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FROM SIGNIFYING TO PERFORMANCE

*International Ballroom Dance and the
Choreographies of Transnationalism*

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INTRODUCTION

ONE OF THE LESS THEORIZED AREAS within Asian American Studies has been that of leisure and recreational activities. And among those activities, ballroom dancing understandably occupies a dubious position, rooted as it appears to be in class divisions and in the promotion of bourgeois conventionalities. Images of men in coattails and top hats and of women trailing expensive ball gowns, who together re-enact the heteronormative colonial narrative of pair dancing, are widespread and customary. Today's competitive and performance forms continue to use markers like dance apparel to preserve associations with class distinction and wealth or with conventional gender roles. The most systematized, regulated, and arguably prestigious form of ballroom dancing is the "international" style, which the hugely popular television show, *Dancing With the Stars*, has brought into more general American consciousness. What the viewing audience of this television show may not know is that international dance has a far more parochial origin than its name implies and that historically many of the top American professionals have been emigrés from Europe, especially from Great Britain or the former Soviet states. What fans of ballroom dancing also may not know is that transnational Asian Pacific participation is so widespread that it constitutes a plurality at the amateur levels of international-style dance performance and competition in the very region that produces the television show.

What does it mean when classes of immigrants constitute a critical mass involved in this kind of dance? Is such dance merely a static signifier of bourgeois leisure, social exclusivity, and class hierarchy? What cultural scripts are organized or re-organized by these dance participants and the dance studios they attend? I propose to focus first on definitions and on the history and social indices of international-style ballroom dance, including an analysis of the contradictions besetting *Dancing With the Stars*. I will then examine how international ballroom dance constitutes a field of unstable signifiers, which are further unsettled through the impact of a critical mass of Asian Pacific ballroom dancers who renormalize ballroom dancing's imaginary. These dance participants, who emerge from a variety of diasporic spaces and inhabit a range of socio-economic conditions, also serve as reminders that ballroom dancing does not index a particular race, nationality, or class. In addition, I will argue that Asian Pacific ballroom dancers and dance studios loosen the authority of colonial race narratives in general by instantiating transnationalism as a mode of performance operating within self-reflexive spaces. Occurring at the juncture where multinational social interactions border on and cross into the forms of physical intimacy implicit in couples dancing, non-competitive performances at these sites exist at a remove from an authoritative or judicial gaze. Because the specter of the Other does not exist as might occur at a competition venue, such sites draw attention away from ballroom dancing's colonial signifiers and towards transnationalism as a complex of performances organized through space and time, and mediated by language and dialect, race and ethnicity, and nation and region, as well as by class, gender, and sexuality. Although colonial legacies may not be completely discarded, these dancers and dance studios choreograph dance interactions in such a way as to create a daily record, or performance archive,¹ that attests to the fluidities and complexities of transnational experience, as expressed through one popular form of leisure activity.

DEFINITIONS, HISTORY, AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF *DANCING WITH THE STARS*

Before turning briefly to the history of international ballroom dance, it will be helpful to distinguish international dancing from what is broadly

termed “social dancing,” since these forms of dance exist both in concert and in tension. The latter term in its widest application embraces a diversity of expressions and forms, ranging from square dancing to Charleston and from Lindy Hop to Country Two-Step. However, social dancing also can refer to more casual, less regulated versions of such recognizable “ballroom” dances as waltz, tango, foxtrot, rumba, cha cha, and samba. This essay will confine its use of the term, “social dancing,” to the latter usage. Such social ballroom dance forms may be rooted in geographical regions or assigned specifically to an inventive individual, such as Harry Fox, the Ziegfeld Follies impresario widely credited with having created the original, non-international style of foxtrot. Social dancing also is marked by a variety of cultural permutations. Thus, along with the popular American styles of social ballroom dances taught at studios like *Arthur Murray*, there exist Taiwanese, Filipino, and other varieties of ballroom dancing. While international-style dancing is particularly linked with competition,² various non-international style social dances also are shaped into high-level showcase and competition forms—salsa and varieties of swing are examples. But with few exceptions, the non-international forms of ballroom dancing, whether or not tied to competition, choose not to operate under a comparable body of comprehensive, exacting dance regulations, thereby staying proximate to their roots in popular mass culture.

International ballroom dance is divided into two broad categories: the “standard,” or “modern,” dances consist of international-style versions of waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, foxtrot, and quickstep, while the “Latin” forms are cha-cha, samba, paso doble, rumba, and jive. The term, “international ballroom dance,” can embrace both the “standard” and the “Latin” dances, despite the fact that the term normally conjures only the former. Except for the paso doble, a dance imitating the movements of a matador and his cape and one taught and performed much less frequently than the other dances, social versions of these dances exist as well. The international-style dances differ noticeably from these social forms,³ and usually they carry with them the cachet of rigor, difficulty, and advanced forms of performance spectacle, as well as the reality of magnified personal expenditures of time and money. They also necessitate extraordinarily large dance floors, even in excess of 2000 square feet. Therefore, while

international dance forms such as waltz, cha cha, rumba, and jive overlap with their social counterparts, the former are aligned along an historical socio-economic axis of elitism and aestheticized performance.

International-style ballroom dance traces its roots to England in the period between the two World Wars. Its original regulatory arm, the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (still known today as the ISTD), was founded in 1904, but the Ballroom Branch of the ISTD was organized in 1924. This was a committee of dance experts (and expert dancers) who “standardized” four ballroom dances—slow waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, and tango—for purposes of preparing serious dance students for examinations (medal tests) and competitions.⁴ By 1929, the Official Board of Ballroom Dancing was founded to help promote this “English Style.”⁵ By 1936, this type of ballroom dancing was more thoroughly systematized with the publication of Alex Moore’s dance textbook, *Ballroom Dancing*. The hegemonic assumptions underlying Moore’s call for a modernization and standardization of ballroom dancing were reinforced by Philip J.S. Richardson, who wrote approvingly in the foreword to the book of “the modern technique as laid down by the leading authorities.”⁶ Following World War II, the increasingly popular Latin dances were subjected to similar types of regulations, and the English Style acquired the appellation of “international.” Today, despite a proliferation of international dance councils and dance associations, the primary rules and regulations governing international standard and Latin dance competitions can still be traced back to the British. Europeans continue to dominate the pre-eminent professional ballroom and Latin dance competitions, although currently one of the top American professionals is a Chinese American, who has competed with several European-born partners.

