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***Awakened to Space: Containers, Frames, and Blackness  
in Ligia Lewis's minor matter***

Elliot Reza Emadian—University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

The following paper discusses Ligia Lewis's *minor matter*—which, according to her website, is the second in her series *BLUE, RED, WHITE*—as recorded at HAU3 on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, performed by Lewis, Jonathan Gonzales, and Hector Thami Manekehla. The recording was watched on video, with permission, through Renée Wadleigh's Digital Library.

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The piece opens in darkness: only Lewis's recorded voice is perceptible. Piercing through the blackness in a defiant example of sonic mobility,<sup>1</sup> she recites lines from Remi Raji's "Dream Talk."<sup>2</sup> As the lights fade up to an amber wash and medieval court music begins to pulse, three vertically oriented black bodies (upstage to downstage) are revealed, lying motionless in a horizontal line (stage left to stage right), far upstage. The immobile bodies begin to shift in conjunction with the pulsing rhythm, and, although they are distant, their *liveness* instantly permeates the stage. These three dancers slowly section the vast expanse of the black box theatre with linear trajectories, slicing their way downstage, moving through a referential sequence of poses as they travel. The references they make are as vast as the space that contains them: Grecian statues, voguing, burlesque, ballet. Their parallel, individual trajectories begin to converge, muddying the clarity of space yet retaining the precision of posturing; it is almost as if, unbeknownst to them, space had collapsed.

Anita Gonzales, in *Black Performance Theory*, states that "African diaspora performance is read as a response to Euro-American or [W]hite frames of reference."<sup>3</sup> Often in making a work, a choreographer must rifle through their epistemological conceptions of performance to attempt to position the work and viewers in appropriate relationship. The meaning of the work exists in that interplay of the frames of reference between choreographer and audience members. In *minor matter*, Ligia Lewis choreographs these frames as delicately as she choreographs movement. She places (B)blackness<sup>4</sup> at the center of the work, dialogically relying on the "minor" matter operating in and around it to disrupt direct relations between perception and meaning. By dissolving the rigidity of space, time, and body, Lewis situates the multifaceted (B)blacknesses of *minor matter* as the central ontological key; in doing so, she challenges hegemonic expectations of concert dance.

The term “Blackness”—capitalized here as a descriptor of a person’s culture—typically connotes a confluence of identities surrounding racial and cultural experiences shared by persons of the African diaspora. Scientifically, “blackness”—uncapitalized here as a descriptor of objects—is the quality of colorlessness, darkness, a visual invisibility. Lewis mobilizes the linguistic congruence of these distinct terms. Historically, Blackness exists as the marked opposite of Whiteness. While the darkness of the color black serves as a cloak from sight, the identity of “White”<sup>5</sup> often lingers as the unchallenged, equally unmarked norm in dominant discourses. Countless Black scholars and writers (Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, etc.) of the twentieth century lead the subversive effort to mark into existence the creation of “Whiteness” as a constructed hierarchical identity of its own, rather than a default category. Critical Whiteness scholar David Roediger, in his *Colored White* introduction, points out that the characterization of this scholarship quickly diverted away from the project of identifying the problems with Whiteness to planting “Whiteness” at “the table of multiculturalism.”<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that this diversion has historically occurred by White people, as Roediger suggests, continuing to “plac[e] [W]hites at the center of everything.”<sup>7</sup> This insistence on placing the White experience first is inherently at the expense of people of color—and in the conversation around Blackness, at the dismissal of Black peoples’ experiences of a system of hierarchies that tangibly and directly impacts their lives—is the particular project of White supremacy that Lewis subverts. It is this deft undercutting I will illuminate through this writing.

