



PROJECT MUSE®

Democracy's Body, Neoliberalism's Body: The Ambivalent
Search for Egalitarianism Within the Contemporary
Post/Modern Dance Tradition

Jose L. Reynoso

Dance Research Journal, Volume 51, Number 1, April 2019, pp. 47-65 (Article)

Published by Cambridge University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/723677>

Democracy's Body, Neoliberalism's Body: The Ambivalent Search for Egalitarianism Within the Contemporary Post/Modern Dance Tradition

Jose L. Reynoso

In this article, I am interested in the ways in which *dance* as labor and *artist* as a specific subjectivity relate to the material conditions of their production within contexts shaped by neoliberal notions of freedom, ideologies of liberal democracy, and the logic of global capitalism. I attend specifically to the tension between an egalitarian ethos, a desire to foster relations that cultivate equality, and the centrality of the individual (self, choice, freedom, advancement).¹ Some of the questions I discuss below have developed over time from conversations with diverse people in the field, my own experiences as a dancer in many collaborations, and my experience as a choreographer who has used the seemingly egalitarian but somewhat problematic crediting practice that relies on the words “and” and “with” to *acknowledge* dancers’ creative labor in the production of performance works.

As an artist-scholar, body-subject enmeshed in a web of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural forces, I realize that neoliberal ideology and capitalist economic logic is naturalized not only by the operations of government institutions and private corporations but also by the quotidian bodily actions and interactions that ordinary people, including dance artists from different traditions, engage as they go about their life and work.² To some extent, when we rely on a digital platform to use services like hiring a ride company who employs drivers as subcontractors, we reproduce similar contractual logics that organize labor arrangements under which many dancers are hired as performers in project-by-project *collaborations*. Also, when dancers engage in their dance practices any variation of the formula *the least amount of physical energy for the greatest amount of movement efficiency*, they reproduce embodiments of the capitalist foundational principle of *the least amount of investment for the greatest amount of profitability*. Through the repetition of many quotidian bodily activities as we engage in life and art making, we participate in the normalization of the ideological, social, cultural, and economic forces that inform who we become, or not, as citizens and artists.

In the last few decades, scholars interested in dance have addressed some of these questions by drawing critical attention toward the different relationships artistic labor has to politics and

Dr. Jose L. Reynoso (jose.reynoso@ucr.edu), dance scholar, performer, and choreographer, is assistant professor of critical dance studies at the University of California Riverside. His research interests include the role corporeality in general and dance in particular play in processes of knowledge production, and decolonial theory and practices, as well as ideological aspects in the formation of artistic subjectivities. His book project, tentatively titled *Mestizo and Other Modernities: Dance and Politics in the Construction of Modern Mexico(s)*, focuses on the ways dance practices participated in the construction of Mexican rhetoric of modernity and nationalism before and after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. It emphasizes how Mexican dance forms that combined with ballet and modern dance idioms influenced the development of racial and social formations at different historical moments.

economic systems (e.g., Cvejić 2011; Franko 2002; Klein 2012; Kolb 2013; Kunst 2015; Martin 2017). Alexandra Kolb notes that insufficient attention has been given to postmodern rhetoric and modern market economic trends. She has written about parallels between participatory performance and a new “experience economy” that reframes the relationship of customers to commodities by staging rather than delivering (as in a service economy) products not to be passively consumed but to be experienced by the customer’s senses (2013, 37). In dance, the spectator-consumer becomes a type of active guest who experiences an event—by engaging in verbal and/or physical exchanges with performers, by having freedom in navigating the space and interacting with it in various ways during the performance, etc.—rather than passively witnessing a spectacle (Kolb 2013).

By discussing some works by Yvonne Rainer, Xavier Le Roy, and Tino Sehgal, I seek to build on what Kolb calls the econo-political implications of dance work that claims to be, and to some extent is, egalitarian in its intent, as choreographers try to design more inclusive and less hierarchical dance making methods and viewing strategies. This paper examines these democratizing practices in relation to notions of ownership as well as the production of financial, cultural, and symbolic forms of capital.³ My analysis of these dance practices that seek to implement more collaborative modes of production also attends to claims and efforts made to give performers *more individual agency* in how they interpret improvisational scores or instructions for completing game-like tasks or other organizational prompts. These methods also include how dancers tap into their own personal experiences and movement backgrounds by engaging with “somatic practices” intended to facilitate more egalitarian creative and teaching approaches (Burnidge 2012, 37) “purported to resist outdated gender ideals and authoritarian training” (Gilbert 2014, iii).⁴ In combination with other strategies, these choreographic mechanisms and training regimes produce a distinctive aesthetic style for a work to be shared in public, even if the whole or elements from it are intentionally not to be *recognized* as dance.

I argue that while these forms of labor intend to be more democratic because of the egalitarian ethos they seek to cultivate through more inclusive, collaborative, less hierarchical compositional processes, the unequal distribution of various forms of capital produced by the participants’ creative labor enacts while it naturalizes exploitative relational logics of capitalism. The argument contends that *while choreographers strive, with varying success, to establish nonauthoritarian creative practices in the production of their work, the collaborative bodies whose creative labor is crucial in the dance-making endeavor cannot claim authorship nor ownership of the product, even if in the form of a process or experience offered to audiences-consumers.*⁵

This argument resonates with Bojana Kunst’s efforts to affirm the political viability of art by situating forms of “artistic powerlessness” vis-à-vis the workings of contemporary capitalism “which saturates all pores of social life” (2015, 1). She notes this economic system’s apparent tendency to appropriate critical and political art as “just another in the offer of what Guillermo Gómez-Peña describes as ‘mainstream bizarre’” (Kunst 2015, 1). As for dance, Kunst urges us to look for its political possibilities not merely in the abstraction of movement’s infinite potentiality and democratic ideals such as freedom, but in the ways dance relates to “power of and exhaustion of work, with its virtuosity and failure, dependence and autonomy” (2015, 118). It is this simultaneous embodiment of apparent opposites that contextualizes my argument. *I situate variations of the notion of democracy, freedom, and individual agency in relation to exploitative aspects of global capitalism that “saturates all pores of social life” and which constitutes a cultural context in which politically progressive contemporary post/modern dance practices have evolved and proliferated.*⁶

As contemporary post/modern dance artists thrive within an enveloping capitalist logic, they develop strategies to produce their work and make a living. Gabriele Klein situates discourses on labor as the “leading dispositive of contemporary society” and situates it in relation to biopolitical strategies and techniques of the self, thereby positioning artists in constant negotiation of their

labor, life, and art as part of process of subjectivization (2012, 13). She evokes scholarship on how some of the working and living methods employed by artists, including those attributed to artists in the nineteenth century, have become “the working ethos of neoliberalism” (Klein 2012, 13). In confronting the decreased demand for art in relation to modes of production in capitalist markets, Klein cites Berlin-based dancer-choreographer Jochen Roller when asking what “technologies of an entrepreneurial self” contemporary artists need in order to thrive. As an answer included in one of his choreographic performances, Roller suggests, in Klein’s words, that the “artistic work of the performer itself becomes a work performance in which the production of added value in terms of symbolic capital is decisive for the existence of the artist’s subject” (2012, 5).⁷

In Klein’s argument, one can see this labor-based entrepreneurial strategy as a “key element of the effectiveness of . . . bio-power” (2012, 13). Precisely, I am interested in the regulative effects of biopolitics as a disciplinary context in which artists negotiate their potential (relative) agency, even if framed as a technique of the self, not only in relation to meeting their material needs but also to the production of their specific artistic subjectivities. Thus, this paper focuses on various entrepreneurial strategies dance artists rely on, including what I will discuss below as *entrepreneurial artistic archive*, in order to develop unique aesthetic practices while engaging in distinctive ways to procure ownership of the product of their and/or of their collaborators’ labor. In other words, I contend that modes of artistic entrepreneurship allow dancers-choreographers to advance their careers in ways that simultaneously enable them to constitute themselves as politically progressive subjects. As such, their artistic production intends to challenge and reformulate aspects within the *autonomous* aesthetic tradition in which they circulate and/or within the broader sociopolitical and economic realms in which those artistic practices inevitably exist.