Behind international ballroom dancing’s development lurks an assortment of anxieties relating to class and empire. Dance historians like Frances Rust have noted how, after World War I, “the process of ‘democratization’ of dancing was immensely speeded up,” a democratization that meant that during the 1920s in England “all classes now enjoyed the same dances and the same rhythms,” although at decidedly different venues.⁷ Belinda Quirey, a dance historian and a founder fellow and past chair of the Historical Branch of the ISTD, in some ways typified the

elitist attitudes within the original international ballroom dance community when in 1976 she commented on how old film clips of ballroom dancers from the 1920s failed to “show anything but the untaught herds strolling or pushing about.”⁸ But even while implying the value of a more widespread formal dance instruction, she lamented the fact that in the next decade the large dance halls had relocated among the bourgeoisie in the “suburbs”: “Modern ballroom had, to start with, been popularized by very distinguished people. . . . By the middle of the 1930s, when the old class structure in this country had not yet totally disappeared, to become suburban in this way meant social death.”⁹ Quirrey’s wish for the masses to receive proper dance instruction operated only within a regulatory framework that continued to centralize the “distinguished people” who drove the system at its inception. The marginalizing of this elite spoke to her concern over a disintegrating class structure and an imperiled empire. But it also spoke to a fundamental contradiction within ballroom dancing as a colonial process. On the one hand, it sought to disseminate (or internationalize) itself as widely as possible as a confirmation of its own cultural authority. But at the same time, the very success of this dissemination widened and deepened the threat to that authority, as the middle and working classes began to assume the guises and acquire the performance abilities of their “betters.”

Ballroom dancing’s standardization efforts also connected with anxieties over dance itself, in both its aestheticized and popular expressions. In the years prior to World War I, with the emergence of the Ballets Russes, the ballet quickly became recognized as high art but just as quickly as high art whose zenith some British despaired of reaching. Quirrey wryly notes that “the Russians’ enormous artistry had given their dancing such kudos that other kinds of dancing were thought meretricious, and as for ballet, well, only Russians could dance it.”¹⁰ At the same time, and from the other end of the artistic spectrum, the global “dance craze” inspired by fast-tempo Ragtime music in 1910 led to social dancing on an unprecedented scale. In America, early twentieth-century dances like the Turkey Trot, Bunny Hop, and Grizzly Bear, along with the less frenetic Hesitation Waltz, already had set the tone for ballroom dancing as a popular, widespread activity that blurred class lines and augured social mobility.¹¹ Typified by

“swaying, lurching movements,” many of the American-style dances were easily learned and far-removed from the non-standardized yet “patterned elegance of pre-modern ballroom dancing.”¹² And increasingly, they placed America at the center of cultural expression.

Thus, international ballroom dance as a regulated activity was intended to mediate social, cultural, and political anxieties generated by degraded class structures and the decline of imperial authority, as well as by both the rise of ballet as the acknowledged form of high culture dance expression and the popularity of “debased” social dance forms from abroad. Even the generally applauded expression of ballroom dancing as performed by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in a movie like *Swing Time* (1936) implied a free-style democratization of ballroom movements in which pure fun rather than the affirmation of existing social registers seemed to be the goal. Notwithstanding the obvious talents and athletic abilities of Astaire and Rogers, their type of dancing seemed unabashedly American in its determination to entertain unregulated dance movements. In the same film, Astaire also dances solo in blackface as *Bojangles*, thereby recalling racialized histories of vaudeville and minstrelsy and confirming, as it were, the American bastardization of dance as an elite art form. Viewers of the aforementioned television show, *Dancing With the Stars*, can readily detect how the weekly episodes reinforce stereotypes of ballroom dancing as bourgeois pageantry. The various “stars,” coupled with their professional-level partner-teachers, affect the costumes and perform the movements associated with international ballroom dance. With increasing frequency, couples stretch the international rules, which are exceedingly precise regarding frame, rhythm, leg lines, body contact, utilization of heels and toes, and so on, to engage in an attention-grabbing maneuver vaguely echoing Astaire and Rogers. But the judges make due note of such violations. Some performers attain an acceptable level of dance competence, especially considering how little ballroom dance training they actually receive.¹³ Each week the program takes a behind-the-scenes peek at the arduous preparation and work that lie behind the public performances. Still, even the more accomplished of these amateurs are merely reproducing practiced routines; the idea that each now can perform high-level international ballroom dancing is largely illusory.

However, part of the show's allure lies exactly in its ability to convince the non-dancing public that a high level of dance competence can be achieved in a remarkably brief period of time, given a dedicated work ethic by its practitioners. Originally derived from the British television series, *Strictly Come Dancing*, the American version adopted the gimmick of allowing the television audience to vote electronically for their favorites, their online votes to constitute 50% of the total score. This ploy effectively dilutes the expertise concentrated in the three judges. It is particularly effective because it allows the television audience to assert its own assumed expertise or to demonstrate its impatience with expertise altogether by voting as simple fans of a particular star. It also allows the American public to "talk back" to the two particularly acerbic and condescending judges, both European males with accompanying accents, and less directly, perhaps, to the female judge, an Asian American woman.¹⁴ Thus, the audience can revel in the simulacrum of Old World wealth, splendor, and class distinction that the show conjures yet assert its postcolonial ballroom claim by subverting its "foreign" regulators.

