



Between Anti-Communism and Chinese Exclusion: Sylvia Si-lan Chen and Chinese Diaspora Dance in the U.S. During the Cold War

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Centuries of anti-Asian discrimination in U.S. immigration policy, politicized targeting of Asian Americans and stripping them of their rights, and other exclusionary and racist practices need to be understood as part of how U.S. dance history itself was constructed.

When Sylvia Chen debuted as a professional concert dancer in Moscow in the late 1920s, the crowds adored her. In 1929, a writer for *United Press* recounted, “Not for many years has this famous theatre witnessed such enthusiastic ovations for a new and unknown artist. Small, pretty, and remarkably rhythmic, Miss Chen captured the audience as soon as she appeared and thereafter monopolized attention.”¹ On Chen’s dance style, the writer continued, “Miss Chen’s talent seems to lie in the direction of syncopated dancing—a blending of jazz rhythms with the free interpretive movements of the Duncan school. It constitutes a strong contrast to the formal ballet dancing for which Russia is famous... Russian critics, as well as foreigners who attended this concert, forecast a brilliant career for her.”² [FIG. 13.1]

Through the early and mid-1930s, Chen’s career indeed boomed—she developed a large repertoire of original choreography and toured successfully in the Soviet Union and Scandinavia. Reflecting her artistic environment, Chen produced dances with strong political themes. In 1932, for example, a Moscow reviewer described one of Chen’s recent works, a choreography that critiqued the racist practice of lynching in the United States: “‘The American Negro’ (a protest) was Sylvia Chen in her new development, that of a socially conscious artist. She danced before the silhouette of a gallows tree, from which swung the body of a murdered Negro. Every gesture was a cry against the brutal oppression of the Negro.”³ Chen had a special talent for using comedy and satire to address heavy themes in her choreography. This is reflected, for example, in the same author’s description of Chen’s series of dances titled *Today*, in which “[h]er caricature of the greedy French imperialists was particularly astute.”⁴ A writer for *Soviet Travel* in 1934 also noted this as a strength of Chen’s work: “She is the most joyous of the Moscow dancers, with a keen sense of humour that she turns to good account in her political caricature dances on ‘The Militarist’, ‘Geneva’ or ‘The Fascist’.”⁵

Fig. 13.1. Sylvia Si-lan Chen performing solo dance. Photo likely taken in Moscow, 1929–1936. Courtesy of Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers, Tamiment Library, NYU

Chen showed enormous breadth in the range of material treated in her work. As Elizabeth Sine has argued, Chen paid particular attention to minoritized communities and women, and “her dances consistently conveyed a brand of anti-imperialism that was imbued with opposition to white supremacy and patriarchy.”⁶ Transnational in her choice of subjects, Chen “developed a wide-ranging repertoire that foregrounded the battles of insurgent populations across the globe.”⁷ Chen’s philosophy of anti-racism was informed by multiple sources, one of which was conversations with African American writer Langston Hughes.⁸ Hughes travelled to the U.S.S.R. in the early 1930s, and the two had a romantic relationship that lasted for several years.⁹ Reviewing her recital at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1933, Hughes recounted,

Miss Chen’s program consisted of the folk dances of various darker minority groups in the Soviet Union, the Uzbeks, the Tiurks (sic), and others. She also did a series of humorous satires on various Soviet types, including the young Komsomol girl, and the bourgeoisie woman, left over from the old regime. The most powerful of her dance compositions was an interpretation of the spirit of revolt now sweeping China—the awakening of the yellow peoples against the foreign imperialists who have robbed and persecuted them so long.¹⁰

Chen’s Uzbek and Turkic national dances described by Hughes above, which were sometimes mistaken as light entertainment, were deeply political. As explained by the writer for *Soviet Travel* cited above, these dances conveyed the “theme of the liberation of the Eastern peoples” and were inspired by her personal visits to these places.¹¹ Through their focus on modern female figures, these dances also addressed women’s liberation, an important concern in Chen’s contributions to revolutionary modernism.¹² [FIG. 13.2]

Even when she toured outside the Soviet Union, Chen maintained the explicitly leftist political messages in her choreography. Alongside racial and gender concerns, her works also addressed themes of economic exploitation and class inequality. This is shown, for example, in a review published in Oslo’s *Arbeideren* (“The Worker”), written most likely during one of her two tours in Norway in 1934 and 1936. Describing Chen’s 1933 series *Shanghai Sketches*, which depicted life in contemporary China, the author writes,