This ability for the exercise of (relative) forms of individual agency that can be associated with the (dance) artist as entrepreneur within neoliberalism represents a productive tension between agency and history that Randy Martin (1998) theorizes as a dancing dialectic.⁸ By adapting Martin’s dialectical paradigm, I suggest the possibility of artists and publics to adopt (explicitly or implicitly) the ideology of neoliberalism that organizes daily life, including art making. At the same time, they can think of themselves as subjects who resist and transform the very logic that substantiates their existence and provides the conditions for their subversive desires and capacities to emerge. In other words, **it might be possible that (the ambivalence of) neoliberal subjectivity enables the artist, dancer, and choreographer to embody distinctive sets of progressive politics through (egalitarian) collaborative modes of production that grant more individual agency to participants. At the same time, as contemporary historical bodies, they design (individualistic) entrepreneurial mechanisms for the production and accumulation of different forms of capital in ways that often reiterate oppressive-exploitative aspects of an economic logic “which saturates all pores of social life” (Kunst 2015, 1).** In this paper, the tension between neoliberal individual agency and history provides the stage on which (dance) artists motivated by an egalitarian ethos strive to create collaborative practices within capitalism while embodying specific instantiations of democracy’s and neoliberalism’s bodies. It is within this paradoxical ambivalence that the search for egalitarianism as part of a politically progressive artistic subjectivity is mediated by the means of its production within a capitalist economic regime.⁹

Democracy’s Body, Neoliberalism’s Body

In order to trace a genealogy that led to the emergence of diverse intercontinental aesthetic exchanges, I will revise briefly some of Sally Banes’s work on the Judson Dance Theater (1983) and will put it in conversation with Andre Lepecki’s (2016) analysis of performance in relation to neoliberalism. I will do so to contextualize my discussion of artists such as Rainer, one of the members of the Judson Dance Theater, Le Roy, and Sehgal. This brief analysis emphasizes historical and social contingencies that contribute to shape notions of democratic, nonhierarchical dance practices, one of the *recognizable* core values of contemporary post/modern dance practices.¹⁰

Postwar notions of postmodernism in dance translated into new modes of composing and sharing dances in more democratic ways. Banes (1983) conceptualized these new democratizing values oriented toward openness, indeterminacy, and inclusiveness as a political choice and as a unique aesthetic. She recounts that, impressed by the significance of the postmodern dancers' work, Jill Johnston, a dance writer for the *Village Voice*, "enthusiastically followed and championed the burgeoning of a new, pluralistic generation of choreographers—one which, as the body of her criticism shows, she saw actively installing in dance new values of *democracy, humanism, decentralization, and freedom*" [emphasis added] (Banes 1983, 33). It is perhaps this observation that inspired the title of one of Banes's books. *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* certainly reflected the aesthetic values, as a political choice, that mobilized a group of not exclusively but primarily white, middle-class artists as they experienced and produced embodiments of democracy from the specificity of their own social positionalities between 1962 and 1964. In that respect, the Judson Dance Theater's body was a particular instance of democracy's body.

If democracy as an ideological construct was to be expanded as a potential reality for the population in general and as context for the emergence of the Judson Dance Theater in particular, one would have to include not only the influence of Zen, Sartre, Heidegger, phenomenology, and drugs that Banes (1983) acknowledges, but also the Civil Rights Movement as a force shaping the sociopolitical and cultural moment in the 1960s. Among many ongoing events that coincided with the emergence of the Judson Dance Theater in the early 1960s, four young African-American male students from the North Carolina Agriculture and Technical College inspired a surge of protests across the South as they defiantly sat at a whites-only lunch counter in a Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina.¹¹ Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed for joining a similar sit-in in Atlanta, Georgia. Withstanding violence by white supremacists, including the Ku Klux Klan, Freedom Riders—African-American and white allies—traveled in 1961 across states in the Deep South challenging institutional segregation on interstate bus and rail lines. Protests continued throughout 1963 when King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, just a few months before President Kennedy was assassinated. In 1964, Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity to galvanize African Americans against discrimination. All efforts prior to and during these first four years in the 1960s culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The same year that the Judson Dance Theater disbanded as *one* of democracy's bodies, African Americans along with other allies fought structural racism in order to bring into full *humanness* a different instantiation of what democracy's bodies could be. Although both movements, the dance avant-garde and the civil rights struggles, were fueled by similar impetus for freedom, openness, and inclusiveness as parallel social phenomena during the same period of time, Banes's somewhat segregated history reproduced seemingly contradictory notions of a selective democracy that excludes.

If, for Banes (1983), postmodern choreographers could embody and produce liberating democratic principles through their practices in the early 1960s, André Lepecki (2016) suggests that experimental dance makers create similar liberating strategies as they confront through their innovative artistic practices the colonizing logic of neoliberalism. For Banes, the Judson dancers' attitude that anything could be dance and be looked at as dance, rendered their innovative activities, "although not recognizable as theatrical dance," subject to reexamination "and 'made strange' because they were framed as art" (1983, xviii). Similarly, Lepecki affirms that the singularity he proposes in relation to experimental choreographers stands as "a bearer of strangeness" that enables artists to thrive as they actively participate in their own subjectivization in the era of neoliberal performance (Georges Didi-Huberman quoted in Lepecki 2016, 6).

Lepecki stresses the pervasiveness of neoliberalism, the result of current "colonialist-capitalist assemblage of power" (2016, 4), as a "new kind of rationality, a new mode of reasoning," a

“choreography of conformity” that has snatched the body, captured subjectivity, and permeated discourse about and the making of art as well as spectatorship (2016, 2–3). In a manner similar to how Kunst views capitalism as saturating “all pores of social life” (2015, 1), Lepecki succinctly summarizes the colonizing effects of neoliberalism as a system of knowledge. He asserts that

We are, as always, as everyone, everywhere and anytime, being conditioned. However, the rationality that orientates the neoliberal condition of overall conditioning, the (il)logic that makes it all have not only some kind of sense, but that makes the conditions of contemporary conditioning gain real hegemonic sense, real normative sense, real neo-colonialist, neo-racist sense, that (il)logic is governing conduct as if it were granting liberty. (Lepecki 2016, 2–3)

One infers here that the relativity of agency must be negotiated within epistemological, structural, and institutional paradigms that strive to mediate the bio- and necropolitics that seek to condition and manage the life and death of bodies and subjects. Lepecki (2016) points to the promise, the calculated rhetoric, of “liberty,” which sustains neoliberal forms of governmentality that produce a sense of collective consensus. In this context of shared potentiality, people engage voluntarily in practices that situate their bodies, in the case of dancers, between technique and the state (Martin 1998) as they engage in a hopeful search for experiencing the appealing concept of freedom (and dignity) (Harvey 2005).

It is against, and “admittedly from within” (Lepecki 2016, 5), this seemingly totalizing conditioning that Lepecki sees the singular strangeness of experimental performance enabling corporeal-subjective formations to perform “both dissensual and consensual acts” as dancers inhabit “momentary zones of freedom” (5) of their own making. I will situate Lepecki’s confidence in experimental artists’ “choreopolitical operation” to “undo” from within the (il)logic conditioning conditions of neoliberalism in dialectical dance with Kunst’s adaptation of Slavoj Žižek’s concept of “pseudo activity,” which she employs as a way to discuss the (relative) effectiveness of (apparent) progressive artistic practices (2015, 7).¹² In this sense, the ontological reality of the contemporary post/modern dancing body is simultaneously resistive to the conditioning forces that mediate its subjectivization while also being, I will argue, an instantiation of neoliberalism’s body. Within this context, the body’s output, in the form of project-by-project flexible labor, leads dance artists to devise strategies to manage ownership of their own and their collaborator’s embodied work.

