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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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The Againness of Vietnam in Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

Jessica Spring Dellecave

August 2015

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Chairperson

Dr. Jens Richard Giersdorf

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The Dissertation of Jessica Spring Dellecave is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

I extend my deepest gratitude to the persons and institutions that made this project possible. Without the life changing funding from the United States Department of Education, Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, this would not have happened. Additional support from University of California Riverside's Chancellor's Distinguished Fellowship, Gluck Fellowship, Humanities Graduate Student Research Grant, Graduate Student Research Association, GradSuccess Dissertation Retreat, and Mellon Dance Studies in/of the Humanities greatly contributed to my success. A huge thank you is extended to the artists that generously shared their stories, processes, and artistic materials with me—Yvonne Rainer, Wendy Rogers, Ann Carlson, Miguel Gutierrez, Victoria Marks, Jeff McMahon, and Krissy Keefer—without your passionate contributions this project would not exist. Thank you to the New York Performing Arts Library, Getty Research Institute, Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation for granting me access to archival materials.

I acknowledge and thank my committee chairperson, Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, for her immense guidance, support, and belief in this project and in me. Jacqueline, your ability to flow with the struggle of me working through many large ideas about the world taught me and will continue to teach me numerous valuable skills and techniques. Thank you to committee member Dr. Anthea Kraut for her generous comments on my dissertation as well as for her role as my teaching mentor and graduate advisor. Thank you to Dr. Jens Richard Giersdorf for sharing his expertise and for thoughtfully challenging some of the foundations of my project. All of these wonderful people pushed this work far beyond my expectations. I look forward to our continued

engagements. As well thank you to my qualifying examination committee members Dr. Linda Tomko, Dr. Jennifer Doyle and Wendy Rogers. Thank you also to the support staff at the University of California, Riverside, especially Katrina Oskie.

On the home front I thank first and foremost my creature, collaborator, and life partner LJ Roberts for their endless love and support—at times it felt as though this process took a harder toll on you, thank you for your endurance. To my birth family—my smart Mom, Rhoda Dellecave, and artistic Dad, Chris Dellecave, and lovely, eccentric siblings Kenyon Dellecave and Vanessa Dellecave—your belief in me kept me going. To my academic family, my writing group—Dr. Rachel Carrico, Dr. Hannah Schwadron, and Dr. Michelle Summers—whose keen intelligence and diligent feedback shaped many drafts of this project and whose generous hearts helped me through the most challenging moments. Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my many artistic collaborators during these years, you kept me sane and inspired as I painstakingly learned to become a scholar and writer.

Dedicated to Mollicus Maximus (aka Molly) Dellecat and Six Teen Dellecat

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Againness of Vietnam in Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

by

Jessica Spring Dellecave

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Critical Dance Studies

University of California, Riverside, August 2015

Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Chairperson

The Againness of Vietnam in Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography examines eight twentieth- and twenty-first century postmodern antiwar choreographies in order to uncover the reverberations of Vietnam antiwar protests in these dances. The choreographies I examine in this study are Yvonne Rainer's 1970 *M-Walk* and 1970 (and 1999) *Trio A with Flags*, Wendy Rogers' 1970 *Black Maypole*, Ann Carlson's 1990 *Flag* and 2006 *Too Beautiful A Day*, Miguel Gutierrez's 2001, 2008, and 2009 *Freedom of Information (FOI)*, Jeff McMahon's 1991 *Scatter* and Victoria Mark's 2006 *Action Conversations: Veterans*. I theorize a concept called "againness," in order to think through the multiple ways that repetitions specific to these particular choreographies continue to exist and to enact effects through time. I argue that repeated choreographic embodiment offers immediacy, nuanced response over time, expression through the bodies of former soldiers, and sites of mediated resistance such as live-streamed dance protest, to the United States public's commentary on and critique of war. I conclude that choreography's irregular and inexact repetitions are one of the ways that dance is

especially apt for commenting on the large, never-ending, and ongoing traumas of the world such as war. My research extends established discussions about choreographic repetition and ephemerality, exchanging in questions of exactitude for conversations about impact. In particular, I show how the changes inherent to bodily repetitions reflect societal change, raise energy, garner power, and/or respond to current events. I study how politicized dances do not disappear after the time/space event of the initial performance, but instead linger on and reappear in unexpected moments. I thus parse out the many unbounded ways that protest choreographies happen again and again.

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The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Introduction:
**Contemporary United States Antiwar
Choreography, Vietnam, and Againness**

Miguel Gutierrez:

“[I] had no illusions that [*Freedom of Information*] was going to change things [...] It is not giving anyone soup, it is not saving anyone from going to jail, that is very clear. I think a large part of what I do is about creating visions that people can create identification with, either to inspire themselves to continue either to live or to make art or to whatever. Or often in the case of people who don’t live in the art world, I know that it creates a space of reflection and consideration that is just kind of an alternative temporality to the one that is gotta-get-up-and-live temporality. [This] reflective space feels like a radical space to me¹.”

During much of my research on this project, the United States was engaged in war abroad. At the same time, choreographers on the postmodern dance scene were making dances about war². Many choreographers, like Miguel Gutierrez above, expressed that these antiwar choreographies they made were not intended to stop war or complete a specific goal or action. But, in the face of war, choreographers were compelled to do something, anything, and at times this meant doing what they always do—choreographing in response to what was on their minds. These choreographies and choreographers assert what may seem obvious: contemporary United States antiwar choreography does not stop war. Antiwar dance does not end combat, it does not create peace, it does not affect U.S. foreign policy, it does not bring troops home, and it does not stop killing. When I began this project I was interested in why contemporary choreographers would choose to make choreography about an issue as large and never

¹ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014. Gutierrez also stated in our interview: “I am prepared to accept that [*Freedom on Information*] doesn’t do anything, but I do know I know that I was changed from those experiences.”

² Postmodern choreographers who created work that responded to war in the 2000s include (but are not limited to): William Forsythe, David Dorfman, Juliette Mapp, Ann Carlson, K.J. Holmes, Krissy Keefer, Wade Robson, Victoria Marks, Jeff McMahon, and Muhanad Rasheed.

ending as war because it was somewhat evident that these dances would not actually do anything to stop war. What was the point of these dances about war—which were *not* presuming to be direct political action, yet seemed to be asserting an important function in relationship to war? How did their choreographed and embodied projects relate to other artistic forms that dealt with war? If there was no possibility of affecting or changing the war at hand, why make these dances? Was there a purpose other than expression of the artists’ ideas? Was it supposed to be doing something more? Was making choreography about war exploitive of the violence, death, and destruction experienced by others?

In this project, provoked by these questions, I explore ways that U.S. postmodern choreography from the past four decades acknowledges war as inevitable, offers possibilities for how to cope with it, and aids in our understandings of how to deal with it. I focus in particular on the ways contemporary United States choreography provides interventions into understandings of cause and effect, and through that, of linear temporality. I suggest that these works accomplish activisms that are not directly related to stopping war, but are linked to understanding war and perhaps experiencing the permutations of war. As articulated by choreographer Gutierrez above, one of the activist actions of dance is thus not about serving “soup” to feed the hungry but about creating “alternative temporalities” of “radical” contemplation. The creation of these “alternative temporalities,” I suggest, are what dance offers as political action, in relation to war and in relation to political intervention more generally—action with affective capacity, though in multiple temporal directions and in ways that open space for thinking about

war and about viewers' implications as U.S. citizens. Antiwar choreographies provide artistic space for war to enter into the forefront of our thinking. Antiwar choreographies acknowledge the power of powerlessness and instead point towards how physical bodies in space (on stage or on the street) set a platform for awareness and thinking about change.

In the introduction subsections that follow, I define and contextualize the major components of this project. I address each major component of this project in the reverse order that they appear in my title, "The Againness of Vietnam in Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography." What follows are three sections—United States Antiwar Choreography, Vietnam, and Againness. First, I explain my use of the vexed term "choreography," as well as qualify the categorization of the works I examine in this project as "contemporary" and "antiwar." Next, I discuss the utility of the frame of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement. I historicize Vietnam era postmodern dance and antiwar protest in order to contextualize the threads I identify in contemporary antiwar dance. I address dance scholarship in relationship to politics and situate this project amidst how choreography has been theorized as to what it *does* to better the world. Lastly, I define againness, address several specific ways that dance repeats, and explain each chapter's unique choreographic repetitions. I situate my project in conversation with dance studies scholarship on reconstruction, repetition, ephemerality, and performance studies scholarship relating to liveness, reenactment, and non-linear temporality. I argue that dance is a genre of art that operates in non-linear or non-chronological temporalities because of the specific ways it repeats and that these dance-specific repetitions can

impact the past, the present, and the future (not always in the that order). My study aids in the understanding of not only how dance repeats steps but also how choreographies repeat ideas through time. Non-chronological influence is the kind of effect that I theorize antiwar choreography having on social change in the world.

**Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography:
Choreography, Antiwar Choreography, and Contemporary U.S. Antiwar
Choreography**

Ann Carlson:

“One of the first dances I made in high school was a protest dance about the Vietnam War. [...] It was kind of veiled and it was so ridiculous, but so heartfelt, with people walking across, it was very Ted-Shawnian, Ruth St. Denis. [...] War has been a very dominant thing, but that more was because both my brother and my father fought in the wars. I am not exactly antiwar, but I think that is too simplistic a position [...] it is hard not to make work in response to conflict. Growing up, I could feel the experience, trauma, and pride of war and combat training in the bodies, minds and hearts of my father, mother and brother³.”

Choreography is a vexed term, historically fraught with associations to exclusion and privilege in dance scholarship, despite its widespread colloquial use as a term to describe a sequence of dance steps or moves or structured dance improvisation. In what follows, I explain my use of the term choreography for this project and take into account several issues and scholarly debates pertaining to the categorization of dance works as choreography. I first define my use of “choreography,” followed by my use of the term “antiwar choreography,” and lastly I spell out what I mean by “contemporary U.S. antiwar choreography.” I situate my argument within particular strains of choreography emerging from postmodern dance traditions. My work activates broad concepts, such as

³ Personal interview with Carlson, January 14, 2014. Personal correspondence with Carlson, May 29, 2015.

choreography (and elsewhere repetition and temporality), while working from within the frame of specific postmodern dances. Thus throughout general terms help to express the specificities of repetition within particular postmodern choreographies, which in turn aid my overall argument that these choreographic repetitions offer understandings of large ongoing traumas such as war.