The show also devises racial configurations designed not so much to promote racial interaction as to assuage racial anxieties. Until the most recent, fourth television season, which includes Olympic speed skater Apolo Anton Ohno, only one of the dance contestants, Tia Carrera, was Asian or mixed Asian, and until the third season, only one was Latina/o (There were six amateur contestants during the show's first season, ten during the second.). At the same time, the three African American contestants appearing in the show's first two seasons—a boxer (Evander Holyfield), a rapper (Master P), and a football player (Jerry Rice)—clearly demonstrated that they were among the most awkward and least accomplished of the international-style dancers. Their dance frames, which are meant to emulate the social postures associated with English aristocracy, were continually compromised (perhaps in part because each of these men was too tall for his partner), and their footwork egregious, often failing to observe the heel-toe, inside edge, and continual contact-with-the-floor regulations of international dance. The awkwardness of these particular contestants reflects an unresolved racial problematic in the show: on the one hand, it challenges the stereotype of African Americans as necessarily

gifted dancers; on the other hand, it reinforces the racialization of ballroom dancing as an elite, upper class activity at which whites naturally excel. In the show's second season of competition, Jerry Rice, the Hall of Fame professional football player, was runner-up, but he clearly was the beneficiary of his own broad popularity. Thus, while the show seeks to assuage racial anxieties by allowing a black athlete to receive electronic votes from an undeniably extensive fan base, it also serves to stimulate the unease that reactionaries harbor over practices of "racial preference." The show's third and fourth seasons have made slight racial adjustments, particularly in their featuring of African Americans.¹⁵ During the third season, former professional football player Emmitt Smith developed into a reasonably skilled amateur ballroom dancer, and, during the fourth, professional boxer Laila Ali (daughter of Muhammad Ali) also has demonstrated obvious talent, although the leaden performance of former professional basketball player Clyde (the Glide) Drexler revived the earlier racial problematic.

Unsurprisingly, the Hollywood version of international dance is caught in a series of contradictions relating to elitism and equalitarianism, formal training and instantaneousness, and hopes and anxieties about race. What is effaced (with judge Kerry Inaba being exceptionalized as a "choreographer") is the striking disproportion of Asian Pacific international dancers at the amateur levels in the very geopolitical region where the television show originates. Beyond the history of international dance and its current deployment in the service of American revisionism, the popularity of this type of dance among a generation of transnational Asians (whose own children, growing up mainly in America, are more likely to favor hip hop) is notable. In the Southern California area, while dance studios are ubiquitous, there exists only a limited number of studios expressly or largely devoted to international-style ballroom dancing. In the region, there are perhaps six or seven sizable studios primarily devoted to this type of ballroom dancing, with the four largest existing in Asian enclaves and the others also drawing heavily from Asian dance participants. Interestingly, none of these studios exist in Los Angeles's fashionable Westside or in the Santa Monica or Malibu areas. Nor do any exist in the demographically white areas of Ventura County or in upscale Santa Barbara. One triangular sector of the Asian-populated San Gabriel

Valley has more of these large international dance studios than does all of Orange County. Any non-Asians inspired to participate in the region's international dance scene after watching *Dancing With the Stars* may be surprised to find themselves a distinct racial minority at the group lessons conducted regularly at the largest international ballroom dance studios.

UNSTABLE SIGNIFIERS AND THE TRANSNATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC PRESENCE

What are we to make of the demographic reality otherwise suppressed in Hollywood's version of international dance spectacle? What is its significance, and how does it signify, in relation to the historical meanings of international ballroom dance in England and its present incarnation on U.S. television? At one level, the participation of transnational Asians in ballroom dancing can signal an uncritical submission to a leisure practice associated with colonial domination and imbued with bourgeois normativities of class, gender, and sexuality.¹⁶ It would be senseless to deny that such submission ever occurs. But to regard all Asian Pacific ballroom dance participation as a mere surrendering to a colonial legacy ignores two factors: first, the inherent instability of ballroom dancing's signifiers and, second, the visual impact of a majoritarian Asian presence on the dance floor.

To casual observers, international dance remains entangled in its colonial roots—and for easily identifiable reasons, including its dance apparel and gendered dance regulations. The common visual signifiers of international standard dance—the formal coat and tails for the man and the elaborate ballroom gown for the woman—conjure images of caste, privilege, and exclusion, even though evidence suggests that for several decades many top-ranked international dancers have not emerged from pedigreed backgrounds or in some cases even from middle class ones.¹⁷ The ballroom apparel also operates on gendered paradoxes of worldliness and purity and of experience and innocence. Moreover, on its surface, ballroom dancing clearly inclines towards what dance historians label the “marriage plot.” While permutations of this plot exist in ballet and modern dance, it applies with an almost crippling force of convention to international standard dancing, where a couple may appear to be dressed exactly as if for a wedding.

Additionally, gender protocols of the male “lead” and the female “follow” do remain operative. Inflexible attributes of ballroom dancing, the “lead” and “follow” at first glance correspond to conventional binaries: the man as agent, deciding which figures to undertake and when to undertake them; and the woman as receiver, responding to and following the dance leads. Like the feminized body of the colonized nation, the woman passively awaits the male imperative. Given these dance protocols, and given the continued European dominance at the highest international levels of dance competition, it is tempting to link all Asian Pacific ballroom dance participation to a gendered, colonial binary. This connection is reinforced by patriarchal conventions and histories pre-existing within various diasporic Asian communities.

Yet the performance and competition realities of international ballroom dance complicate this picture. While the female partner may willingly dress in a costume defining her along the historical lines of the “lady,” in the course of the dance itself her motions seldom if ever appear submissive. In fact, many of the dance figures or “pictures” are designed to allow the woman to gain a momentary position of visual or expressive prominence. Even when this ballroom dance feature is traced back to the sexist practice of placing a woman on a pedestal or in a gilded cage, the dance image does not project itself as a yielding to the authority of the male. Indeed, the very fact that in the vast majority of international standard dance figures the partners never look directly at each other and must always, in every instance, not enter each other’s “window” supports an independence and a self-sufficiency that contradict the power inequalities presumed to exist in the lead and follow protocols. Both dancers having their own windows, it follows that both enjoy ownership over their own space and their own gaze. International dance implies a unity of effort and a unified center of gravity rather than a simple hierarchy based on gender or brute physical strength. Moreover, even though dance practitioners continue to use anachronistic terms such as “leader” (man) and “follower” (woman), the reality is that the man (that is, the male dance position) serves more as a “cue-er” than as a leader, *per se*. In the synergy of dance, there appears an equality of movement rather than dominance or control on the part of either partner. In the eyes of most competent dance

practitioners, this equality is both apparent and real. Not only is there no visual evidence of the male's lead as the dance is performed, but an effective lead or cue involves the eventual absencing of control or domination. In international dance the female partner, as she completes a particular figure or picture, visually and voluntarily fills this absence.

