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Queer Performance and Radical Possibilities: Bill Butler and the Post-Stonewall Roller Disco

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The preface of Bill Butler and Elin Schoen’s 1979 skating instruction manual, *Jammin’*, teems with encouragement, but offers one slight warning. Welcoming his first-time skaters, Butler tells the reader, “chances are, once you’ve roller-discoed, you won’t want to stop. You’ll want to stay on wheels. And there’s no reason why you shouldn’t, even if you’re not in a rink.”¹ With the tagline “[everything you need to know to get up and boogie down!],” *Jammin’* begins with “skating the rail”—a necessary means for first-timers to establish balance, appreciate the tempo of the rink, and learn to control the skates beneath them. Butler then goes on to describe couples skating, group skating, and dancing in place, each of which articulates a relationship to tempo and “the beat,” to the other individuals in the rink, and the contradictions of the rink itself. *Jammin’* therefore proposes a practice of emphatic improvisation that is decidedly nonlinear and centers an expressive practice. *Jammin’* also cites the logistics and pleasures associated with skating as a community. These logistics and pleasures include everything from “dealing with other people” to “how to become a disco dazzler in one minute flat.”² Butler tells us the secret of both is, simply put, to *relax*.

Yet, from “skating the rail” to “the sensational feeling that sometimes you just go completely Out,”³ how does roller-skating as sport manifest expressive practice? How does it accomplish these practices within a specifically queer locale? Moreover, what are the vocabularies that tell skaters and onlookers to do so? Although red-velvet rope rollerdromes do exist in Manhattan, roller disco communities in the 1970s and 1980s primarily gravitated to Brooklyn and similar semiurban geographies. As both sport and artistic practice, roller disco responds to a Black queer musical tradition, yet poses an athletically atemporal means to express endurance and technique. These means manifest in realms that allow for inclusion and sweeping experimentation. This analysis homes in on the figure of Bill Butler, a self and publicly acclaimed roller-skating virtuoso often considered the calling card of Empire Rollerdrome in the 1980s. It takes a critical look at the illustrated guidebook he coauthored with Elin Schoen in 1979, *Jammin’: Bill Butler’s Complete Guide to Roller Disco*, as primary evidence for a queer impetus to practice in and attend roller discos. Butler’s text presents a formula for reading queer and skating queer in roller disco and other resistive formations. In doing so, the instruction manual discreetly reveals several key methods to rupture homogeneity in

athletic and artistic production. These ruptures are achieved within the subtext of roller disco's history, but in this essay I specifically center jamming as a subliminally, but definitively, queer practice. This queer practice, of course, extends beyond the walls of the roller rink—much as Butler warns it will.

Modern roller-skating is a little over a century old and witnessed several aesthetic transitions throughout the twentieth century. Four-wheeled rink and street skating became a more formalized form of recreation in the US Northeast during the 1940s, attracting celebrities and athletes and earning its own degree of cultural trendiness.⁴ Butler writes that he began skating in Detroit around 1945 as an amateur (in his own words, a “general, run-of-the-mill, bust-your-butt-type skater”) where he practiced primarily on his own time and under his own direction.⁵ Around the same time, brothers Henry and Hector Abrami took ownership of the Empire Rollerdrome in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. Andy Thomas historicizes the now foreclosed rollerdrome in the mid-1940s as “nested between a row of gas stations and storefront churches, the Empire was originally frequented by the Eastern Europeans who were predominant in the area at the time.”⁶ However, as Brooklyn experienced a demographic shift, so too did the culture of the rollerdromes. Having been assigned to an Air Force station in Brooklyn in 1957, Butler frequented the Empire Rollerdrome where he noticed two key details: the rink primarily used organ music (as most did at the time), and the vast majority of the skaters were Black.

Based on his interviews with Butler, Thomas synthesizes the following transition at the Empire: Butler remembers, “When I got there, it was all organ music, nothing related to Black people and how we danced. So I brought my own music with me and asked Mr. [Henry] Abrami if he would play a number I had, ‘Night Train.’ The owner obliged and the Empire was to change forever as organ music was replaced by jazz and R&B.”⁷ Butler quickly assumed the role of mentor and skating instructor for many local skaters, teaching them not only how to maintain balance performing basic moves, but also how to infuse the practice of jamming into their own improvisations and routines.