In viewing Lewis’s work, I watch through a lens formed by many factors: skin that presents as white; my experience of living as an Iranian-American during the early 2000s in a small town; a Southeastern American upbringing and studio dance education; a liberal arts degree in mathematics and dance; a professional dancing body that was assigned male at birth that, while always being queer to me, is often misgendered as male. It is the privilege and strife of choosing to live and perform in this queer dancing body that has led me to the academic projects of dance scholarship, critical race theory, and gender theory. Through these lenses, and through the patience and guidance of mentors, friends, and colleagues, I continually reexamine the inherent complexity of my viewership of others’ works. In writing about Blackness in the context of this work, I do not aim to define or

understand Blackness, although my operating definitions are obviously at play in the moments I choose to highlight. Neither is my aim to prove the *validity* of the work from a/my White perspective. I will engage with a reading of the piece by Ligia Lewis, the dancers, and the whole choreography as an attempt at amplifying some of the work I perceive it to be doing from my intersectional identities. I acknowledge that my relationship with the material might, therefore, be fraught, but I hope that this friction may generate further conversation about the work.

Following their downstage descent, the dancers shift into two monologues: the first, “Bitch 101,” expertly delivered by Jonathan Gonzales; and the second, Lewis’s own “Feelings Matter” crusade. Juxtaposed by a physically captivating wrestling match between Lewis and Hector Thami Manekehla, the first monologue proscribes an exaggerated tactic for survival. The second, processed through a vocal effect that drops Lewis’s voice into a lower octave, is wrought with “too much” emotion for being so close to the beginning of the dance.<sup>8</sup> These two monologues are densely packed with questions, statements of exhaustion, opinions on life and artmaking, quips, and gibberish. The content of the work zooms forward in overwhelming detail. Lewis knows this: it is this first shift that sets up a pattern of re-(and dis-)orientation throughout the work.

### **Black Box**

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*“I call our world Flatland, not because we call it so, but to make its nature clearer to you, my happy readers, who are privileged to live in Space.”<sup>9</sup>*

In Edwin Abbott’s most famous work, *Flatland (a fiction)* “romance in many dimensions,” he cleverly explores the impossibility of seeing a world outside of one’s own.<sup>10</sup> The work is written from the perspective of A Square in the titular universe, Flatland, where two-dimensional shapes glide around in a hyper-stratified Victorian society, debating side coloring, boasting of the regularity and number of their sides, and studying geometry.<sup>11</sup> On the eve of a new millennium (after having a dream about discovering a one-dimensional universe—the inhabitants of which refuse to believe that there could be a *second* dimension, despite the Square’s logical explanation), the Square is visited by a guest from the third dimension: a sphere. The Sphere awakens the Square’s

awareness to his space, his conception of the possibility of what a being can be, and his understanding of how the world (and the larger world of Spaceland)<sup>12</sup> operate. He is able to see himself clearly in relation to the “Laws of Nature” of Flatland only by literally stepping (or floating) outside of it.

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Lewis situates *minor matter* intentionally within the frame of a black box theatre. This rigid, rectangular black performance space functions first as a theoretical “black slate” used to position the performance within a historical context of black box postmodern dance. The space at HAU3, like most black box theatres, appears to be painted black throughout: electrical pipes, outlets, the dance floor are each painted to a matte black uniformity. The cubical nature of the space is not obstructed by curtains or wings. Indeed, these distinct vertical and horizontal perpendicular walls—with rigid 90-degree intersections—function to contrast directly the “vanishing point” of architecture that, as French theorist Henri LeFebvre suggests, connotes capitalist, patriarchal spaces.<sup>13</sup> Parallel lines that seem to converge due to their impossible length are a hallmark of what LeFebvre deems “phallic verticality.”<sup>14,15</sup> In this black box, I am trained to safely assume that every possibility for the performance I will witness is well within sight from the moment the work begins.

Historically, the proscenium stage, with its expansive frontal frame and invisible fourth wall, has been filled with scenic elements (consider: ballet, mid-century modern dance, Tanztheater). While the openness of the stage would seem to free up the potential for different readings of the space, the additional props, sets, costumes, or historical musical scores utilized in these dance forms tended to carry such heavy semiotic power that the work was funneled through reference and handily directed toward a distinct point of meaning. This choreographic tactic tends to steamroll the varying epistemological frameworks from which an audience member might be operating: offering a weighty symbolism and assuming that the perception of that symbolism is consistent across audience members—enough so to contain, for instance, the dance around an unfolding narrative arc. Both the stage space and the scenic additions could leave vast space for individual interpretation. As such, attempting to mobilize the stoic separation of a

proscenium stage for forms typically reserved for more intimate settings does not always serve the ends of the work.<sup>16</sup> To work around this, Lewis relies on the historical shift to postmodernism in mobilizing the blackness of a black box theatre.

