

PROOF

BLACK PERFORMANCE THEORY

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**BLACK
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THEORY /**

Thomas F. DeFrantz AND Anita Gonzalez, EDITORS

Foreword by D. Soyini Madison

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FOREWORD

Black performance theory (BPT) helps us decipher the imperatives of blackness. Translating the meanings of blackness by excavating the enlivening enactments that sustain blackness, theory does the labor of translating the thick ontologies of what black imperatives are by locating them within the generative forces of performance. With each generation, perhaps with each turn of a phrase, we stake a new claim within a new world order for the nature and significance of blackness. Black performance theory complicates old claims of blackness, because life is change and the world keeps turning demanding new vocabularies and new actions. Blackness is born and reborn as something uniquely itself, in stark difference against that which it is not, and in comforting familiarity with those things that are itself. To say something different and new about blackness, about it having a nature or a decipherable core, is serious work because it is head spinning in its contradictions and contingencies. Black performance theory shows us how each unfolding or iteration of what blackness is can be constituted by performance and revealed within unlimited performance frames.

This volume transforms black ontologies and imperatives into the lived realms of time, space, and action: bodies, machines, movement, sound, and creation now culminate within temporalities of struggle and renewal. Black performance theory shows us how subjects and subjectivities animate blackness across landscapes that are all spectacularly excessive in the cause and effects of African dislocation, imperialist trade, capital accumulation, human violence, and black abjection as well as circum-Atlantic expressions, black labor, Africanist retentions, black diaspora movements, the politics of black is beautiful, and more.

In deciphering the imperatives of blackness, BPT becomes an oppositional move within a matrix of disciplining powers reigning over the black body. Because it deepens the details of black expressivities and transgressions within the abiding contexts of disciplinary histories and circulations of inequality, BPT translates all of this within fluid rubrics of performance,

1 performativity, and the performative. If *performance* constitutes forms of
2 cultural staging—conscious, heightened, reflexive, framed, contained—
3 within a limited time span of action from plays to carnivals, from poetry
4 to prose, from weddings to funerals, from jokes to storytelling and more; if
5 *performativity* marks identity through the habitus of repetitive enactments,
6 reiterations of stylized norms, and inherited gestural conventions from the
7 way we sit, stand, speak, dress, dance, play, eat, hold a pencil and more; if
8 the *performative* is the culmination of both in that it *does something* to make
9 a material, physical, and situational difference—then BPT speaks to why all
10 this matters to blackness and to contested identities. Black performance the-
11 ory helps us realize performance. In this performance/theory coupling what
12 is revealed to us is how performance performs *and* how theory performs *us*
13 through its realizations, claims, and possibilities. It works to translate and
14 inspire, to politically interrogate and sensually invoke, how realms of per-
15 formance struggles and troubles illuminate black agency and subjectivity
16 within reimagined spaces of being.

17 Black performance theory is high stakes because it excavates the coded
18 nuances as well as the complex spectacles within everyday acts of resistance
19 by once known a/objects that are now and have always been agents of their
20 own humanity. Black performance theory is oppositional because it honors
21 the subaltern, rhetorical roots of black symbolism that survive and break
22 through the timeworn death wish cast against black expression. The theo-
23 rist attends to performance histories, aesthetics, and orders of belonging
24 governed by multifarious modes of un-freedom as well as the radical per-
25 formances that violent constraint has invoked. But, as much as black per-
26 formance theory is about politics, entangled within history and power, it is
27 also an enterprise and labor of the senses. The gift of performance theory is
28 its distinct attention and indebtedness to the sensory as the senses actualize
29 temporality, enliven desire, and embrace beauty across the poetics of bod-
30 ies and the aesthetics of their creations. Performance theory honors and
31 heightens the gravitas of the senses as gateways to the symbol-making body,
32 its sonics, and its existential truths wrapped in art and purpose.

33 If the genealogy of black performance extends like a rhizome to cross its
34 dense continental roots and budding diasporic expressivities in the culmi-
35 nation and continuum of endless circum-Atlantic performances, then black
36 performance theory inherits an ethics commanded by the performatives of
37 Africanist multitudes. Because black performance is born through and sus-
38 tained by circum-Atlantic epochs and its (dis)concordant expressivities, it
39S follows that black performance *theory* is indebted to the truth of this Afri-
40N canist inheritance that constitutes the fact of blackness. Africa/Africanisms/

Africanists symbols, meanings, and lives have been the prototype of abjection. Therefore, the political stakes and sensory affects of black performance theory require an intellectual rigor that elucidates and disentangles the complexities of these Africanisms and the haunting terrors of their degradation. Black performance theory also requires an ethics of engagement that begins with, but moves from, economies of dislocation and disciplinary power to futures of what black performatives *do* and its instructive elaborations on futurity. Black performance theory offers up something beyond what we already know, because it is an ethics that does not stand in iterations but intellectually thrives in thick performatives of kinesis and invention: for life's sake.

This volume is a palimpsest of black performance histories, practices, affects, and ideologies. In this contemporary moment, what surfaces and leaves its imprint upon BPT is the demand for new imperatives, expanded notions of black ontology, fresh meditations on black abjection, and renewed dialogues on how performance can generate it all. This claim goes further in enunciating that race is both a fundamental constant and a “resistant” factor in the infinite and boundless reaches of black performance, its sensibilities, and its analytics. I am reminded of Harry Belafonte’s lament of how black artists have turned their backs on black social responsibility, adding, “give me Bruce Springsteen, and now you’re talking. I think he is black” (Zawia, 2012). Herein the notion that cultural politics trumps race. From Toni Morrison’s noted comment about Bill Clinton being the first black president to the controversy over the meanings of post-black, the point is that race is a fact of blackness within racially boundless articulations and performatives that rise from this fact. This volume illuminates the constant of blackness *and* its abiding boundlessness.

Exceeding iterations of ready-made blackness and overcooked theories of performance, this volume honors the charge to theorize outside the expected and to say something new. It does this with each essay. Theorizing is a real commitment. It is hard, good, interventionist work. Blackness makes theorizing even more complicated, because it makes theory expand and reach into histories and economies that are layered by abjection and subjugated spaces. Black performance theory, with heartfelt commitment and sharp-tongued intellect, deepens the expanse and reach of this interventionist work to offer up black imperatives of politics, beauty, and the senses.