Further historicizing the relationship between roller disco and both Blackness and queerness, roller disco would witness several other transitions during the ensuing decades. Indoor rinks, like the Empire Rollerdrome in Brooklyn, allowed the practice of roller disco to rise not only to prominence, but also as an underground performance. Post-Stonewall and into the 1970s, communities of primarily Black, queer, and other marginalized individuals began to thrive in these spaces. Prior to this, what were known as soul nights were the exclusive option for Black skaters to utilize many rinks in Chicago and New York specifically. This continued through the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The “soul nights” were venues in which endurance and expression were immediately vital politically and artistically.⁸ The intervention of the Stonewall Riots in 1969 pushed socially dissident politics toward more explicitly queer inclusion and practice. Likewise, it immensely contributed to the visibility and the legitimization of queer politics and the resistive formations that emerge from LGBTQ+ social, political, and community spaces.⁹

By the 1980s, Butler had established a somewhat legendary reputation in the rink. With a home at Empire Rollerdrome, he remains a Hollywood skating consultant, and author of *Jammin'* (though the book is rare enough to now be

considered a collector's item). Nevertheless, Butler has been an underrepresented athletic and artistic icon. A 2020 *New York Times* journalist cites several of his monikers: "Brother Bounce; Mr. Charisma; and, variously, the King, the Grandfather and the Godfather of roller disco."¹⁰ Further complicating this ambiguous persona, Cher's song "Hell on Wheels" (1979) is rumored to have been written about Butler as well. I want to be clear here that I am not reading explicitly LBTGQ+ activism or identity in Butler's life or politics. Rather, that upon reading *Jammin'*, I located an expressively queer vocabulary that I believe is useful to the politics of mobilization and may be applied toward any resistive formation based in pleasure, expression, and community.

The Brooklyn Library's 2019 exhibit on the Empire Rollerdrome—which changed its name to Empire Roller Disco in the 1970s and Empire Skate some years later, then closed in 2007—summarized the ethos of disco rinks as being that each "belongs to its skaters, DJs, floor guards, managers, and everyone else who was part of its dynamic community."¹¹ The rinks themselves are only structural spaces. Yet, communities that engage with an inclusively and dynamically queer practice of roller disco comprise the political edge of this radical practice, a practice that finds a home in the community spaces of the roller rink. The simplicity of roller-skating is deceptive, but the argument for a queer politic at the roller disco centers Black performance—specifically, Black performance through the lens of Malik Gaines's "radical act."¹² The radical nature of Black performance lies in the queerness of desire and potentiality. Desire and potentiality are manifest clearly and expressively in continuous practice. These masterful improvisations of roller disco "can be creative and playful . . . but it is also a political mode."¹³

According to Shane Vogel, the possibilities of desire are being held with "perverse regard"¹⁴ in the public eye. The bodies of Black and queer artists are marginalized by the mainstream, but the subculture of the discos allowed this more deviant practice to radicalize as an artistic and athletic expression. Such expression does not evidently preclude a legislative politics. It does, however, promote an aesthetic and practical queerness that can be similarly read as political. Although its legislative efficacy remains debatable, the place of roller disco in queer studies, while underdeveloped, remains encouragingly productive. I argue that the continued practice and communities of roller-skating present figurative, embodied, and formative lenses to radicalize, read queer, and rehearse a praxis that centers the possibilities of queer politics. In addition to the politics and performances associated with Butler, I argue that the performances of community in the rink extend into communities of artists—as well as troupes, leagues, teams, or clubs. Such communities cite queer collectives and create sites of leisure, pleasure, and expression.

Within these community venues, collaboration becomes necessary for the longevity and evolution of the practice. Roller disco can be an arena of style and improvisation, and therefore lends itself to a performative analysis as well. I emphasize the significance of queer styles and athletic performances, both in Butler's text and in the exemplary rink itself, through several lenses. The first is a structural argument, as Butler's instructions speak both to self-invigorations as well as to various critical responses to the rink itself. His instructions ultimately promote the development of skills that allow his practice to move beyond the rails of the rink.

The next is an argument of embodied temporality related to music and dance that cites a syncopated repetition inherent in the art of roller disco. Roller disco then becomes a lens through which to “look to the ways the study of blackness can rearrange our perceptions of chronology, time, and temporality.”¹⁵ The invocations of time, beats, and rhythm as crucial to the queerness and queer politics of the roller disco emphasizes its convoluted directions, and a musical temporality¹⁶ related to a Black, queer origin of disco that gestures to collectivity, yet also to individuality within movements and gestures.