Labor and Modes of Artistic Entrepreneurial Ownership

In early November 2011, performance artist Marina Abramović, auditioned performers for a gala event for donors at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA). For one of the activities in the event, performers would sit for three hours on lazy Susans placed under donor’s dining tables, only their slowly rotating heads sticking out from the flat surface in the midst of dinner plates to be enjoyed by people who paid up to \$100,000 per seat (Wookey 2011). An anonymous participant reported that not even restroom breaks would be allowed and performers were to remain in “performance mode and unaffected,” regardless of how donors decided to interact with the performers’ bodies, including under the table, pun intended (Rainer, pagget, and Crimp 2011). Compensation for over fifteen hours of work would be \$150 and a one-year MOCA membership.

In response to the controversial working conditions under which performers were hired, interdisciplinary dance artists Yvonne Rainer and taisha paggett, as well as art critic Douglas Crimp, signed a letter directed to MOCA’s director Jeffrey Deitch.¹³ Their missive suggested that performers’ participation—their “desperate voluntarism”—was symptomatic of “exploitative conditions of the art world” and characterized the artistic project as “economic exploitation . . . verging on criminality”

(Rainer, pagget, and Crimp 2011). Only several days later, Sara Wookey (2011) issued her “An Open Letter From a Dancer Who Refused to Participate in Marina Abramović’s MOCA Performance,” in which she clarified her status as the until-then-anonymous whistle-blower who inspired Rainer and colleagues to take on the issue of labor relations between artists and art institutions.

As Kunst suggests, this contentious situation is significant not only for its exploitative dynamics in terms of unjust financial remuneration (2015). She argues that Abramović’s “performance mode” expected of performers decreases the potential political efficacy of art while claiming to have staged a critical intervention, like asking her rich donors to wear white lab coats over their fancy clothing and jewelry. Kunst asserts that this depoliticization of art in the name of progressive intervention contributes to the “spectacular value of the artist and the institution she is supported by” (2015, 42). She contends that asking rich museum donors to “ascetically cover up their clothes at the gala dinner just confirms that the asceticism of today is at work at the core of the greatest pleasure; at the center of the most intense consumerism, there is control and discipline, the order to ‘enjoy yourself!’” (Kunst 2015, 47–48). In other words, Abramović’s intended critical intervention was absorbed by a context already established to provide a space for rich donors to participate in the pleasure of performing (symbolic) transgression, even or especially at the expense of the “parodic critique of their role” as wealthy art benefactors (Kunst 2015, 47). Kunst’s (2015) distinction between different claims for and articulations of political efficacy in art inform my interest in the relationship between the production and distribution of different forms of capital and politically progressive dance practices. In this case, I relate political economies of entrepreneurial modes of dance making in relation to the accumulation of capital and the formation of specific subjectivities.

As dance artists negotiate their resistance to and/or (tacit) participation in exploitative practices, they continue to devise strategies to improve their working conditions while trying to be more egalitarian in their own creative practices as well as more protective of their artistic productions and labor. According to dance and performance artist Abigail Levine (2016), Rainer herself does not make dances unless her funding covers decent wages for her performers. Rainer has also become entrepreneurial while protecting her work from exploitation by taking more control over the ownership of pieces such as *Trio A*.

As Rainer became more “doctrinaire about the details” of her piece (Catterson 2009, 9), she grew more concerned about its unregulated transmission. She summarized succinctly her preoccupation while remembering her shift from a “postmodern evangelist bringing movement to the masses” while watching what she described as “the slow, inevitable evisceration of my elitist creation. Well, I finally met a *Trio A* I didn’t like... I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was all but unrecognizable” (Rainer 2009, 16). By 2009, only four women were certified as “official transmitters of the dance,” Pat Catterson, Linda K. Johnson, Shelley Senter, and Emily Coates (Rainer 2009, 15). Sara Wookey joined the selective group in 2010 (Wookey n.d.). As much as Rainer became more “doctrinaire” and continued to do “tune ups” (Levine 2016) when seeing the dance performed or taught by her five trainers, each of their own interpretations is different no matter how attentive they are to the dance’s details (Catterson 2009, 9). However, despite variations, still within a range of “Rainerisms” (Levine 2016), the certified body-to-body transfer of the canonical *Trio A* attempts to ensure the preservation of a higher standard of the dance’s aesthetic integrity.¹⁴

This self-entrepreneurial institutionalization of the dance’s transmission also creates a unique economy for its circulation as an experience and as a type of embodied commodity. *Trio A*’s supply and demand thrives in the international art market also due to interest for it within the visual arts. The five official transmitters can set their own fees for teaching the dance and can accommodate participants on an “economy scale,” as was the case for Levine, who paid “some hundreds of dollars, ... a good price for [learning] a modern masterpiece,” when she learned *Trio A* from Catterson (Levine 2016). However, learners of the historical postmodern piece do not necessarily own a

tangible product in their flesh, as much as they pay only for an experience. They must agree to not reproduce the dance in any form. While the written agreement does not threaten to sue participants for \$1 million plus attorney fees should they disclose part of the creative process, as it was the case for the MOCA-Abramović's collaboration (Wookey 2011), the accord seeks to enforce some management over the dance's unregulated reproduction. The binding document states that

The participant agrees not to restage or teach the dance, *Trio A*, by Yvonne Rainer without prior written permission from Yvonne Rainer [deleted information in the source].

The participant also agrees that in no instance will a videotape of agreed upon performance of *Trio A* be copied or used to restage *Trio A* without permission from Yvonne Rainer.

By signing below the participant agrees to the above terms. (reproduced in Levine 2016)

Unless given permission, the learner must keep the dance—its unique aesthetic structure, kinesthetic sensations, and proprioceptive logic—within their bodies' memories and nowhere else externalized. Learning the dance provides a completely individualized experience of the subjectivity and corporeality it produces for different learners. At the same time, the one who could afford access to purchase the experience accumulates whatever cultural capital such embodiment and certificate of learning produces for the learners. Thus, to different extents, they become members of a class of body-subjects possessing a glimpse into the embodied knowledge of one of the most canonical dances in the tradition of contemporary post/modern dance.

In this paper, I am not focusing on legal protection under copyright law in relation to dance as other authors have done, most prominently Anthea Kraut (2008; 2016). Instead, in the case of *Trio A*, I am interested in the management of the circulation of its reproduction under the owner's control. However, part of the logic of copyright law is informative to understand self-entrepreneurial artistic ventures. Kraut (2016) notes that the emergence of copyright law was in great measure possible in relation to ideas of personhood proposed by personality theories as well as the doctrine of possessive individualism that served as a foundational cornerstone of Western culture in general and liberal democracy in particular. While these ideas gave rise to the notion of the author as owner, dancers seeking legal protection for their bodily-intellectual property negotiated their pursuits from their specific racial and gendered positionalities vis-à-vis copyright law's patriarchal and Eurocentric assumptions that tended to privilege white males.

I want to suggest that notions of personhood and possessive individualism have reemerged continuously in contemporary reiterations to form the foundational "(il)logic" of the "colonialist-capitalist assemblage of power" that has constituted neoliberalism (Lepecki 2016, 2–4). It is within this new conditioning epistemological paradigm that I posit that self-fashioned entrepreneurial management strategies for one's (intellectual, embodied) property emerged in relation to dance practices intended to be more egalitarian. While the economy Rainer and her five official transmitters created participates in capitalist exchange value in relation to goods (restricted ownership of *Trio A*) and services (teaching/dancing), it gives agency to the choreographer as the creator-owner and the teachers as legitimized official bearers of the dance and their dance tradition.