The postmodern era ushered in an absence of scenario and meaning, accompanied by a focus on the body. This revolution was a critical shift in the creation of concert dances. In perhaps the most oft-cited evidence of this, Yvonne Rainer's "No Manifesto" decries "spectacle" and much of what can be boiled down to overproduced versions of the self.<sup>17</sup> The space of these postmodern dances rooted themselves primarily in the dancers who performed them. A sense of "spatial entitlement" that Gaye Theresa Johnson references in *Spaces of Solidarity* manifests in two particular ways: the productive and the imaginative.<sup>18,19</sup> While the use of proscenium theatres in dance in order to arrive at a singular meaning seems to be at the expense of individuated imagination, much of the postmodern movement could be seen as the opposite, favoring an *imagined* emptiness that shifts due to a dancer's presence. What the postmodern movement broadly lacked was an acknowledgment that an empty stage is not an empty space: "for space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning. The perception of gaps itself brings the whole body into play."<sup>20</sup> A history of performance, presentation, audience, ticket prices, the neighborhood in which the theatre resides, etc. all sum to a politic that exists inextricably from the stage. Additionally, a living, breathing person's appearance in space changes the space (directly, if that body attempts to action change in the politic of the space). Lewis, aware of this assumed invisibility of spatial politic—the blackness of the black box—brings the whole theatre into question throughout the work.

Quoted above in his *Production of Space*, LeFebvre defines two specific constructions of social space: domination and appropriation. I interpret his understanding of domination as a *primary* use of space: constructed without consideration of the spatial potential— "I will write a paper." Appropriated space (importantly not equated with, but related to, our current conception of appropriation of culture) is a *secondary* activation of space: constructed to suit a need— "This work needs to be unpacked, I will write a paper to open a dialogue about it." Importantly, LeFebvre distinguishes appropriation from *re-appropriation* or *diverted space*: space repurposed after its original use has expired—"This paper prompted me to think about this use of dance, I will apply those thoughts to my

considerations about other works.”<sup>21</sup> Using existing space for minority benefit feels like a uniquely minoritarian strategy, an almost disidentificatory<sup>22</sup> practice.

Early postmodernism, rebuking the production value of late modernism, focused on refuting the politic of space in favor of a politic of imaginative embodiment, bridging the gap between dance and the everyday. The MOMA exhibit, *Judson Dance Theatre: The Work is Never Done*, illustrates the conscious shift away from the overtly produced. Workshops held on wooden decks, performances recorded in vast spaces with seemingly no end, or contrastingly, recorded on everyday street corners, highlight efforts to inject dance into everyday spaces and to resist the distance created by proscenium performance that often reifies dance as a separate way of being from life.<sup>23</sup> This would seem, at first glance, to be a re-appropriation of pre-existing spaces, in Lefebvre’s terms. I would move toward considering this a secondary appropriation of space, eliminating the *physical construction* of a tangible place from the *conception* of these spaces. While the physical place for these activities may have already existed while being used for a novel purpose, these artists were appropriating the space to suit a need. To *insert* dance into the everyday, space was constructed by the presence of dancers. The space was carved, taken, used—a political act, to be sure.

Of course, as theorist Danielle Goldman points out while engaging with John Perpener’s *African-American Concert Dance*, this political impulse availed itself to dancers inequitably based on their “institutional position and broader social standing.”<sup>24</sup> Goldman illustrates extensively how established dance convention in the 60s and 70s actually *facilitated* critique for artists of color: affirming and unsettling expectation within an established practice also allowed for—within Goldman’s focal “tight spaces”—a changing politic of space. Perversely, this might be read as a sort of respectability politic; however, I move to consider this reliance on established choreographic frameworks, as Goldman does with improvisation, as staking a claim for artistic freedom. It is these artists who *re-appropriate* existing performative spaces for new purposes. Following this tactic, Lewis employs a *diversion* of the black box theatre as a tactic for centering the *Blackness* in her work. She leans into the postmodern while mobilizing a discursively black space. This act is equally political: a shifting of formal expectation from within an existing form.