As a convention of female submission, the marriage plot of ballroom dance is likewise unstable. Dance critic and historian Sally Banes has observed that ballet and modern dance forms that reflect marital norms often simultaneously betray a "growing anxiety, at least since the French Revolution, toward marriage as it is particularly associated with women's destiny," and she notes how a "female character" portrayed as "weak or passive" within the plotting of the dance will likely demonstrate a "physical prowess" while performing her role that "may saturate it with agency."¹⁸ This agency is especially evident in the international-style Latin dances, which impose exceedingly high demands on dancers' athleticism and timing. While the international Latin apparel with its exaggerated sexuality may provoke an image of predation with the woman as object, the binary dissolves within the actual drama of the Latin dances, within which the "chase and retreat" maneuvers are in constant flux and the partners appear equally active and agentive. Often, in fact, dance moves are performed side-by-side, having been choreographed beforehand, and thus no lead—or predation—exists at all.

Indeed, the overt sexuality of costume and gesture objectifies neither male nor female dancer. Instead, it is retransmitted through dance movements as line, shape, and contour seeking to embody most effectively the disembodiment of the particular musical selection. The performers' success in competitions depends on their ability to dance to—and interpret through dance—the music itself. Their appearance and apparel may help or hinder in these efforts, but they do not supplant the focus on line and "action," on quickness, agility, rhythm, and variation of movement. Similarly, in the standard dances, where the marriage plot seems most conspicuously reenacted, the physical prowess demonstrated by both partners implies an equally agentive role that destabilizes the hierarchy inherent in marital tradition and dance apparel. Ultimately, international ballroom dancing loosens if not absolves its hereditary debt to bourgeois marriage

and evokes a world in which men and women coexist in concert and harmony, while sharing an equality of motion enfolding sociality within a broader aestheticism. Needless to say, such utopian evocation also may reveal the distance between reality and fiction, with the exaggerations of dress, dance figurations, and expression creating a gestural surplus that continually reminds us of such a world's fictitiousness.

If key colonial signifiers associated with ballroom dancing are unstable to begin with, what role does the Asian Pacific presence in international dance play in further destabilizing the colonial sign? On the one hand, it certainly disturbs the familiar containment narratives, which exoticize and essentialize Asians as, say, disciples of *feng shui* or consumers of bizarre foods, or, for that matter, as ethnic dancers. On the other hand, even when ballroom dancing serves to contest racial and ethnic essentializing, it runs the opposite risk of implying that Asians subscribe to a more fluid yet equally majoritarian narrative of acculturation and inclusion. Certainly, viewers of *Dancing With the Stars*, which simultaneously divests ballroom dance of its imperial authority and deploys an equalitarian methodology to reconstruct a largely mono-racial aestheticism, would probably regard transnational Asian ballroom dancers as assimilationist, testifying to the originary strength and gravitational pull of American national culture. Interestingly, Japanese American *nisei* have long engaged in both social and international ballroom dance lessons (always conducted in English) at smaller venues. Emerging from the internment camps of World War II, these *nisei* have recognized this leisure activity both as an extension of their pre-war interests as native-born Americans and as a post-war imprimatur of their Americanness. For them, the ballroom was a usable site both to resignify and to perform what their compliance with the government over war-time incarceration had all along been meant to prove: that they were, if not white, at least indubitably American.

But transnational Asians who have taken up ballroom dancing (most notably diasporic Chinese and Koreans but also Vietnamese, Japanese, and Filipinos) lack the U.S.-born Asian Americans' extended histories of minority oppression within American borders and have little reason to relate ballroom dancing or other leisure activities to vestiges of racial crisis. For them, ballroom dancing signifies neither acculturation nor American nativism. In fact, because such dancing has existed in Asian countries

for many decades (even Mao Tse Tung was reportedly an avid ballroom dancer), its association with imperialist culture has blurred beyond ready identification. For these participants, ballroom dancing often serves as an index of their transnationalism rather than as a sign of transition or acculturation. Moreover, no less than the ethnic enclaves that house them, the studios operate as majoritarian spaces for ethnic Asian minorities. The languages and dialects, as well as the customs and social habits, at these studios reinforce the primary assumption that ballroom dancing signifies elective transnational interaction.

The fact that Asians in Southern California are ubiquitous at all kinds of dance venues but are notably a majority presence at international ballroom dance studios does more than unsettle conventional assumptions. Between the colonial race signifiers of international ballroom dance and its present pseudo-democratization and re-racialization on American television exists a space in which transnational dancers, rather than merely being seduced by a hegemonic practice or effectively erased by the machinations of television producers, act on and renormalize ballroom dance in their own image. At least in Southern California, international ballroom dance approaches an historical moment not unlike that of sports like baseball and basketball, whose highly competitive participatory bases around the world have led to widespread cross-national penetrations into the American professional sports industries. Baseball in Cuba, Japan, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, South Korea, and other regions, as well as basketball worldwide, arguably has overrun the colonial histories of the sports themselves.¹⁹ Given its critical mass of Asian participants, the visual landscape of international dance has experienced not only a truer internationalization but a widespread renaturalization that threatens to wrest the activity from its colonial anchorage. When a critical mass reaches a certain point, there exists for the colonizing agency the sensation and related anxieties of “take-over” rather than “submission,” as noted earlier among the British upper class dancing elite.

The crisis of ballroom dancing’s conventional racial and ethnic signifiers is apparent in the regional competition venues, where transnational Asians do not function as minorities seeking to claim a meager cultural foothold but instead constitute an unmistakable critical mass. A glance at a pair of regional competitions, the California Star Ball held in 2000 and

the nationally prominent Emerald Ball held in 2006, is revealing. Among competitors at the Star Ball, 71 out of 201 women and 41 out of 106 men had Asian Pacific (primarily Chinese) surnames, or in other words 35.3% and 38.6%, respectively. Among competitors at the Emerald Ball, approximately 32.1% of the women participants and 23.5% of the men had Asian Pacific surnames. Moreover, the percentages within the various divisions of amateur (as opposed to pro-am or professional) standard couples dancing generally approach or exceed 80% Asian in a variety of Southern California international-style dance competitions, percentages which far exceed the respective regional and national demographics of ethnicity and race.