By taking some control over the regulated transmission of *Trio A*, these dance artists—owner, teachers, and learners—manage its disappearance and reappearance through ever slightly new reiterations that are performed, sold, and purchased. To some extent, these owner-teacher artists also seem to unclog, rather than clog, as Peggy Phelan would suggest, "the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital" in order to ensure decent

remuneration of their creative labor (Phelan quoted in Kraut 2016, 21). At the same time, the embodiment of this enabling economy renders them as specific instantiations of neoliberalism's bodies that, as Kraut (2016) has noted, simultaneously participate and resist the commodification (and "evisceration") of their embodied work, especially Rainer's, as I will illustrate below.

Kraut (2016) also contends that John Locke's labor theory of value, proposed in 1690, resonated with a tradition of liberalism that championed notions of self-ownership and the autonomous individual. Asserting it as a "natural" right, Locke assured that "every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*" and added that "the *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his" (quoted in Kraut 2016, 17). To some extent, Kraut adapts these assumptions to argue that, while dancers negotiated their racial and gendered subjectivities, they embraced intellectual property rights "to position themselves as possessive individuals and rights-bearing subjects rather than as [mere] commodities and objects of exchange" (2016, xiii). Kraut explains further that "because choreographic works are corporeal in nature, they carry strong ties to the bodies that generate them; dance-makers' bodies are deeply implicated in the circulation of their choreography" (2016, xiii–xiv). I will suggest this is certainly the case with dance artists like Rainer, whose *Trio A*, the product of her creative labor, serves as the embodiment of her personhood and thus is, as Locke would say, "properly" her property. It is not just the intellectual conception of the historical dance, but also Rainer's unique corporeal qualities that are to be protected, performed, sold, and purchased under the artist's control.

As noted earlier, the reproduction of *Trio A* over time implies inevitable alterations. Nevertheless, efforts have been made to preserve as close as possible Rainer's corporeal personhood as the foundational embodied aesthetic basis of the dance's transmission. But what happens when a dance is produced by the embodied personhood of various dancers who participate in democratized creative processes? Who owns the creative labor of those expected to not reproduce a choreographer's *singular* corporeality in the making of a specific work but to collaborate within an egalitarian and aesthetic conceptual framework that *gives dancers agency* by requiring them to cocreate a sort of collective—rather than individual—embodied personhood? Although the confluence of multiple corporealities (or personhoods) has always been part of the choreographic endeavor in most dance forms, through consensual collaboration or by appropriation, the emphasis placed on these practices as democratic has already been naturalized as a *recognizable* core value among contemporary post/modern dance artists as others have already noted. In what follows, I will explore these questions in relation to the *entrepreneurial artistic archive* and a political economy of crediting dancers' flexible creative labor working in project-by-project works *created* by politically progressive choreographers who strive to facilitate egalitarian, nonhierarchical approaches to making and viewing dances.

Producing Capital and Politically Progressive Dance in the Age of Neoliberal Performance

Responding to Rainer's suggestion that contemporary audiences might not be as apt to appreciate her slow works produced during the Judson Dance Theater period, dance scholar Ramsay Burt claimed that European audiences avid for innovative dance and live arts were still prepared to "appreciate slow, demanding, experimental work" (2009, 25). He noted that dances such as *Trio A* have influenced in various ways European choreographers and dance artists like Xavier Le Roy, who in 1999 participated in a restaging of Rainer's *CP-AD* and eventually created a duet with her in Berlin where the French artist works recurrently. Burt posits that Le Roy's exposure to Rainer's aesthetics characterized by "ordinary, task-based, and pedestrian movement . . . affirmed his own research into similar kinds of movement" (2009, 25).

While Rainer in general and *Trio A* in particular can certainly represent one among many influences in the formation of Le Roy's artistic trajectory, Bojana Cvejić (2011) notes the artist's inclination

toward French theory themes and methodologies. Experimentation with new forms of spectatorship, critique of spectacle, and exploring ways in which the body is represented constitute Le Roy's basis for creating alternative modes of production, authorship, and ownership that dominate the dance scene in France (Cvejić, 2011).¹⁵ Cvejić explains that Le Roy's "politics of authorship" ultimately do not attempt to target dance as a medium but instead attempt to target "theatrical performance" as *dispositif*, which in the Foucauldian sense might represent "an apparatus that shapes spectorial attention by organizing its modes of perception in an ideological fashion" (2011, 189). In these efforts, Le Roy attempts to distance his work from conventional models of authorship as well as the protocol of "signature" that defines a recognizable, if not predictable, dance style and choreographic approach characteristic of well-established French dance companies (Cvejić 2011).

I want to discuss Le Roy's politics of authorship, as theorized by Cvejić, alongside his politics of representation in order to examine the *nonrepresentational* as discourse and its relation to the production of capital and subjectivity. Cvejić argues that in works such as *Untitled*, Le Roy breaks with the *dispositif* associated with the "theater of representation" because "during the period of its performance, the author of *Untitled* was only known to the show's producers and performers" (2011, 198). She contends that by (temporarily) keeping this work "nameless" (*Untitled*) and "authorless," the tendency of audiences "to attribute their judgement of artworks to an author" was disrupted, thereby leaving them only to speculate while confronting an emptiness, a void (Cvejić 2011, 192).

I agree with Cvejić that Le Roy's "conceptual intervention" in *Untitled*, and other works such as *Self-Unfinished*, can weaken "the logic of representational theater" (2011, 192). However, I want to explore the possibility that similar interventions also re/constitute new forms of (theatrical) representation as a unique *dispositif* that activates specific aesthetic ideologies, including (innovating) modes of spectatorship and participation. In this contemporary post/modern reiteration of the representational, the presence of the object in question (e.g., "authorlessness") is not choreographed visibly onstage; instead, its temporary absence is staged at/as the margins of the performance (e.g., printed programs with no identifiable author). On the one hand, **laboring against representation has become one of the recognizable aesthetic values among contemporary post/modern dance makers, not exclusively but primarily because of the political work it does by disrupting conventional audience-performer and life and art relationships. On the other hand, the politically progressive act of disrupting representation as a theatrical convention by temporarily postponing or concealing the author's name seems to remain within a new representational realm that continues to reproduce a schism between life and art.**

In other words, **the disrupting act as an iteration of make-believe theatrics (authorless) represents a politically progressive gesture within a symbolic (aesthetic) realm while attempting, temporarily, to alienate itself from the material conditions of its production, including the economic systems in which it thrives. If audiences, not producers and/or performers, must suspend judgment and recognition while confronting the emptiness of a void caused by the lack of a named author, Le Roy, the absolute author and owner, consequently accumulates the different forms of capital produced by the untitled, temporarily authorless, piece.** Once the manufactured fantasy of authorlessness subsides, the work is not only reviewed by critics and written about by dance scholars. It is also included on the artist's website and in his CV, all materials constituting the archive that attests to his artistic worthiness, while producing his subjectivity as a politically progressive artistic subject.

As contemporary post/modern artists wrestle with potentially multiple operations and iterations of representation in performance, many of them, like Rainer and Le Roy, have become entrepreneurial in restructuring distinct collaborative modes of working and doing research. While Rainer makes efforts to protect her artistic production, the embodiment of her personhood, from exploitation by asserting her authorship and ownership, Le Roy creates new modes of theatrical representation that momentarily distance him from the *conventional* logic that organizes how dances are authored and owned. While an increasing number of artists like Rainer and Le Roy strive to create more

egalitarian modes of production while engaging in a variety of aesthetic approaches and theoretical inquiries, some tensions among participants remain.