In this subsection, I follow and build upon dance theorist and founder of dance studies Susan Leigh Foster's most rudimentary definition of choreography. In her historical exposition on the etymological roots of the word choreography, *Choreographing Empathy*, Foster defines choreography, in a broad sense, as the ordering or "structuring of movement," and "a plan or score according to which movement unfolds⁴." Foster also points out that dance artists often call themselves choreographers who make choreography⁵. Further simplifying and streamlining these definitions, I define the choreographies researched for this project as *structured orchestrations of movements made by choreographers*. While choreographies are certainly made by people or entities other than choreographers and choreographers often craft or create more than choreography—this definition suits the specific dance works investigated in this project

⁴ See Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 2. Foster's opus addresses the historical specificity of performer/spectator exchange in an attempt to reveal how contemporary conceptions about empathy experienced during dance performance are not timeless and universal but rooted in ideas that have changed over time. In separate chapters, Foster historicizes the word "choreography" and the word "empathy."

⁵ Ibid, p.3.

because I am focusing on a range of postmodern dance works crafted by and attached to particular self-identified “choreographers⁶.”

Choreography by choreographers is, however, critiqued as being used in the service of privileging some and excluding others. Choreography is commonly not considered when dances don’t have specific authors (a dance like salsa for instance) and is in fraught relationships to issues of ownership and copyright⁷. As pointed out by Foster in relationship to the work of dance scholars Anthea Kraut and Jens Giersdorf, “choreography, whether as notation or as composition, functions to privilege certain kinds of dancing while rejecting or repressing others⁸.” For example, historian Kraut challenges the notion that only self-identified choreographers make choreography. Kraut contends that improvised dance at popular events, such as many black vernacular dance forms, are often left out from the canon of choreography. In her book, *Choreographing the Folk: the Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston*, Kraut examines the 1930s Black Renaissance staged performances by African American folklorist, anthropologist, and writer, Zora Neale Hurston. Kraut argues that Hurston choreographed Bahamian folk dance for the stage, despite the fact that Hurston did not identify as and is not

⁶ Many of the dance-making artists I discuss in this project have worked in other artistic genres as well as dance. Yvonne Rainer left dance to become a feminist filmmaker in the mid-1970s and then returned to choreography in the early 2000s. Jeff McMahon currently works more frequently in theater than in dance and teaches in a university theater department. Victoria Marks often collaborates on films. Miguel Gutierrez plays music and has performed in various bands.

⁷ Choreography within these debates is also sometimes viewed as separate from or in relationship to the agency of the dancers.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

posthumously recognized as a choreographer⁹. Kraut’s queries are an invitation to question the very notion of what we deem choreography and whom we deem choreographer. Kraut points out that often social or vernacular dance forms originating from African American or communities of color, such as Hurston’s folk dances, are typically excluded from the kinds of dances that are considered choreography¹⁰. Thus the makers of these kinds of dance works are not called and do not identify as choreographers. Kraut’s intervention into the terms choreographer and choreography aims to be inclusive of more dance forms and dance-makers of these dance forms, particularly those rooted in historically invisibilized communities of color¹¹. My use of the word choreography as a term connected to self-identified choreographers does not intend to exclude choreography made by non-self-identified choreographers, especially choreographers of colors and choreographies that are popular, cultural, or from non-U.S. locations. However, in this project I include a combination of canonized, well-known, emerging, and lesser-known choreographers all who have extensive histories of working

⁹ Kraut examines issues of authenticity and authorship within Hurston’s stagings, arguing strongly that Hurston’s orchestration of these dances for the stage was choreography and that she was a choreographer (though she is not called and did not name herself as one). Kraut looks to dance theorists Randy Martin and Susan Foster to define choreography and art critic Rosalind Krauss on the original versus the copy.

¹⁰ Kraut’s theorization of the folk resists master narratives and absolute origin, releasing the folk from strict adherence to notions of authenticity. Kraut defines folk as a description of “black expressive practices that Hurston strove to portray and illuminate on stage and throughout her career, practices that emanated from a particular demographic group and a particular region—the black working classes of the rural South—but were not confined to them.” Kraut notes that folk represented a “bulwark against modernity” and thus was taken up by many divergent groups with divergent anti-modernizing impulses. See p. 23.

¹¹ Invisibilization is term coined by dance scholar and historian Brenda Dixon-Gottschild and can be situated within recuperative projects in dance studies, which serve to include the overlooked contributions of African Americans in the early U.S. dance canon. Dixon-Gottschild argues that all U.S. dance forms, even those associated with white communities (for example, Balanchine’s ballets) are an amalgamation of Europeanist and Africanist aesthetics, yet the Europeanist aesthetics are often exclusively identified in these forms. See *Digging the Africanist Presence*.

quite traditionally in the canon of postmodern dance (a genre of associated with choreography/choreographer). I utilize these terms to gain specificity in my discussions of U.S. postmodern antiwar dances with awareness that this term carries with it an often-unacknowledged privilege.

Likewise Foster cites dance scholar Giersdorf, who warns against choreography, particularly within the academy and when used as a method of theorizing, as an unmarked, universalist, self-referential “site and strategy, which thereby loses its potential for intervention¹².” Giersdorf argues that choreography, as a universalist umbrella term for all forms of dance, might result in “loss of specificity” and “could become an unmarked strategy within transnational academic and artistic exchange that would work complicit with other forces in globalization¹³.” Both Kraut and Giersdorf are in agreement that choreography is an often unmarked and uninterrogated site. However, Giersdorf argues that a theoretical move such as Kraut’s expanding the inclusiveness of choreography and choreographer, especially in the context of a transnational academic dance studies department, could potentially result in choreography as further aligned with homogenization resultant from globalization and corporatization in the academic

¹² See Giersdorf, “Dance Studies in the International Academy: Genealogy of a Disciplinary Formation,” p. 37. In an exposition on his personal experience teaching at and/or attending three European and United States dance departments (University of Surrey, England; University of California, Riverside; and Universität Leipzig, Germany), Giersdorf points out that archivization, analysis, and choreography are methodologies and approaches emphasized by each of these departments and contributing to the formation of a homogenized culturally non-specific transnational academic dance studies. Following Foster’s interrogation of the definition of culture from *Reading Dancing*, Giersdorf proposes a similar inquiry into the presumably unmarked term choreography. Giersdorf argues “this would allow a comprehension of institutional interests in the construction of choreography, its disguises, and even possible hegemonic moves.” p. 38.

¹³ Quoting Foster on Giersdorf, p. 5.

institution¹⁴. This project seeks to inhabit the broad canvas and often umbrella-like characteristic of the term choreography, pointed out in Giersdorf's critique, while investigating how socially engaged choreography and choreographers, often from within the globalized and corporatized structure of institutionalized dance studies, offer up ways of dealing with the ongoingness of the large traumas of the world. My project does knowingly privilege the work of those who identify as and have had careers as dance-makers, particularly those who have worked predominantly within the postmodern genre of dance. I investigate choreography by choreographers who inhabit these terms in this conventional way. That is, the sites I investigate are all well within what would be customarily called choreography/choreographer. All of my subjects are U.S.-based, some of them do work international dance circuit, and many are employed by academic institutions. I aim to acknowledge Foster, Kraut, and Giersdorf's critiques by marking the term and practice of "choreography" as exclusive, broad, homogenizing, and aligned with globalization, yet at the same time I aim take advantage of the choreography's broadness to push the definition of choreography, as well as propel a new set of considerations for how choreographic repetitions carry ideas through time. The universalizing quality of choreography provides plentitudes of opportunities for understanding some particular and highly specified ways that choreographic repetitions function. My project seeks to exploit choreography in order to explore some of the variations and lesser-discussed way of how this broad term can operate—particularly in relationship to repetition and antiwar commentary.

¹⁴ Giersdorf, p.37.

I also exclude from my analyses choreographies of antiwar protest that are not danced. For example I do not include analysis of choreographies of protest, such as Foster does quite successfully in her analysis of the non-danced but choreographed protests of the lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960s, ACT-UP die-ins of 1990s, and IMF/World Trade Organization protests orchestrated for media in the late 1990s¹⁵. Foster points toward how choreography does not necessarily include dance, but does share with dance, the training of bodies and intentional kinesthetic orchestrations in space. This project specifically addresses danced antiwar choreographies by self-identified choreographers. Many lenses could have been used to talk about the particular dance works I selected. I chose to emphasize “choreographer” and “choreography” because in each chapter I focus on the repetitions in the choreographic process, specific repetitions of repeated performances, and biographical information about the individual choreographer’s genealogy within lineages of postmodern dance. Though choreography is a broad and often generalized term that encompasses many ways and styles of dance making, in this instance, choreography permits a way of teasing out the specificities that are subsumed under an overall tag, such as choreographer. I do not intend to suggest that these dance works are representative of “Choreography” as a whole or as a strict definition of what is considered a work of dance, but instead I utilize the term choreography, with an awareness/recognition of this broadness but also a mobilization of this broadness, to describe dance works choreographed by particular postmodern choreographers within a specific time frame (1970 through early 2000s). I categorize

¹⁵ See Foster, *Choreographies of Protest*.

these dance works as choreography, not dance or performance. I chose these dance works and to term them as choreography in part because I aim to distinguish antiwar choreography—presented as such by postmodern choreographers within a specific historical moment—from antiwar dance, which could be considered any and all dancing or movement done as a protest against war. This choice of language differentiates “dance” as broader than choreographed dance, and “performance” as inclusive of dance as well as other genres of art, and thus broader than this project.