D. SOYINI MADISON

PROOF

HIP-HOP HABITUS V.2.0

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

—Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53

By now, hip-hop dance and its myriad articulations constitute a constellation that engages entertainment, competitions, social networking, concert performance, and expressions of social justice. Still, many academic studies rely on narratives that foreground African American and Latino wellsprings for hip-hop dance styles without considering shifts in circulation that surround these movement forms. This chapter explores the slippage from Africanist performance histories to global hip-hop corporealities. How does hip-hop dance “sound” in locations without obvious connection to an Africanist movement legacy? Does some singular notion of hip-hop “do” something recognizable, or consistent, in its various movement manifestations? How has a “global hip-hop” shifted its ideological possibilities from an Africanist sensibility? How has hip-hop become a *habitus* recognizable to youth and attendant audiences worldwide?

Everyman's Rhapsody

A young skinny white guy emerges from the shower drying himself off. He walks from a large, airy bathroom into the living room of

1 what must be a shared rental domicile—it's too big and established to be
2 his property, and he's too moist and dewy, literally, to have organized him-
3 self into this level of home ownership. Besides, there's a smiling female pop
4 starlet cooing an anti-love song at a baby grand piano in the living room, a
5 feature only available in a fantasy. Nevermind; he pulls on a T-shirt, and with
6 a towel wrapped around his legs, moves to the remote control for the large
7 flat screen facing the couch. The starlet's gaze—a white and happy gaze—
8 follows him, seemingly intent on maintaining his interest. Too late; with no
9 remorse or concern, our everyman changes the channel. Starlet disappears,
10 her song rejected mid-phrase. Suddenly a black hip-hop trio appears, clad
11 in skinny jeans, designer tees, and millennium baseball caps, dookie chains,
12 microphones in hand; a small suggestion of a stage area and theatrical lights
13 framing them. White everyman grimaces into an appropriately warrior-
14 masculine mask of intent and begins to move to the electronic pulsations
15 alongside the conjured blackness. His body jerks, twitches, and heaves to
16 the beat, weight directed downward and insistent, pushing against imagined
17 forces of binding. The cool performers move as they rhyme on their Mr. Mic
18 machines, stressing rhythmic accents with displacements of weight more
19 lateral than vertical, but surely as regularly shaped, in temporal accord, as
20 everyman's. Everyman shakes his head, still damp and seemingly happy, in
21 this dance moment, to be among the Cool Kids.¹

22 This commercial for Rhapsody digital music service intends to sell con-
23 venience and variety, diversity of musical taste, and the possibility of an end-
24 less musical mood. No vanishing point here; choose whatever music suits
25 your shifting emotional state. Changing channels might be as easy as wiping
26 the water off your back or the dirt off your shoulder, unlimited access to an
27 endless variety of sound available for a low monthly fee.

28 In corporealizing the encounter of our young everyman with the bodies
29 of his temporary interest, the Rhapsody ad confirms an interchangeability of
30 physical approaches to being. Bodies are present and absent simultaneously,
31 topologies flattened, winsome instantly transformed to forceful, female to
32 male, white to black, lyrical to percussive. The ad denigrates the performa-
33 tive impulse at the heart of music-making. What the artists hope to convey
34 may be evacuated by the consumer's desire to receive at will. In this ad (and
35 it may be worth noting that there are other versions of the same ad campaign
36 in circulation that offer different narratives) our everyman chooses to con-
37 sume and construct by his movements in response to their music, the cool.

38 Of course, the cool kids drive the marketplace. In *The Tipping Point: How*
39 *Little Things Can Make A Big Difference* (2000), Malcolm Gladwell describes
40N the lengths to which advertising agencies go in order to predict trends that

will influence future markets. Hiring information “mavens” to make sense of shifting economies of cool, advertising agencies compete to align their clients with impossibly ambiguous terms of desirability. The cool kids—the ones who swim against the streams of normalcy, who stand out because of their “maverick” flexibility in the face of the everyday—constitute the relied-upon information sources. Cool coheres; it reflects and recognizes itself; and its agents perform its presence—and allow it to be marketed—through their affiliations. The cool kids get together, and the rest of us try to assemble among their number.

Gladwell’s book is often referred to as psychology (of a popular sort), and his gestures toward the marketplace align cool easily with a state of mind that can be recognized, packaged, and consumed. This may be so, but cool is also a performative, an approach to movement or dance that we value as embodied abstraction. Cool replenishes imagination, and surely we all crave its access. But in approaching the performance of cool we run the risk of misstepping (usually via excess) and possibly falling, with a thud, somewhere in the realm of clown. Our rhapsodic everyman almost gets his cool groove on, but we’re not quite sure that he actually embodies his own movements: after all, he had to conjure the Cool Kids in order to find his dance. Really cool kids don’t need other cool kids to be cool.

The derisive irony of calling oneself a cool kid doesn’t escape note. The Cool Kids emcees, from Chicago, emerge from a playful, self-created my/space that could counterbalance even their very uncool appearance in the Rhapsody television commercial. These cool kids dress odd, ride BMX, and seem to mock their attempts at hip-hop celebrity while simultaneously pursuing it. The simulacra shimmer, and they are and aren’t cool, even as they can only be identified as such by name.

My favorite Cool Kids song of the 2000s is “Bassment Party,” an up-tempo dance track with a crackling backbeat and several well-constructed rhythmic breaks. Depending on your speakers or headphones, you might appreciate the tune title variously: the insistent bass tones only resonate with a good sound system, while the lyrical call to an adolescent house party may strike you as hapless, thrilling, or just silly. This bassment party is cool in the Kanye West ironic mold; clownish and ineffective at the performative transcendence of balance that usually characterizes cool, it becomes cool by violating principles of the concept. The Cool Kids tend to record in two modes: up-tempo party, or slow, plodding, “lean back” beats. In either mode the bass drives the track, and the emcees flow in opposition to its inevitable return. Is this cool? Possibly. Is this hip-hop? Possibly. Are the everyman’s movements to their music recognizable as hip-hop corporeality?