Sylvia Chen opened her programme with three small Chinese sketches. Already in the first of these ‘The Empty Bowl’, she showed that she had sought the motives for her compositions in other surroundings than those generally chosen by dancers. In sketch No. 2, ‘The Rickshaw Coolie’, this was even more accentuated. The little tiny figure that runs on the stage drawing an invisible rickshaw, the speed increasing until the coolie overstraining his poor broken body collapses.¹³

Chen’s identification with communism was at times manifested in clear visual symbols in her choreography. The Oslo author goes on,

The audience applauded wildly, but I wonder if they quite understood, and when the one word ‘Soviet-China’ was announced, the big bourgeoisie in the orchestra stalls were extremely startled. When Sylvia Chen danced against a background of red swinging the little red flag on the large stick, which also could do service as a spear, then the contrast was so striking between this dance and the two former dances that no one could be in doubt as to the basic motive of these series.¹⁴

The descriptions above offer a brief introduction to Sylvia Si-lan Chen, a brilliant artist whose contributions to the development of U.S. modern dance were significant yet remain largely obscured in standard narratives of U.S. dance history. Part of Chen’s importance was her unusually transnational reach. As Mark Franko explains, Chen was “the only radical dancer during the 1930s to have worked consistently both in the Soviet Union and the

Fig. 13.2. Sylvia Si-lan Chen performing solo dance c. 1937. *Ting Ling* premiered in 1935 as a tribute to the Chinese leftist female writer Ding Ling. Photograph Barbara Morgan. Barbara and Willard Morgan photographs and papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. Courtesy of Jay and Si-lan Chen Leyda Papers, Tamiment Library, NYU



United States."¹⁵ Additionally, as Yuh-Jen Lu has identified, Chen was the first prominent Chinese diasporic modern dancer in U.S. dance history.¹⁶ Thus, as Lu demonstrates, Chen is a critical figure for understanding the historical development of Asian American dance, as well as representations of China in U.S. performance. Chen was an important figure in early twentieth-century global leftist dance modernism and a pioneer of politically conscious modern dances on Soviet, European, Chinese, African American, Caribbean, and Central Asian themes. In addition to concert dance, Chen choreographed and performed for films in both the Soviet Union and Hollywood. She also performed in Mexico, the Caribbean, and China. With a career that spanned five decades and three continents, Chen left a deep impact on dance history in the U.S. and elsewhere. Caught at the intersection of anti-communism and Chinese Exclusion, Chen's strengths also became liabilities. As I discuss below, Chen's presence and absence in U.S. modern dance history speak to larger problems of race, citizenship, and Cold War politics at the heart of U.S. modern dance. [FIG. 13.3]

After launching her professional dance career in the Soviet Union from 1928 to 1936, Chen married an American and emigrated to the U.S. in 1937. Despite serious immigration problems, discussed further below, it was in the U.S. that she spent the majority of her adult life. After her American debut at the Windsor Theatre in New York City in January 1938, Chen performed in programs with dancers Anna Sokolow, Dorothy Bird, Miriam Blecher, Merle Hirsh, Saki, Lily Mehlman, Archie Savage, Olga Cantu, Doris Niles, as well as African American pianist William Duncan Allen, Brazilian folk singer Olga Coelho, Spanish Flamenco artists Antonio and Luisa Triana, African American activist Eslanda Robeson, and others.¹⁷ In 1937, Japanese invasions of China escalated into a large-scale war, and Chen toured the U.S. in 1938–39 raising funds to support the Chinese war effort. According to Yuh-Jen Lu, "Si-lan Chen's recital program of thirteen dances performed thirty-two concerts during a nation-wide tour for two months," bringing Chen's dance works to diverse audiences across the U.S.¹⁸ An extant draft schedule lists stops in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Washington, D.C., and Maryland.¹⁹ Chen also attained recognition in the U.S. modern dance community. Chen was listed in a committee of sponsors of the Theater Arts Committee dance division formed in 1938, which was chaired by Jane Dudley and included Sophie Maslow, George Backman, Henrietta Greenhood, and Bessie Shoenberg. According to a Los Angeles newspaper, the committee of sponsors included "Martha Graham, Sai Ishoki (sic), Si-Lan Chen, José Limón, Charles Weidman, Muriel Stuart, Dorothy Fox, and Doris Humphrey."²⁰ In addition to her concerts in the U.S., Chen also performed in Mexico City and Bermuda during the late 1930s and early 1940s, as discussed further below. She also directed dances for and appeared in major Hollywood films, including *Keys to the Kingdom* (1944), *Anna and the King of Siam* (1946), and *Slave Girl* (1947).²¹