The choreographies I examine in this study are Yvonne Rainer’s 1970 *M-Walk* and 1970 (and 1999) *Trio A with Flags*, Wendy Rogers’ 1970 *Black Maypole*, Ann Carlson’s 1990 *Flag* and 2006 *Too Beautiful A Day*, Miguel Gutierrez’s 2001, 2008, and 2009 *Freedom of Information (FOI)*, Jeff McMahon’s 1991 *Scatter* and Victoria Marks’ 2006 *Action Conversations: Veterans*. Each example of dance work examined in this project has a distinctive relationship to the word “choreography.” I include as choreography set and improvised movement phrases, performances and re-performances of dance works, an improvised endurance movement score with few parameters (including an instruction to report back on one’s experience in written form on an online blog), archival documentation of performances, and dance works with extensive set and improvised text and sound scores performed by people who identify as dancers and non-dancers. My exploration of choreography depends on a notion of choreography that exists beyond any single performance, thus my approaches to choreography and temporality are interwoven. As I show throughout this project, choreography itself exists in the past,

present, and future, and those multiple existences often influence and sometimes alter each another.

In my analyses, I blend the differences between performance and choreography, especially in relationship to repetition, in order to maximize and fully investigate the ways that choreography, particularly postmodern forms, does in fact complicate discrete notions of choreography and performance. My writing liberally alternates, slips, and slides between these terms. Destabilizing the term choreography also follows Foster, who states that she has “endeavored to decenter choreography from functioning as an explanatory rubric, and instead, to highlight the dilemmas that the term embodies¹⁶.” Choreography is often used as a device for delineating what certain aspects of danced performance is called or named. I am not so interested in arguing for choreography as separate and distinguishable from dancing and/or performance. Instead my project conflates and collapses what Foster calls the “dialectic tension between choreography and performance” in order to take issue with strict notions of the term choreography, while intentionally utilizing choreography as a terminology that encompasses many kinds of locations¹⁷. While Foster uncovers dilemmas in the relationships between choreography and performance, I contend that their conflation evokes insight into the ways that choreography operates to comment on the large traumas of the world. Asserting that choreography encompasses both the performance and the score/documentation that precedes/succeeds the performance allows for more opportunities for repetitions or

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

doings over again in different contexts and/or political moments and thus expands instances for these danced comments to take place. In other words these conflation bolsters the amount of inexact repetitions and extend the number of perspectives that are available from a singular choreography in its various forms.

Of further concern in the use of the term choreography in my project are the historical relationships of choreography as structured orchestration in space to notation, geography, botany, colonization, and war¹⁸. These histories inevitably and perhaps problematically intersect with antiwar choreography by self-identified choreographers. However for the purposes of this project I find the term choreography most suitable for the specificity of the kinds of dances I investigate. Foster also points towards other dance scholars (Thomas DeFrantz, Randy Martin, Mark Franko) who have engaged in debates about choreography specifically in relationship to society and politics, choreography as theorization of the corporeal, and choreography as embodiment of individual and social

¹⁸ See Foster, Chapter One and Two, *Choreographing Empathy*. Foster elucidates a compelling historicization of the term choreography. Foster discusses late seventeenth and early eighteenth century European efforts to notate and disseminate dance. With focus on the work of dance notator Rauol Auger Feuillet, author of *Chorégraphie*, Foster contends that early dance notation on the page “bound the dancing to the ground on which it occurred, not to its indigenous location, but rather to an abstract and unmarked ground.” p. 26. Foster convincingly relates this early dance notation to imperialist efforts of European empires to similarly conquest and colonize the unmarked space of the rest of the world. Foster contends that dance notation on the page allowed dances to travel and be disseminated to the ever-growing empires of Europe. To make this argument Foster connects the practice of notating choreography to the sub discipline of geography termed chorography, which used similar techniques to map geographies of conquered lands. Foster draws upon the work of landscape geographer Kenneth Olwig (as well as others) citing his work as demonstrating “the crucial role that chorography played in consolidating regions and proclaiming their sovereignty.” p. 76. Foster argues that chorography “contributed to consolidating and building the nation.” p. 76. Similarly she relates choreography to the kind of categorization that was happening at this time in fields such as botany (taxonomy) and medicine (Galenic notions of anatomy). Foster links the orchestration of bodies in space via choreography, to the spatial ordering of bodies in colonized lands. In other words, Foster associates the seventeenth century impulse to categorize, notate and disseminate dance to imperialist conquest and war.

identities, particularly gender¹⁹. Foster argues that choreography is “this kind of theorizing about what a body can be and do [that] makes evident the ways in which dance articulates with social, aesthetic, and political values²⁰.” My use of the term choreography in this project aligns with this latter set of debates and seeks to emphasize the political currency brought forth through not just any kind of dancing, but through specific structured orchestration of dancing—choreographed dancing.

My use of the term “antiwar choreography” includes choreographies that were made specifically as antiwar activism, as well as choreographies that include antiwar commentary and critique. In other words, I use “antiwar choreography” to mean choreographies termed, promoted, and historicized as antiwar, as well as choreographies that more broadly address, comment on, and critique war. The examples I chose often spanned multiple wars and were performed more than once, and more often than not in differing circumstances and political moments. The sample of choreographies that I chose for this project comment on and critique a range of United States wars—the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the military conflict Afghanistan Wars—all of which occurred outside of the national boundaries of the United States. The limited range of wars, all of which were acknowledged as wars by the United States government, purposefully excludes other wars fought on U.S. soil—such as the War on Drugs, the Culture Wars, the War on Terror, and continuing settler colonization of Native lands. Though postmodern choreographies have certainly been made that address these

¹⁹ See Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 3-5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

domestic wars and the social issues that surround them, including analysis of these works are beyond the breadth of this project. Each example has a unique relationship to the category of “antiwar.” While *M-Walk*, *Scatter*, and *FOI* are specifically named as antiwar by their respective choreographers, other choreographies protest more than one cause—the 1970 version of *Trio A with Flags* was an antiwar protest and a protest against flag art censorship, and the 1999 version of *Trio A with Flags* was not in conjunction with any war, but was instead performed as an anniversary celebration at Judson Memorial Church²¹. *Flag* made a comment and critique of both the Persian Gulf War and the Culture Wars, while *Too Beautiful A Day* was performed during the aftermath of 9/11. Both choreographies were political and controversial because dancers danced atop an actual United States flag²².

“Contemporary antiwar choreography” denotes postmodern antiwar choreographies of today – by which I mean dance made from the late 1960s to the present day. I use the term contemporary to signal that these dances are within the current era of aesthetics, and also to evoke contemporary as an overarching term used to describe both modern and postmodern dance globally. While the choreographies I discuss are contemporary dance, they are also more specifically postmodern dance. Just like choreography, the term postmodern dance is contested because of its unresolved

²¹ Judson Memorial Church is an iconic downtown/postmodern Manhattan performance venue where the early postmoderns held many performances. Judson Memorial Church also was and is an active place of worship.

²² Carlson told me that in both choreographies the upside down, danced-upon U.S. flag represented a “nation in distress.” This distress included the obvious wars, first the Persian Gulf, later Iraq and Afghanistan, and also the Culture Wars and later 9/11. Personal interview with Carlson, January 14, 2014.

relationship to the project of modernity and imperialism. Philosopher Jurgen Habermas protests the use of the word postmodern and posits postmodernism as an impossible project because “the project of modernism has not yet been fulfilled²³.” Dance theorist Andre Lepecki similarly prefers the term modern citing the Homi Bhabha-inspired skepticism of the “time-lag” in which “colonial and postcolonial moments emerge as sign and history²⁴.” Cultural studies theorist Marianne DeKoven agrees with Habermas, yet advocates for the use of the word postmodern because she views postmodern as “in continuity with, as well as a transformation of modernization²⁵.” Likewise queer theorist Judith Halberstam defines postmodernism as “ the generative clash between new modes of cultural production and late capitalism²⁶.” As a dance practitioner, I use postmodern colloquially to describe an aesthetic trope distinct from codified techniques of classical modern dance such as Graham, Hawkins, or Horton technique²⁷. In dance, postmodern technique can be vaguely described as a conglomeration of techniques including release technique, improvisation, kinesiology, and somatics. The postmodern technical goal of released musculature creates a sense of ease, an awareness of the body, and the ability to respond to unknown or surprising shifts of weight, such as those encountered in improvisation. The postmodern-trained body counters the rigid, muscular, athletic bodies

²³ Habermas, p.13.

²⁴ Lepecki, p.14.

²⁵ DeKoven, p.12.

²⁶ Halberstam, p.98.

²⁷ The modern versus postmodern classifications of dance are of course generalizations, and in a state of constant flux that is both difficult to pin down temporally, yet distinctly changing over time.

of ballet-rooted modern techniques. In modern technique, prescribed bodily positioning towards fixed points in space remains a major goal, while in postmodern technique the sequencing and spiraling of the limbs and torso, rather than the positioning, assumes precedence. In examining U.S. contemporary antiwar dance, created by self-identified choreographers working within the postmodern style, my project implicates contemporary U.S. postmodern political dance as continuing and continuous—not simply as a historical byproduct of the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 70s, and not just in reaction to particular wars or particular events.

Vietnam

Wendy Rogers:

“We mistakenly had such a strong belief in the power of what our art-making could do in the context of the [Vietnam War] moment. [We felt like] some things just got very messed up and we just need to get rid of the rules and then goodness will prevail. Hahahahaha [...] maybe that is over-exaggerating but there was just such a sense of the power of goodness and the power of art to reveal that [goodness] and transform really complex serious political and social structures. [...] One can look back and feel embarrassed or critical or all different kinds of things, and I know that a lot of people looking back on those times see a lot of the behaviors as indulgent, but I really think that the energy and youthfulness and the fact that is was the generation of boomers coming of age and coming out of our houses and gathering on lawns, and going, wow! There’s a lot of us—lets take some of the power²⁸!”

Yvonne Rainer:

“Even at the time [1970] I did not expect *M-Walk* or *WAR* to have any political effect. It was simply an expression, shared by thousands of people and not just artists, of our anger and outrage at the criminal misadventures of the US government at home and abroad. [...] I turned to film around 1972 in an effort to deal more with the specifics of issues around feminism and global politics. Upon returning to dance, I still rely more on language than abstract dance movement to deliver political material²⁹.”