1 A larger question surrounding what hip-hop might be wonders at what
2 hip-hop can do, and the borders of its possibilities as resistance expression.
3 At first, many older folks thought hip-hop dances too brash to be considered
4 black popular culture and tried to label them the renegade practice of a few.
5 But the academy broke, and hip-hop came to be theorized in line with a
6 progressive social politic, typically narrated as a response by working-class
7 young people of color to rising tides of economic inequities in the post-civil
8 rights era. In this vaguely functionalist analysis, hip-hop fulfilled a need
9 for expressive flexibility as an outlet for speaking truth to power. Hip-hop
10 can be narrated as a return to the real in its aggressive rhythmicity, its lyrical
11 directness, and its physical abundance of heavily accented movements.
12 These performance qualities of hip-hop (echoed in graphic stylings of visual
13 arts associated with the genre) suggested a truthfulness of expressive
14 gesture that predicted possibilities of communication across boundaries of
15 race, class, and location, if not gender, sexuality, or age group. For hip-hop's
16 first generation of scholars and journalists, hip-hop claimed expansive space
17 as a necessary voice of expression for the disenfranchised; for its second
18 generation interpreters, it became a connectivity for youth across geography,
19 practiced locally.²

20 Some scholars tentatively cited the production of black pleasure, or even
21 radical black joy, within hip-hop dances. Whether or not we found ways to
22 talk about hip-hop in these terms that aligned black expressive culture with
23 social justice and pleasure simultaneously, it continued its largest trajectory
24 as a source of unmarked popular pleasure quickly made available to global
25 populations of youth. In the early to mid-1980s, at site after site, young
26 people witnessed some aspect of hip-hop expressivity through mediated or
27 live performance and found themselves drawn to its forms.

28 Dancers in France, Australia, and Japan seized hip-hop's performative
29 idioms and breaking crews propagated. While DJ-ing, emceeing, and graffiti
30 writing found devotees over time in local language, hip-hop dance accumulated
31 committed performers almost immediately as popping and breaking
32 became expressive weapons of choice available to young men, and some
33 women, worldwide. Clearly, hip-hop dances encouraged social organization
34 along axes of burgeoning masculinities, physical strength/control/endurance,
35 physical imagination, and expressive communication. But analytic
36 narratives that aligned hip-hop's physical movements to collective action
37 foundered. As often occurs when considering the power of the body, hip-hop
38 dances came to be discussed as embodiments of collective action only to
39 the extent that their performance could generate economic exchange within
40 the frame of the festival circuits. The many breakdance festivals of the 1990s

allowed product marketing for consumable goods (videotapes, travel, sports gear, alcohol) to function at the center of these social activities. Hip-hop dance stylings—and this includes b-boying and b-girling—came to refer to themselves and the individuals who performed them, a gathering notion of individuality within a group dynamic, but one aimed only reflexively at its own contents. If breaking and b-girling had been conceived to speak physical truth to oppressive forces that would deny the presence of young people of color, by the 1990s these forms stood largely as referents to resistance co-opted by a nimble marketplace eager to commodify the cool.

So, where did the possibilities for collective action within hip-hop movements go? Are these possibilities subsumed by the ability for hip-hop movement to be cool?

Habitus

The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history.

—Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54

Because social dance has had so little theoretical capacity in Europeanist discourses, and has been so pervasive as to be ubiquitous and practically disposable in Africanist discourses, its border transgressions as an agent of social change have gone under-acknowledged. Hip-hop dances have fared no better than swing dances or soul-era dances in terms of theoretical scrutiny that could illuminate the unrelenting popularity of black social-dance practice across cultural boundaries. But surely these dances create an identifiable alignment of black performance and cool that becomes part of a network of social situation worth recovery. A review of the literature specific to hip-hop dance is quickly achieved. One of the two manuscript-length texts in English devoted to hip-hop dance—Carla Stalling Huntington’s *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages*—focuses much of its text on functional historical explications that align particular movements with historical African American dance forms, and speculative descriptions of dances that interpret, again, with a functionalist bent, how particular dances refer to narratives of black oppression. Huntington, like other Africanist scholars of hip-hop globalization including Halifu Osumare (*Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip Hop: Power Moves*), interpret hip-hop’s emergence from working-class communities of color as evidence of the desirability of a shared black past, one that is inevitably referenced and rearticulated through hip-hop expressive discourse in any location. Hip-hop dances are “supposed” to refer, rhetorically, to a black past, and their performance unifies youth movements around

1 themes of dispossession reclaimed through expressive physical labor. Hip-
2 hop dances embody linguistic ideologies (Huntington) or offer possibilities
3 for “connective marginalities” (Osumare) that allow youth to acknowledge
4 their common subordinate subject locations.

5 But how might hip-hop dances constitute a habitus of physicality that
6 refers to aesthetic creativity? And can aspects of physical creativity con-
7 struct, say, joy—in any subject location—recognizable to young people in a
8 way that aligns that construction with the aesthetic imperatives of hip-hop?
9 What might be lost through a consideration of pleasure and its dispersal,
10 or the embodiment of cool, within hip-hop social dances? Is the pleasure
11 within the engagement of these corporealities part of what undermines their
12 social force or impact?

13 Ethnographer Joseph G. Schloss explores these questions in his full-
14 length study *Foundation*, based on fieldwork that he conducted as a b-boy
15 in New York from 2003 through 2008 (Schloss). Schloss affirms that post-
16 millennial b-boying mobilizes its participants to recognize each other, dance
17 together, and affirm a common history—even if the details of that history
18 are contentious and widely debated.³ In Schloss’s study, the community that
19 breakers recognize is self-selecting and hermetically sealed; for one to ma-
20 terially participate in the culture of the dance, one must become “of” the
21 dance and its culture through extensive training, apprenticeship, and par-
22 ticipation. While Schloss does allow b-boying to be considered artistic prac-
23 tice by its practitioners, the terms of its creativity are defined by a genealogy
24 that extends back only to post-civil rights era gang activity transformed
25 into twenty-first-century competitive dance structures. Dancing offers its
26 participants a safe communal space that mitigates the daily stresses of life for
27 its practitioners. But here, we find little recovery of the political capacities of
28 dance to transfigure an expansive population of attendant witnesses beyond
29 the terms of participation in the cypher.⁴

30 Sociologist Katrina Hazzard-Donald narrates dance in hip-hop culture
31 as an extension of the earliest African American dance practices, all born
32 of cultural adaptations that secured presence in an American marketplace.
33 These practices include an exceptional “cyclical” iteration in which dances
34 appear, go underground, or seem to die out, and then “emerge twenty or
35 so years later as a ‘new’ dance.” For Hazzard-Donald, this cycling reflects
36 the U.S. commodity market, within which African American culture has
37 surely developed, and which “continually demands new dance material”
38 (Hazzard-Donald, 220, 221). Hazzard-Donald also notes an “influential ex-
39 change of dance material between vernacular-popular-folk dances and the
40 black professional performance tradition,” a dialectic that predicts a detach-

able, performative quality of motion that could allow its movement across geographic, class, and aesthetic boundaries.