While the widespread participation of transnational Asians in ballroom dance has dislodged its colonial race signifiers, as well as altered conventional scripts, what seems less contestable is that ballroom dance persists within an economy of wealth, leisure, and heteronormativity. It is, after all, a type of couples dancing that involves the exhibiting of “high fashion” dance apparel and the literal spotlighting of the results of expensive private dance tutelage. Indeed, such repertoires of transnational Asian ballroom dance do in part encode socioeconomic standing and colonial inheritance, at least at the competition sites. Some transnational dancers, coming from communities steeped in ideologies of status and class, also wish to embrace the symbology associated with this type of dance. But it is important to recognize that the Asian international ballroom presence also is marked by continuities rather than solely by the occasions of competition, and that within these continuities the economies of wealth and leisure are unsettled. Everyone in the transnational ballroom studios knows that shoes and dance outfits can be purchased at discount at selected stores operating in ethnic enclaves and even at most of the dance studios. Some dancers avail themselves of even cheaper prices abroad and have friends purchase dance skirts, blouses, and shoes in bulk in Hong Kong and elsewhere, which they then are able to re-sell in the United States.

Undeniably, private dance lessons can be expensive, and in order to attain a reasonably high level of international dance proficiency, whether or not one seeks competition, such “privates” must supplement group lessons. Taken with professional teachers, weekly private lessons can easily range from \$50–\$125 hour, with the average cost with a recognizably

accomplished professional being somewhere around \$65 per hour. The cost for, say, fifty weeks of lessons, exclusive of the ongoing group lessons, would therefore be around \$3250 per year. A dancer taking just two group lessons per week at \$8 per lesson would pay an additional \$800 per year. So the annual total would surpass \$4000. In reality, many of those taking private lessons take substantially more than one lesson per week. A few affluent dance students spend well over \$15,000 per year on their private lessons alone. Clearly, or so it would seem, the level of expertise attained at international dancing must correlate directly with annual income and relative socio-economic status.

But the reality is more complex. Accomplished international dancers—like their professional teachers—come from every walk of life: salesperson; bank teller; cook; nurse; restaurant worker; clerk; casino dealer; bakery employee; and so on. If some dancers emerge from a leisured class, others are retirees, living off of pensions or other forms of fixed income. Some dancers scrimp and save for their occasional private lessons, while others secure free advice or tips from more accomplished amateurs. Some engage in their own cottage industry, offering private lessons to novices for about \$20–25 per hour. Committed learners find ways to manage their private lessons, and they avail themselves of affordable group lessons taken at studios located in ethnic enclaves. If one attends a Monterey Park-area dance practice on a “Ladies Night,” the cost for three and one-half hours of practice on a large dance floor can be as little as \$3.00. Group lessons may cost as little as \$6.00 an hour (five years ago it was only \$3.00), with the average being about \$8.00. Within the region, transnational Asians comprise the largest student clientele for both group and private lessons, and they remain crucial to sustaining the local international dance economy.

Even when an economic gap manifests itself among international dancers based on the frequency of their private lessons, the level of dance skill in any given instance is no more a reliable index of social status or income than the particular dance apparel worn. For many transnational Asian ballroom dancers, the “showy” international dance is, while not altogether disconnected, at least loosened from its associations with wealth and class. Knowledgeable spectators “see through” the apparel to mark the primarily aesthetic appeal (or lack of same) of the dancing itself. In

ceasing to function as an inevitable sign of exclusion or exclusiveness, international dancing becomes an activity and a moment wherein boundaries are recognizably transgressed. Especially within the transnational dance studios, international dancing does not index a particular class but rather the fluidities of class signifiers and social negotiations within heterogeneous Asian Pacific communities.

Heteronormative strictures remain largely intact in ballroom dance, but they too are gradually loosening. There have been gay competitions held in San Francisco whose express purpose has been to queer ballroom dancing. There exists no physiological reason why males and females cannot assume either role or else switch roles in ballroom dancing. It is quite common to observe homosocial dance combinations on the practice floors. And even during dance “parties,” it is routine to see female-female pairings, in most cases for purposes of practice and learning but in some cases where gay women choose to bond. Interestingly, in international Latin dance competitions, the man is required to wear a two-inch “Cuban heel,” which elongates the leg line but which, despite the wedge-like thickness of the heel, is indeed similar to wearing a woman’s two-inch heel. Bearing so directly on deep-seated sexual anxieties across many cultures, heteronormativity is likely to persist, yet not unaccompanied by the growing normalization of homosociality and by various other practices that bend gender roles.

CHOREOGRAPHIES OF TRANSNATIONALISM: THE ROLE OF DANCERS AND DANCE STUDIOS

Despite its unstable signifiers and the majoritarian presence of minorities on certain of its dance floors, international ballroom dance undeniably finds it difficult to escape its own colonial inheritance. Particularly at the competition and showcase venues, international dancers continue to effect a visual homogenization through their apparel and regulated dance movements, while submitting themselves to the external gaze of judges and spectators. To that gaze, it also may appear that Asians in the United States uniformly have gained a level of financial resources sufficient to allow them to engage in non-productive leisure activities. Even more than most representations, international ballroom dancing, with its standard-

ization strategies and its historical interpellation with wealth, privilege, and leisure, runs the risk of exacerbating what Lisa Lowe has decried about public productions of multiculturalism in general, wherein the “aesthetic representation” projects itself as and yet in truth “is not an analogue for the material positions, means, or resources of those [heterogeneous] populations” forming the participatory base.²⁰ And not only are material differences occluded: the dance competitions also may imply a false social harmony. Like other “bourgeois social dance forms,” ballroom dancing, as Andrew Hewitt has observed, “might be taken to represent in aesthetic form a political ideology of seamless social harmony that serves as a cover for the social antagonisms it unleashes and seeks to contain.”²¹ If, as Lowe also contends, the “crises” of multiculturalism, both social and economic, “are best seized and contested at the moments when the contradiction between the representational economy of ethnic signifiers, on the one hand, and the material economy of resources and means, on the other, becomes unavoidably clear,” then the insertion of an “oppositional narrative” onto the ballroom floor is essential to restore the gaps, differences, inequities, and conflicts that exist outside the fictional construct of international dance.²² Yet there exists no such oppositional narrative at the competition venues (usually grand ballrooms located in high-rise hotels) to arrest the parade of class signifiers for the uninformed viewer.

