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LARNE ABSE GOGARTY

CELLS IN ORGANISMS/ COGS IN MACHINES

1930S PROLETARIAN PERFORMANCE AND JAZZ

Born in 1902, the dancer Edith Segal grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in a fairly orthodox, working class Jewish family. She first took dance classes at the Henry Street Settlement House, which was founded by Lillian Wald in 1893 and inspired by Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago. Segal also joined dance classes at the Neighborhood Playhouse, which had been formed in 1915 by the philanthropist sisters Alice and Irene Lewisohn as one of the first "little theatres" in New York City mixing professional and amateur drama. At the Neighbourhood Playhouse, Segal studied interpretive dance in the manner of Isadora Duncan and attended classes with visiting teachers such the Anglo-Indian dancer Roshanara.[1] During the 1920s, Segal became radicalised by attending courses in socialism and dance at the Rand School of Social Sciences and a few years later, she gravitated towards the Workers' Party of America USA, an organisation that formed the legal front for the illegal and still underground Communist Party USA (CPUSA).[2]

In 1927, Segal joined the CPUSA, and her membership of the Party was marked not only by her political commitment but also by a belief that the Party was "a very positive influence... not only in my work, but I believe in the whole cultural movement in our country."[3] Part of the communist cultural movement in the US involved the formation of amateur proletarian dance groups. In

1 Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, p.27.

2 Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, London: Macmillan & Co., 1960, p.174.

3 Edith Segal, "Music and dance and the Left in the 1930s", Interview with B. Lemisch, February 1981. Oral Histories of the American Left 1920-1980, Tamiment Library/ Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

1932, the Workers' Dance League was organised, which in 1935 became the New Dance League (hereafter WDL/NDL), signalling the CPUSA's adoption of Popular Front strategy.[4] Under the umbrella of the WDL/NDL, the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union Dance Group (NTWIUDG) was organised by Segal and joined by women working in all aspects of the needle trades. In line with the ambitions of much communist culture during the period, Segal's work was at the forefront of the drive to use dance as a "weapon in the class struggle". As Ellen Graff notes "one purpose of such groups was to get workers moving politically and to prime them for actual strike action and picketing. Workers' classes made up scenarios that they danced in a kind of rehearsal for the real thing."[5]

A photograph of the NTWIUDG was reproduced in the Workers' Dance League Sparatkiade programme for 1933 (Fig. 1) and accompanied by a note written by Bella Hurst, secretary of the Union. The photograph shows a group of women flexing their muscles, caught mid-dance, smiling at the camera. In the text, Hurst affirmed the aims of Segal and the wider proletarian dance community as follows:

> At first we did not realise how much of our daily struggles could be utilized as thematic material for the dance, and how effective a medium it can be in helping workers to better understand and fight against their conditions. We approach our

4 The WDL/NDL served as an umbrella for numerous groups and was likely formed in response to the establishment of the Workers' Cultural Federation (WCF) in 1931. See Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926-1956*, Yale University Press, 2002, pp.21-22 for details of the WCF.

5 Graff, op. cit., p.42.

> theme work thru [sic] discussions and group improvisations, choosing our themes from our daily struggles.[6]

fig. 1

Segal confirmed Hurst's affirmation of collective organisation in a 1935 article in New Theatre, writing that "The subject matter is social and is the concern of all the participants in the dance [...] therefore not the private property of the director, or even of the group, but that of the audience and society."[7]

Ruth Allerhand, another proletarian dancer, echoed Hurst's and Segal's emphasis on collective dance as an aesthetic process towards communism and gave it an interesting twist. Allerhand stated that the experience of performing in a workers mass dance was one in which "The individual no longer feels that he [sic] is the whole, he now sees that he represents the substance. He is not

6 Bella Hurst, programme for the *Workers' Dance League Spartakiade*, June 4th 1933. Edith Segal papers (Box 4), Dance Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

7 Edith Segal, "Directing the New Dance", *New Theatre*, May 1935, p.23.

so much a link in a chain, a cog in a machine, as a very alive, very productive cell within a body."[8] Allerhand's contrasting of the organic with the mechanical in the mass dance is strikingly reminiscent of Siegfried Kracauer's famous 1926 description of the popular dance troupe the Tiller Girls in "The Mass Ornament":