Taken together, these volumes and essays affirm that hip-hop corporealities cohere, and their particular practices emerge within particular genealogical contexts. The detailed studies of dance practice within core communities of b-boys or hip-hop devotees suggest a granularity of knowledge far more developed than the passing familiarity of mediated hip-hop dance that circulates globally today. That passing familiarity is not usually structured around following the rules of b-boying, or knowing a history of dance families; rather, a growing global populace recognizes these physical ways of being in the world as our everyman does—as playful, fizzy, millennial fun that can open spaces of belligerent cool. So how is it that social dance forms so deeply imbued with meanings and historical contexts crucial to their core participants float in a contemporary mediascape without grounding in the Africanist aesthetics that gave rise to them?

Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historical and socially situated conditions of its production, the freedom it provides is as remote from the creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning.

Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 55

I'm hinting at the limits of understanding pleasure, aesthetic physical activity, and power relations among diverse cultural systems. Surely we veer toward cool physicalities because they “feel good” in their alignment of energy, individual expression, and perceived connection to a larger social group. Black social dances offer pleasure to those who engage them because they encourage cool aesthetic approaches; they confirm careful organization of the body in relation to discourses of physical ability and ingenuity. Hip-hop dances thrive in the production of *corporeal orature*, or body talking; in their aggressive rhythmicity, they encourage muscular engagements that underscore dynamism, power, and control.⁵ Not all black social dances operate in this way; buck and wing dances (of the nineteenth century), swing dancing (of the 1930s), and footworking (of the 2000s), for example, are not explicitly concerned with the enactment of power and strength in the way that breaking, popping, and whacking styles are. These hip-hop styles demonstrate power as often as not; in this, an affiliation of power and pleasure at the center of these forms may seem politically regressive. After all, a feminist analysis could easily discard the seemingly inevitable affiliations of

1 strength, domination (in hip-hop's myriad competitive strains), and masculinized pleasure of hip-hop to focus more favorably on the more welcoming and flexible possibilities of other black social dance forms. For example, partner forms including swing dance, disco, and Chicago stepping highlight interpersonal communication toward a unified goal of movement in a way that hip-hop surely does not.

2 To be clear, here, I mean to align pleasure with aesthetic purpose as well as social function. What hip-hop dance styles manage to do, in their organization of physicalities and dispersals of energy, is to combine the joy of controlling an emotional and physical self in a blankly powerful manner that suggests social dynamism. Hip-hop dancers “hit it hard” whether breaking or popping; when combining genres to include movements from ballet or house dancing, hip-hoppers tie a persistent weightiness to the pleasure of bringing it down to the ground. Hip-hop dancing gathers energy as it broadens its contours and revels in its own accomplishment as an aggressive, masculinist style that conditions its dancers to demonstrate their power. In the contexts of its emergence, hip-hop dances demonstrated the abilities of its practitioners among peer groups, to confirm social status and creative facility. For young people discovering an awareness of their own physical, emotional, and desirous capacities, hip-hop dances combine the need to explore along each of these axes to a demonstration of strength and control bound up with unprecedented pleasure—a pleasure not to be found in other aspects of daily life. Hip-hop dances answer a need for creative release that allow aesthetic contemplation to young people who could then recognize each other's artistry in process.

3 Not surprisingly, hip-hop shows up on global theatrical stages with great regularity. In these circumstances, by 2014, the social component of these moves have been carefully evacuated; these are dances created in careful rehearsal to reveal aesthetic qualities and contest fixed subjectivities in theatrical situations. Two thumbnail examples: in July 2008 dancer Kentaro offered a solo performance of his hip-hop stylings extended into an hour-long theatrical form.⁶ Kentaro spent as much time not dancing as moving, as he tested space in luxuriant slow motion and explored geometric form via hip hop-inspired physicality, but the whole was danced to pop music, staged with rock-concert styled lighting effects and jokey films that he made with some friends projected in between dance segments. The performance included only one or two sections of flat-out spontaneous movement invention; for the most part, Kentaro carefully controlled the release of energy; he seemingly allowed himself to limit the possibility of us seeing him directly through a context of hip-hop. In August 2008, Compagnie Accrorap

presented *Petits Histoires*, a work for five men that aligned hip-hop dance with memories of the performer’s fathers and grandfathers, stories related in monologue recited between segments of dance.⁷ This grand theatrical spectacle included radio-controlled airplanes and cars, inexplicable props that traveled across the back of the stage on a clothesline, a sequence staged on a wheeled sofa, and a ‘funky chicken’ locking dance performed by a man dressed in a chicken costume. The dancing in *Petits Histoires* ranged through several idioms: strong floor work and popping sequences interspersed with comedic episodes, and segments of masculine bravado undercut by unexpected theatrical effects. In one scene, the chicken dancer was shot by an offstage hunter; the dancer disappeared in a lighting blackout, to be replaced by a clutch of chicken feathers floating to the ground in his absence.

Hip-hop, then, proves its flexibility as a constellation of dance idioms that can be reconstituted in various circumstances, and by 2014 these possibilities are exploited in every direction imaginable. Here, the promise of flexibility, often cited as a key component of black performative cultures, fulfills itself as dancers claim hip-hop lineage. Kentaro, the men of Accorap, and anonymous young men in the South Bronx a generation or two earlier share their approach to physicality and embodied representation. We can recognize that these are hip-hop dances in these different venues; the form allows for many to engage its physical ideologies. And audiences assemble for a taste of that release of palpably powerful energy; Kentaro’s large audience of teenage girls and Accorap’s legions of families and teenage boys gather to witness the ends of physical challenge that hip-hop can engender. Performative flexibility is akin to the communicative tradition of signifying that enlarges realms of meaning-making by shifting the context of recognition available to a word, phrase, or vocal tonality. In performance circumstances, this flexibility assumes relations between hip-hop and other forms of dance; it assumes that Korean teenagers have an access to the physical imperatives of hip-hop, as do teens from Houston, Texas. Black social-dance forms emerge from particular social spaces, but are constructed with an aesthetic resilience that allows them to transform and suit other performative contexts.