Despite Chen's unquestioned talent as a dancer and choreographer and her many significant and well documented contributions to the U.S. dance field, Chen has only recently been rediscovered by scholars as an important figure in U.S. and Asian American dance history. In 2002, Taiwan dance scholar Yuh-Jen Lu completed pathbreaking research on Chen by devoting an entire chapter to this forgotten artist in her doctoral dissertation "Wrestling with the Angels: Choreographing Chinese Diaspora in the United States."²² Lu completed this research in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University under the guidance of committee members Barbara Browning, Uttara Coorlawala, André Lepecki,

Fred Moten, and José Muñoz. Lucid, trenchant, and extraordinarily well-researched, Lu's dissertation remains the most in-depth English-language study of Chinese diaspora dance in the U.S. before the 1990s. Mark Franko further contributed to the uncovering of Chen's legacy when he included her as an important case study in his book *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s*, published the same year as Lu's dissertation. Scholars Harvey R. Neptune, S. Ani Mukherji, and Elizabeth E. Sine later made significant investigations into Chen's contributions to Trinidadian dance, Soviet modern dance, and choreographies of anticolonial internationalism.²³ Most recently, in her book *Arise Africa, Roar China: Black and Chinese Citizens of the World in the Twentieth Century* published in 2021, Yunxiang Gao has analyzed Chen's role in Sino-African American relations.²⁴ I have also investigated Chen's contributions to dance history in China in my 2018 book and a short 2021 article "Convergent Transnationalisms: Leftist Dance Networks in Cold War East Asia."²⁵ In 1984, Chen published an extraordinary 317-page autobiography *Footnote to History*, edited by Sally Banes, whose title reflects Chen's sense of marginalization.²⁶ In 2008, Chen's sister-in-law, Yuan-tsung Chen, published a history of the Chen family that is also extremely valuable for situating Chen's life within modern Chinese politics.²⁷ Reflecting this growing interest in Chen, in 2021 *The York Times* published "Overlooked No More: Si-lan Chen, Whose Dances Encompassed Worlds" as part of "a series of obituaries about remarkable people whose deaths, beginning in 1851, went unreported in *The Times*."²⁸ This further helped to put Chen on the map of popular memory and communicated important aspects of Chen's biography and contributions for a general audience.

One hopes that all of these efforts, including the present exhibition, will aid in the important ongoing project of rewriting "U.S. dance history" to make it better reflect the actual history of dance in the U.S. As Yutian Wong reflects in her writing on Ito Michio, however, accomplishing such a task is often difficult, especially for Asian American artists:

Since his death in 1961, Ito has been the subject of multiple retrospectives, all with an eye towards integrating Ito 'the forgotten pioneer' into the canon of early twentieth-century U.S. modern dance history. Despite the concerted efforts of Satoru Shimazaki in 1979, Repertory Dance Theater in 1991, Seattle's Chamber Dance Company in 2001, and Dana Tai Soon Burgess in 1996 and 2005, Ito continues to remain the obscure and 'all-but forgotten' pioneer of early American modern dance [...].²⁹

One reason for Ito's continued non-integration into U.S. dance history, Wong argues, is that the conceptualization of him as an "international artist" obscures the pivotal issues of Asian American history that led to Ito's exclusion from the U.S. to begin with. Specifically, Ito's subjection to the effects of U.S. anti-Asian immigration policy, as well as his arrest, internment, and deportation to Japan during the U.S. government's violent and racist targeting of Japanese Americans during the second world war would all have to be acknowledged as fundamental components of U.S. history and the history of U.S. dance. For Ito to be fully recognized as part of the narrative of U.S. modern dance history, in other words, requires changing the narrative to recognize that these aspects of his biography are not, as Wong writes, "an anomalous political quirk with little bearing on the rest of the modern dance world of the 1940s."³⁰ Centuries of anti-Asian discrimination in U.S. immigration policy, politicized targeting of Asian Americans and stripping them of their rights, and other exclusionary and racist practices need to be understood as part of how U.S. dance history itself was constructed.