²⁸ Personal interview with Rogers, December 8, 2013.

²⁹ Personal interview correspondence with Rainer, November 19, 2013.

Within the case study of contemporary U.S. antiwar choreography, the Vietnam War emerged as a fruitful frame for examining how antiwar ideas repeat through time and explaining how dance functions. I chose to trace one particularly meaningful U.S. war as I see it continuing in different ways in different choreographies. My examples reflect distinct aspects that I trace as emanating from the Vietnam War era—choreography as street protest in direct reaction to military actions; desecration of the United States flag; use of media technologies to report on both war and the protest of war; and concern for the welfare of combat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). My goal was to discuss how dance functions to perpetuate ideologies and strategies from the Vietnam antiwar movement in order to further thinking about how dance recycles and repeats ideas from different eras. I chose to look specifically at the resonances of the Vietnam War in contemporary antiwar dance because of my personal connection to this war—my father is a Vietnam veteran and his experiences of war greatly influenced my political inclinations. The Vietnam War era is also historicized as the era of the emergence of postmodern dance, the genre of dance that I examine in this project. My dissertation is thus premised upon but not really about war at large or Vietnam in particular. I utilize the case study of antiwar activism and within that the frame of the Vietnam War, which in turn has allowed me to explore different kinds of repetition, continuity, and political expression in dance.

To answer the major research inquiries of my dissertation I have chosen to trace antiwar ideas from this specific war, Vietnam, through six specific choreographies³⁰. Overall my project examines how specific postmodern antiwar choreographies of today carry particular activist engagements from the Vietnam War era, with special interest in their inexact repetitions or againness. I did not choose the Vietnam era because it serves as a starting point for the history of antiwar choreography. Antiwar sentiment as choreographic content is easily documentable in early modern and ballet choreographies such as Kurt Jooss' 1932 *The Green Table*, Ana Sokolow's 1933 *Anti-War Cycle*, and Martha Graham's 1936 *Steps in the Streets*. Despite the existence of antiwar choreography since at least the 1930s, I choose to study the Vietnam War era because it serves as a clear framework for bringing forward what dance offers discussions of repetition in both dance and performance studies and how art functions to sooth unchangeable and difficult truths about the world (like war). The influence of Vietnam antiwar protests in the contemporary antiwar dances I examine in this study offers a particularized corroboration of the anti-ephemerality, or non-disappearance, or staying effect of choreography in particular, and performance more generally.

My project takes root from two significant cultural events in United States history—the Vietnam antiwar movement and the birth/recognition/popularity of downtown New York City postmodern dance. The era of roughly the early to mid 1960s through the early 1970s signaled a major turning point in postmodern dance history, as

³⁰ To name this particular war as the “Vietnam War” signals the geographical location of the United States, as in the country of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam this same war is termed the “American War.”

well as a critical turn in the U.S. public's relationship to the military actions of the government. The early postmodern choreographers emerged from the thriving minimalist and experimental scene of downtown Manhattan, which mixed and mingled artists of many disciplines. The convergence of dance (and other art forms) with political turmoil and counterculture lifestyle in the 1960s produced what in hindsight was termed the shift from modern dance to postmodern dance³¹.

The Vietnam War era significantly changed the U.S. public's trust in the government's involvement in war overseas. This distrust was frequently expressed as mass street protests and exacerbated by unprecedented media coverage. Televised news reports, of both the war in Vietnam and domestic antiwar protests, outraged U.S. civilians spurning the name the "living-room war." The late 1960s and early 1970s also mark a clear shift in warfare style. The Vietnam War is an example of a style of warfare that emerged after classic inter-state warfare, and before the New Wars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries³². While classic inter-state warfare served the purpose of

³¹ New York choreographers associated with early postmodern dance include Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, Anna Halprin, Deborah Hay, Trisha Brown, Meredith Monk, and David Gordon as well groups such as Grand Union and Judson Dance Theater. U.S. dance scholarship by such authors as Susan Manning, Susan Leigh Foster, Sally Banes, and Ramsay Burt documents the social and cultural change in the counterculture of the 1960s as very much reflected in the dances produced in New York City during that time.

³² Karl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831) was a German-Prussian soldier and military theorist credited with being one of the most cited theorists on classical strategic war theory. Clausewitz outlines and theorizes two models of classic inter-state warfare predominant in Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: war to overthrow an adversary and the conquest of frontier. Modern battle during the time of Clausewitz was a conglomeration of soldiers amassed on both sides of a thick line at the site of the battlefield. The soldiers would engage in musketry battle until nightfall and then assess whether the battle line had progressed or retreated. Strict rules, previously established by the warring states, were adhered to in regard to the movement of the troops. For example, battling after nightfall, battling from the rear of the frontline, and attacking medics who removed wounded or dead bodies from the battlefield were strictly prohibited. Herfried Münkler theorizes the wars of the late 1990s and early 2000s as New Wars, for example wars that broke out in Rwanda and Sierra Leone. According to Münkler, new wars dismantle

conquering new terrain or overthrowing an adversary, the Vietnam War exemplified a war in which a number of powerful countries, including the United States, aided one side of an *intra*-state conflict. Post-World World II conflicts such as Vietnam resulted in theorizations about just versus unjust war³³. The Vietnam War was not two sides of relatively well-matched soldiers amassed on a single line, as in classical warfare, but instead was foreign soldiers, with more powerful weapons and manpower, fighting amidst the unfamiliar terrain of Vietnam (and later Cambodia and Laos). The South Vietnamese responded to the force of foreign troops through surprise tactics: they staged guerilla attacks in hard to navigate terrain such as jungles and recruited local villagers in order to confuse the distinctions between civilians and soldiers³⁴. The Vietnam War was

states as opposed to wars of the past, which were used for state-building purposes. Münkler believes that the new wars of the twenty-first century have gone beyond the warfare theorized by Clausewitz as classical inter-state warfare. Münkler contends that the new wars began in response to a shift from symmetrical power relations, or symmetrical war, to warfare with asymmetrical power relations or asymmetrical war. Characteristics of new wars include surprise attacks, child soldiers, cheap weapons, groups that operate across national borders, less distinction between soldiers and civilians, the utilization of humanitarian aid by warlords, and brutal violence. Münkler argues that media has become a part of the new wars and that war reporting as warfare was an integral step in the shift to asymmetrical warfare.

³³ In *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer argues that some wars, such as World War II are justified and morally acceptable. Walzer writes from the perspective of a participant in the Vietnam anti-war movement. As an anti-war activist, Walzer takes on the seemingly contradictory task of justifying why wars should sometimes be fought, and if they must be fought, how soldiers should be expected to act with moral consideration for life. Walzer argues that war can be justified in response to aggression or humanitarian intervention, but that regime change, such as that which happened recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, is not a justified cause for war. Walzer theorizes unjust wars as unjustified use of force and violence. For example, Walzer critiques battles during the Vietnam War where superior officers forced soldiers into morally compromising and/or illegal situations.

³⁴ U.S. soldiers fighting during the Vietnam War thus describe improvisation as one of the ways combat played out in the dense unfamiliar terrain of Vietnamese jungles. Improvisation emerged as tactic used in artistic practices as well. Film theorist Owen W. Gilman, Jr. argues that improvisation techniques used by film directors in movies depicting the Vietnam War both employed improvisation as a technique, and utilized improvisation to demonstrate chaos. Postmodern dance during the Vietnam Era also heavily utilized improvisational techniques, both in process and in performance. See Gilman in *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television (Culture And The Moving Image)*.

publically perceived as an unjust war, and therefore garnered massive public outrage. Though the style of warfare in Vietnam was a classic intrastate conflict, the strict rules of combat were compromised on both sides of the conflict, creating an asymmetrical war, and thus signaling the beginning of another era of warfare, the New Wars. Since the 1970s military conflicts involving the United States have incorporated all sorts of new modes of combat (particularly remotely operated combat, which I do not take up here but wish to address in relationship to this material in the future). However just because a style of warfare has changed in the larger world does not mean that the way it is protested, especially the way it is protested through dance, has also made an equal shift in strategy³⁵. While utilizing some Vietnam-era strategies to protest an entirely different style of warfare could be read as a backwards or behind-the-times response, I argue that the recycling of the old in the new provided by modes of artistic and bodily transmission is precisely the power of dance. In this, dance utilizes its changeability and functions to create fresh perspectives and powerful continuities. I contend that these kinds of evidences—of past antiwar movements in contemporary choreographies—suggest the non-chronological or non-linear effects that are made possible through danced commentaries.

My research about specific contemporary U.S. antiwar choreographies in the twentieth and twenty-first century serves as a case study regarding choreography, temporality, and politics. Though researched during a time of war, the discoveries of this

³⁵ Gutierrez's *FOI*, which I address in Chapter Three, is the one antiwar choreography that I address in this project that I believe responds to shifts in how war is fought through its' performance in various locations and concurrent live-stream on the Internet. See Chapter Three.

project ultimately have little to do with war. My argument can be just as easily made by substituting antiwar with any activist cause that choreography has been made about, and choreographies have been made about everything. When choreographers make dance about war they bring awareness to difficult experiences that have always been a part of humanity and will likely continue to be. The choreographic relationship to resistance to and comment upon war, or antiwar statements is a useful frame for talking about what dance does as a tool of reflection about the ongoing traumas of humanity. War becomes a useful frame for examining what dance *does*.

Many smart, thoughtful, politically engaged U.S. postmodern choreographers make choreographies about war. The choreographers I interviewed for this project—Yvonne Rainer, Wendy Rogers, Ann Carlson, Miguel Gutierrez, Jeff McMahon, and Victoria Marks—articulate that their relationship to the large, ongoing, never-ending, forever concept of war is very personal and often boils down to personal relationships to family members or loved ones who have experienced war. Some of these choreographers shy away from naming their dances as explicitly antiwar, while others have clearly stated goals about their protest and activism. The indirectness of these choreographers' experiences of war and their impetus to *do something* about war speaks to the way that war greatly impacts lives beyond those who have experienced it first-hand. I theorize choreography in a similar way—as extending beyond the initial time/space event of performance in situations such as video documentation, scholarly and critical writing, blog posts that are part of the choreography, and re-performance. Againness, or inexact repetitions specific to the genre of dance, are how I see dance responding to issues as

universal and as personal as war. I argue both dance and war exceed finite context. Dance is conceived of as disappearing or ephemeral, while war is conceived as over when the government declares a victory or truce. Instead, I posit war as a permanent situation and the time of dance as not disappearing; both war and dance last beyond the initial time/space event. This recognition provides ways of concretely tracking how non-linear understandings of effect work through choreography.