And yet, in the movement of movement across geographies and social spaces, how that movement signifies shifts. The qualitative flexibility that allows the form to speak variously to various communities parasitically diminishes its own core values of derisiveness. As signifying practice, black social dances tend toward the space of derision; dancers tease those who are not dancing (or not dancing well) through their gestures. These dances of derision—and of course Robert Farris Thompson included them as an

entire aesthetic category of West African invention (Thompson, “Dance and Culture”)—lose their capacity to function outside localized social spaces: they don’t translate from Lexington to Lyon. In social and theatrical contexts, hip-hop has not yet come able to speak convincingly with derision to a global audience.

Disarmed, unmoored from the progressive social possibilities of staging derisive masculinities or narratives of strength and control, what can hip-hop dances do? What sorts of narratives can their gestures inspire? Kentaro’s performance suggests that expressive control might be something contained by a hip-hop body, but released only sparingly and in isolation from other hip-hop genres. (On his website, Kentaro claims to want to draw connections between hip-hop and techno and rock; for him, hip-hop emceeing and DJ-ing have exhausted their potential to generate movement.) The dancers of Accrorap explicitly align hip-hop with comedy, in the process constructing the spectacle of hip-hop virtuosity as something necessarily undercut by gestures of self-deprecation. The Accrorap dancers are modern clowns, who engage hip-hop to encourage a mutable masculinity, one that directs its agents toward a vanishing point of irrelevancy beyond the moment of performance. As comic enactment, hip-hop becomes something like pantomime on steroids, with an insistent rhythmic pulse: the dancers amuse their audience with their abilities, but stop far short of suggesting that these movements hold the potential for social action alongside the pleasures of their production. In each case, the dancers address the performance of cool, and that cool seems to be a lot of fun to engage.

The *habitus*—embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.

Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56

Where, then, has hip-hop gone? In traveling the world, hip-hop coheres in its movement ideologies—Kentaro and Accrorap offered exciting popping and locking demonstrations—but it contracts, perhaps, in its communicative resonances. An American audience probably can’t decode Kentaro’s commentary on gender and sexuality that responds to his large female fan base. Japanese audiences may miss out on physical references to immigrant strife in France, corporealized in gestures by the largely Algerian-born French dancers of Accrorap. And French audiences may not understand an American skepticism surrounding the Cool Kids’ commercial appearance, a skepticism that hints at “sellout” even before the Kids have released an

album. When hip-hop loses its ability to sound derisive notes, what can it do—beyond entertain?

Consider the mashup DJ stylings of Girl Talk (Gregg Michael Gillis), who too often places emcee rhymes over favorite beats. Here, aspects of hip-hop become part of a flyby landscape, a constantly shifting immersive environment that evacuates historicizing aesthetics central to black musics in favor of a cumulative singularity. Building on black expressive culture's rhetorical strategies of flexibility, which are, after all, at the heart of hip-hop DJ-ing, Girl Talk poaches from any source that will produce an effective whole. How the fragments he chooses functioned in different contexts before now does not matter; listener-dancers are encouraged to take inventory of the number of samples that are recognizable, but only for a fleeting moment. Hip-hop becomes linked to a purpose of celebration, with only the vestiges of a small rhetorical stance against the marketplace that might restrict this sort of construction.

Girl Talk evidences skill in the way he constructs tracks; like any good DJ in the house tradition, he works with sturdy underpinnings of rhythmicity and bass tonality. At times, listening/dancing to his music, I wonder at the compulsion to work with so much information at all times. For decades, house DJs have constructed musical environments that provoke dance with far less sonic information than Girl Talk employs. House music also tends to work with sparingly articulated referents, evocative lyrical hooks that are open-ended enough to repeat over several minutes without significant elaboration. In this expressive space that values repetition over change, details of harmonic and rhythmic structural shifts matter greatly. More than anything, house music relies upon the movement of the bass to generate sonic drama. House music, born, like hip-hop, in the American crucible of black expression of the post-civil rights era, has become variegated in its soundings (trip, drum and bass, garage, chill, classic, detroit, electro, etc.), but never achieved the global popularity of hip-hop. House dancing, less concerned with the competitive possibilities or blankly aggressive physicalities of hip-hop, has not yet found a global youth movement able to conjure cool at the rhapsodic push of a remote control button.

Girl Talk, like our Rhapsody everyman, loves music in several varieties and hopes to compress his infatuation into a manageable singularity—something we might call popular culture. Along the way, certain rhetorical roadblocks are ignored, and the sensibilities that might allow these passions to be marked as love for black popular culture diminish. Everyman has access to an aggressive rhythmical movement, and he can change the channel.

1 Girl Talk can raid the digital frequencies for portions of recordings that ap-
2 peal, to compile a document that means only what it can physically provoke
3 for a listening dancer.⁸

4
5 The *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by
6 providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible,
7 that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its
8 dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products.

9 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 61

10
11 Some argue convincingly that dance disappears in the moment of its emer-
12 gence. So then, it may also always be potential. This truism may be part of
13 how social dance recurs, even when we seem to engage so little discourse
14 beyond that recurrence. What social dances can do shifts dramatically after
15 their appearance in a local space. Strangely, what coheres to those dance
16 forms—from their wide-ranging constructions of physical preparedness,
17 emotional expressiveness, gestures toward social justice, realignments of sex
18 and sexuality, or narratives of class mobility—tends to be the embodied pos-
19 sibilities for unmarked rhythmical pleasure. Broad categories of movement
20 ideologies fall away in the shift from a local black public space to a global
21 public space. “Krumping” loses its framing as a response by marginalized
22 kids—within a homophobic black adolescent space—designed to physi-
23 cally prepare those kids to deal with daily tauntings, and becomes a dance
24 taught at strip mall dance studios. Purpose shifts, even before purpose has
25 become clear.

26
27 How is it that hip-hop physicalities become a means for young people to
28 recognize themselves in space? How are some dances chosen, and why do
29 others fall away? If social dance generates only small bits of analytic pub-
30 lic discourse, how do we decide what dances to do when? Can we look to
31 the African American expressive *imperative to innovate* to discuss aspects
32 of taste?