Performing Resistance to Neoliberalism While Reproducing Its Logic at the Museum

Tino Sehgal, one of Le Roy's former dancers, with a strong desire "to do dance with the same seriousness that art was done," built a reputation for himself as an artist who creates experiences rather than objects while experimenting with space, time, and forms of sociality primarily in museums and galleries (Sehgal quoted in Stein 2009). The Berlin-based artist's work *These Associations* illustrates the simultaneous resistance and reproduction of neoliberal approaches to labor, capital, and subjectivity. After its performance at the Tate Modern International and Contemporary Art Gallery in London, critical reception praised the work as "one of the best Turbine Hall commissions" that was about "communality and intimacy" (Adrian Searle for *The Guardian*, quoted in Paramana 2014, 83). Also writing for *The Guardian* about this work in which performers shared intimate stories as they engaged audience members in game-derived interactions hoping to create a more communal experience, Claire Bishop situated it within a broader context. She said that

In (placing) an emphasis on everyday (rather than highly skilled) forms of performance, [Sehgal's] pieces, like so much other participatory art under neoliberalism, serve a double agenda: offering a popular art of and for the people, while at the same time, reminding us that today we all experience a constant pressure to perform and, moreover, this is one in which we have no choice but to participate. (Bishop quoted in Paramana 2014, 88)

Here Bishop noted the dual operation of Sehgal's egalitarian ethos in producing a more interactive sociality as well as the seemingly inevitable neoliberal conditioning under which art of and for the people was created.¹⁶

Based on her own experience as a performer in the work for a few months, Katerina Paramana (2014) argues that *These Associations* ended up reproducing rather than subverting the neoliberal logic that organizes time, care, and relationality. She notes how the process of creating the work with a total of 250 participants, from which groups of nearly seventy performers alternated four-hour shifts, promulgated some of the collaborative values many contemporary post/modern choreographers seek to implement in their creative practices. Paramana recalls that interactions among the rather large association of performers were "relatively democratic and egalitarian, participatory and informal" as performers' voices were seemingly invited during the development of the work (2014, 86).

However, upon the premiere of *These Associations* at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, a shift to a neoliberal governmentalist approach by the choreographer and close associates stressed management of rather than care for the work (Paramana 2014, 84). Consequently, there was a "rupture" with the social ethos that was intended as the conceptual and affective foundation of the interactive performance as a contemporary work of art. According to Paramana, hierarchies previously not felt as much turned "strongly structured and specialized as in an organization," rather than a social association (2014, 86). Paramana reports that morale in the collective decreased and that she learned through conversations with fellow performers that many felt their voices were not valued anymore while others experienced feelings of isolation (2014). On the one hand, in part due to managerial demands by overproducing (e.g., additional performance commissions by Sehgal in other countries), it seems that Sehgal's egalitarian ethos succumbed to the pressure to perform that Bishop noted as characteristic of making participatory work in the era of neoliberal performance. On the other hand, to what extent individual agency among a large number of performers employed in similar works must surrender to the *co-directive*, or increasingly authoritative,

individual guidance of the choreographer in order to bring the work to life as an entity, to keep its intended aesthetic integrity and social motives, while implicitly functioning as a commodity?

In terms of capital production, accumulation, and exchange under the neoliberal pressure to perform, the rupture in the work's initial intent to enact alternative modes of sociality would have different implications for the already popular contemporary dance artist and the relatively unknown performers. In addition to accumulating some cultural capital by including in their personal résumés the fact that they worked *for* Sehgal, performers were remunerated, "albeit at the London minimum wage" (Paramana 2014, 84). The minimum legal payment effectively kept the artist and the art institution that patronized him within the bounds of the law that regulates labor relations between an employer and a laborer. On the one hand, the large number of performers (250) in this production can make one think of the substantive budget that Sehgal and the Tate—or Abramović and MOCA, whose collaboration enlisted 200 performers—would have to have if a more significant remuneration was to be paid for (artistic) services rendered by un/trained performers or "interpreters." On the other hand, one can consider the option of not making the work as implied in Levine's (2016) assertion that Rainer does not produce dances unless her funding covers decent compensation for her performers. This will be at the expense of not cultivating a reputation of being a politically progressive dance (or art) maker who facilitates innovative modes of collaboration intended to create egalitarian socialities and *give* more agency to participants.¹⁷ As for the artist's gains, although the amount for the Tate's commission is unknown, the cultural capital the collectively created work produced for Sehgal in the form of rave reviews (some are quoted in Paramana 2014) and positive responses from audiences, as well as the project's nomination for a Turner Prize, contributed to increase his reputation as a contemporary, politically progressive, highly innovative dance artist.¹⁸ In what follows, I will discuss in more detail these neoliberal relational ethics in relation to the accumulation and distribution of various forms of capital.

The Entrepreneurial Artistic Archive and Program Credits: Resisting and Reproducing Neoliberalism's Logic in Dance Labor Relations

In this last section, I want to expand the scope of my discussion to dance makers who employ the convention of crediting the creative labor of dancers in printed programs, using the words "and" or "with" to compose phrases such as "choreographed by [name of choreographer] and the dancers" or "in collaboration with the dancers." I will suggest that this seemingly egalitarian crediting practice concurs with neoliberal notions of individual agency that fetishize the idea of "freedom" as an irresistibly appealing concept (Harvey 2005) as well as in its (partial) availability as "liberty" (Lepecki 2016). These specific notions of agency and freedom represent the constructs that contribute to give "real hegemonic sense, real normative sense, real neo-colonialist, neo-racist sense" to the force of neoliberal conditioning (Lepecki 2016, 2–3; see also Martin 1998; Harvey 2005; Bishop cited in Paramana 2014, 88).

In other words, I situate agency in direct relationship to the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural forces that contextualize its production as a concept and its exercise as an experience for different groups of social and cultural body-subjects. Therefore, this analysis applies to dance makers—"experimental," "avant-garde," "conceptual," "conventional," and/or "traditional"—as long as they engage with what has become a widespread practice and cherished value within our contemporary time: the democratic desire to give dancers more agency while *acknowledging* their creative labor in the production of a dance work. I will emphasize how these crediting practices relate to the production and *uneven* distribution of financial, symbolic, and cultural forms of capital as part and products of the artist's entrepreneurial archive.

Collaborative modes of production in contemporary post/modern dance practices are indeed diverse and complex and often shaped by the conditions that characterize the cultural contexts

in which they are developed or adapted. Writing about European dance, specifically in Brussels, Rudi Laermans theorizes what he calls “the semi-directive mode of participative collaboration” (2015, 294). This semi-directive regime can take many forms, but in general, it fosters a nonhierarchical, egalitarian ethos, as it envisions the dance maker as an “enabling coach” who provides the conditions for performers to become creative collaborators rather than mere “passive executors of a ‘dance text’ that is preconceived, partially or entirely, by an author-choreographer” (Laermans 2015, 295). Thus, performers under the co-directive guidance of the enabling coach engage in various modes of movement improvisation and research in order to “co-create the basic material” that would be “variably framed by the choreographer,” who often takes the “final aesthetic responsibility” for the work (Laermans 2015, 295).

Laermans’s description of choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker’s co-directive approach to dance making closely resembles how, according to Paramana (2014), participants felt during the initial stages of making Sehgal’s *These Associations* for the Tate. Laermans explains that De Keersmaecker’s dancers “have a feeling of being genuine co-authors, a status the dancers see confirmed in the possibility to have a say and give personal comments, even to voice serious objections or strong counter-opinions (mostly in a diplomatic way, civility reigns)” (2015, 296). As I share the reflections below, I keep in mind this and other approaches to collaborative processes and the different levels of directiveness they employ. At the same time, I will focus on the question of **who ends up not only symbolically coauthoring but also actually owning the fruit of collective labor as a result of neoliberal entrepreneurial collaborative dance making that enables performers to exercise their individual agency by having a say as creative subjects.**

The ways in which dancers and choreographers built their careers in relation to official and alternative funding structures for diverse dance forms in different countries and historical times vary significantly.¹⁹ Doing an exhaustive comparison of specific practices dance artists engage with in conventional or alternative modes of production, including funding, is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I am more interested in how those different economies lead to what I will call the *entrepreneurial artistic archive*. In addition to historicizing an artistic trajectory, this archival repository of collected materials (e.g., websites, printed programs, awards, critics’ reviews, various forms of documentation such as notations and videos, citations and discussions by scholars, etc.) also functions as a testament to dancers’ and choreographers’ artistic worthiness as they strive to advance their careers and construct their subjectivity as specific artists. Distinctive entrepreneurial artistic archives relate differently to financial, symbolic, and cultural forms of capital depending on the standing a dance artist holds in the hierarchies that determine legitimacy or sophistication as defined within various art and dance traditions and markets.