Finally, roller disco presents a spatial argument in queer politics, queer existence, and the crucial affirmations of both. To read this text as explicitly queer, thereby “invites us to veer into the space beyond official documentation, into the warm dark abyss of remembrance and potentiality.”¹⁷ The geographies and architectures of the rinks are inclusive yet demanding. The rinks ultimately exist for expression and leisure but allow working-class communities to rehearse inside and outside the rink with cohesive stamina and endurance.

Although the roller disco is representative of deviant yet expressive spaces, within other such spaces the practice of roller-skating is popularly considered a lower art form. However, not only do queer sexual acts and identities deviate from normalcy within this time frame, but both the act of roller-skating and the aesthetic styles present in disco music imbue the roller disco with a specter of deviance. The queer politics of roller disco are not merely a politics of deviance but also leverage toward a “politics of mobilization.”¹⁸ The production of further representational myths that can in and of themselves normalize a continuing history proves only that the queer politics evolve—just as the practice of jamming evolves. That representation alone does not challenge prevailing queer genealogies. However, I argue in accordance with Butler’s *Jammin’* that the evolution of roller disco is not assimilatory, normalizing, or even a direct simplification. Butler instead posits further complication and cutting edge distortion of what might be a normative or expected skating technique.

Regarding the spaces of the rink itself and the intermittently urban spaces for roller disco in the Northeast, it is crucial to note other forms of exclusion in sports related to gender, ethnicity, ability, and so on. The limits of a presumed agency do not respond to the structures of Keep Out signs and exclusive spaces. The roller discos can be open spaces for Black skaters and artists, where skaters of any identity are encouraged to engage and indulge in the rink. There also appears to be an impetus to destabilize white heteronormativity, which pervades the blueprints of the roller disco. (Brooklyn’s roller discos continue to attract mostly queer skaters and skaters of color.) Therefore, *Jammin’* is a guideline to cultivate practical and emphatic queer communities. Butler instructs the reader on how to stand, how to move your feet, how to care for your skates, and so on, all of which forms a meticulous yet encouraging means to address the form of the rink and its outside structures with caution and attention. Finally, with emphasis on a clear but overlooked reality to both roller-skating and queer life—namely, that “it isn’t easy”—*Jammin’* is defined as not only a “how-to” but a “why-to.”¹⁹

The following moment in Butler’s guidebook summarizes his own stance on jamming as a style of movement and performance, but also a resistive political gesture. Jamming therefore becomes what Stephen Low calls “a paradoxically

destructive yet generative power”²⁰ implicit in queer dance and other aesthetically radical forms of physical movement. Butler’s manual includes a series of more generic how-tos: how to edge, how to balance, how to keep the beat, and so on. Yet it is his more holistic approach to the practice of learning these skills that makes his book stand out from other skating instruction manuals of the time (in which movements would be broken down into choreographic series, often listed in a series of bulleted numbers intended to be executed in sequential order).

Butler never dismisses the fact that the skater is likely to fall down—and fall down frequently. Tommy Defrantz questions performing moments of queer failure in dance: “[W]hat drives him to keep going, even when the impossibility of the task is apparent?”²¹ Butler seems to have an answer when he writes, “You’re never so good that you become immune to falling. But there is less chance of falling if your body is relaxed (knees, elbows, and wrists loose). The idea is to fall with as much confidence as you skate.”²² Butler encourages his students to resist the shame of falling, and refuse the embarrassment that comes from falling publicly. His next section is simply stated: get up as quickly as possible and assist others who cannot get back up on their own. He acknowledges the vulnerability of falling and encourages all skaters to think collaboratively and supportively when they see others fall around them.

The body and its resistance are crucial to Butler’s definition of practice. Much as Vogel offers a sense of artistic practice in the Harlem of the 1920s–30s as a form of “literary” art,²³ I consider practices of sports (competitive, professional, athletic)—and Butler contends “roller skating *is* a sport”²⁴—as a critical study of the body, visibility, endurance, iconography, and competition related to queer politics. Roller disco is not a *team* sport, but a place of collaborative and individual expression. According to Butler, the reason for sports is that, in them, “life is idealized. Life should be fair.” Life, however, is in fact *not* very fair, and “you don’t necessarily ‘get as good as you give.’ [But] in sport you always do. The more you put into it, the more you get out of it.”²⁵ While acknowledging the attractive but too-good-to-be-true sentiment, Butler necessitates the role of continued practice. Further insights of *Jammin’* include that skating is expressive, dynamic, and liberatory. Yet it is still a “split-level challenge”: the skater cannot defy the laws of physics but must exist on, and respond to, some form of rink and wheels—a relationship that is “direct, immediate.”²⁶