33 An abiding aesthetic imperative to innovate fits directly into narratives of
34 spectacular display that allow social dance to function in the current reality
35 television–game show mediascape. Public dance competitions change the
36 idiom and its possibilities. The pleasures of dance cohere and reproduce
37 themselves across landscapes and bodies; of course, this is how hip-hop
38 dances have gained such broad practitioner bases. But in black communi-
39 ties, pleasure must be aligned with aesthetic purpose and social function of
40 one sort or another. Global stages overwhelm social function beyond their

local identities: dancers at the international hip-hop “Event of the Year” or on MTV’s “America’s Best Dance Crew” seek celebrity that needn’t be aligned with sexual identity, local community histories, family hierarchies, social identity, etc. Competitors in these public arenas dance to win and then possibly transfer their celebrity to a local context. Because dance, following neoliberal discourses, has so little cachet beyond the space of pleasurable individualized motion, we assume that pleasure drives the practice of this dance. In the context of performance that invites scrutiny without participation, pleasure can become the alpha and omega of a conversation about dance. Here, it may be enough to enjoy the sight of uninterrupted flow or controlled releases of physical impulses to decide where the ground of the dance begins. Watching the mediated networked dance competition, we learn little of the complex interactions that inform movement choices. And yet, these tiny choices, navigated in practice sessions and then again throughout the performance of social dance, deflect singular appraisals of performance as “joyful” or “strong” or “good.” Encountered in context, shifts in tonality or approach; weight and attack of gesture; dispersal of energy and the construction of flow, all shape the experience of social dance performance. The pleasure of the doing is but part of the event.

Notably, the pleasurable recognition of physical flow is seldom enough to account for value within the aesthetic structures that give rise to these dances. In one analysis, the dances themselves are constructed against a ground that considers their presence to be derisive, impossible, unprecedented, radical. Each of these aspects may be visible in hip-hop dance: the dance that is practiced incessantly to ultimately reveal its languageable teasing of another; its unexpected, outrageous movements that defy the visible. When the body can be coaxed into dancing beyond what can be seen, this achievement accepts a truly radical capacity, a potentially unlimited capacity for innovation and creative expressivity. This capacity defies the boundaries laid out for black people in the New World, people for whom, generations earlier, dancing in shackles was intended to be a final condensing of social exchange into physical potential enabled, by slavery, for the marketplace. Hip-hop dances surely arise from this tradition of dance that defies expectation, dances that confirm something beyond reach (freedom?) but present within the capacity of the physicality of doing. In the performance of these dances, dancers strive for a cool stance afforded through persistent practice and refinement. These rehearsals allow dancers a pleasure of recurrence, enhanced by the unexpected flash palpable in performance. The pleasure of repeated rehearsal as a feature of social exchange enabled by the dance gives way to the pleasure of execution—the aesthetic action underscored by the

1 coolness of preparation. The pleasure of hip-hop dance practice is always
2 visible in performance. This pleasure is aligned with accuracy of perfor-
3 mance, with the execution of aesthetic action well done.

4 Hip-hop dance has few impermeable rules of engagement within the
5 spheres of its recognition; you can't really dance *wrong* here so much as
6 *poorly*.⁹ That recognition includes the *imperative to innovate*; dancers in this
7 idiom must reveal something unprecedented for the dance to arrive with
8 conviction. The revelation of individual innovation—inevitable in convinc-
9 ing hip-hop dance—is acknowledged by all as the fullest capacity of dance
10 to demonstrate subjectivity. Here, hip-hop dance proceeds from an assump-
11 tion that each individual dancer will fulfill herself through an unprecedented
12 alignment of desire, intention, and action. Because black performance aes-
13 thetics tend to be fed by this alignment of invention—rather than some need
14 to master or preserve preexisting regulations—these dance practices hold
15 special significance in identity formation and social development. Black aes-
16 thetics prize working as an individual within a group dynamic; surely this
17 arrangement appeals to adolescents developing expressive voice for their
18 emotional, physical, and communicative energies.¹⁰

19 This energy in transformation—the *delta* of a person's being that dance
20 performance activates—becomes the visible marker of hip-hop dance fulfill-
21 ment. This *fulfilled* performance cannot be entirely preplanned or rehearsed
22 into superfluousness; it must come into being in real time and register a
23 delta of change perceptible to its attendant witnesses. In this requirement,
24 hip-hop dance, like jazz musicianship, becomes a barometer of individual
25 capacity, an action that reveals the possibility of the unprecedented. When
26 hip-hop dance fulfills itself, witnesses and dancers recognize the change that
27 occurs through the alignment of desire and aesthetic action. The pleasure of
28 this temporary transformation becomes palpable through the dance.

29 And to be sure, pleasure drives the rehearsal and performance of hip-hop
30 dances. The layered pleasure of subtle alignments released by the dancer
31 among witnesses who can recognize these fluctuations of capacity drives
32 the continued circulation of hip-hop as black performance. Like jazz musi-
33 cianship, hip-hop dance demands palpable effort that is produced, and then
34 rechanneled toward a quality of cool that effectively undermines the visibil-
35 ity of effort. Cool is a sensibility and an aesthetic achievement consistently
36 experienced as pleasurable by actors and witnesses alike. We enjoy the sen-
37 sations of cool because they confirm a multilayered awareness of energy and
38 its distribution. Moments of transformation—the delta of change—are in-
39 evitably tied to an abiding affect of cool, produced by labor that can balance
40N these contrasting performative tendencies. In the best hip-hop dance, clarity

of intention, desire to transform, purposefulness of action, and their organization within the context of cool aesthetics form the core of vast appeal.

Hip-hop dance also enjoys a privileged position as a product of the marketplace with the credible appearance of resisting the authority of the markets that produced it. Of course, aesthetics are not outside of the marketplace, and hip-hop as a practice emerged in determined affiliation to political and economic circumstances that surrounded its emergence. Hip-hop's transformation, from a creative constellation that satisfied Africanist performance imperatives for youth of color into a market-recognized dance practice that could feed television, Internet, and film markets hungry for representations of young people engaged in aesthetic action, completes a feedback loop in which the system inspires creative practice that then validates the system. Hip-hop emerged as a resistant aesthetic practice that provided beauty and joy—aspects necessary for human development—to its participants outside of mainstream markets; it continues to provide these aspects to young people simultaneously within and without marketplace support. In this, hip-hop straddles, often uncomfortably, its own capacities as resistant and compliant practices that allow its practitioners to work within and without normalizing narratives of social order. For dancers who hope to claim creative presence from the margins of local social order, hip-hop suggests an upending of common logics surrounding dance and expression with its downward-driven weightiness, its impossible fragmentation of the body in gestures of robotic precision, and its unlikely earthbound manipulations of directionality. But these dances are also available for those who dance on opera house stages, or participate in market-driven media exercises, such as *So You Think You Can Dance*. Hip-hop carries its markings as “street culture”—creative expression in reference to marginalized, minoritarian life—into venues far removed from its mythic roots.