What does exist, however, is a multidimensional transnational performance coordinated by the studio owners and enacted daily by the dancers at the dance studios themselves. The oppositional narrative is not so much a story as a series of performances, which involve a variety of dance practitioners interacting within a limited number of familiar, though ever-shifting, self-enclosed spaces. In actuality, outside of the competition venues, ballroom dancing is not experienced by most of its transnational practitioners as a signifying practice at all, let alone one encoding histories of race and class. Instead, it is experienced as a daily social performance (often but not always quasi-aesthetic) conducted within the studios’ familiar environs. These studios and their dancers create the sense that there exists no *out there* to observe and decode the self-interested *in here*. While not closed to the general public, these dance spaces effectively loosen ballroom dance from its colonial and neo-colonial scripts. In contrast to Hollywood’s *Dancing With the Stars*, which invites its audience to *national-*

ize a class-marked activity by casting votes democratically, international ballroom dance studios in Southern California orchestrate *transnational* performances, wherein ballroom dancing recedes as a colonial signifier and both the studios and the dancers foreground the multiple dimensions and changing processes of quotidian transnational interactions. These studios remind us that a leisure activity like ballroom dancing can be at once a source of valuable information and an invitation to choreograph and practice new forms of social networking. As Hewitt has argued in the context of modern dance, “choreography has served not only as a secondary *metaphor* for modernity but also as a structuring *blueprint* for thinking and effecting modern social organization: it is not only a secondary representation but also a primary performance of that order.”²³

To better understand transnational dance choreographies, we should examine the international ballroom dance studios, especially in Southern California, where virtually all of the largest ballrooms cater heavily to transnational communities. For most of these studios, instruction in the social styles of ballroom dance generates large numbers of dancers and substantial income, while instruction in the international style generates perhaps less income but greater prestige. Thus, one of the studios’ fundamental tasks is to promote international dance yet harness and contain it within a comprehensive economic strategy. Lai Lai (located in Alhambra), Star Ballroom (Monterey Park), Vivo Dancesport (Hacienda Heights), and Westmor (Los Angeles’s Koreatown) are known as international dance studios because they offer regular lessons in international standard and Latin ballroom. A fifth studio, Regency (Torrance), also has a majoritarian presence of Asian dance students and offers similar group and private lessons. Each studio sets aside at least one evening per week exclusively for international dance practice. Lai Lai and Star also offer a substantial amount of social dance instruction, while Vivo, Westmor, and Regency concentrate more heavily, though not exclusively, on international dance. Most of the studios with a majority transnational clientele structure meeting points—notably the approximately three-hour afternoon “tea dances” and the 8:30–12:00 p.m. dance “parties”—for both social and international forms of ballroom dancing. The majority of dancers are Chinese, representing a global diaspora, with the largest numbers having

immigrated from Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, and Vietnam but with others arriving from Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and occasionally from less predictable continental regions like South America or Africa. Generally, the dancers range in age from their mid-thirties to their seventies, although women in their early thirties and occasionally younger are not uncommon on the aforementioned “Ladies Nights,” usually held once or twice per week. Those taking international lessons tend to fall within the mid-thirties to late-sixties age brackets, except that a substantially larger number of youthful dancers in their twenties, with a few in their teens, attend the international Latin lessons.

Studio owners coordinate dance lessons to accommodate the complex geographies and the varying material and cultural registers of the region’s transnational Asian Pacific population. Affordable group lessons are scheduled seven days a week and at a variety of times; private lessons are scheduled during the days and on weekends. Easily learned social dances like the Taiwan Tango are taught regularly. Some group lessons are aimed at retirees, while others are directed toward those who have conventional work hours but must fight freeway traffic to reach the studio. Only occasional showcases or holiday dance parties interfere with the afternoon tea dances and evening practice parties. Part of the strategy of the studios is to play music which the older clientele can recall from their youth. It is common, for example, to hear cha cha music sung in Mandarin or Cantonese to a familiar tune re-scored to a softened beat. The past momentarily manifests itself, at least for some dancers, through a rite of nostalgia. At the same time, the studios remain highly cognizant of their own changing student demographics. One of the regional international dance studios, for example, which once drew from an almost exclusively Chinese clientele, has in recent years made a series of deliberate efforts to reach into local Korean, Filipino, and other communities. Another studio, which was formerly split between a clientele largely drawn from Hong Kong and Taiwan, now draws increasing numbers of participants from the local Chinese-Vietnamese and mainland China transnational communities. Over time, the music has become more varied, too. Thus, both past and present insert themselves into the daily performances orchestrated by the studios.

The studios having arranged the meeting points, the dancers themselves also are free to organize the ensuing interactions. In other words, the dancers, too, serve as arbiters of community spaces and as choreographers of transnational activity. Whether at group lessons or at the evening practice dances, the participants feel free to circulate largely within the orbits of recognized national or linguistic communities or equally free, sometimes based upon their level of dance proficiency, to venture into less familiar social spaces or to engage in the formation of new social constellations. These performances are mediated through language and dialect, race and ethnicity, class and gender, and so on. Thus, dance interactions regularly occur among, say, Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, or mainland China, as well as among other diasporic Chinese or among non-Chinese, with linguistic code-switching regularly employed. While some dancers may limit their most frequent dance contacts to those within a particular subset, say, Taiwanese or Chinese from Vietnam, always there is a social fluidity implicit in these dance studios precisely because of the mediating influence of dance itself (Social dance lessons usually require “rotations,” so that one dances with a variety of partners; international dance lessons commonly do not require rotations.). The fact that this sociality occurs at the level of physical touch and contact lends an additional dimension to the interaction.

The choreographies of transnationalism are not achieved, however, merely by securing meeting points for dancers but also by recognizing and then coordinating the inherent tensions between international and social types of ballroom dancing. International dance prizes aestheticism, while social dance, by definition, prioritizes sociality, even though it is scarcely immune to dance’s artistic attractions. International dance places intense demands on balance, timing, and (often disguised) athleticism, while social dance insists on none of these. One dance requires an intense work ethic, even though it is conventionally aligned with a leisured class; the other promotes leisure and sociality, even though rooted in the necessity of work. Ultimately, international ballroom dance follows a teleology based on order, regulation, and progressive development. If perfection is unattainable, it is nevertheless posited as the goal. Social ballroom dancing, however, is based on a principle of indeterminacy, despite its

signifying collusion with heteronormative marriage. It prescribes but does not rigidify patterns and movements, and it imposes only rudimentary technical rules whose violations conspicuously lack consequences. While dancers do not, in fact, operate along a simple binary of art and sociality, the divides nevertheless are easily recognizable.

