalism and its enduring histories.

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31. Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths” (1991:34).

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