As assumed in my analysis, symbolic capital circulates as a type of intangible currency within a political economy of affect, while cultural capital, like financial capital, circulates as a tangible currency in the materiality of collected items within the entrepreneurial artistic archive.²⁰ Intangible symbolic capital pertains to the formation of the dancer and the choreographer as an *artist*. For the dancer—as a performer whose bodily labor contributes to the production of a work, or as a dance maker whose embodiment is an active part of choreographing—this affective form of capital has no other body of its own but the dancer’s body. The dancer’s body produces it while it moves by itself or in intersubjective affective exchanges with other specific dancing bodies in particular spaces for distinct audiences. As the dancer embodies this affective symbolic capital, the dancer takes pleasure off of it. Thus, within a specific aesthetic discourse, the dancer as an artist is in part because of the body’s movement, the pleasure it generates, its relationality to others, and because of the other forms of capital it produces. He/she/they can thus feel as, and claim to be, a dancer, a dance artist.

This symbolic capital circulates as affective and psychological intangible currency, but it is always mediated by the materiality of the body’s position in the social hierarchies that frame its

production and circulation. Intangible symbolic capital affords the laboring body of a dancer, as a performer or choreographer, an affirmation of its unique subjectivity as an *artist* with specific relations to hefty or meager financial remuneration as well as systems of social stratification in quotidian life.

While intangible symbolic capital has to do more with the production of the dancer as a perceived embodiment of a specific artistic subject, cultural capital contributes the tangible means that in part determine the circulation of the dancer as a laboring body within the dance field. While symbolic capital is primarily a felt experience, it correlates with its tangible currency accumulated as cultural capital constituted by the contents collected within the dancer's own entrepreneurial artistic archive. The value of cultural capital depends on the dancer's performing associations with the choreographers they have performed for and the dance forms valued by their peers and/or funding sources. The higher the status of the choreographer in the dance community for whom a dancer has worked, the more prestige and legitimacy will be accrued as the dancer's tangible cultural capital. Like intangible symbolic capital, tangible cultural capital not only provides further affirmation to the dancer's subjectivity as an artist, but also augments the dancer's opportunities to make a career in dance by increasing their access to working for choreographers with more recognition and potentially gain some or increased financial compensation.

Like printed programs, websites, video documentation, awards, and critics' reviews also contribute to building a dance artist's reputation amongst their peers, funders, and prospective customers. For performers, these forms of tangible cultural capital increase their competitiveness as prospective dance employees. For dance makers, they also increase opportunities to apply for grants, be approached by potential patrons such as museums interested in purchasing or commissioning dance works, or be presented (or hired) by universities who value more direct engagement with performances of artistic and academic labor.

I will focus now on how symbolic and cultural capital relate to crediting practices and dance making strategies that attempt to be more egalitarian. In many cases, these collaborative compositional strategies through which dancers contribute their own creative labor and embodiment (and personhood) lead to a style unique to a piece of work, whether this is *recognizable* as dance or not. In practice, it will be difficult if not impossible to assess the "value" of how much a dancer contributes to the creation of a dance project, thereby problematizing notions of ownership. However, no matter how significantly dancers have contributed with their bodily creativity to the development of the work, phrases such as "Choreographed by [name of dance maker] and the dancers" or "in collaboration with the dancers" establish the clear hierarchy between the identified choreographer and the defaced, nameless mass of dancers. The massification of these creative, unidentified bodies erases their direct creative history in the project and diffuses the *ownership* of the symbolic and cultural capital the work produces, concentrating such capital in the hands of the one credited before the words "and" and "with."

Often, the next line in the credit listing is the "dancers/performers" category, and from this we can then learn who danced in the piece and who *collaborated* in the making of the choreography. Whatever the contribution of performers' creative labor was to the production of a dance, the erasure of their specific bodies instituted by the words "and" and "with" implies that their input has not been enough to merit access to the symbolic and cultural capital produced by the work and which would enable claims for (co-)ownership. The only one deserving to accumulate and exploit that capital is the one credited before the word "and" or "with" in the credits for choreography. It is only the *author* identified by name, as opposed to the symbolic "coauthors" as unidentified collaborative bodies included in the "and or with the dancers" credit category, who enjoys the right to spend this symbolic and cultural capital when furthering his/her/their own career as a dance maker.

The use of the words “and” and “with” might indeed represent a significant symbolic egalitarian gesture in crediting creative collaborations that present the choreographer as a more democratic subject. On the other hand, how much of this crediting practice reproduces modernist notions that cherished the purportedly genius choreographer whose creative strategies now include the use of others’ bodily creativity, their personhood, in the production of dances, in exchange for a nameless inclusion in the category “and” or “with” the dancers? It is within this democratic, capitalist context that dance makers engage in modes of production that give dancers more agency as creative body-subjects, as Laermans (2015) discusses De Keersmaeker’s co-directive approach to dance making and Paramana (2014) notes of the initial phases of producing Sehgal’s *These Associations*. At the same time, performers and choreographers accumulate their respective financial, symbolic, and cultural capital in order to meet their needs as people and to advance their careers as artists while attempting to cultivate an egalitarian ethos that contextualizes their distinctive practices and subjectivities. In the age of neoliberalism, the choreographer-dance maker and the dancer-performer (interpreter) create new transactional arrangements and consensus as to how to affirm their right to enjoy individual freedom and agency as well as the type and quantity of remuneration (i.e., symbolic, cultural, financial capital) for stratified levels of collaborative input. As they confront the conditioning “(il)logic” of neoliberalism (Lepecki 2016), dance artists must perform *it* “or else . . .” (McKenzie 2001; Bishop quoted in Paramana 2014, 88).

Conclusion

In a context of neoliberal ideology, capitalist economic logic, and democratic ethos as the basis for epistemological and bodily conditioning, what are the relational ethics necessary to enable the articulation of decolonial concepts of agency that can be more enduringly collectivist than those that, according to Paramana (2014), failed in Sehgal’s *These Associations*? Would new forms of collectivist agency and ethics imply the expansion of the belief that the singularity and strangeness of contemporary post/modern dance forms can exclusively emancipate sophisticated artists from neoliberalism’s grip, even if momentarily? Can there be a more inclusive democracy’s body when some conceptions of contemporary post/modern performance continue to reproduce violent exclusions and erasures of the so-called traditional and ethnic? Who would be willing to fracture this dichotomization that has served to constitute the rhetoric of modernity and its processes of racialization, so entrenched in contemporary forms of neocolonialism embodied in neoliberal artistic discourse?²¹

Because of the political and ideological implications diverse approaches to dance making mobilize, the study of dance has demonstrated the ability of dancing bodies—in their many forms—to influence the constant retransformation of societies. Dance also creates and transforms the lives of people who engage in these various forms of cultural production as they create “momentary zones of freedom” (Lepecki 2016, 5) of their own making. Different dance practices enable dancers to define and/or experience “agency” and “freedom” for themselves, through their unique approaches to choreographing, training, and teaching. Despite efforts to deprive some groups from their right to vote, in the United States,²² dance thrives in a society in which democracy is defined by the people’s opportunity to choose their representatives through voting. At the same time, many are denied a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and allocation of resources. In the age of neoliberal performance, is dance merely reflecting or actually producing this context of partial democracy? Or can dance produce alternative, more expansive democratic bodies and politics, more egalitarian symbolic, cultural, and financial economies?