The body of the skater and the space of the rink hold a relationship that is communal and reciprocal but never transactional. I am here reminded of Defrantz’s invocation of “queer doing,” which, he writes, “assumes an interaction of self and other. [D]oing queer, then, becomes something always shared, always interpreted and recognized between/among, rather than the kind of essential status that might be embedded in queer as identity.”²⁷ Returning briefly to agency as theme, *Jammin’* summons the body—along with its stresses and pleasures—as a powerhouse for expression and structural resistance. The queer agency within the rinks is related to the body and its practice, the spaces themselves, and a Black spatial reckoning in larger contexts that exclude queer politics. Jack Halberstam similarly reckons that queer life is precarious more often than not. While the notion of queer time and place can never be universal (nor should it be), the recurrence of time and the experience of time as themes in queer narratives and queer art forms speaks to the very precarity that embodies any subculture.²⁸

However, given that roller disco is considered peripheral sport, and though fetishized consumption and appropriation of course took place, the lack of traditional spectatorship somewhat prevents this in the moment. Crucially, the skater can roll on by. Butler's publication on roller disco manifests agency where it might not otherwise be recognized and, more important, it documents the many ways this agency was practiced. These performative acts might also be considered gestures of Black embodiment and a praxis of queerness. Invocations of partner dances and group skate also suggest a synthesis of identities toward a collaborative gesture of unified movement. These gestures, their agencies, and their resistive tendencies contribute to the structural intervention of queer politics through roller disco.

Skating in Circles or Standing in Place

In addition to what I argue as a queer politics within Butler's history and contributions to roller disco, his instructions for skating invoke an analysis of time, gesture, and embodiment in performance. For example, one can consider the popular practice of skating backward in relation to time and endurance and what simultaneously moving forward and backward suggests for a queer action. Likewise, it is necessary to think through the many ways disco and funk influence the aesthetics and offerings of the rinks. We can also consider how skating as a day and nighttime practice evades key restrictions on interiors and exteriors as well as queer nightlife more broadly. And finally, Butler poses a vaguely transcendent question of what it actually means to find balance and maintain harmony with others in the rink.

As a sport that evades "serious" interrogation from many avenues, I once again offer an application of Gaines's definition of "performance as a radical act" to roller disco as athletic expression and queer artistic practice. Performance as a radical act implies that which "pursues the possibility that performances of blackness have been capable, sometimes, provisionally, and contingently, of amending dominant discourses that manage representation and constrain the lives they organize."²⁹ *Jammin'* encourages personal style both for the individual skater and in collaboration with others. Butler writes that, upon entering the roller rink, the first thing to notice is "There [are] lines on the floor" and they "[aren't] just for decoration."³⁰ He encourages the skater to "Know the rough spots and the slick spots and plan your movements accordingly."³¹ While the skater must respond to the confines of the rink, the skater does so with critique. The skater practices on the rink but is not confined to the politics of the rink. The deviant styles must exist on the very structures that attempt to contain them—toward the ultimate gain of control of practice that can dismantle its limiting structures and radicalize its queer acts.

Moreover, resistive communities coalesce in these spaces with shared identities and their obscured relations toward the immediacy of hegemony. Butler, however, does not stop at agency in roller disco. It is not only a matter of *can* one roller skate but, more important, *why* should one skate? And specifically, why should one skate the *discos*? With the ability to pick up skates, master each move, form friendships and partnership, and somehow cruise beyond the rails of the rink, Butler summons a radically resistive practice of possibility. Such a notion of skating toward possibility invokes José Muñoz's invocation of a queer potential in *Cruising Utopia*.³² To

walk the reader through a vocabulary of movement and style, Butler invokes cruising by telling the reader that the disco is about “always jamming, keeping the beat, not just staying aloft.”³³ *Jammin*’s instructions for skating and disco emphasize that practice and community are crucial to the power of a movement, but also that the singular essentials of endurance, style, and fun will not only deviate from white heteronormativity, but ultimately destabilize it.