The inclusion of Sylvia Si-lan Chen into the history of U.S. dance similarly requires incorporating histories of Asian American exclusion into our understanding of U.S. modern dance. For Chen, the two salient issues are Chinese Exclusion and anti-communism. The latter is especially sensitive for modern dance history because U.S. modern dance itself came to be associated with the erasure of radicalism and the embrace of bourgeois politics. Addressing this issue, Wong writes,

Foulkes comes closest to articulating the relationship between the survival of 'bourgeois modern dance' and collaborations with the U.S. state department, but like speculation around Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban's collaboration with the Third Reich, making a direct connection between 'bourgeois modern dancers' and U.S. wartime policies would be too embarrassing and considered extreme [...].³¹

In addition to the issues of Chinese Exclusion, anti-China discrimination, and anti-Asian racism more generally, all of which are relevant in Chen's case, Chen's story further brings us back to this additional sensitive issue of U.S. modern dance history—the history of U.S. modern dance's relationship to anti-communism and the erasure of revolutionary dance from canonical understandings of U.S. dance history and aesthetics. In Chen's life and career in the U.S., the two were fundamentally intertwined.

The dancer known in the United States as Si-lan Chen Leyda was born Sylvia Achem-Chen in Trinidad, West Indies in 1905 and died in Contra Costa, California in 1996.³² Although she often presented herself during her early career in the U.S. as "Chinese" (a decision she later said she regretted)—even changing her stage name from Sylvia to Si-lan to reinforce this public identity—Chen was in fact Afro-Asian.³³ Her father Eugene Chen (陈友仁, 1878–1944) was a prominent Trinidadian lawyer of second-generation Chinese descent and her mother Alphonsine Agatha Ganteaume (?–1926) was a progressive Trinidadian socialite born to a formerly enslaved Creole woman and the wealthy French estate owner for whom she worked.³⁴ In her 1984 memoir, dedicated to Ganteaume's memory, Chen describes her various ancestors' arrivals in Trinidad:

It took a desperate love of life to survive the stinking holds of the slave ships. This is how my remote African ancestor arrived in his American home. Another ancestor came in a more elegant vessel. Admiral Ganteaume sought and found refuge in the West Indies when the families of Napoleon's supporters were forced to flee France. In China, Chen Kan-chuan, a native of Shunde xian [Shunde xian], Kwang-tung [Guangdong] province, fought in the army of the Taiping rebels and was forced to flee to the West Indies when a revolt failed. Making his living as a barber, and known as A-kan, he went first to Jamaica and then to Trinidad where he settled in the southern part of the island.³⁵

The peripatetic lives of Chen's ancestors continued with her own. As a well-to-do child growing up in a British colony, she was sent to London in 1912 for schooling. After Chen's mother died of cancer in 1926, Chen and her siblings travelled to China, where her father was working in the revolutionary wing of the Chinese Nationalist government. In 1927, a violent purge of leftists by Nationalist Party leader Chiang Kaishek (later the leader of Taiwan and a U.S. ally during the Cold War) drove the Chen children to relocate to Moscow while their father went into exile in Paris.³⁶ Chen visited China again briefly in 1935. In 1936, amid Stalin's tightening policies on foreigners and artists in the Soviet Union, Chen left Moscow and relocated again, now with her husband the American student of Sergei Eisenstein, Jay Leyda, to the United States. Despite holding a British passport and being

Fig. 13.3: Sylvia Si-lan Chen performing solo dance *Shango* 1941. Dance based on local performance practices in Trinidad. Photograph by Barbara Morgan. Barbara and Willard Morgan photographs and papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. Courtesy of Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers, Tamiment Library, NYU

the wife of an American citizen, Chen was refused a U.S. visa citing the Chinese Exclusion Act. Historian Yunxiang Gao writes, "[C]lassifying her instead by the most restrictive Chinese heritage, although she had lived in China for only a few months, Si-lan was deemed 'an alien ineligible to citizenship' ... [and] finally granted a visa ... to 'visit' her husband for six months."³⁷