Such differentiation between the international and the social is not merely descriptive but also hierarchical. By founding itself on principles of artistry, international dancing sanctions and performs itself as hegemonic, elitist, regulatory, and invasive when performed on the same dance-floor space as social dancing. The accomplished international dancers may segregate themselves not merely according to their skill levels but according to their fundamental conception of ballroom dance as an acquired artistic practice. Because the dance lines and frames, as well as in some cases the very rhythms, of international dance operate differently from social dance, the international style can inhibit interaction at the practice parties, with a few international dance couples not only dancing exclusively with each other but also confining themselves to the five dances comprising the international standard repertoire, even when other types of music are being played. Such segregation inhibits the interactions that social dance is expected to initiate and poses the threat of repositioning all varieties of ballroom dance as an inherently elite aesthetic activity. Indeed, the necessarily larger, extended body frames characterizing international dancing, along with the enhanced requirements regarding floor space, can impose a literal territorialization of the dance floor, with art asserting its putative ascendancy over “mere” sociality.

Once recognized, the tensions between international ballroom dancing and social dancing must be coordinated in such fashion that both sets of dance clientele receive temporal and spatial acknowledgement. One way that the studios orchestrate these tensions is to apportion specific amounts of music to each dancing style during the daily practice parties. The strategy is to play international dance music each day but also to curtail it. Except for the night(s) reserved solely for the international dancers, on all other nights, as well as during the daily tea dances, the transnational dance studios will play only 4–5 pieces of international dance music. The bulk of the time is devoted to social music and social ballroom dance.

When each international ballroom dance begins, the studio lights go up exactly as would occur in a spotlighted dance performance. Those who know international dance (and a few who do not) begin to move couple-by-couple across the floor. Some are quite good; others are clearly still learning the basics. What is notable, however, is that while some of the social dancers, now relegated to the position of spectators, observe the international dancers, others choose not to watch at all. Instead, they exercise the option to meet and chat with friends, thereby reframing international dance as just another feature—rather than the specialized one implied by the spotlights—of transnational dance studio interactions. So while the dance studios literally spotlight the international dances, thereby alluding to their external performance and competition registers, they also hold in check the actual number of international dances on any given night. And while the dancers enjoy these moments of performing in the spotlight with the whole of the dance floor conceded to them, their enjoyment must be tempered by their knowledge that others in the studio “audience” may find these moments of scant interest.

While this dance studio strategy of proportioning types of dance music prevents the studio space from being overtaken by international dance, it does not prohibit the latter style from occasionally asserting its spatial authority, especially in the Latin dances and the waltz, when both social and international dancers occupy the floor at the same time. Nor does the spatial projection limit itself to the dance floor currently in use. Just as international dancing depends literally on amplitude and space, its practitioners project the possibility of performance outside the social venues. For some, the performance potential may imply a willing submission to the class and status markers conventionally assigned to international ballroom dance, as well as an allegiance to arbitrary dance regulations governing apparel, facial appearance, hair length, gestures, and mannerisms, which emerge as facsimiles of English aristocratic tradition. So, along with exerting controls over the time devoted exclusively to international dance, the transnational studios also impose a different sort of social choreography by utilizing an approximately thirty-minute “disco” period, where the line between dancing and exercise is purposely blurred and expression is allowed to erupt without regard to dance regulations of

any sort. During “disco” (which should not be confused with dances from the disco era), several consecutive pieces of music, almost all with strong, driving rhythms, are played for about thirty minutes. Some dancers gather in spontaneous line dances, while others dance varieties of swing. When the music changes, many elect to perform the twist. Most engage in any kind of unfettered, freestyle movement, including running in place. It is during the disco that non-dancing visitors to the studio feel most free to come to the dance floor. Some international dancers do use the time to practice particular steps, but they must do so against the rhythms and blaring volume of the disco music and against the reterritorialization of space. Disco is performative, but it does not rely on regulated dance patterns. Aligned across cultures yet not linked to any particular one, it is danced in proximity yet apart. There is mutuality yet independence. It is basically a free-form movement to music. While *Dancing With the Stars* attempts to democratize an elitist form of ballroom dancing by having its viewers cast their votes, the transnational studios allow their dancers literally to perform democracy as dance.²⁴ Here it is the actual enactment, the free-form choreography of movement, which contests international dance hegemony, not the television ratings gambit of having viewers vote electronically. Moreover, the focus here is not on imposing nationalist strategies on ballroom dancing but on performing transnationalism as a multiplicity of intentions and styles and as part of the performance dialectic of class-driven and democratic principles.

While the disco may not specifically set out to disrupt the signifiers that ballroom dance inherits, it choreographs a transnational multidimensionality, which, in continually producing and reproducing a shifting performance archive, is inherently contestatory. Requiring no previous dance instruction or partner—only music and a baseline of social proximity—it dissolves the landscape in which the international dancer is at the fore and against which the social dancer must materialize as either aspirant or enfeebled antagonist. As a form of social choreography, the disco contains both aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties. As the former, it is an enactment of street carnival during which dancers engage in a variety of dance movements, crossing freely and spontaneously from one to another. As the latter, it is the moment when dance crosses over

into exercise, thereby restoring the principle of labor or toil that formalized dance styles otherwise seek to conceal. Although the various dance movements cannot be coded to actual socio-economic positions, the disco dissolves ballroom fictions of homogeneity, while foregrounding indeterminacies. Class and sexuality signifiers are placed in jeopardy not due to direct assault but due to the complexities of transnationalism's own self-interested performance.

CONCLUSION

In its early years, international ballroom dance evolved as a response to imperialist anxieties. Exacting rules and regulations were devised in an effort to aestheticize ballroom dancing in such a way as to distinguish it from increasingly popular and undisciplined modes of social dancing and to elevate it to a status that might approach the recognized artistry of ballet and modern dance. Ostensibly a preserve of the upper class, international-style ballroom dancing would affirm its authority by paradoxically initiating the uninitiated, so that they, too, could someday approach the level of their "betters." Today, regional, national, and international ballroom competitions, as well as countless pair and group showcase performances, attest to the popularity of this style of ballroom dancing. The runaway success of the television show, *Dancing With the Stars*, as well as the popularity of movies such as *Shall We Dance* (Japanese version 1997; American version 2004), *Strictly Ballroom* (1993) and *Take the Lead* (2006), further confirms the populist appeal of the international style of ballroom dance. At the same time, the television show unintentionally reveals the racial fissures operating within its own democratizing strategy.