From the margins, hip-hop dance operates in a persistent present, without regard for its own futurity or capacity as commerce. Dancers engage the corporeal practices of hip-hop to tie their physical pleasure to something immediate and entirely social; dance as a tactic to express and survive, to imagine future sociabilities outside of commodity exchange. In the mainstream, though, hip-hop might be more of a strategy to corral black performance toward its minoritarian boundaries. Over time, hip-hop dance, like jazz musicianship, has become a nearly empty referent to politicized expression that thrives without access to the politicized implications that originally created the form. The aesthetic structures survive, honed by exposure and engagement with ever-expanding publics, but with their relationship to social expression limited by the commercial sphere. Dancers in the mediaplace

1 enjoy limited capacity to inspire social mobility, if only because the media-
 2 place requires the possibility for repetition, incessant and public rehearsal,
 3 and narratives of predictable, predetermined achievement. Robbed of their
 4 potential to register transformation, these dances exist in an eternal place of
 5 nostalgia and already-done-ness; audiences enjoy the commitment to dance
 6 that these forms demand, but think little of their potential beyond their
 7 dispersal as product.

8 But what of the dancers who engage hip-hop dances within the medi-
 9 ated marketplace in order to achieve social and commodity mobility? Is the
 10 expressive capacity of the form necessarily eclipsed by the need for rehearsal
 11 and obvious narratives of “overcoming the odds” to arrive as a dancer in the
 12 mainstream? Probably. The delta of dance capacity is likely not mediable; it
 13 is an experience in time and skin, smell and place, vision and presence. The
 14 mediaplace resists, and even denies, the sensates of smell, skin, and pres-
 15 ence; but these aspects of performance are bound up with recognition of
 16 the dance. Dancers in the mediaplace compromise their engagement with
 17 the dance to suit the visual requirements of the simulated dance. Creative
 18 innovation does happen here, delimited by the overwhelming need to con-
 19 struct pre-palatable contexts for dance. And when the dance cannot register
 20 transformation, it becomes something other than itself; its copy, or maybe
 21 just something else.

22 The *habitus* is the principle of a selective perception of the indices tend-
 23 ing to confirm and reinforce it rather than transform it, a matrix gener-
 24 ating responses adapted in advance to all objective conditions identical
 25 to or homologous with the (past) conditions of its production; it adjusts
 26 itself to a probable future which it anticipates and helps to bring about
 27 because it reads it directly in the present of the presumed world, the only
 28 one it can ever know.

29 **Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 64**

30
 31
 32 The mass distribution of hip-hop corporealities via media transforms what
 33 hip-hop does in the world. Of course these physicalities don't retain their
 34 shape or presence across the space and time that media distribution makes
 35 possible, and how these ways of being “mean” to groups of people changes
 36 rapidly. In general, black social dances distributed by the mediaplace veer
 37 toward familiar spectacles of excessive activity and hyperkinetic impossi-
 38 bilities. The three major documentaries dedicated to these modes of dance
 39 practice—Mura Dehn's *The Spirit Moves* (released 1986), Jennie Livingston's
 40

Paris Is Burning (1990), and David LaChapelle's *Rize* (2005)—can be characterized by their outside-the-dance attitudes that move from fascination through explication to exploitation. This sequencing mirrors the relationship of black social dances as minoritarian aesthetic practices across historical eras, from the fascination with black structures of feeling associated with civil rights activism (Dehn), through a more ethnographically shaped accounting of black modes of survival in the era of Reagan (Livingston), to the blankly commodity-driven constructions of the millennium (LaChapelle). Surely these three white authors of black-dance mediaplace subjectivity are interested in the teleology of the dances they capture in their films. And yet, the terms of aesthetic achievement represented in these films become undermined through these acts of mediation, to become so easily reduced to the dynamism of the outward shapes of their performance. While the two later documentaries focus on the contextualizing narratives of the lives of dancers of color to some degree, how any single performance resounds for these individuals escapes discussion. Dance becomes a practice that is accessible and repeatable by an absent and unknown (unknowable?) viewer, and in the process, the dance becomes predictable and reducible to the spectacle of its sight. Its power to release unprecedented transformations of energy through performance is tamed by the insensate camera's lens and the process of digital mediation.

When documentarians of black corporeality operate inside the structures they film—as in Israel's *The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-Boy* (2002)—discussions and demonstrations of transformative capacities of dance ensue. To a large degree, the creative team examining hip-hop dance here draws on its layered understanding of the history and trajectory of these ways of moving. Where LaChapelle, Livingston, and Dehn necessarily position themselves outside of the dance cultures they capture, Israel and executive producer Quincy Jones III claim close familiarity with black modes of being. The resulting document arrives as a particular history of the idiom, something of a “how-to” manual coded in the commentary of mature dancers in reflection on how to allow these dances to speak through varying social registers. The film offers evidence of the capacity of these dances to transform in discussions of singular historical events, and the capturing of singular performances not to be repeated or commodified beyond the terms of this DVD representation.

In these films, the place where the dance happens can be artificially constructed. Many phantasmagoric shadow sequences of *The Spirit Moves* were filmed in Dehn's studio; at times, *Rize* and *The Freshest Kids* took dances out of social context in order to effectively capture their contents. This shift

1 of location predicts the displacement of these dances that is reiterated by
2 the circulation of the films themselves. The dances are moved to a “neu-
3 tral” place to be mediated; the newly minted, mediated corporealities can
4 then be mass-distributed to be reassembled in a fragmentary manner by
5 consumers.

6 As documentaries, these films place dance among a web of activities and
7 social exchange; filmmakers use the dance as a central “fixing agent” to dis-
8 cuss gender, sexuality, class, location, age, ability, and race. Dance binds the
9 film subjects and offers evidence to understand other dimensions of identity
10 claimed by participants. The place of sex and gender deserves special atten-
11 tion here. While each of these documentary films includes women among
12 its subjects, they spend very little time exploring the place of the feminine
13 within narratives of black social-dance physicality. The feminine exists as a
14 category in *The Spirit Moves* and *Paris Is Burning*, as the space for the part-
15 ner of male dancers in World War II-era dances, and as the aspirational
16 identity of queens—male and some female—walking the balls in New York
17 in the 1980s. But the hip hop-inspired movements of *The Freshest Kids* and
18 *Rize* make no distinction that allows an alternative to the aggressive actions
19 inevitably configured as masculine. The feminine here is absorbed by the
20 context of visibly powerful, weighted movements that suggest a blockish,
21 superhero-styled resistance to empathy. While women certainly perform
22 hip-hop dances—Ana Rokafella Garcia’s *All The Ladies Say . . .* (2009) fea-
23 tures vibrant documentation of these movements—the idiom has been cir-
24 cumscribed by the mediaplace as a masculinist pursuit. Women in hip-hop
25 “man up” to achieve narratives of transcendence; they engage the strength
26 and balance regimes that allow performance of the most flamboyant moves
27 that distinguish hip-hop from other forms of black social dance. And yet,
28 the presence of the feminine is routinely abrogated in discourses of hip-hop
29 physicality.