Dance scholarship in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has covered many topics involving dance and politics and/or social justice issues. My theorizations follow the trend of dance studies scholarship that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s and sought to recognize modern and postmodern concert dance with political meaning. Like this scholarship, my work looks at how dance choreography *does* something political³⁶. Dance scholar Naomi Jackson, editor of the anthology, *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, points out a number of things that activist dance *does*. Jackson writes that dance inspires individuals to “reach out to each other, and find ways, through dance, to promote ideals of freedom, justice, and peace³⁷.” Dance and performance studies theorist Randy Martin insists that art, including dance, has “helped engage people” with civil dissent, given “voice and comment” to a crowd, “captured media attention”, “introduced a range of voices,” and operated as a mechanism of “public

³⁶ By political, I mean, working towards various social justice issues. This deployment of political is distinct from political dance in the 1930s, which was ‘political’ because it was political party affiliated. See Stacey Prickett, Ellen Graff, Mark Franko on the Revolutionary Dance Movement; Rebekah Kowal and Gay Morris on 1950s U.S. Modern Dance, Cynthia Novack and Sally Banes on 1960s postmodern U.S. Dance.

³⁷ Jackson, p. x.

making³⁸.” Yet Martin also observes the shortcomings of activist art: “there is of course no guarantee that art will promote justice and democracy³⁹.” While Jackson and Martin offer promotion, engagement, public making, and media attention as concrete accomplishments that activist dance can and has achieved, the goal, intention, or point of activist oriented choreography can be much more ambiguous, particularly in modern and postmodern genres where narrative content often draws upon techniques of abstraction⁴⁰.

Martin provokes, ask not what politics can do for dance, but what dance can do for politics⁴¹. Martin warns that it is common practice to under read choreographed politics. He instead proposes “overreading” or intentionally reading complex and multi-layered meaning into choreography. Martin cautions that under reading can result in

³⁸ Martin, *Artistic Citizenship*, p. 4-5.

³⁹ Martin, *Artistic Citizenship*, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Dance theorists Susan Manning and Randy Martin propose that the abstract narrative of dance, because it can be read in multiple frameworks, has potential to serve as a vehicle for political meaning. Manning terms this choreographic strategy “interpretive ambiguity” and proceeds to theorize “mythic abstraction.” Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*, p. 135. Most notably Manning discusses the “mythic abstraction” present in the “Emancipation Episode” of Martha Graham’s *American Document*. For example, Manning describes a woman kneeling, and gazing at the ceiling with her hands in front of her eyes. Manning wonders whether this woman is praying, covering her eyes, or celebrating the freedom of African Americans. Martin advocates for dances’ narrative ambiguity, arguing that the multiple readings available to dance imbue it with the potential to be read in service of politics. Martin, *Critical Moves*, p. 60. Choreographer Stephanie Skura similarly proposes that the politics of dance are not in the content of choreography but instead in the process of making choreography. See Skura, p. 183. For Martin, political meaning in dance choreography takes on multiple and sometimes vague meaning, and its ability of choreography to morph or have unclear meaning that gives choreography deep power. Kowal argues that in the 1950s African American choreographers opted to choreograph social issues as social realism, over the universalism and abstraction utilized by their white contemporaries. Where Manning and Martin read abstraction and ambivalence as contributing to the politics of dance, Kowal argues during the postwar era, audiences and critics did not appreciate African American choreographies that relied on abstraction. Similarly in this project, I investigate antiwar choreographies that employ “interpretive ambiguities” which allowed choreographies to be danced in protest of multiple causes and across the time span of multiple wars. As well, I look at several examples that employed more of a “social realism” approach or a combination of “interpretive ambiguities” and “social realism” in their antiwar commentary. In Chapter Three I problematize abstraction in the work of Miguel Gutierrez. See Chapter Three.

⁴¹ Martin, *Critical Moves*, p. 60.

“conflating the real and its representations⁴².” For Martin, “dancing itself” is a “political practice” rather than a “politics of its aesthetic⁴³.” This project directly addresses Martin’s question about the politics of dissent against a large and unstoppable traumas, such as war. This project offers several answers to his question.

My project adds to this scholarship by moving beyond debates about whether choreography is political, and extending Martin’s question of what choreographed dance can do for politics. Rather than re-read choreographies of the past as political, I approach these antiwar choreographies as always already political in a variety of ways. Less important in my research is whether or not postmodern choreographies were/are positioned by the choreographer as political, and more important is *how* I see the antiwar activism of postmodern choreographies functioning through time as artistic aids for processing the large traumas of the world. Because it is evident that none of these choreographies intended to actually cease war, I instead pay attention to how and when dance forwards ideas of antiwar activism and how dance addresses the ongoingness or never-ending quality of war. Thus dance, in this study choreographed contemporary U.S. antiwar dance, reframes understandings of time and effectiveness.

Againness

Jeff McMahan:

“There was a kind of work being done around PS 122 [in the 1980s and early 1990s], that was somewhat reactive, immediate and topical, and less focused on concert dance, coming from a need to respond. At that time, performance art especially could respond to things on an immediate level. [...] I wasn’t interested

⁴² Ibid., p. 60.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 154.

in making a jeremiad against war. [...] I was speaking in an aesthetic language that was in some way affecting people. I wasn't really interested in simply preaching to the converted, or as Holly Hughes liked to say 'preaching to the perverted,' which is much better. [But] how do you speak to people if they are already on your side, to get them emotionally re-energized, to feel passionate about something? To me it comes back to the body. [...] I probably felt at the time a little bit differently than I do now about the responsibility of art to be political. That position has evolved somewhat, as now I believe we are citizens and so we have political responsibilities. I don't believe that means you have to make work that is about politics⁴⁴."

McMahon describes above how his 1991 antiwar choreography, *Scatter*, served as a needed infusion of energy to an already politicized audience. He points out that choreography, during eras of certain aesthetic conventions, utilized states of physical embodiment to "emotionally re-energize," or energize again with emotion, audiences who were engaged with social and political issues. McMahon specifies that it was the return "back to the body," not the other modes of theater practiced in this interdisciplinary moment in the downtown New York arts scene, that caused an affective infusion of politics. McMahon's quote of "re-energize" and "back" to the body hints at the function of dance that I investigate in this project—how dances' repetitions in their doing over again, do something different. This something different that I seek to identify takes on a variety of forms and I explore particular functions of danced repetitions in each of my four chapters.

Early U.S. postmodern choreographers questioned what was and what was not considered dance through incorporating quotidian movements, everyday actions, and non-dance-like movements into their choreographies. These choreographers took issue

⁴⁴ Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014 and correspondence May 2, 2015.

with, or one could say employed the broadness of the term “choreography” in their choreographies. Similarly, I take advantage of the choreography’s many meanings in order to expand understandings of choreographic repetition. Repetition is also a broad term used most basically in the context of this project on postmodern choreography as a *doing over again*. In my analysis I look at repetitions or doings over again of choreographies, parts of choreographies, and most importantly, ideas. I contend that danced repetitions forward broad ideas and social, cultural, and political values through time. Here, I draw this conclusion from a close analysis of the ways that specific postmodern antiwar choreographies forward repetitions of ideas from the Vietnam antiwar movement.

Dance itself is premised on repetitions of steps, techniques, and performances. Repetitions in dance are genre specific and include: the repeated technique warm-up practiced over the course of years (particularly in codified forms such as ballet, but also in postmodern dance of various styles); the reuse and “re-purposing” of one choreographic phrase in multiple choreographic works; the reuse, practice, and refinement of choreographic phrases in class context taught by choreographers who are working on choreographies where those same phrases eventually appear; repertoire (in both dance company and social and cultural contexts); the multiple performances of a single choreography on different nights with different casts; the “re-performance” of a choreography in different contexts (sometimes during a different time period or era); and archival documentation which allows spectator “re-viewing” beyond the initial time/space event; and the postmodern choreographic technique of “re-imagination”

where performers draw on previous experience and re-engage physically with past or imagined experiences as part of the creative process. Of course, there are many ways of repeating and these are just the four that I am attending to here—re-purpose, re-performance, re-view, and re-imagination. This dissertation project forwards discussions of repetition in dance studies and performance studies, attending to them specifically in particular choreographies. I engage with how putting movements of your body over and over again might contribute to the world beyond just making an aesthetically pleasing or compelling piece of choreography. I contend that repetitions in dance are inexact and non-disappearing, and that doing something over again in your body inherently does something different.

During my research for this project, I found that antiwar ideas from other wars were present in choreographies happening during and/or addressing current wars. I surmised that the repetitions of these antiwar choreographies were outside of the theoretical scope of both reenactment scholarship in performance studies and reconstruction scholarship in dance studies. I argue that performance in general, dance in particular, and antiwar choreography as a case study, does not disappear. I view the power of antiwar dance activism in its inexact repetitions through time, which are available because of the specific ways dance repeats. Therefore I make the argument that dance does not disappear, but repeats through time in numerous ways specific to dance—on bodies, on the screen, and in writing about dance. Though repetition in or on the physical body is an important thread to my argument, I also attend to the changes of physical bodies when their repetitions occur in archival documentation.