The presence of a critical mass of Asian Pacific international-style ballroom dancers further complicates the picture. Their majoritarian presence at certain regional venues sponsoring international dance practice and instruction unsettles ballroom dancing's race and class narrative, while serving to renormalize ballroom dancing as an activity not just international but transnational. Together, the dancers and dance studios redirect attention from international ballroom dancing's trail of colonial signifiers and onto the ways by which both dancers and studios choreograph space and time, as well as types of music and dance, into complex transnational

interactions that recapture elements of the past, while allowing the past to negotiate with the present. Collectively, these interactions, which strategically accommodate the tensions between the international and social styles of ballroom dance, constitute a daily performance archive largely immune to a colonial gaze yet open in unexpected ways to the production of new forms of knowledge and understanding.

Notes

1. Diana Taylor distinguishes between written history and embodied or performed history by referring to embodied performance as “repertoire” rather than “archive.” However, in international ballroom dancing, “repertoire” generally refers to the body of recognized dances and/or dance figures. Therefore, while I am using “performance archive” in the same spirit as Taylor’s use of “repertoire,” I am following more closely to David Román’s use of the former term in *Performance in America: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Performing Arts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). See also Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
2. The proposal before the International Olympic Committee to include ballroom dance as an Olympic event relates specifically to international-style ballroom dancing. The American-style competition and showcase versions of the standard and Latin ballroom dances are called “American smooth” and “American rhythm,” respectively.
3. International ballroom dances require continual body contact as opposed to the “opening out” maneuvers common to the American ballroom and other popular social styles. The international Latin dances require straight leg lines and use the downbeat as a nearly stationary “body action” beat rather than as an initiating step. Other international rules explicitly govern each foot placement, degree of turn, use of the foot’s inside edge, as well as placement of fingers, elbows, neckline, etc.
4. Albert and Josephine Butler, *Encyclopedia of Social Dance* (New York: Albert Butler Ballroom Dance Service, 1971), 272.
5. Debra Craine and Judith Mackrell, *Oxford Dictionary of Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 49. Since the formation of the ISTD, other prominent dance councils have emerged, including the International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA), all of which have worked towards ballroom dance refinement and standardization.
6. In Alex Moore, *Ballroom Dancing*, 9th edition (London: A & C Black, 1986), v.
7. Frances Rust, *Dance in Society: An Analysis of the Relationship between the Social Dance and Society in England from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 86, 93.

8. Belinda Quirey, *May I Have the Pleasure? The Story of Popular Dancing*, ed. Libby Halliday (London: Dance Books, 1976), 81.
9. *Ibid.*, 83.
10. *Ibid.*, 76.
11. For a valuable discussion of early American ballroom dancing and its relationship to social mobility and self-invention, see Julie Malnig, “Two-Stepping to Glory: Social Dance and the Rhetoric of Social Mobility,” eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 271–87.
12. Butler and Butler, 310, 277.
13. In its latest television season, the dancing performances by the “stars” have improved noticeably. The enhanced performances have no doubt been inspired by the television show’s success, which has brought heightened attention to ballroom dancing in general and has raised the bar for individual performances.
14. Len Goodman, a former competitor, dance coach, and dance competition official, is the Head Judge. Bruno Tonioli and Carrie Ann Inaba are the other judges.
15. The third season of the show featured several African Americans, including Vivica A. Fox, Monique Coleman, and Emmitt Smith, along with Latino actor Mario Lopez. The fourth season has included Laila Ali and Clyde Drexler. However, the majority of contestants have remained white.
16. I have used the term, “transnational,” in the essay to emphasize not only the intact cultural subjectivities of diasporic Asians but also the frequency and literalness of their movements across national boundaries.
17. Prominent examples include Bill and Bobbie Irvine, who dominated professional ballroom dancing in the 1960s, accumulating thirteen world titles. Bill Irvine came from a mining village in Scotland; Bobbie Irvine came from an ostrich-feather manufacturing town in South Africa. Donnie Burns, who won fourteen World Professional Latin titles between 1984–1998, was the child of middle-class schoolteacher parents in Scotland.
18. Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London: Routledge, 1998), 5, 9.
19. Notable in this regard are U.S. losses in men’s basketball in both the 2004 Olympics and the 2006 World Games, and in baseball in the inaugural 2006 World Baseball Classic. In both the Olympics and the World Baseball Classic, U.S. teams composed of top professional athletes—once considered invincible—failed to reach the semifinals.
20. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 86
21. Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 16.
22. Lowe, 88, 90.
23. Hewitt, 14, author’s italics.

24. Perhaps heeding an audience desire for a more democratized form of dance, the producers of *Dancing With the Stars* decided, during the show's third season, to introduce Freestyle Disco as part of the competition formula. Nothing could be farther removed from the regulations and strictures of international dance. During the same season, the producers included mambo, which is not part of the international-style ballroom syllabus but which remains a popular, crowd-pleasing dance similar to salsa. Interestingly, Emmitt Smith, who won the third season of competition, excelled particularly in these non-international style dances. The Antonio Banderas film, *Take the Lead* (2006), which traces the efforts of a New York City public school employee and former dance professional to teach "detention" students important lessons of "respect, teamwork, and dignity" by learning ballroom dancing, also seeks to democratize elitist dance. The film succeeds insofar as the arc of its dance narrative shows how ballroom dancing can be aligned, and in some respects even fused, with dance styles like hip hop. However, the film's perception of ballroom dancing is actually hybridic from the start, mixing at will a variety of ballroom dance styles and categories. Like the satirical film, *Strictly Ballroom* (1993), *Take the Lead* also pursues its theme by portraying a one-dimensional ballroom dance community composed of wealthy snobs.

Author's Note: As of this writing, Apolo Anton Ono has been declared the winner of the fourth season of *Dancing with the Stars*. Joey Fatone, who gained attention as a member of 'N Sync, was named runner-up, and Laila Ali finished third. Ohno excelled particularly at the Latin dances, although his standard dances were well-performed, too. Curiously, head judge Goodman seemed hostile towards Ohno's dancing, while consistently favoring Fatone, whose dancing was marked by enthusiasm and high energy but, arguably, by much inferior technique. Ali exhibited athleticism and grace, but she lacked sufficient amplitude in her standard dance frame, and she needed straighter leg lines in her Latin figures.