From 1936 to 1959, Chen made a career in the United States despite extreme hardships caused by her unstable visa status, which both denied her the right to work legally in the U.S. and required her to constantly leave the country and reapply for a new visa each time she re-entered. Chen made visits to Mexico City, Trinidad, and Bermuda during the late 1930s and 1940s as part of this process.³⁸ In addition to the Chinese Exclusion Act, Chen also fell prey to U.S. anti-communism. Chen finally received her U.S. Permanent Residency in 1946, thanks to the easing of Chinese Exclusion Act policy during the Pacific War, specifically for Chinese wives of U.S. citizens.³⁹ However, because of increasing anti-leftist sentiments in the U.S., Chen experienced persistent harassment and surveillance by the FBI, the CIA, and agents of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in the U.S.⁴⁰ As Lu explains, "she was branded a 'red-hot radical' and pro-communist dancer-actress," and her family ties in China, the Soviet Union, and Hong Kong also made her vulnerable.⁴¹ Lu writes, "With some spillover of enmity against Communist China onto Chinese Americans, some 5,000 foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. were prohibited from making any remittances or writing letters to relatives in Mainland China. According to the Enemy Act of December 17, 1950, family connections might indicate disloyalty to the United States."⁴² With the rise of McCarthyism and the House Committee on Un-American Activities, attacks on Hollywood (where Chen and her husband were working since the early 1940s) and seizing of passports of U.S. citizens suspected of communism, Chen discontinued her application for U.S. citizenship in favor of retaining her British passport.⁴³

In 1951, the INS denied Chen's request for a re-entry visa to travel to Italy, France, and Scandinavian countries for an International Folk Dance Festival, citing as reason her alleged affiliation with the Communist Party.⁴⁴ Gao writes,

Persecution by the FBI and INS forced the Leydas into internal exile, roaming around the United States on the verge of homelessness. They moved ten times from Hollywood to New York City to Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1947 to 1951, under close observation by the FBI in cooperation with the U.S. Post Office. Adapting to such adverse settings, the couple continued to pursue their careers with determination. Since neither was able to obtain studio work anymore by 1950, they relocated to the East Coast and Leyda changed his profession to research in nineteenth-century American literature.⁴⁵

Lu notes that during this period, Chen diluted the political messages of her new choreographies. Nevertheless, her concerts received less attention from critics and the media, a shift Lu attributes to the anticommunist persecution: "Most likely, McCarthy's Red Terror to fight against every Chinese in the U.S. cast a chilling effect in silencing the dance world and the press."⁴⁶ According to Lu, Chen's mixed heritage also became a liability in the new climate:

When, later, 'the Chinese problem' loomed larger in the minds of the U.S. public, cultural productions became measured even more by their anthropological 'authenticity'; as forms of symbolic containment and evidence of political prudence, these double tactics attempted to both fulfill and reverse the escalating social tensions through the exposure of ethnic visibility and cultural

understanding. By her mixed heritage, Chen's racial profile did not match this 'ethnic authenticity' and thus had no voice of her people.⁴⁷

Eventually, political persecution drove Chen and her husband to leave the U.S. and take refuge abroad, as it did for many other leftist artists and political activists of the period. Based on research using archived FBI documents, I have argued:

Both Chen and her husband Leyda, who was at one time a member of the U.S. Communist Party, were closely tracked by the FBI and were the subject of Security Index cards by early 1951. In May of 1955, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a warrant for Chen's arrest and impending deportation, along with other noncitizens on the Security Index. This was likely one impetus for her and Leyda's departure from the U.S. in 1958, traveling initially to Paris, then the Soviet Union, and finally China.⁴⁸

Chen was initially welcomed in Beijing as a "patriotic Overseas Chinese."⁴⁹ However, she did not integrate well into the Chinese dance system, which by the time she arrived in 1959 had already rejected U.S. modern dance as politically backward and was heavily invested in the construction of new national dance forms that could distinguish it from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ Additionally, as explained above, by this time Chen's own aesthetic style had also shifted away from her more radical earlier work. In Lu's words, it had become "more abstract and formal" and "she no longer seemed to care if her dances were bereft of identity or adrift as 'pure art' in the universe."⁵¹ In other words, Chen's work had come more to reflect the ideals of mainstream modern dance as it was practiced in the post-war U.S. When Chen did make a political statement with her dances in China, such as in a work critiquing the Korean War, it went against what was considered correct ideology.⁵² Even Chen's newly created choreography intended to reflect life in Beijing was "criticized as too 'Western'."⁵³

Chen and Leyda eventually made their way back to the United States but only after further travel. Lu writes, "Eventually Chen suffered a nervous breakdown and left China for good in 1964 [...] After stopovers of (sic) East Berlin, Moscow, Montreal, and elsewhere, she ultimately returned to the U.S. in 1977."⁵⁴ According to Gao,

