© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Dance Studies Association.
doi:10.1017/S0149767726100874

Editor's Note: Mobility, Dance, and China

This special issue marks the first time that Chinese dance scholars have collectively written in English for readers in Anglophone academia. Instead of a translation of Chinese-language scholarship, this issue comprises English-language articles by Chinese scholars who know how to address the discrepancy in writing styles, theoretical assumptions, and ideological discourses across Anglophone and Chinese dance academia, a discrepancy that cannot be solved by language translation. Such a scholarly collectivity suggests an anti-white-supremacist move, in which Chinese-identified scholars seek visibility in Anglophone academia against the neutralization of both Western-centric notions of dance in China and the representation of these notions. Following Sansan Kwan and Yutian Wong in their co-edited issue, *Dancing in the Aftermath of Anti-Asian Violence*, the contributors and I highlight the significance of listening to the Asian scholars, who themselves are a vulnerable group of people often subject to racial violence in the West.

Yet this special issue by no means wants to be authoritative but instead aims to expand the ways in which dance can be imagined, examined, and written. Due to ideological differences, economic competition, and the rise of nationalism amid globalization, how the West envisions China will likely never align with how China envisions itself. The articles here neither align with Western nor with Chinese mainstream ideologies regarding the image of China. The authors situate themselves in a third, in-between space to produce dance scholarship that speaks to both Anglophone and Chinese-language academic communities. As Yutian Wong has disabused the optimistic belief that "greater representation, recognition, or visibility will solve anti-Asian violence" (2023, 9), this issue is not simply about Chinese people's self-representation in a Western context. A Chinese-authored dance scholarship can, to some extent, decenter white-centric conceptions about dance in China. Yet, this act of decentering itself serves to update the Western epistemological system, to facilitate knowledge production in the West, which again centralizes the West. Therefore, the authors not only write for Anglophone readers but also for their peers in China about possible effective approaches to transnational and translingual communication in dance research.

Mobility, Dance, and China emerges from the productive encounter between the Anglophone and Chinese-language dance academia to mobilize homogenized conceptualizations of dance and Chineseness. Such encounters occur at multiple levels in the contributors' research subjects and in their academic training backgrounds. The authors discuss topics shared across both linguistic academic fields, such as the instability of identity, the history of feminist activism in dance, dance under nationalism, and the problems with Western-centric concepts of modernism. The authors' ability to identify these shared topics stems from their bilingual academic training. Born and raised in China, where Mandarin is the official language, the authors received initial Chinese-language academic training and later pursued PhD degrees in Anglophone academia or spent extensive time as visiting scholars abroad. The Chinese-language and Anglophone training experiences equipped the authors to serve as bridges between these two academic fields. It is equally important to note that, although they share similar transnational experiences, the contributors demonstrate diversity across disciplines and generations. Rather than highlighting a shared ethnicity or transnational background,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767726100874 Published online by Cambridge University Press

we see this similarity as a departure point for developing distinct research interests, methodologies, and interdisciplinary approaches, as the following articles will show.

As said in a Chinese idiom, "to throw a brick to attract jade " (抛砖引玉 *paozhuan yinyu*), which implies a humble attitude in inviting more valuable thoughts by offering initial remarks, this special issue serves as the "brick" in the hope of inviting future, more fruitful discussions about how transnational, translingual scholarly communication can expand the ways in which we theorize dance. With humility, I want to highlight that this special issue cannot represent or offer a view of the full dance studies landscape in China, but only a significant glimpse. Because of our transnational experiences, the authors and I have the privilege that many dance scholars in China do not have, namely, access to English-language dance scholarship and the ability to communicate with Anglophone academia. To limit this privilege, at the beginning of this issue, I include a catalog of the English translations of the titles of selected articles published in China's leading dance research journal, *Contemporary Dance Research.* This catalog introduces a larger landscape of dance studies in China that the contributors are inspired by, converse with, and think critically alongside.