> The bearer of the ornaments is the mass and not the people [Volk], for whenever the people form figures, the latter do not hover in mid-air but arise out of a community. A current of organic life surges from these communal groups [...] Only as parts of a mass, not as individuals who believe themselves to be formed from within, do people become fractions of a figure.[9]

Kracauer's description of the Tiller Girls presents a troubled version of the notion that ornament expresses organic community spirit. Unlike accounts of ornament by art historians such as Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin that Kracauer drew upon, as Frederic Schwartz explains, Kracauer "uses the mass ornament to posit the arrival of a post-hermeneutic age, employing the postulate of the unmediated interrelatedness of all aspects of a culture to show that it no longer obtained [...] since there is no more community [...] there is no more spirit in ornament."[10] Despite Kracauer's initial statement that a "current of organic life surges from these communal groups", by the end of his description, the Tiller Girls are positioned as a perversion of the organic qualities

8 Ruth Allerhand, "The Lay Dance" *New Theatre*, April 1935, p.26.

9 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament" (1926) in Thomas Y. Levin (trans. and ed.), Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Cambridge, MA. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995, p.76.

10 Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, p.142.

of ornament that had been associated with notions of a holistic community.[11] With their mechanical movements analysed as Taylorist, the Tiller Girls represent absolute fragmentation and alienation, becoming ciphers for the technological innovations of high capitalism. Instead of organic community, they represent the living, breathing "social hieroglyphic" of the commodity form described by Karl Marx.[12]

The form of community espoused by Allerhand in describing the proletarian mass dance seems to stand in sharp contrast to Kracauer's take on the Tiller Girls, as well as the dominant, contemporaneous performance aesthetics of the Soviet Union and wider communist movement that sought to re-purpose Taylorism against its capitalist origins. Most notably, Proletkult poet and leading Soviet Taylorist, Alexei K. Gastev valorised these ideas as the founder and director of the Central Institute of Labour in Moscow in 1920. Within the early Soviet Union, the influence of Taylorism also crept into acting and dance with Vsevelod Meyerhold developing biomechanics as a form of acting that dovetailed with Gastev's analysis of how efficiency could be improved through studying the mechanics of labouring. As Rose Whyman explains, the appeal of Taylorism within the Soviet Union was founded on the notion that the "system" must come above individuals, thus forming an attempt to supplant the abstractions of capital with a technocratic system that could synchronise the

11 Kracauer, op. cit.

12 Karl Marx, trans. Ben Fowkes, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, p.164. As Mark Franko has emphasised, the Tiller Girl herself as a worker reliant on selling her labour-power was also *actually* commodified. See Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement and Identity in the 1930s*, Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002, p.33.

proletariat.[13] In contrast, for Allerhand, Segal and Hurst, the proletarian mass dancer was emphatically not a Taylorist "link in a chain" or "a cog in a machine" but "a very alive, very productive cell within a body".[14] This pits the organic qualities of the proletarian mass dance—where as Graff notes, the movements would often "prime" the dancer-worker for strike action—against the mechanics of industrial capitalism.

The women in the dance groups discussed so far were primarily Jewish, first generation immigrants that had become involved in those groups through their employment within the garment industry. Production within that industry in the 1930s was characterised by waged factory labour as well as piecework at home, sweated labour, contracting and sub-contracting that was often seasonal and based on intense periods of labour to increase output.[15] Despite their location within an "industrial union" then, Allerhand and the members of the NTWIUDG would have likely encountered the supposedly "pre-capitalist" working conditions of piecework at home, meaning their invocation of an organic community through collective dancing can be read as an attempt to produce what Ernst Bloch might describe as a "revolutionary non-simultaneity" out of the "objective" non-simultaneous contradictions of their lives.

13 Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.223-226.

14 Allerhand, op. cit.

15 Jennifer Gugliemo, "Italian Women's Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s-1940s" in Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta (eds.) *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Women* Around the World, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, pp.253-254.