To reframe my initial experience of the work, I turn to Hershini Bhana Young in her chapter of *Black Performance Theory*. She writes that “sound in its insistence on Sylvia Wynter’s nondeterministic ‘demonic’ structure, decenters the ocularcentrism of Western Subject formation.”<sup>25</sup> Lewis upsets the often-superseding significance of the visual by confounding the visual information of her work. Gaye Teresa Johnson uses spatial sonic entitlement to specifically refer to the ability of radio and television to facilitate political action that Black and Brown individuals were unable to achieve due to the White-dominated state, but I believe that the technological manipulation of sound and body is relevant here.<sup>26</sup> At the debut of the work, Lewis deprives me of sensation, leaving me longing for something to which I can attune, and she presents it sonically amplified. She stakes her spatial claim in a truly black space (in the darkness before the lights come up) via sonic means. In this way, she deploys blackness as a subversive strategy to push back against a trained, western reading of her work. By the time the lights eventually glow, Lewis has already instilled her own politic onto the black-painted theatre. The resonance of her voice, which in the darkness expanded far beyond the theatre, settles back on the black walls as they become visible: defining the “empty” space only after it has been filled. In the monologues that follow, Lewis pushes the limit of how much sonic information can be injected into a space with minimal relief. The relentless delivery of Gonzales’s words shifts the referential frame of the work with every sentence. In her “Feelings Matter” monologue, Lewis confuses our perceptions further by complicating the signification between external visual cues of subjecthood (gendered and racialized appearance) with electronic manipulation of her voice. It is transposed down into a lower octave and distorted, and yet her audible speaking voice underlines the amplified sound. In this way, signs and signifiers are troubled. The complication of visual and sonic information compounds with the sheer volume of oral context to explode possibilities for impressions of the work’s content. This recurrent mistrust of perception functions as a tactic for unsettling expectations of concert dance or of black box performance. Lewis turns the presented information into an unreliable narrator of sorts, troubling the direct correlation presumed between signifier and meaning. Assuming that a viewer will anticipate these parallel systems converging at the conclusion of a work, she leans into multiplicity, nonlinearly weaving and diverting perceptual systems. With no initial presumptions about



the content of the space, dancers, or audience, the dance resonates with possibility at its debut. Then, with no end to approach, the legibility of the body and voice of each dancer continues to fill the space of the work with matter. The meaning of the dance flits elusively around an echoing stew of reference and sign.

### **Blackness and the Shape of Space**

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In *Flatland*, the Sphere first attempts to convince the Square of its higher dimension by explaining the third dimension mathematically: a point moves perpendicularly to itself to create a line, a line moves perpendicularly to itself to create a plane (a square for example), and a square moves perpendicularly to itself to create space/volume (a cube for example). The Sphere then moves to prove its existence by explaining the “bird’s eye view” of Flatland, providing detail about the literal guts of beings inside of Flatland as evidence of its extradimensional existence. With the Square unconvinced, the Sphere attempts to prove its point by floating in and out of a two-dimensional world. It is revealed to the Square as it appears to expand and to contract, seemingly by magic, as cross-sections of the Sphere exist transiently in Flatland. Unmoved, the Square is forced out of his plane by a push from the Sphere. Flying above Flatland, the Square is able to comprehend everything that was previously opaque and, literally, out of his world.<sup>27</sup>