I posit these choreographic repetitions as not disappearing and argue that this challenges dances' supposed fleetingness. Thus my project engages with performance studies ephemerality debates and moves discussions of repetition in dance studies beyond reconstruction of historical dances. Instead of becoming a project about how dance does or does not address war, this project became about addressing antiwar dances' various kinds of repetitions. Dance adds to larger social and cultural movements, but it is sometimes out of line with, ahead or behind of, these movements. This out-of-sync quality adds fresh perspectives and/or infuses old ideas into contemporary movements and contemporary moments. I argue that what is notable about antiwar choreography is that it demonstrates how dance functions non-linearly to address the large and ongoing traumas of the world without any intention of ceasing them. The persistent doing over of dance, in this instance contemporary dance, thus also becomes a tool for rethinking ephemerality and temporality in relationship to the political implications of never-ending traumas. I argue that these contemporary dance-specific repetitions aid in dance's ability to address large ongoing issues, such as war, without the pressure to necessarily stop or change war. Thus, I claim that dance in and of itself does not possess any special ability to comment on or critique war (or other activist causes). I do, however, argue throughout that the ways dance repeats is specific to these choreographies, different from other art forms, and crucial in envisioning the power of dance to comment on the large ongoing traumas of the world.

In this subsection, to contextualize the position of my argument, I provide an overview of non-linear temporality. I define "againness," a term I employ throughout this

project to describe inexact, non-disappearing repetitions present in the specific antiwar choreographies I examine. I position my work within debates about reconstruction of historical dances in dance studies and within debates about reenactment in performance studies. I also address dance and performance's supposed ephemerality or fleeting disappearance, a phenomenon linked to the inability of dance and performance to repeat exactly beyond the initial time/space event. Lastly, I briefly outline each chapter and provide rudimentary definitions of my four specific repetition-themed chapter topics—re-purpose, re-performance, re-view, and re-imagination. The “re” terms I use to frame each chapter are repetitions specific to dance and specific to the choreographies discussed in the respective chapter. While most are familiar with danced repetitions such as technical training, rehearsals, or multiple performances, the repetitions I highlight in each chapter are less known and an important contribution of this project. I forward these topics to explain the distinct ways that dance repeats inexactly in specific choreographic examples and how these dance-wise ways of repeating ideas from the Vietnam antiwar movement, offer insight to how dance functions in relationship to large, ongoing, unstoppable, traumas such as war.

My study aids in the understanding of not only how dance repeats steps but also how choreographies repeat ideas through time. Theories of linear versus non-linear time are foundational to conceiving of choreography in general, and antiwar choreography in particular, as contingent upon and enmeshed with temporality. Linear time is what we most generally think of when we think of time or temporality. Many scholars trace European/Western Enlightenment ideas to the core of what is commonly termed linear

time⁴⁵. It is the concept of time most closely aligned with the idea of European/Western work clock time. Linear time is divided into seconds, minutes, hours, days, years, etc., and has distinct categories of past, present, and future. Past, present, and future are each distinct and immutable categories that hold a fixed position in time. That is, the past is always behind, the present is always now, and the future is always ahead. Activism is ordinarily conceived of as drawing upon linear notions of time where the point of action in the present is to effect change in the future. Anthropologists, postcolonial and indigenous scholars such as Johannes Fabian, Dipesh Chakravarty, Marisol De La Cadena, Mary Louise Pratt and Orin Starn critique linear time as responsible for the creation and enforcement of hierarchical social and cultural positions particularly in conjunction with colonization⁴⁶. Linear time serves as a counterpoint and foundation to

⁴⁵ I have taken the liberty to insert “linear time” where Johannes Fabian, Dipesh Chakravarty, Marisol De La Cadena, Mary Louise Pratt and Orin Starn simply used “time” or “temporality” to describe the types of time or temporality associated with European/Western Enlightenment era ideas of time. I felt this was an important step to take in order to deconstruct the assumption that there is only one conception of “time” or that “time” is fixed entity that has a consistent definition. I strongly believe that Fabian, Pratt, De La Cadena, Starn, and Chakravarty argue against linear temporality, not all time and temporality.

⁴⁶ While anthropologist Fabian contends that linear time creates a hierarchical power relationship between anthropologist/other, Chakravarty argues that the imposition of linear time by English colonialist settlers in India was a means of creating hierarchical difference between the modern/non-modern Indian subject. In *Time and the Other* Fabian argues that European/Western conceptions of linear temporality were used to achieve distance in nineteenth and twentieth century anthropology. According to Fabian the distancing effect of time posits the anthropologic Other in a perpetual past, and because of the Other’s absence from our time, the Other materializes only as object and as victim. Fabian contends that Enlightenment-originated time creates a one-way forward-moving history of progress from which chronopolitics emerged. Chronopolitics is the political notion that certain cultures are with time, and other cultures are behind the time. Fabian argues that it is from chronopolitics which geopolitics, or the colonialist politics of hierarchies based upon geographical location, emerged. Fabian contends that stratified relationships between different parts of the world are temporal. Fabian establishes that the hierarchies of chronopolitics and geopolitics stem from evolutionary and taxonomical ideologies in which time is a “stream” and certain people are upstream and others are downstream. See Fabian p. 17. Pejorative temporal signifiers such as primitive, tribal, peasant, and savage were therefore used to describe cultures that were behind or downstream of European/Western-imposed linear time. In the volume of essays entitled *Indigenous Experience Today*, linguist and cultural critic Mary Louise Pratt contends that the term indigenous has a direct relationship to linear time—there was a time before settlers and a time after settlers where indigenous people became

alternative non-linear conceptions of time, which are often aligned with non-Western cultural or religious practices. Conceptions of non-linear time have gained recent popularity in white U.S.-based scholarship with ideas such as queer time and syncopated time⁴⁷. While linear time presupposes a future that is influenced by the past and

indigenous. Anthropologists Marisol De La Cadena and Orin Starn (quoting Pratt) theorize indigenous as a term that thus marks a specific relationship between time, space, history, and politics. Pratt points out that from an indigenous perspective, the indigenous became indigenous in the time after the settler arrived. That is, indigenous was birthed at the moment in time when colonization or conquest was fulfilled and indigenous people were ‘found’ or ‘discovered’ by outsiders. Similar to Fabian, De La Cadena, Starn, and Pratt also identify pejorative cultural markers as inextricable from temporality and often employed in service of cultural hierarchy.

⁴⁷ Queer time is time that is not straight. Straight as an antonym for queer suggests that straight time aligns with linear time. English professor and social critic Judith Jack Halberstam theorizes queer time as “a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance.” Halberstam, p.6. Within straight time unruly adolescents mature into adulthood, and consequently marry and reproduce. Straight time, like linear time, is beholden to a past that is always behind, a present that is always now, and a future that is always coming. In queer temporalities, the past, present, and future collide and influence each other in non-chronological order. Queer time is a time of ghosts and histories forgotten, while straight or linear time represents strict teleological time. Queer time is a useful and fruitful analytic lens for antiwar dance because it is productive and exciting to utilize the idea of queering outside of the liberatory use of the term. Queer time when applied to antiwar dance also potentially aligns the LGBTQI and antiwar social justice movements. However, the term queer is critiqued as largely applying to and servicing white, upper middle-class people from developed and wealthy nations. Therefore, when utilizing the lens of queer time I must do so with caution for what is being overlooked in terms of space, race, location, nation, and/or class.

Performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider’s notion of syncopated time is situated amidst the early 2000s re-enactment scholarship that is an extension of the early 1990s performance studies liveness debates. Schneider also historicizes ephemerality as stemming from the liveness debates, which emerged from New York Universities Performance Studies Department in the late 1980s and early 1990s (where she was at a time a student). See Schneider, p. 142. Syncopated time complicates claims that performance is ephemeral and disappearing, and thus is a useful lens for this project, and one I engage fully in this study. Schneider purports that we generally conceive of performance as live, and composed in a linear temporality that moves from a past through a present to a future in which it dissolves. Counter to Peggy Phelan, more complex than Philip Auslander, and in response to both mediated and live performance reenactments, Schneider identifies that theatrical performance can never *only* be in the live, and therefore must exist in multiple temporal registers. Within a framework of syncopated time, performance is always already more than just the live, and temporal multiplicity is unproblematic and matter of fact. Under these auspices Schneider acknowledges that the antithesis to the never-ending project of war is the never-ending project of protest. Schneider’s analysis includes protests and wars that occur as performance, for example Civil War reenactments. While Schneider connects war, activism, performance, and reenactment, my work builds upon hers in that it looks at the specific role of war, activism, and dance. As I argue throughout, dance repeats differently from other art forms, and the distinctness of these danced repetitions function to aid in our understandings of large never-ending woes of the world, such as war. Schneider’s model of temporal

potentially influenced by the future, non-linear times provide models in which the past, present, and future influence one another in non-chronological order. Non-chronological influence is the kind of effect that I theorize antiwar choreography having on social change in the world. In this project, I argue that one of the ways that choreography in general, and postmodern antiwar dance in particular, affects social change is through an activism that can effect the past, the present, or the future in non-chronological or non-linear order. This opens up the possibilities for the impact that danced activism can have in multiple temporal registers. In order to repeat inexactly, what one is repeating must have already happened at some other point in time. Most typically, if conceived of in a linear temporal framework, the prior repetition would have happened in the past or before. Doing something again is thus dependent on temporality, that is, repetition takes place through time. My analysis therefore necessitates a discussion of the non-linear temporalities that contribute to the phenomenon of againness.