Crucially, Butler’s *Jammin*’ might not only negotiate this isolation, but more actively resist it through community acts. Roller disco, according to Butler, is a practice of call and response of and within the greater community. Though this might be exacerbated by notions of spectatorship, spectacle, and public witnessing in the rink, it nevertheless speaks to an ephemeral archive that holds power in the acts of practice and continued mastery. Skaters resist copying each other’s moves in exactness, but rather build and evolve upon the practices of others. Therefore, the ability to forge identity within difference becomes more active in decoding and renegotiating. While exploring the experiences and contributions of different figures, roller disco emphasizes the connections that are made or already exist between skaters (not unlike the network politics of Ballroom culture). Such improvisational partnerships and collectives in the rink summon an image of what Aaron Lecklider articulates as a form of kinship in dissent.³⁴ The notion of shared spaces in a geographical and political sense similarly seems to stress the significance of emotional and physical kinship, which collectively aggravates the normalizing politics of sexual hegemony.

For kinship to flourish in the rink, the skaters must coalesce and improvise. This is achieved with intentional temporal flux. Butler appears to insist that tempo and improvisation negotiate the structure toward an emphasis on possibility—an emphasis that further enables roller disco’s archival evasion. The rink itself has no finish line. It must be engaged only with immediate response to its musical syn-copation or “musical time” as a form of “queer temporality” in and of itself.³⁵ Gestures of temporal performance include the practices of skating the breaks, skating backward, spins, whips, trains, windings, scissor jumps, hockey stops, grapevines, backpedals, free-falling, falling free, plus “The Hustle, The Freak, [and] The Spank.”³⁶ These unique movements for jamming identify roller disco as distinctly, and by location, queer in their need for relaxed endurance. While there is no spatial or physical goal within the sport of roller disco, unlike related practices in Roller Derby, the immediate goal of roller disco is, to paraphrase Butler, the continuous and masterful development of the skater toward exacting difficult and exciting moves, and the encouragement of both technique and utopic pleasure for one’s own self and for the other skaters in the rink.

Butler invokes temporality within the rink as a means of negotiation as well as resistance: as Low notes, “Queer temporalities [. . .] offer a potential for physical transformation that challenges normative gender constraints by dissolving the perceived visual material boundaries of the body.”³⁷ Much like the response to the structure of roller disco, the temporalities of roller disco must respond to speed, cadence, rhythm, and obstacles to keep moving in and around the rink. Yet, it must also critique the monotony of skating in circles with the practice of jamming. Butler defines “Jammin” as “dance improvisation on rollerskates to Disco, Jazz or R&B music.”³⁸ However, he better articulates the why-to of dancing on wheels

when he explains, “the roller motion makes everything flow. Your movements connect. You respond to the music with everything you’ve got. The glide doesn’t stop at your feet.”³⁹ The imaginings at the disco flourish through its negotiation of structured time and space to allow for the repetitive and dynamic capacities of jamming. Of course, not all bodies are capable of jamming on roller skates in the literal sense, but the politics of jamming extends to any iteration of a queer practice. The following analysis might gesture to the intersections of queer time and crip time in their peripheral occupations of heteronormative lineage. Alison Kafer’s “strange temporalities” might here be used as a locational term.⁴⁰

Butler’s *Jammin’* encourages practical engagement with roller disco’s necessity of response to abrupt changes and alignment as they can occur in and out of the rinks. Eventually, *Jammin’* informs the reader that musical time will eventually produce a collective understanding of the beat, the lyrics, and the breaks present in the songs and the vocabularies of that day’s practice. He notes that when the drive to the beat is realized, “the abrupt changes, the breaks, are what builds up the adrenaline, compelling people to skate hard.”⁴¹ To avoid the distraction or disruption of the coalition of skaters, Butler emphasizes, “you must keep your balance; you must keep the beat,”⁴² thus forming a queer connection through practice that might resemble what Rodríguez calls a site of “intimate, intoxicating, funky, fleshy connection.”⁴³ Improvisational roller-skating, according to Butler, is more than physical movement, it is a practice of embodied and mental connection; “and so jamming conditions the mind, not just the body. You have to be mentally awake. You get on a mathematics high, calculating how fast the speeding body behind you will take to catch up with you, whether or not you’re in danger of collision at any given moment, what move will free you from the situation.”⁴⁴ The act of embracing and preparing for the unexpected allows the skater to thrive not only as a singular skater, but as a collaborative member of a partner dance and a community of skaters—all of whom possess potential to synchronize in and beyond the rink.

“Meet Me at the Empire”: Geographic Strategies of Roller Disco

Roller discos gained traction in a number of working-class urban locales: Brooklyn, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Jersey City, and so on. This geographic specificity might relate to the availability of liminal urban space, but also to notions of an in-between accessibility, and perhaps even conversations of high culture versus popular or common culture. Butler emphasizes the movement specificity of a local style in his section on “The Geography of Jamming.” He informs the reader, “From city to city, all across the country, the way of skating changes along with the way of speaking. I use the different styles according to the music. Some music demands the Detroit Stride; other cuts put me into one of the other local motions.”⁴⁵ Regional styles influence the length of the stride, the pace of each shift and glide, and so on, much as in a regional dialect. Yet, the regional styles tend not to stay in isolation but, as Butler notes, are shared through the cultural transmission of musical aesthetics.