While clarifying that dance cannot be always rendered as a material product, Kraut asserts that “dance is by no means immune to commodification” (2016, 23). While advocating for better working conditions for dance artists in her impassioned open letter regarding the MOCA-Abramović incident, Wookey declares that “art is not immune to ethical standards” (2011). In this paper I

have attempted to address both dance in tensile relationship to the (il)logic of economic and ideological forces as well as dance in relation to ethical considerations in its production. In doing so, I have also tried to emphasize that dance artists, including those with genealogies within the contemporary post/modern tradition, are not immune to processes of subjectivization within a conditioning epistemological context of neoliberal ideology, capitalist economic logic, and democratic ethos.

Notes

I am deeply grateful for the labor, time, and expertise anonymous readers and coeditors of this volume as well as my colleague Anthea Kraut invested in providing critical feedback. In different forms, their insights are present in the strengths this article might have. All weaknesses in the discussion are totally my responsibility.

1. The second paragraph of the United States Declaration of Independence offers an example of an egalitarian ethos as foundational to a democratic relationality intended to assert equal access to rights and opportunity as implied in the lines that read: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness...” We know now that for the rest of the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond, the relativity of that truth functioned as rhetoric that privileged heterosexual, male whiteness. It is that function of egalitarianism as rhetoric integral to the discourse of liberal democracy that informs my use of variations of the “egalitarian” and “democratic” as applied in this paper.

2. Unless otherwise noted, “dance artists” and “dancers” refer to both dancers as performers and dancers as choreographers (or dance makers).

3. This analytical approach extends from Pierre Bourdieu’s assertion that “the mode of expression characteristic of a cultural production always depends on the laws of the market in which it is offered” (1984, xiii). While readapting Bourdieu’s theorization on the discursive construction of taste and social distinction, I will argue that as contemporary dance artists circulate in international art markets, they create additional forms of exchange and economic logic. In doing so, they negotiate their participation in mainstream and/or alternative artistic circuits where they produce and present their work as an integral part of their own formation as specific subjects.

4. For an example about claims that somatic practices in dance training can facilitate “feminist/democratic pedagogy,” see Burnidge (2012). For an extraordinary analysis of the ideological work (liberalism vis-à-vis “American expansionism”) that somatic practices have done transnationally while creating discourses around notions of an ostensible “natural body,” often assumed as an anatomically and mechanically “neutral,” “universal” entity, see Gilbert (2014). Gilbert was also known in international scholar and artistic communities as Doran George. For a discussion of “the authoritarian pedagogical legacy in Western concert dance technique training and rehearsal” to which more egalitarian approaches seek to provide an alternative, see Lakes (2005).

5. While historicizing the emergence of “collaboration” as a new creative mode of production in the Flemish contemporary dance scene around 2005, Rudi Laermans (2015) asserts that this collaborative approach included the “political ideas of equality and democracy” (2015, 19–21). Laermans’s overall project to examine various forms of collaboration without “morally contrasting” them (2015, 392) advocates for a general perspective of commonalism as part of “a contingent experiment in *democratizing democracy*” (2015, 319). He explains that “every creative cooperation not only brings forth a common wealth made up of mutually induced singularizations but also resembles a self-organizing commonwealth of a self-deciding republic” (2015, 390–391). It is in relation to the ethics of the commons that I view the experiment of *democratizing democracy* not only in terms of relationality in democratizing creative modes of production, dance making practices, but also as it implies a more egalitarian distribution of different forms of capital produced by collective and individual labor. I will develop this line of argument in the last section of this paper, where I also return to Laermans’s work.

6. In this paper, “contemporary post/modern dance” refers to a “Euro-American” genealogy of a dance tradition traceable to modern and postmodern dance approaches often historicized as pre- and post-Judson Dance Theater (see for instance Banes 1987; Johnson 1967. See Gilbert (2014) for the role of somatic regimens in the formation of this performance tradition’s genealogy on the US-Europe transnational circuit). Notwithstanding qualitative differences, the generic “postmodern” intends to include variations of dance approaches identified as “avant-garde,” “experimental,” “conceptual,” and/or “cutting edge.” “Modern” hints at dance practices that to various extents have relied on codified dance techniques and other theatrical conventions associated with modern dance (e.g., intentional emotional expressivity, heteronormative gender roles, representational intent, etc.) and which in the second half of the twentieth century served as the field of cultural production from which postmodern dancers emerged and/or reacted to. “Contemporary” intends to signal a recent temporality but that can extend to the first decades after World War II. Its paring with “post/modern” intends to resist the normalization of “contemporary” as a referent for Western dance practices traceable to “Euro-American” postmodern and modern dance genealogies that often go culturally and racially unmarked. This is in contrast to *other* contemporary dance practices marked by identifiers of cultural-racial particularity, such as African, Asian, etc. For a discussion on political implications in the use of “contemporary” in concert, commercial, and “world” dance, see Kwan (2017).

7. See Lazzarato (2011) for an account on the pressure on people, including artists, to adopt the role of an “entrepreneur” as a survival strategy within neoliberalism.

8. In his book chapter “Dancing the Dialectic of Agency and History,” Martin sees agency and history in relation to performers and audiences as analogous dialectics (1998). He proposes that if “performance pertains to the execution of an idea [voice] implicit in the notion of ‘agency’ and that if an audience suggests a mobilized critical presence intended by radical notions of ‘history,’” all the informal and formal nuances represented or unregistered (i.e., in subsequent writing like criticism) materialize “in the tension between performers and audience that enables performance to produce itself a historicity” (Martin 1998, 44–45). It is this dialectical dance between agency and history that informs my view that these two terms as discursive concepts and experiences shape one another without achieving autonomy from their coexistence. More specifically, I view notions of individual agency as contingent to historical events and cultural contexts in which ideologies of liberalism and neoliberalism have provided the conditions that make possible the desire to transcend the (“restrictive”) forces of culture and history to emerge.

9. Although my personal (collaborative) experiences as a dancer, choreographer, scholar, and a person with a background as a working-class laborer constitute the basis for my argument, its development takes the form of discourse analysis that relies primarily on secondary sources.

10. While elements in this brief contextualization might be familiar to a specific readership, I imagine a potential audience inhabiting an international map that expands beyond Europe and the United States and who might not be as acquainted with these histories and their political implications (for a discussion on a more expansive dance studies international map, see Reynoso, [forthcoming](#)). Thus, I do not assume or expect everyone interested in *dance* to be familiar with contemporary post/modern dance histories as it has been my experience engaging in the diverse field of dance studies and dance making in various contexts. In a “democratic spirit,” I hope to reach out to a broad audience of dance artists, scholars, and students interested in learning about how issues of ideology and power work in different dance traditions, including the one I am discussing in this paper.

11. For discussions of the Greensboro sit-in, as the first incident was known, in the context of dance histories, see Rebekah J. Kowal (2010) and, in relation to choreography, see Susan L. Foster (2003).

12. See specifically Kunst’s (2015) discussion of the Abramović-Rainer debate in chapter two, which I discuss briefly later in this paper, and in her book’s conclusion on laziness and doing less work.

13. In order to solicit endorsement from a wide network of artists and scholars, Rainer circulated the letter via e-mail, but the letter was leaked to the media when only Crimp and paggett had signed it. In reality, according to paggett, “There were many other undersigners” endorsing the

letter (paggett prefers her name be written with all lower case letters; pagget, personal e-mail communication with author, October 14, 2018).