In "The Evolution of 'Chineseness' in 'Chinese Dance': An Analysis Based on the Theoretical Models of Chinese Dance Criticism", Yu Mu pinpoints the lost meanings in language translation between the Anglophone and Chinese-language dance academia on the term "Chinese dance." According to Mu, both terms of "中国舞蹈" (*zhongguo wudao*) and "中国舞" (*zhongguowu*) are translated as "Chinese dance" in English. Yet these two Chinese-language terms contain related but different meanings: the former refers to all types of dances and their centuries-long histories in China, the latter refers to concertized Chinese national dance created in the twentieth century. However, such nuanced differences are flattened and erased in language translation in Anglophone academia. By tracing the evolution of "Chineseness" in dance criticism in the twentieth century in China, Mu shows how the plurality of "Chinese dance" as both zhongguo wudao and zhonguowu mobilizes China's shifting cultural and political selfhood.

In "The Choreography of Frontier Dance: Local Materials, Ballroom Dance, and the Ethnographic Fantasy of the Frontier," Jing Zhu examines the historical moment when rural-area ethnic minority dance transformed into frontier dance (边疆舞*bianjiang wu*), a new concert dance genre in modern China, through Han Chinese dance artists' choreography in the 1940s during Chinese Civil War. Zhu shows the complexity behind this generic construction, in which frontier dance showcased both the dynamic Chineseness and the hierarchical multiethnic nationhood. Analyzing the influence of Western ballroom dance on the composition of frontier dance repertories, Zhu argues that the creative choreography of frontier dance reveals a Han Chinese imagination of a romanticized frontier synonymous with existing and traditional ethnography.

In "Idealizing a Female Ballet Body: Hybridity, Gender, and 'Cosmopolitanism with Chinese Characteristics'," Ziying Cui focuses on the construction of the ideal female ballet body under the interviewed gender hierarchy, racial politics, and nationalism in contemporary China. Through a case study of the audition, education, and stage performance of the ballet program at the Beijing Dance Academy, Cui argues that the ideal female ballet body in China is a hybridity "where traditional male fantasies in Chinese philosophy and the patriarchal forces of contemporary nationalism converge." Ballet, according to Cui, is not solely a result of Westernization or cultural imperialism in China. Rather, Cui uncovers ballet's new political mission to perform China's cosmopolitan aspirations in contemporary time.

In " 'As If Zhao Feiyan was Incarnated in Zhang Qi' - Corporeal Negotiation, Transmediality, and Feminist Agency in Dance on Hands (1931)," Yao Xu examines the under-researched Chinese dance troupe Meihua Shaonü Gewu Tuan (梅花少女歌舞团, Plum Blossom Girls' Song and Dance Troupe) and their commercial performances during the 1930s and 1940s under the semi-colonial conditions of the Republican China era (1912–1949). With a focus on the troupe's popular repertoire

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767726100874 Published online by Cambridge University Press

piece Dance on Hands (掌上舞 *zhangshang wu*), Xu delineates how Meihua's performance employs fantasies of the traditional to sustain their prosperity in China's colonial modernity. Accordingly, Meihua exemplifies the transmediality that defines Chinese dance modernism at that time and demonstrates the power of female dancers to reshape local audiences' desires under the influence of Euro-American feminine ideals.

In "Dance as New Women Physical Education and the Embodied Modernity in Republican China, 1926–1934," Yi An analyzes how dance education for young Chinese women (aged 16–25) in girls' schools during the Republican China era allowed Chinese women to utter their own voices in socio-cultural, political, and transnational upheavals. The author highlights a kinesthetic understanding alongside a historical and a feminist understanding about how women dancers instrumentalized the Western dance influence "to forge a hybrid modernity that balanced feminist liberation with nationalist cohesion."

Mobility, Dance, and China cannot come to life without the support of many people. I want to express my sincere gratitude toward the *Dance Research Journal* editorial team, the blind peer reviewers, the authors, and everyone who contributed to the production of this special issue. This togetherness across national and linguistic boundaries, once again, demonstrates the power of dance to make inspiring connections among people.

Fangfei Miao

Work Cited

Kwan, Sansan, and Yutian Wong. 2023. "Dancing in the Aftermath of Anti-Asian Violence: An Introduction in Three Parts." In *Dancing in the Aftermath of Anti-Asian Violence*, edited by Sansan Kwan, and Yutian Wong for *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies*, Vol 42.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767726100874 Published online by Cambridge University Press