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Immediately following the opening monologues, Lewis expands and contracts the visual perceptibility of the space by audibly calling light cues from onstage. With “LEFT SPOT” and “RIGHT SPOT” she dissolves the rigidity of the stage, reframing the dancer so that his arms float in a singular, circularly spot-lit space, free to pass in and out of sight.<sup>28</sup> With “FULL STAGE” she highlights the expanse of the theatre, while simultaneously drawing attention to its rigid boundaries. As punchy horn soundtracks layer in eights, twos, threes, and fours—creating a disorienting sense of rhythm—the floor, ceiling, and walls of the black box sharpen into focus. Each dancer continues the gentle, steady back-and-front step (which I will call a *ball change*) that Gonzales began while his floating hands anchored the previous section. Poised at center stage, his head floats uncannily atop his hunched

body, spine and pelvis rippling, flicking, and he stares directly into the audience. He sets up a new vernacular of movement and rhythmicity that feels as though it exists closer to an African diasporic dance aesthetic: pelvic oscillations, weighted and rhythmic stomps and claps, and explosive jumps are intercut with some of the earlier, more postural movements. In contrast to the prior image—emphatic intrusion of his fully extended hands into a condensed circle of white light—here, his hands begin to unfold and recede, tracing a delicate pattern to his front (that Lewis herself began stage right). The persistent but aimless traversing quickly becomes militant as Gonzales leaps downstage, then recedes in his ball change with slashing, punctuated gestures, head and jaw snapping in rebound. This leads the trio into a percussive series of downstage stepping and ponying around the space. They insistently trace the stage boundaries with both body and keen eyes, which, for each dancer, are blacked out by all-black contact lenses. The trio skates around the stage—occasionally in vehement unison other times with looser consistency—but always with rhythmic precision that sits uncannily within the complex polyrhythm of the music. Through their meticulous coverage of the space, grand and explosive leaps and claps are reconfigured as spatially static, while ruminative pulsing, stomping, and the ever-present ball change become critical to wringing out the whole spatial potential of the black box.

Danielle Goldman stakes a claim for improvisation as a mechanism by which performers “criticize the ways in which institutions support[ ] certain kinds of dance ... ways in which formalism in dance historically has effaced struggle” (by privileging grace and verticality in a hierarchy of form and by excluding the outside world).<sup>29</sup> In this middle section of the work, Lewis employs a formalist commitment to exhausting spatial trajectory (and indeed to exhausting herself and the other dancers) in order to unearth the incalculable labor of making and performing dance. She places Black dance and Black dancers into this formalist structure, further demanding that this formalism highlight the particular degree of labor faced by Black artists.

The faces of the three dancers are revealed in high detail as they descend closer to the audience. Grotesquely contorted in concentration, confusion, and sheer effort, their unnaturally black eyes stare back blankly as I gaze unflinchingly from my seat outside the action.<sup>30</sup> The effect of the black contact lenses is particularly eerie. Through these physical appendages, racial identity is itself troubled as the dancer encroaches upon an extra-human

identity. Juxtaposing the tangibility of strenuous dance, forcible breathing, glistening sweat, and anguished faces with a more-than-human physical presence seems to challenge the dancers' humanity, positioning them as other-worldly.<sup>31</sup> They are dehumanized and laid bare for observative consumption, ready for an academy that will read them as "bodies." In this moment, indulgence in ocularcentrism feels selfish or voyeuristic. Watching through video, I am compelled to look away.

Lewis continues to awaken and to challenge the fourth wall as she and the dancers stare sharply through it. Previously content to arc vigorously through the space, conquering it to its very edge, the dancers confront the possibility of something past those constructed boundaries directly. Failing to break through into the audience, they begin to awaken to the potential for going beyond the other five walls of the black box theatre. Much like the Square in *Flatland*, the dancers (metaphorically) step outside the container within which they had previously been content to continually carve their place.

### **Moving Outward in Place**

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In *Flatland*, the Square returns to Flatland to announce his discovery to the ruling classes, only to be committed to an insane asylum. Without the experiential power of the third dimension, the ruling Circles are unwilling to adjust their beliefs or expand their conception of their world.<sup>32</sup> While this seems low-stakes in the abstract, considering the Victorian sociopolitical climate of Abbott's time, he was actually pushing back against something tangibly oppressive.

The challenge faced by the Square is to awaken the citizens of Flatland to a potential existence outside of their own *without* having the ability, as the Sphere does, to explicitly present it to them. His inability to do so is ultimately his downfall.