Ernst Bloch's theory of non-simultaneity (Ungleichzeitigkeit) was initially developed in 1932 to analyse the rise of German fascism, with its rhetoric of blood and soil, as well as to imagine its overthrow, posited as communist. Later published in his 1935 book, *Heritage of our Times*, Bloch sought to distinguish how non-simultaneous contradictions could be related to a genuinely revolutionary struggle, rather than consigned to the forms of nationalist nostalgia that characterised National Socialism. For Bloch, revolutionary non-simultaneity is crucially not anachronism or nostalgia, as he insists that any valorisation of the past over the present depends on the false notion that the past is dead. Instead, he points towards where congealed forms of earlier society, unsubsumed by capital and contradictory to our present, can conjure up "sentimentally or romantically, that wholeness and liveliness from which communism draws genuine material against alienation." [16] The project for making this argument was one tied to the belief that the left could work with the "objective" contradictions of capital in order to produce "subjective" experiences that might lead to drastically different political conclusions than National Socialism. Bloch came to this view through a critique of National Socialism, but also through seeing "communist language" as "totally contemporaneous and precisely orientated to the most advanced economy", aspects that he viewed as difficult for "non-synchronous" people to understand, meaning National Socialism had more successfully captured their "subjective" experience of non-simultaneous contradictions. [17]

Bloch's project was largely a utopian one, but here his writing

16 Ernst Bloch (trans. By Neville and Stephen Plaice), *Heritage of our Times* (1935) Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p.112.

17 Ibid., p.105.

seems to have taken a kind of practical, or strategic turn, where he wants to seriously consider how the left can adequately meet the forms of discourse mobilised by the right. This produces a series of problems, where we have to try and understand how much his proposal of a "revolutionary non-simultaneity" can truly exist as neither anachronistic nor nostalgic, and even more importantly, how this non-simultaneity could be operative for a working class that is not nationally or ethnically homogenous. As much as his statement that "Not all people exist in the same Now"[18] rings true, we must also countenance that not all people experience non-simultaneity as the manifestation of the same "remnants". In other words, a truly revolutionary non-simultaneity would not only need to be multi-temporal, but characterised by a heterogeneous geographic and cultural imaginary, capable of negating the racist and sexist nationalism that inheres within the populist—and fascist—conjuring of non-simultaneity as a singular, unifying heritage, or as the characteristic which consigns certain individuals as necessarily "left behind" with indentured labour, piecework, the prison system, etc.[19]

18 Ibid., p.97.

19 Much of my recent thoughts on this have been prompted by discussions on the left post-Brexit. In particular, I am thinking of arguments that seek to situate the vote to leave as primarily a cry against immiseration, with racism as a secondary symptom. This view fails to see how completely these categories are integrated. Whilst this argument is deployed in order to stress that the left should not adopt a "patronising" metropolitan attitude towards a working class it does not understand, this view is then implicitly only invested in finding ways to appeal to the *white* working class, a view which seems to inherit problems from the history of the left producing populist strategies as an attempt at recruitment. This is the problem inherent in Bloch's concept—how do you have a revolutionary non-simultaneity that is not invested in a necessarily exclusionary idea of national heritage?

In this light, we might consider how non-simultaneity specifically reverberates with the dynamics of racial formation in the United States. David Roediger's analysis of the construction of a "popular sense of whiteness" in America poses this as dependent on a nationally diverse white working class reaching consensus around the notion "that blackness could be made permanently to embody the pre-industrial past that they scorned and missed."[20] The ideological positioning of African-Americans as pre-industrial operated as a racist means to primitivise individuals and communities, and thereby legitimise their subjugation. Roediger poses this as partially emerging through a popular understanding of slave labour as something which wage labourers affirmatively identified themselves against—as he states—"The existence of slavery (and increasingly of open Northern campaigns to degrade free Blacks) gave working Americans both a wretched touchstone against which to measure their fears of un-freedom and a friendly reminder that they were by comparison not so badly off."[21] The formation of whiteness was dependent on racialising the negative connotations of not having internalised capitalist work discipline. Slang such as coon, buck and mose "went from describing particular kinds of whites who had not internalized capitalist work discipline and whose places in the new world of wage labor were problematic, to stereotyping Blacks."[22] However, the imagining of black people as having supposedly eluded industrial discipline was simultaneously configured as attractive, with popular entertainment such as minstrelsy offering whites an opportunity

20 David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London and New York: Verso, 1999, p.97.

21 Ibid., p.49.

22 Ibid., p.100.

to act “wild” or irrational.[23]