Againness in relationship to choreographic repetition suggests a certain ambivalence as to when and where exactly choreography comes in and out of being a thing or an entity. The “again” of againness implies a prior iteration yet does not adhere to the notion of a pure or authentic original. Againness signals inexact, non-disappearing, non-chronological repetitions through time as well as traces the workings of social, cultural, and political change. The term againness is present in the work of performance

multiplicity, combined with interest in the social implications of performance, is key to my formulation that antiwar ideas travel through time in choreographies in temporally divergent ways. I follow and develop Schneider’s syncopated time as a major theoretical model for this project.

studies theorists Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor⁴⁸. While both of these theorists use the term againness in passing, I take it up as one of the central concepts of my project. Schneider contends that the “*againness* of (re)enactment” in general is the one of the most compelling aspects of the “tangle of explicit theatricality and time.” For Schneider, againness, along with “the double, the second, the clone,” and “the uncanny [...] trouble the prevalence of presentism, immediacy, and linear time.” Schneider is compelled by “the curious inadequacies of the copy,” which lie in the domain of “the error and unreliability known as flesh memory⁴⁹.” Taylor brings up againness as well, arguing that, “Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. [...] The act of transfer, in this case, works through doubling, replication, and proliferation⁵⁰.” This project takes up the againness of dance choreography in general, and antiwar dance choreography in particular, to examine how the inexactness of these specific choreographic repetitions enable contemporary U.S. choreography to propel ideas through time—here, by looking at antiwar ideas. Though I point out in each chapter how the againness of antiwar dance operates in non-linear or non-chronological modes of temporality, I have resisted naming these non-linear times as specific kinds of times (for example queer time). Because non-linear times are inherently bound up with and compared to Western conceptions of linear time and colonization, I contend that naming

⁴⁸ During my qualifying exams Linda Tomko also used the term againness to describe the kind the repetition with difference that I was describing.

⁴⁹ Schneider, p 6.

⁵⁰ Taylor, p. 21 & 46. Note that Taylor spells againness with one ‘n’ and I have kept that as she wrote it in the text. Taylor argues that transfers happen through doubling replication and proliferation, rather than through surrogation as theorized by performance theorist Joseph Roach.

non-chronological temporalities further reifies the distinction of these non-chronological times as different and thus lesser in hierarchical positioning. Thus in the chapters that follow I employ non-linear temporality as an umbrella term to discuss the non-chronological way that dance unconventionally forwards ideas and activism in multiple directions through time.

Againness in relationship to choreographic repetition suggests a certain ambivalence as to when and where exactly choreography comes in and out of being a thing or an entity. When applied to choreography, againness illuminates the problem of when and where choreography comes into existence or the impossibility of an original or authentic choreography. The repetitious entanglement of choreography and performance that I point out in this project suggest that choreography and performance, when repeating, sumptuously blend and blur within one another. As I mention in the introductory subsection, my use of the term choreography intentionally collapses strict distinctions between dance, performance, and choreography in order to maximize what the slipperiness of dance/performance/choreography can evoke in relationship to the large, ongoing traumas of the world (such as war). This collapse draws into question where and when choreography does exist. Choreography comes into visual and experiential existence during performance, but is created before performance, and it remains in documentation and embodied memory after performance. Choreography also exists (or can sometimes exist) on the page in notation or as a written score or documentation of performance. Where does a choreographic plan or idea become a “choreography,” and then continue to exist as a choreography? For the purposes of this

project, I contend that choreography exists in multiple physical and non-physical locations—in/on the body of the dancer, on the stage (or other location) in the moment of performance, in notation, in a written score or video documentation, in rehearsal or other creation processes, in technique and training that each of the dancer's bring to rehearsal, in writing about the performance, in dancers' embodied memories, in choreographers and audience members' recollections. When does a choreography come into being? How does a choreographer or a dancer or an audience member or a scholar distinguish when that choreography comes into being? My approach evokes these questions, yet does not attempt to fix any answers. Here, in againness, I consider the structured orchestration of danced movement, or choreography, as existing in all formats—in the making, performance, and documentation of a work of dance, occurring both on and off of the physical bodies of dancers, and sometimes in the written or the recorded realm. Iterations of choreography across multiple formats (process, performance, documentation) are inherently divergent. This conflation creates more opportunities for observation, and I execute this theoretical move with awareness of the privilege and exclusion, while taking advantage of the broadness and sometimes blurring between choreography and performance that this globalized term evokes. Therefore choreography across format lends itself to different kinds of repetition and thus againness: this, I argue, is specific to dance and one of the ways that dance speaks to, addresses, and offers solutions for how to live with horrors and injustices that are as unstoppable as war.

Two strains of dance studies discussions on repetition and difference relate to my theorization of againness—repetition with difference within the context of

reconstructions of historical dances, and inexact and evolving repetition as an aesthetic principle and cultural practice in relationship to improvisation and African diasporic dance. My aim in this study is to engage and expand these discussions. To address the first, I join dance reconstruction scholars such as Mark Franko to further shift the conversation about dance and repetition away from repetition as exact replication, and towards what Franko posits as “constructions” of historical choreographies⁵¹. In general, discussions on reconstruction of historical dance (and repeated performances) emphasize sameness and/or emphasize difference. An emphasis on sameness would indicate a replicable authentic original from which a likeness could be rendered. Premising difference renders an original or an authentic as an impossibility—if all dances and versions of dances are different, how could one distinguish an authentic original? who would determine an authentic original? Franko’s emphasis on constructions, not reconstructions, acknowledges that restagings of performance can never replicate an authentic original. My work similarly denies notions of an authentic original and asserts that all choreographies change in each iteration. I wish to move the discussion of repetition in dance studies beyond discussions of re-embodiment of historical choreographies and instead look at the implicit but not often talked about ways that dance repeats.

⁵¹ According to Franko, “consciously avoid[ing] simulation of the original [...] has been rare, until recently, among contemporary choreographers.” Franko asserts, “seeing the new in the old [...] is a pinpointing of radical historicity in production.” Franko calls this process construction, not reconstruction, and strives to debunk exact repetition as an attainable goal of remounting choreography. See p. 133-35, *Dance as Text*. This argument was also published as “Repeatability, Reconstruction and Beyond,” *Theatre Journal*. Vol. 41, No. 1 (Mar., 1989), pp. 56-74. Susan Leigh Foster also gestures towards repetition as a means of achieving unison in *Dances That Describe Themselves*, p. 6-7.

Another strain of dance scholarship on repetition emerges from African American scholarship on African diasporic dance⁵². Scholarship by authors such as Margaret Thompson Drewal, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, and Thomas DeFrantz highlight repetition in dance both as an Africanist aesthetic principle and cultural value. The focus of my work on repetition with difference resonates with dance historian and ethnographer Drewal who advocates that ritual repetition in a West African Yoruban cultural context must repeat with differences in order that the ritual stays alive and engaged with contemporary societies. For Drewal it is the repetition with difference that keeps the ritual alive. In my work, it is the repeated antiwar comment, through time, that garners power despite dance's inability to stop war. Dance scholar and historian Dixon Gottschild theorizes repetition or "repetition-as-intensification" as an Africanist aesthetic value, which historicizes the aesthetic of repetition in dance as emergent from an African

⁵² Also of note in the discussion of scholarship on repetition and performance in a non-European/white postmodern context is the work of Diana Taylor and Jill Sweet. I address Taylor's repertoire as bodily archive (theorized in the Latin American context) in relationship to the cultural production of 1970s street protest in Chapter One. Sweet discusses repetition in the context of Indigenous performance. Sweet describes the Southwest Tewa performance and ritual as repetitive and in service to unison as an expression of community. Her work contradicts how dance theorist Susan Leigh Foster addresses the issue of repetition in service of unison in the introduction to her book on postmodern improviser Richard Bull (*Dances That Describe Themselves*). Foster describes unison as the "fascist potential in movement to obliterate differences between bodies and unite them in a single, maniacal purpose." Foster p.7. While Sweet describes in unison the Indigenous ritual dance context as "group unity." Sweet p. 3-7. Sweet argues, "Group unity is facilitated, in part, by the repetitive or redundant nature of the dance and songs. Redundancy not only makes aesthetic expression predictable and familiar, producing a sense of pleasurable security, but it also simplifies execution. By keeping the movement and song vocabulary relatively simple, and by recombining and repeating this vocabulary, a large group of non-specialists is more likely to dance and sing successfully in unison. Performance in unison is not only an aesthetic imperative, but it also reinforces a Tewa concern for the needs of the whole community over those of specific individuals." Sweet p.7.

lineage of stories within a principle of contrariety⁵³. Dixon Gottschild contends these repetitions, like repetition in dance, “end with a question or call for a discussion, rather than a solution. They stand as a challenge to the linear concept of beginning-middle-end⁵⁴.” Dixon Gottschild elucidates these repetitions without conclusion, solution, or straightforward temporality as signaling the “transcendent power of the Africanist worldview⁵⁵.” My work similarly theorizes the againness of antiwar dance as gaining power or intensity through time, and examines how dance, in its non-resolution of the issue of war, is thus suited for commentary on the world’s never-ending and ongoing traumas. Danced choreographic comment questions rather than pretends to solve the issue of war. Dance studies scholar DeFrantz’s research on prolific and vastly influential modern/postmodern choreographer Alvin Ailey, takes up repetition as “versioning” in relationship to the choreography *Revelations*. *Revelations*, Ailey’s iconic and famous choreography about the struggles and uplift of African American life in the United States, has been performed in the repertoire of the Ailey Company for over fifty years, and as the aesthetics and technical capacity of the company has changed, so has the dance. DeFrantz defines versioning as “the generational reworking of aesthetic” and similar to Dixon

⁵³ Dixon-Gottschild’s Africanist aesthetics aim to point out the influence of African diasporic aesthetics in U.S. forms of dance that are often ascribed to Europeanist roots. Dixon-Gottschild’s project is premised on the concept of invisibilization, or the non-acknowledgement of the African roots in U.S. danced cultural production.

⁵⁴ Dixon-Gottschild, p. 8. In her discussion of repetition as an Africanist aesthetic, Dixon-Gottschild includes repetition in dance as rooted in “repetition in traditional, quotidian African life: pounding grain, seeding ground, kneading bread, reaping the crop.” p. 8.

⁵⁵ Dixon Gottschild, p.8.

Gottschild as a “strategy of African American performance⁵⁶.” DeFrantz describes versioning as “at once postmodern and as ancient as the hills,” and as possessing “transformative agility⁵⁷.” My research similarly identifies the potentiality of choreography to change meanings over time and in different political and viewing contexts and points towards dance as a genre of political art that is particularly suited to changeability.