30 Rather, hip-hop has become something of a FEMA trailer for youth, a
31 place to congregate and triage amid battles for identity and resources in the
32 world at large. Locked within articulations that deny the human connectiv-
33 ity at the core of black performance—the sensate registration of affect that
34 occurs as part of transformation through performance—hip-hop corpore-
35 ality stands as a reference to emergent youthful masculinity; a stand-in for
36 individual power and cool; as a referent of access to the marginalized, to
37 minoritarian politics through the assumption of its shapes, rhythms, and
38 weightinesses. In the FEMA trailer we can see each other for a moment and
39S recognize our attendant cool poses, our ability to assume the postures of the
40N

cool kids, and in that moment access something like group connectivity. Even if we are alone at home with a computer mouse or smartphone in our hand. But then what? And what of the aesthetic imperative of sociability to recognize effort and transformation?

A FEMA trailer indeed, because hip-hop dance in and of itself may be unsustainable as a physical practice. We triage, to recover from the shifting storms of time that predict our changed capacity to approach hip-hop corporealities. We step out from the center of the dance circle, to allow other, more nimble energies, the recognition of placement in the spotlight. Hip-hop in the mediaplace, though, is popular culture creating its own centered spotlight in a vicious feedback loop without the need for provocation from gathered witnesses of the dance.

And yet. Pleasure, and maybe something we can recognize as *Black Joy*, become aspects that are potentially uncommodifiable in this discussion. These dances surely enlarge access to a purposeful fizzy creativity that we could align with a historically situated black joy born within spaces of marginalized resistance and aesthetic innovation. Do we need corporeal orature as a means to recognize this joy? Or could the joy exist outside of its direct recognition as communication? Could the pleasure of engaging these dances allow us access to some globally available (quasi-*universal*) kinetic space, at times outside of commodity exchange? Would this distributed space be aligned with something of the “racial sincerity” that John L. Jackson Jr. theorizes, one that “stresses its excesses, its visible and invisible overflow, the elements of self not totally expressed in social phenotype?” (Jackson, *Real Black*, 227).¹¹ What might it mean if we were to all dance hip-hop?

Hip-Hop Habitus

The habitus, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s constructed categories of being that govern actions of the everyday, becomes the place where hip-hop’s masculinist qualities are practiced by an international cohort of youth regardless of place, class, gender, race, sexuality, or in some cases, ability. (We can look to the wheelchair-bound character on television’s *Glee* for representation of an impaired youth engaged, at times, in hip-hop physicalities.) Hip-hop corporealities cohere, as in the Rhapsody commercial, to define and perpetuate ways of being. They become orderly, entirely sociable on a blank, repeatable scale that allows their repetition in the mediaplace. The political import of hip-hop corporealities—so central to their emergences on the bodies of youth of color in the years leading up to Reagan’s urban America—is displaced and evacuated so that the gestures can become protected patterns of

1 motion produced spontaneously and without reflection. These are the terms
2 of the habitus, that it produces and protects itself without hesitation.

3 And a physical hesitation in hip-hop would be very uncool.

4 Notes

5 Thank you to the Choreography and Corporeality working group of the International
6 Federation for Research in Theatre convened by Philipa Rothfield, to the Princeton
7 reading group organized by Daphne Brooks, to Ian Condry of Comparative Media
8 Studies at MIT, to members of the ASTR working group (2008) organized by Katherine
9 Mezur, and especially to members of the Black Performance Theory Working Group.

10 1. “Rhapsody Commercial Cool Kids and Sara Bareilles.” Rapmusic.tv.

11 2. This logical progression follows from the first-generation situated sociological
12 approach of Tricia Rose in *Black Noise*, which valorized hip-hop approaches to cre-
13 ativity as emblematic of life in New York City, followed by a slew of cultural-studies
14 renditions of global sites for hip-hop, including *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside*
15 *the USA*, edited by Tony Mitchell, and more specialized studies, such as Ian Condry’s
16 *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*.

17 3. Schloss’s subjects disagree on particular narratives of breaking history in terms
18 of who did what where and when; Schloss documents a remarkable circumspection
19 in terms of claiming master origin stories for b-boying among early practitioners of
20 the form.

21 4. To be sure, Schloss documents testimonial statements about the power of dance
22 to transform aspects of life beyond the dance. But b-boying is depicted essentially as a
23 hobby activity that finds devotees in uneasy, always tension with professional identity;
24 it is dancing as a permanent subaltern status.

25 5. For an overview of the concept of corporeal orature, see “The Black Beat Made
26 Visible.”

27 6. Performance in Tokyo, Japan; see “Kentarō!! Profile,” <http://www.kentarock.com/profileeng.html>, for an overview of Kentarō’s works.

28 7. Performance in Lyon, France; see “Compagnie Accrorap,” <http://www.acrorap.com/>,
29 for an overview of the company’s operations. Photographs of the production can
30 be accessed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fredbeaubeau/sets/72157622611268104/>.

31 8. Mechanical engineer by day, touring DJ by night, Girl Talk embodies the mythic
32 “everyman” persona as an ultimate unlikely cool kid.

33 9. Schloss details ways that breakers are deemed inappropriate or poorly prepared
34 for battling; still, according to his interview subjects, space is invariably made in b-boy
35 ciphers for participation by all.

36 10. This analysis differs mightily from Schloss’s conclusions. In that study, b-boys
37 are quick to police the boundaries of acceptable or tasteful dance practice.

38 11. In my reading, Jackson’s articulations of racial authenticity and sincerity line up
39 with global b-boy and b-girl desires to authenticate the dance and its history even as it
40 moves further and further from its originating aesthetic capacities and social purposes.