The dynamics of how black people and women were consigned to pre-capitalist temporalities—whether through outmoded forms of work, or total exclusion from the capitalist workplace—had inevitably coalesced by the 1930s in the US. We can see this in Angela Davis’ description of how black female domestic workers were employed via open markets that congregated in the Bronx, akin to a “modern version of slavery’s auction block” throughout the 1930s and 1940s.[24] Notably, Davis hones in on a 1938 article in *The Nation* outlining the exploitation of these women, highlighting the headline of “Our Feudal Housewives” as descriptive of the overwhelmingly negative reality of the continued existence of supposedly “pre-capitalist” labour relations.[25] For women and African-Americans, their position within labour markets and society more broadly was marked by a pronounced non-simultaneity, meaning any invocation of the organic, or a lost heritage, would stand as a kind of homeopathic critique of their social positioning, an aspect we can also find in the case of Duke Ellington, who performed alongside Edith Segal and the African-American dancer Alison Burroughs at the Second Annual Inter-Racial Dance at the Rockland Palace in Harlem on Saturday March 22nd 1930.

At the Rockland Palace, Segal and Burroughs performed the dance *Black and White*, which they had premiered at the CPUSA organised International Women’s Day event at Lincoln Center Plaza earlier that month. Burroughs’ mother was the prominent Harlem communist organiser Williana Burroughs and her

23 Ibid., p.109.

24 Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* New York: Vintage Books, 1983, p.95.

25 Davis, Op Cit. p.95

father Charles Burroughs had directed W.E.B. DuBois' *The Star of Ethiopia* (1913), a pageant which presented a history of black people from prehistoric times, through ancient Egypt, various African kingdoms, to slavery, and then closed by detailing the struggles and achievements of African-Americans. Prior to becoming involved in the proletarian dance scene, Burroughs had received her training at the prestigious Dalcroze dance institute in Geneva.[26] In rehearsal photographs of *Black and White*, Segal and Burroughs' naked bodies are positioned in front of a backdrop painted with factory machinery; a chimney billowing smoke, a cog encircling Segal and Burroughs' arms, which are raised at right angles (Fig. 2 and 3). In Segal's choreography for *Black and White* the bodies of the dancers—playing workers—were positioned against such machinery, again raising the relation of the mechanical to the organic.

Black and White begins with a black and a white worker heading into the factory, their movements inflected with drudgery. The structure of the dance involves a progression from "primitive methods of work" towards advanced, assembly line production. Throughout, the dance is accompanied by a regular drumbeat, symbolising the temporality of the factory. A rattle, or piano interrupts, signalling the authoritarian call of the "boss", and at other points, a "positive call", which stands for communism.[27] The dancers gesture towards one another, but always fall apart before they can come together, seeking to demonstrate Segal's view (and that dominant in the CPUSA) that racism emerged from the "prejudices instilled [...] by their common exploiter: the cap-

26 Susan Manning *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p.74.

27 Edith Segal, "Mayday Script" in *New Dance*, March 1935, p.19.

fig. 2

fig. 3

italist class."[28] As the "speed up" process of the belt begins, the white worker falls and the black worker also falls at the end of this phase. Both dancers then try to rise without looking at each

28 Ibid.

other and fall again before rising to their knees and gazing at each other's fists as if readying to strike each other. They pause, a "disruptive voice" (the rattle representing the boss again) rings out and they strike each other, fall again and look down at their own fists. The two workers return to the belt, repeat the movement based on assembly-line work, speeding up, and looking at their own hands "wonderingly". Then the rattle rings out a "positive" call (the call of communism), and they try to come together whilst looking at their own fists. They clasp hands, conveying a "feeling of tremendous difficulty in rising with clasped hands, from kneeling to standing position".[29] The sequence ends with a call to other workers, and each dancer walking diagonally with arms outstretched. As Segal wrote in *New Dance* "the enemy, the exploiting class, is not shown but felt through the quality of work movements, which are forced, inhuman, mechanized".[30] Critic Deborah Jowitt's review of the 1984 re-staging of *Black and White* with Serge St Juste and Gary Onsum at PS1 in New York City described how initially the two workers maintain separate kinespheres, coming together and merging at the point at which the "positive" call rings out (the voice of communism).[31]

The representation of black and white unity in *Black and White* is strongly tied with the CPUSA's efforts during the Third Period to gain more African-American members, through mobilising

29 Score for *Black and White* in the Edith Segal papers (Box 2), Dance Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

30 Edith Segal, "Mayday Script", op. cit., p.19.

31 Deborah Jowitt, "Dance: Frontline", *Village Voice*, 10 July 1984, p.71. Kinesphere is a concept drawn from Rudolf Laban and simply means the sphere around the body, the periphery of which can be reached by the dancer extending their limbs. See Rudolf Laban, *Choreutics*, London: Macdonald and Evans, 1966, p.10.