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A rolling drum pulses quietly: a war march. Manekehla breathes rhythmically, his stomach overinflating and collapsing as his gaze pans from his stomach to Lewis, crouched across the stage on all fours. Gonzales walks purposefully to up-center stage and then,

surprising even himself, his pelvis begins to thrust in rhythm with the drum. Manekehla's attention slides back to the floor, where he seems to notice it for the first time. He presses into it, echoing Lewis's stance; perhaps she sensed its rigidity all along. He appears distraught and rises from the floor, anxiously wiping his face. He unceremoniously removes his shirt as he turns to face the right stage wall of the black box theatre. He questions the wall, challenges it to a fight, attempts to seduce it, and eventually, Lewis joins him in his unfruitful séance. As a burning red wash floods the space, the pair leaves the wall, seemingly awakened to its permanence, but unsure how to conquer it.

Lewis choreographically barrels through the massive shift in awareness of space; it becomes immediately clear that where the work is moving will not look like what has come before. The trio migrates back to the upstage as a red wash and an artificial fog flood the space. Red lasers demarcate a diagonal pathway, to be echoed by unhuman, rigid bodies horizontally stretched—muscular, tensile—in the illuminated trajectory. Then, crawling, rolling back downstage in untenable conglomerations (feet connected to heads, upside down planks, wrangling/wrestling for surface time), the trio breaks away from their marked path, and the work begins to disintegrate.

The dancers attack walls and attempt to boost each other to a ceiling that is indisputably closed to the outer world, and too high to summit; they are dwarfed by the omnipresence of boundary. There is no time allotted to acknowledge or to accept a shifted dynamic of space. Lewis simultaneously compresses time—by removing audience agency to react or to stop a cacophonous “resolution” from tumbling through the stage space—and yet guides the work into a decaying, structural world. As the container of the space, which had previously been invisible to them, ticks into the dancers' awarenesses, it serves to contain, and to provide, a vehicle for the fervor which had previously been housed in formalism. The insistent and futile desire to collect as a trio, the chaotic (and seemingly dangerous) efforts to achieve enough verticality to match the height of the ceiling, and the exhausting physicality with which the above are attempted, continue to illuminate the interminable labor of existing in a hegemonically dominated society while personally or collectively identifying outside that hegemony.

The dancers remain consistently aware and attempt to push against (while being forced to operate within) a frame that shapes others' impressions of their matter. Lewis's

choice not to modify the physical structure of the black theatre space, nor to reposition the audience in relation to herself and the dancers, functions to zoom out on space as effectively as her earlier use of light. In doing so, Lewis continues to operate with the vitality of these three Black dancers, moving outward in place to unearth the painful reality of a concert dance form.<sup>33</sup>

Critically, this choreographic decision to centralize the dancers' experience, while illuminating the strife of a minority existence, also demonstrates a remedy. Here in Spaceland, we cannot see a dimension outside of our own. We live in our world, taking axiomatically that the way it is, *is* the only way. In *minor matter*, the dancers function as *more* than a Sphere for their audiences.<sup>34</sup> Where the Sphere was forced to shift the Square into another dimension in order to reveal a new conception of space, *minor matter* diverts existing space inside its frame by prioritizing the minor matter. The choreography shifts from within. The dancers condense, trace, expand, and erase the shape or size of the container to allude to its pliability, its impermanence: unveiling the latent precarity in space through their physical presences and trusting that the key to understanding a new conception of space will be elucidated by their superhuman labor. Where blackness is used to render invisible, Blackness becomes a highlighter for the rich, emotional, and often harsh reality of what exists. In the play between the two, a vibrating prospect for reconsidering what is "minor" slips into the field of view.