To consider the arenas for embodied practice in geographies like this, one might eventually wonder: What was the true role of the gymnasiums, the skate parks, the parking lots, the derby arenas, and, finally, the roller rink in building a queer formation? All gesture to a community space to various degrees of inclusion. The

discos demand that the normative practices of motion be challenged—one does not walk in straight lines, and wouldn't try to if there weren't lanes. Moreover, one must learn to skate by skating the rail, but when learning “and you touch the rail, that's cheating. If you touch the rail too much, the rail will know you cheated.”⁴⁶ Queer formation, like learning to skate, must begin with standing on one's own two feet; if protective normalcy is relied on, while not necessarily cheating, the practice of a queer politics becomes one of cruising until exhaustion, rather than cruising toward utopia.

I have used Muñoz's “cruising,” as in *Cruising Utopia*, somewhat liberally in this argument. I feel the need to differentiate cruising for sex versus cruising on wheels, yet nevertheless invoke their implied parallels in a radical queer movement. Muñoz offers an argument that queerness exists not in the embodied present, but rather as actions one takes toward achieving an idealized future—or utopia. Likewise, Muñoz directly associates queerness with performance, as it is “not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future.”⁴⁷ Cruising is moving without destination or restraints of time, and this applies in both iterations of the word.

A more detailed history of Empire's politics as well as Butler's role in the LGBTQ + community might further develop what a queer activist history looks like in the roller rink (if it does in fact exist)—as would a more explicit documentation of activist praxis surrounding the roller disco community. However, the aesthetic formations discussed in this argument center that which holds the potential to continue and make possible through practice and speculation. They might be what Muñoz calls “queer evidence: an evidence that has been queered in relation to the laws of what counts as proof.”⁴⁸ Therefore, while a documented history leaves holes in the argument's legislative validity, its praxis lies in the possible. The possible, according to Gaines, “confirms the co-occurrence of failure and success, and the way negativity is engendered even in a positive result.”⁴⁹ It might be argued that *Jammin'* and its surrounding texts are not quantitative evidence of, but rather *instruction* for, queer activism. This creatively parallels Joshua Chambers-Letson's references to the means by which “minoritarian subjects mobilize performance to survive the present, improvise new worlds, and sustain new ways of being in the world together.”⁵⁰ He too locates his book *After the Party* as a sort of “travel guide” and “tactical manual.”⁵¹ a means of locating identificatory practices in performance and unearthing the potentiality performative tactics may offer toward a reconfiguration of presence.

As mentioned, Empire RollerDrome closed its doors permanently in 2007, though its public use had declined long before then due to increased efforts to police the predominantly Black and Latino residents of Crown Heights. By the 1990s, it was one of the last surviving disco rinks in New York City. Butler may not be explicitly political in most outlets, but *Jammin'*—or, more presently, jamming as an act itself—continues to present an impetus for the skater to defy the limitations of the rink. Overall, *Jammin'* articulates a push of Black queer political tradition and a resistive queer methodology toward a new trajectory—one of constant, dynamic, and roundabout motion. This trajectory implicates agency, structural intervention, and deviant coalition. Most noteworthy, *Jammin'* suggests queerness without ever saying it outright. Nevertheless, the message is clear and encouraging. In so doing, the guidebook advances the limits of roller-skating to

a practice that radically and resistively moves both between and beyond the rails of the Empire Rollerdrome.

Endnotes

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- 21 Thomas F. Defrantz, "Queer Dance in Three Acts," in *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings*, ed. Clare Croft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 169–80, at 173.
- 22 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, 34.
- 23 Vogel, *Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, 3.
- 24 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, 1.
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- 28 Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).
- 29 Gaines, *Black Performance*, 1.
- 30 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, 2.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 32 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).
- 33 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, 42.

- 34 Lecklider, *Love's Next Meeting*, 287.
- 35 Vogel, *Scene of Harlem Cabaret*, 118.
- 36 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, 3.
- 37 Low, "Speed of Queer," 71.
- 38 Butler and Schoen, *Jammin'*, glossary entry.
- 39 *Ibid.*, preface.
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