that group as an oppressed national minority, a drive that was pushed by the Comintern and would ultimately gain pace during the Popular Front, after 1935. The first steps in 1928 involved the African-American communist Harry Haywood authoring the "Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the U.S.", which proposed self-determination for African-Americans across America's "black belt". Haywood was General Secretary for the Communist League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), and spent four and a half years studying in Moscow. However, the proposal of "black belt" secession was sharply criticised by many African-American communists, and the NAACP derided this resolution as another form of segregation.[32] Another recruitment tactic pursued by the CPUSA during the Third Period involved attempts to forcefully eradicate white chauvinism within their own ranks through trials in "workers courts". If found guilty of white chauvinism, CP members were expelled from the party and "sentenced" to actively join the fight against white supremacy if they wished to re-join. Although these trials were intended to publicly flush out racist members and thus improve the status of the CPUSA amongst African-Americans, Harvey Klehr argues that they made the Party seem like a "hotbed of fascists" due to the frequency of the trials.[33] This echoes comments by the Japanese communist Sen Katayama, who suggested that factionalism within the deeply sectarian Third Period was to blame for the frequent "criminal neglect" of African-American issues within the CPUSA during the late 1920s and early 1930s, where schisms between CPUSA figures, including James Cannon, William Z. Foster, Jay Lovestone and Benjamin Gitlow, frequently featured

32 Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*, New York: Basic Books Inc. 1984, pp.326-7.

33 Ibid., pp.327-9.

accusations of ignoring the "Negro question" from all sides.[34] From 1930 onwards however, the numbers of African-Americans in and around the CPUSA increased significantly, and the performance of *Black and White* at the Interracial Ball is exemplary of the party's significant work against white supremacy within an extraordinarily racist climate.[35] *Black and White* should be set within this context and understood as an index of CPUSA debates about race and labour. Yet, in its social character and setting within the Interracial Ball, it exceeded the orthodoxy that Party disputes sought to enforce.

The performance at the Rockland Palace Interracial Dance was a part of an evening of entertainment chaired by Joseph Brodsky of the International Labor Defence. William Z. Foster, one of the three-person secretariat of the CPUSA in 1930, gave a speech, as did Herbert Newton, a prominent African-American organiser and staff member of the Harlem Communist paper, *The Liberator*. However, the main portion of the night's entertainment and surely the biggest draw was the performance by Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. On the closing of their set, Segal played the piano as the 1600 attendees joined in a recital of *The Interna-*

34 For a comprehensive overview of how the CPUSA responded to the "negro question" during the Third Period see Jacob Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism 1919-1929*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014, pp.253-4.

35 By 1931, a quarter of the Party members in Chicago were African-American. However, this growth was not restricted to urban areas as Robin Kelley's study of Alabama sharecroppers during the Depression aptly demonstrates. See Zumoff, p.362 and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. Another definitive turning point for the position of African-Americans within the party came with James Ford running as Vice President in the presidential campaigns of 1932, 1936 and 1940.

tionale. The evening's entertainment continued with Segal and Burroughs' performance of *Black and White* and concluded with speeches from Brodsky, Foster and Newton.[36]

In terms of Duke Ellington's role and the cultural position of jazz during this period, it is worth noting that during the early years of the 1930s, big band jazz remained a mostly black activity. As Lewis Erenberg writes, it was only later in the 1930s that jazz would move from the margins to the centre of American popular culture, a development associated with the whitening of the genre though prominent swing players and bandleaders such as Benny Goodman and Paul Whiteman.[37] Ellington himself described this process in 1939, noting prominent events such as Goodman's performance with the Budapest String Quartet. While he does not disparage individual musicians, he clarifies that their activities do not concern him, or his group "personally". Instead, he explains that "Our music is always intended to be definitely and purely racial. We try to complete a cycle."[38] As Ellington described of *Tone Parallel to Harlem*, this cycle involved weaving "a musical thread which runs parallel to the history of the American Negro."[39]