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1. Gaye Theresa Johson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013)
  2. Ligia Lewis, "minor matter (2016)." accessed October 21, 2018. <https://ligialewis.com/>.
  3. Anita Gonzales, "Navigations." in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzales (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 30.
  4. This author acknowledges the urgency of capitalizing the term "Blackness" in reference to the shifting cultural identity of Black people. In several instances in this paper, "blackness" will be used in reference to an object or space that is not human. The use of lowercase "black" therefore, is not intended to strip Blackness of its importance, rather as an acknowledgment of the non-human blackness at play in the work.
  5. In line with the Diversity Style Guide, and for the purpose of not presuming "White" to be a default standard, I will capitalize the word when used as a descriptor of the White-dominated culture in which Lewis's work and this writing were produced. I do this not in the service of claiming that the White identity is universal or cohesive. It also serves

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to acknowledge the presence of White supremacy within the culture of contemporary dance.

6. David R. Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 19.
7. Roediger, *Colored White*, 20.
8. Quoted from the work.
9. Edwin A. Abbot, *Flatland: a Romance of Many Dimensions (by a Square)*. (London: Seely & Co, 1884.), 3.
10. “Edwin Abbott Abbott.” JJ O’Connor and EF Robinson, last modified 2005, [www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Abbott.html](http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Abbott.html).
11. Abbot, *Flatland*.
12. For the purposes of this paper, we can consider “Spaceland” to be our three-dimensional world. In the book, Spaceland is inhabited by three-dimensional geometric figures (ie. Spheres, cubes, etc.)
13. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 41.
14. *Ibid.*, 36.
15. Mathematically, parallel lines never converge, except at infinity. This drive toward something impossible plagues concert dance, in creation and perception. What will I get from this dance?
16. Carl Paris, “Reading ‘Spirit’ and the Dancing Body in the Choreography of Ronald K. Brown and Reggie Wilson.” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzales (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 115.
17. Yvonne Rainer, “Yvonne Rainer's ‘No Manifesto.’” MoMA Learning, 1965. [https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/yvonne-rainer-trio-a-1978/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/yvonne-rainer-trio-a-1978/).
18. Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict*, 1.
19. The first, in the wrong hands, leads to seizure of lands, eviction from homes. The second, in the hands of those who need it, results in “discursive...spatial claims...and ephemeral pronouncements...” Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict*, 52.
20. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 154.
21. *Ibid.*, 164-168.
22. See: José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
23. In this exhibit, the variety of “performance” spaces is striking. A video shot by Andy Warhol shows two dancers on a rooftop, smoking, drinking, moving. Several others show the Judson church—a now ubiquitous presence in the downtown dance scene. Here, a prime example of ignoring the politic of a space for its apparent “blankness.” The wood floors of the Judson church or Danspace carry almost as much (of a dance-specific) connotation now as they would have as functioning churches back then. The space was made available as a place “where religion, art, and social activism converge,” (*Image of Wall Text*. 2018. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. [www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3927?installation\\_image\\_index=17](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3927?installation_image_index=17).) but a sense that a religious space could be treated as an “empty” space highlights the vehement presence of hegemonic thinking in this early transition.

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24. Danielle Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 19.
  25. Hershini Bhana Young, "Twenty-First-Century Post-Humans: The Rise of the See-J." in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzales (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.) 48.
  26. Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict*, 65,75.
  27. Abbott, *Flatland*
  28. Laurie Anderson's video "O Superman" comes to mind: a hand floating in a colorless circle of light gets frozen in shadow as the body to which it appeared to be connected continues moving. Here, Anderson is also framed by an "empty" black space, opening the work with an electronically distorted vocoding of "O superman, o judge, o mom and dad." Her veiled feminist crusade compels a return to maternity as the solution to lostness. Anderson also engages with red as a discursive color. It is easy to see the inherent feminist power of Lewis's work and references like this pervade the work and extend its cultural critique.
  29. Goldman, *I want to be ready*, 21.
  30. In theory...I find in practice, this is a hard moment to ignore or to watch passively.
  31. Especially in the context of the world of the dance.
  32. Abbott, *Flatland*
  33. That could continue to operate as oppressively as a Victorian society
  34. I strongly desire to call them a "hypersphere," which would be the term for a more than 3-dimensional sphere, I hesitate though, to extend the metaphor into a critical passage where the implication of a fourth spatial dimension reduces the real political work being enacted by this dance.