Si-lan started to carry a Trinidad and Tobago passport after the new nation gained independence in 1962. They returned to the United States when Leyda took a job as a teaching fellow at the Ezra Stiles College of Yale University from 1969 to 1970, during which Si-lan's application for a reentry permit to visit her family abroad was turned down. Leyda would recall, 'This was refused with such hints of deportation (and no effective support from the university) that we both had nervous breakdowns.' The Leydas were forced to move to Toronto, where he worked as an adjunct professor of Fine Arts and she taught dance at York University, before he was recruited as Gottesman Professor of Cinema Studies of the School of Arts at New York University in 1974.⁵⁵

Once again, despite "persistent" efforts by NYU's lawyer, Chen was again found ineligible for an immigrant visa to join Leyda in the U.S., "based upon her past affiliation with Communist front organizations."⁵⁶ After waiting in Canada for months and much further effort, Chen finally reunited with Leyda in the U.S. in 1977.⁵⁷ By this time, however, in Lu's words, "Si-lan Chen's reputation as a modern Chinese dancer-choreographer shrunk to the vanishing point."⁵⁸

Remembering Sylvia Si-lan Chen is important to gain a fuller understanding of U.S. modern dance in the first half of the twentieth century. Part of this memory is the central role that Chinese Exclusion and anti-communism played in defining U.S. modern dance.

NOTES

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- 3 Milly Mitchell, "Sylvia Chen Dances: Shows Rare Miming Ability," January 17, 1932, Moscow, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 30, Folder 9.
- 4 Mitchell, "Sylvia Chen Dances."
- 5 J.C., "Soviet Travel."
- 6 Elizabeth E. Sine, "The Radical Vision of Si-lan Chen: The Politics of Dance in an Age of Global Crisis," *Small Axe* 50 (July 2016): 28–43, 37.
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- 8 Correspondence—Langston Hughes, 1933–46, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 30, Folder 4.
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- 11 J.C., "Soviet Travel," 1934, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 30, Folder 8.
- 12 Sine, "Radical Vision," Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 85–90.
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- 14 *Arbeideren*. For more on these tours and Chen's early career in Moscow, see Si-lan Chen Leyda, *Footnote to History* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1984), 91–231.
- 15 Franko, *Work*, 85–86.
- 16 Yuh-Jen Lu, "Wrestling with the Angels: Choreographing Chinese Diaspora in the United States (1930s–1990s)" (PhD diss., New York University, 2002); Yuh-Jen Lu, "Wrestling with Angels: From Yellow-Face Performance to Performing Yellow Power of Modern China," in *Dance, Identity and Integration: Tributes to the late Carl Wolz and Muriel Topaz*, ed. Congress on Research in Dance (Taiwan: Taipei National University of the Arts, 2004), 148–158.
- 17 Programs, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 30, Folder 5.
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- 19 China Aid Council "Tentative Schedule of Si-lan's Tour," Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 30, Folder 5.
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- 30 Wong, "Artistic Utopias," 149.
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- 32 British Passport, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 28, Folder 3; Yuan-tsung Chen, interview by Emily Wilcox, Hong Kong, April 26, 2019; Gao, *Arise*, 235.
- 33 Lu, "Choreographing," 94.
- 34 Chen, *Return*, 18–24.
- 35 Chen Leyda, *Footnote*, 1.
- 36 Chen, *Return*, 227–283.
- 37 Gao, *Arise*, 202–204. For detailed legal correspondence documenting Chen and Leyda's travails with U.S. immigration, see Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers and Photographs, 1913–1987, TAM.o83, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York, Box 29, Folder 5.
- 38 Gao, *Arise*, 204.
- 39 Lu, "Choreographing," 101.
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- 42 Lu, "Choreographing," 103–104.
- 43 Lu, "Choreographing," 105; Gao, *Arise*, 223.
- 44 Lu, "Choreographing," 106; Gao, *Arise*, 227–228.
- 45 Gao, *Arise*, 228.
- 46 Lu, "Choreographing," 107.
- 47 Lu, "Choreographing," 110.
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- 52 Lu, "Choreographing," 112.
- 53 Lu, "Choreographing," 113.
- 54 Lu, "Choreographing," 113.
- 55 Gao, *Arise*, 234.
- 56 Gao, 234.
- 57 Gao, 234; Lu, "Choreographing," 113.
- 58 Lu, 111.

Border Crossings

Exile and American Modern Dance

Ninotchka Bennahum

Rena Heinrich

The New York Public Library for the
Performing Arts, Lincoln Center

Museum of Art, Design & Architecture
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