This idea of a cycle is grounded in the possibilities of reconstruct-

36 Manning, op. cit., p.72 and Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1983, p.36.

37 Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

38 Ellington, "On Swing and its Critics", Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. p.135.

39 Helen Oakley (Dance) in *Downbeat* (1943). Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.156.

ing an African tradition of musical forms such as call and response, improvisation, and polyrhythm, a quest that like Dubois' *The Star of Ethiopia*, was embedded in the necessity of invoking a history that predated slavery—or to use a Blochian phrase, on liberating "the still possible future" from the past. For Ellington, adherence to these musical forms contributed to a dynamic collaboration between bandleader and players, and as Ellington's trumpeter Cootie Williams noted, "everyone in the band would pitch in and help write songs", a statement which relates to Segal's affirmation of collective organisation within the NTWIUDG.[40] The organicism of Ellington's sound and practice within the band ("completing a cycle") was grounded in appeals to the universal; as he described in a 1930 interview, the same year as his performance at the Interracial Ball, "I am not playing jazz. I am trying to play the natural feelings of a people."[41]

Fred Moten describes the importance of Ellington's "people" as denoting an eruptive, lyrical universalism:

> This influence of my people to which Ellington refers, in what it hopes for (a genuinely new universal) and in what it disrupts (that which has heretofore been given as the universal) is the sound of love. But this drive of and for "my people"—who are, for Ellington and according to Ellington, "the people"—is complicated; it continually erupts out of its own categorization… .[42]

40 Erenberg, op. cit. p.9.

41 Florence Zunser interview with Duke Ellington in the *New York Evening Graphic*, 1930. Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.45

42 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.26.

As Moten describes, the eruptive quality within Ellington can be understood as the disruption of a dominant universal. The emphasis Moten places on the relationship between the universal and the "sound of love" moves beyond Ellington's own description of his music as being a "real reflector" of the nation's feelings, and towards the (re)production of feeling—a new kind of "universal"—that I think is also captured in Segal's hopes that in *Black and White* "the enemy, the exploiting class, is not shown but felt."[43] Thinking about the place of this emphasis on feeling at the Interracial Ball, we could also consider Ellington's 1930 description of the effect his Orchestra had, saying that "You only have to watch a dance floor full of dancing couples to realize that music is the most vital thing in swaying the emotions of a multitude."[44] However, rather than the relationship between music and dance standing solely as emotional manipulation, Ellington would stress just a year later that "When we dance it is not a mere diversion or social accomplishment".[45]

Ellington's performance and Segal and Burroughs' *Black and White* as both comprised by appeals to universalism and "natural feeling" must be read in relation to the other aspects of the Interracial Ball. The fact Segal and Burroughs performed after Duke Ellington and the singing of the Internationale but crucially before the political speeches, means their performance of conflict and reconciliation set within the space of production (the factory) acted as the meeting point between the social and the political during the process of the evening, or between the "totally syn-

43 Segal, "Mayday Script", p.19

44 Zunser interview with Ellington, p.45.

45 Duke Ellington, "The Duke Steps Out", *Rhythm*, 1931. Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

chronous" "language of communism" and the non-synchronous contradictions which had surely led many of the dancers and musicians to the ball. The experience of singing the Internationale and witnessing Segal and Burroughs dance—after dancing to Duke Ellington (never a "mere diversion")—laid the ground for the speeches and *Black and White* thus served as a kind of mediating point between the heterodox, eruptive politics of the social, and the orthodoxy of Party politics.

Vitally, Segal and Burroughs' dance at the Interracial Ball transplanted the lived politics of the interracial dance back into the industrial workplace, declaring that black and white bodies could only dance together against their "forced, inhuman, mechanized" work once they stood together, opposed to capital. In order to illustrate this, the body was figured in *Black and White* as against industrial machinery and posited as espousing a similar form of organic universalism that had been conjured earlier in the evening by Ellington's orchestra. In the rehearsal photographs for *Black and White*, Burroughs and Segal's nude bodies are intertwined in poses that mimic mechanised labour. The softness of their bodies clashes with the factory painted on the backdrop, posing them, and all the dancers at the Rockland Palace as not links in chains, or cogs in machinery, but rather akin to Allerhand's description of the proletarian dancer as "a very alive, very productive cell within a body". That their bodies were female and black and white also inflects this dance of breaking away from machinery with anti-industrial sentiment alongside its obviously anti-capitalist overtures. Although the romantic quality of these connotations exist as the flipside to a negative reality, I believe *Black and White* within the Rockland Palace dance, coupled with Ellington's "sound of love", gestures towards an excessive kind of non-simultaneity from which we can draw genuine material against alienation.