14. This analysis resonates with Anthea Kraut's argument that while choreographic copyright served other important functions for dancers during the twentieth century, it also represented a response to and/or anticipation of "a perceived crisis: not the crisis posed by dance's disappearance . . . but the perils of its reproduction" (2016, xiii), perils such as the aesthetic and bodily "evisceration" like in the case of *Trio A*.

15. The resonance these ideas as aesthetic values might have in different geographical areas, a phenomenon often conceptualized as "international aesthetics" within the contemporary post/modern dance tradition, are certainly the result of multidirectional transnational flows of ideas and bodies who have the privilege to afford such mobility and shared ideological affinities.

16. It has to be noted that in describing participants in some of his works, Sehgal has preferred "interpreters" instead of "performers," some of whom have been untrained dancers such as museum workers or even homeless people. For a discussion of the dynamics in some of Sehgal's works, see Lubow (2010) and Pewny and Leenknecht (2012).

17. Citing Claire Bishop, Pewny and Leenknecht note that Sehgal prefers to speak of "sculptures," "installations," or "pieces" rather than "performance," thus situating his work in the context of the traditional visual arts and not the performing or (post)dramatic arts (2012, 198).

18. The sale-purchase transactions between Sehgal and his customers (museums) can be very elaborate and his pieces can range between \$85,000 and \$145,000. For more details see, Lubow (2010).

19. For an analysis of how South Asian Bharata Natyam dance artists negotiate the neoliberal logic that organizes transnational flexible labor in the British context, see Kedhar (2014). For a discussion on the emergence of neoliberal practices in relation to dance in the United States, see Foster (2002). For an example of dance artists who seek to circumvent traditional state funding structures but who create *alternative* networks of support with their own economic logic, see Le Roy's website which includes an impressive list of prestigious, international academic and cultural institutions that have enabled the production of his politically progressive work and subjectivity (see Le Roy in Works Cited for website link).

20. Marta Savigliano's work on *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (1995) also informs my approach to this analysis.

21. While there has been more *diversity* within contemporary post/modern dance by artists interested in "traditional," "ethnic," and "indigenous" forms of performance, these often must adhere to variations of *recognizable* values such as defamiliarization, strangeness, singularity, unrecognizableness, or the "nonrepresentational" that define contemporary post/modern dance as a uniquely *identifiable*, albeit diverse, dance tradition. Also, this specific form of diversity has not translated, for instance, into systematic recruitment efforts and/or admissions for "traditional," "ethnic," and "indigenous" dance artists whose diverse dance making approaches do not reproduce contemporary post/modern values that tend to determine access to Master of Fine Arts dance programs in universities in the United States. What dance forms and whose dancing bodies are enabled to advance their careers through the "legitimization" of academic degrees?

22. For an analysis of systematic voter suppression efforts directed toward African Americans and other minorities, see Anderson (2018).

Works Cited

- Anderson, Carol. 2018. *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Banes, Sally. 1983. *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press.
- . 1987. *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burnidge, Anne. 2012. "Somatics in the Dance Studio: Embodying Feminist/Democratic Pedagogy." *Journal of Dance Education* 12 (2): 37–47.
- Burt, Ramsay. 2009. "Trio A in Europe." *Dance Research Journal* 41(2): 25–27.
- Catterson, Pat. 2009. "I Promised Myself I Would Never Let It Leave My Body's Memory." *Dance Research Journal* 41 (2): 3–11.
- Cvejić, Bojana. 2011. "Xavier le Roy: The Dissenting Choreography of One Frenchman Less." In *Contemporary French Theater and Performance*, edited by Clare Finburgh and Carl Lavery, 188–199. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foster, Susan L. 2002. *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- . 2003. "Choreographies of Protest." *Theatre Journal* 55 (3): 395–412.
- Franco, Mark. 2002. *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Gilbert, Duncan G. 2014. "A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2285d6h4>
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Jill. 1967. "The New American Modern Dance." In *The New American Arts*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz, 162–93. New York: Collier Books.
- Kedhar, Anusha. 2014. "Flexibility and Its Bodily Limits: Transnational South Asian Dancers in an Age of Neoliberalism." *Dance Research Journal* 46 (1): 23–40.
- Klein, Gabriele. 2012. "Labour, Life, Art: On the Social Anthropology of Labour." *Performance Research* 17 (6): 4–13.
- Kolb, Alexandra. 2013. "Current Trends in Contemporary Choreography: A Political Critique." *Dance Research Journal* 45 (3): 31–52.
- Kowal, Rebekah J. 2010. *How To Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Kraut, Anthea. 2008. *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 2016. *Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kunst, Bojana. 2015. *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism*. Hampshire, UK: Zero Books.
- Kwan, SanSan. 2017. "When is Contemporary Dance?" *Dance Research Journal* 49 (3): 38–52.
- Laermans, Rudi. 2015. *Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance*. Amsterdam: Valiz.
- Lakes, Robin. 2005. "The Messages Behind the Methods: The Authoritarian Pedagogical Legacy in Western Concert Dance Technique Training and Rehearsals." *Arts Education Policy Review* 106 (5): 3–20.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. 2011. "The Misfortunes of the 'Artistic Critique' and of Cultural Employment." In *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the "Creative Industries"*, edited by Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray, and Ulf Wuggenig, 41–56. London: MayFly Books.
- Le Roy, Xavier. n.d. "Biography." Accessed July 15, 2018. <http://www.xavierleroy.com/page.php?id=ac7d13b59a24c4d4b778159b56ef6d1135577d7e&lg=en>.
- Lepecki, André. 2016. *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance*. New York: Routledge.
- Levine, Abigail. 2016. "Walls and Floors: Dance in the Museum" (lecture). Dance Studies Colloquium Speaker Series. Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University, March 8. Accessed July 16, 2018. <https://livestream.com/accounts/1927261/events/4314594/videos/114863024>.
- Lubow, Arthur. 2010. "Making Art Out of an Encounter." *The New York Times Magazine*, January 15. Accessed July 23, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/magazine/17seghal-t.html>.

- Martin, Randy. 1998. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2017. "Scenes of Reenactment/Logics of Derivation in Dance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, edited by Mark Franko, 549–69. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McKenzie, Jon. 2001. *Perform or Else: from Discipline to Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Pewny, Katharina and Simon Leenknegt. 2012. "La Précarité Dans La Performance Diese Beschäftigung De Tino Sehgal." *Ligeia* 25 (117–120): 196–202.
- Paramana, Katerina. 2014. "On Resistance through Ruptures and the Rupture of Resistances." *Performance Research* 19 (6): 81–89.
- Rainer, Yvonne. 2009. "Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation." *Dance Research Journal* 41 (2): 12–18.
- Rainer, Yvonne, taisha paggett, and Douglas Crimp. 2011. "Yvonne Rainer Accuses Marina Abramović and LA MOCA of Exploiting Performers." *Artforum*, November 11. Accessed July 15, 2018. <https://www.artforum.com/news/yvonne-rainer-accuses-marina-abramovi-263-and-la-moca-of-exploiting-performers-29348>.
- Reynoso, Jose L. Forthcoming. "Towards a Critical Globalized Humanities: Dance Research in Mexico City at the CENIDID." In *The Futures of Dance Studies*, edited by Susan Manning, Janice Ross, and Rebecca Schneider, 676–701. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Savigliano, Marta. 1995. *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Stein, Danielle. 2009. "Tino Sehgal." *W Magazine*, November 1. Accessed July 18, 2018. <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/tino-sehgal>.
- Wookey, Sara. n.d. "Portfolio—Teaching." Wookey Works. Accessed November 1, 2018. <http://sarawookey.com/portfolio/teaching/>.
- Wookey, Sara. 2011. "An Open Letter From a Dancer Who Refused to Participate in Marina Abramović's MOCA Performance." *Blouinartinfo*, November 23. Accessed July 19, 2018. <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/751666/an-open-letter-from-a-dancer-who-refused-to-participate-in>.