The overlap of my research with these African American dance scholars writing on the repetition on danced ritual, points to African, Africanist, and African-American influence in all forms of U.S. dance, including postmodern dance, which is often historicized and coded as white and Europeanist. Repetition in dance is specific, and yet, discourse on repetition in dance (and performance) in a white postmodern context circulates quite differently from the work by African American scholars above. In the white U.S. contemporary dance context, choreographers such as Trisha Brown utilize repetition as a postmodern choreographic strategy. In scholarship on U.S. white postmodern dance, dance is conceived of as fraught with the inability to replicate with exactitude and has thus been theorized as ephemeral or disappearing at the moment it happens. Dance performance from this white U.S. perspective has been theorized as

⁵⁶ DeFrantz, p. 82.

⁵⁷ DeFrantz give examples of versioning in both African American dance and music contexts. Writes DeFrantz “Versioning, and its sibling, inversion, allow us to critique, to uncover, to rediscover, to realign, to mark the common as personal, to read (as in “someone’s beads”), to make something *work*.” p. 82. DeFrantz, citing Dixon-Gottschild’s Africanist aesthetic “ephebism,” places versioning in the context of “youthful innovation,” which admittedly can result in dances’ losing the context or specific locality of prior choreographic versions. He also contests versioning as purely in the realm of black vernacular dance and instead discusses versioning in relationship to individual African American choreographers bringing African forms of dance into black American culture. DeFrantz cites the examples of Katherine Dunham restaging ritual Caribbean dance and Pearl Primus restaging African dances. p.83.

ephemeral and fleeting beyond the initial time/space moment of performance by a number of dance scholars. Perhaps most notably, critic and dance historian Marcia Siegel, whose opus *At the Vanishing Point*, defined the crux of dance performance as the moment at which dance disappears. For Siegel, “Dance exists at a perpetual vanishing point. [...] It is an event that disappears in the very act of materializing⁵⁸.” Similarly in the introduction to *Seeing Difficulties: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, historian and biographer Carrie Lambert-Beatty writes of dance’s problem of spectatorship. She formulates that because dance is a “temporal art, disappearing even as it comes into being, dance resists vision⁵⁹.” Lambert-Beatty calls this supposed disappearing an “obvious fact” as well as calls “performance’s ephemerality [...] an artistic problem: something an artist had to work with, work around, work through⁶⁰.” Lambert-Beatty draws attention towards how repetition was a strategy embraced by early postmodern choreographers to counteract the problem of ephemerality or what she terms the difficulty of seeing dance. Lambert-Beatty’s scholarship provokes the question of how scholars might determine whether repetition as a choreographic strategy is a response to or a refutation of the problem of dance and ephemerality. Deleuzian dance theorist André Lepecki advocates for an expansion of “the melancholic entrapment of the vanishing point” and of what he describes as a dance temporality that only includes the ever-fleeting present. Instead Lepecki calls for “the coexistence of multiple temporalities

⁵⁸ Quoted by Schneider, p. 97.

⁵⁹ Lambert-Beatty, p.1.

⁶⁰ Lambert-Beatty was specifically referring to choreographers working in 1960s and early 1970s and Yvonne Rainer specifically.

within the temporality of dance” which include “multiple presents in the dancing performance⁶¹.” My project seeks to bring a lens, developed not out of Africanist aesthetics but in resonance with them, to debates around often white-coded postmodern choreography⁶². Like Lepecki I argue and similarly identify multiple temporalities within the genre of dance, yet I try to approach the kind of temporality with more specificity yet without naming and slipping into hierarchical relationships. I also aim to distinguish how specific non-linear, non-chronological temporalities carry ideas from the Vietnam Era, which are sometimes but not limited to aesthetic constructs and/or cultural values.

In addition to dance studies, scholarly debates about ephemerality have also occurred in the field of performance studies. In the early 1990s performance studies scholars Philip Auslander and Peggy Phelan (as well as others) engaged in debates about ephemerality, liveness, disappearance, and presence as constitutive of performance itself. These series of scholarly writings are often referred to as the liveness debates. Phelan argued that performance was in fact defined by the moment of fleeting disappearance. Auslander, on the other hand, advocated that evolving technologies no longer necessitated a live body and its disappearance in order for a performance to ensue. In the mid-2000s critical conversations about liveness and performance reemerged in performance studies, this time in analyses of re-enactments. The more recent set of debates cropped up in response to re-performances of classic dance and performance art from the 1960s and 1970s. These works, which had previously been thought of as

⁶¹ Lepecki, p. 131.

⁶² I return to a brief discussion of the rift between African American dance scholarship and theorizations of white-coded postmodern dance in the Epilogue.

fleeting, were usurped and re-performed by institutions and museums, most notably Marina Abramovic's *The Artist is Present* retrospective at the Whitney Museum. Thus similar to dance studies scholarship on reconstruction, scholarship on re-enactment, and the most recent performance studies understandings of liveness and ephemerality, also implicates repetitions of historical performances. I contend that the specific ways that dance repeats offers insights and further understandings to these debates about the doing over of performance.

I argue that these specific repetitions not only contribute to understandings of repetition in performance and ephemerality but also have a number of useful attributes that contribute to antiwar activism and aid in coping with the ongoing plight of war. My project is organized according to thematic chapter headings—re-purpose, re-performance, re-viewing, and re-imagination—and also maintains a loose chronological order. My intention in framing each chapter with a “re” is to directly engage with performance debates by naming the specific repetition I focus on in each chapter. In each chapter, I unpack specific choreographies and attend to the specific repetitions (as well as continuities) and the ways that contemporary dance intervenes in ephemerality debates. Each of my chapters deals with againness to show how dance offers differing ways of repeating that move beyond the issue of ephemerality in dance specifically and performance more generally, and in language that is different from African diasporic approaches to repetition as an aesthetic or cultural practice. Each chapter also decenters and destabilizes neat and contained notions of choreography. In Chapter One, I highlight and address one tactic that Vietnam War era choreographers utilized to protest war on the

street—choreographic re-purposing. I show how parcels of future-existing choreography were re-purposed as street protest in order to immediately respond to the U.S. bombing of Cambodia and subsequent shooting of student protesters. While resisting the idea that choreography comes into existence at a specific, definable, and/or graspable moment, I assert that there is also a moment when a choreography has not yet come into existence. Because these choreographies were re-purposed as protest before they were their initial performance (or premiere), these choreographic examples trouble the point of inception of choreography. I argue that this choreographic re-purposing for antiwar statement offered the viewer, passerby, and participant not an end to the war, but contemplation and meditation about the Vietnam War in particular, and violence in general. This dance activism tactic was equally as actionable but aesthetically different from the bloody and confrontational protests of theater and performance art contemporaries. To make this argument, I focus on two choreographies from 1970, Yvonne Rainer's *M-Walk* and Wendy Rogers' *Black Maypole*. My analysis delves into choreographic protest against the Vietnam War and examines the ways in which physical embodiment on the streets was a tactic used by anti-Vietnam War protesters and dancers alike. I read choreographic re-purposing for antiwar protest alongside of another way that choreographies are typically repeated and reused—repertoire. I argue that choreographic re-purposing complicates strict formulations of repertoire because although parts of the same choreography are repeated, the intention of the choreography as protest on the street is unique and crosses over the art/culture divide⁶³. The choreography itself departs from

⁶³ As mentioned earlier in the discussion of theories on repetition in African diasporic culture.

notions of repertoire as historical preservation as argued by philosopher Graham McFee. However, the context of the choreography as embodied street protest aligns more with performance studies theorist Diana Taylor's theory of repertoire as cultural acts of bodily transfer. I evoke a comparison to repertoire in order to compare a more prevalently discussed dance-specific repetition next to my discussion of re-purpose.

In Chapter Two, I argue that while it doesn't suppose or pretend to stop war, choreography shows how antiwar ideas and tactics, such as flag desecration, reverberate through time. The major focus of this chapter's analysis is Ann Carlson's choreographic tool of the choreographic template. Carlson's templates allow for (mostly) the same choreographic steps and scores to be re-performed with different costumes, props, set, and titles, and thus different meanings. The choreographic template brings into question the originality and striving for newness that is often deemed implicit in postmodern artwork. With her choreographic template, Carlson deploys the same movements (sometimes with different props, costumes and titles) as different choreographies, or, Carlson will also sometimes name different versions (i.e. different steps, costumes, props) of a choreography by the same title. The choreographic template troubles which choreography is which because the same dance steps are considered different choreography and different dance steps are considered the same choreography. I argue that Carlson's choreographic template is conducive for re-performance in a variety of political contexts and thus enables her to utilize choreographic antiwar commentary across multiple temporal frameworks. To define re-performance I build upon the idea of choreographic re-purpose introduced in Chapter One, and argue that the choreographic

template is a more complex form of choreographic re-purpose that is more conducive to complex response, and less suitable for immediate reaction. Thus, re-performance, as I use it here, denotes to perform again, in different political contexts, and is differentiated from re-purposing, which extrapolated a segment from a larger choreography in order to take it to the streets in immediate protest. I contend that the power of this particular kind of repeated antiwar commentary is gained through this re-performance and multiplicity over time. Carlson's choreographic template allows the same steps to have multiple presents and presences depending on the context of performance and/or context of viewing. To make this argument, I focus on Carlson's *Flag* and *Too Beautiful a Day* (1990, 2006), and Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags* (1970, 1999). All of these choreographies utilize the United States flag in controversial ways suggesting a relationship between antiwar choreography and anti-Vietnam War street demonstrations, which made frequent use of flag desecration. This allows old political ideas to re-emerge in new political contexts, and for choreographers to nuance or entirely change content for specific political situations, through utilizing the same or similar choreographic steps. I also connect re-performance and choreographic template with Schneider's theory of syncopated time, showing how these re-performances contribute to what Schneider describes as the perpetually unfinished project of antiwar activism.

In Chapter Three, I look at how antiwar choreography is aware of its inherent limits of efficacy even as it participates in trends of media technology, which are used to report on both war and protest against war. I examine Miguel Gutierrez's *Freedom of Information Act (FOI)*, an improvised protest ritual performance where participants are

blindfolded, ear plugged, and attempt to move continuously for twenty-four hours (2001, 2008, 2009, with the latter two performances live-streamed on the Internet). This chapter examines a very open-ended, endurance, improvisation choreography, which includes participants publically reporting back on their experiences in blog posts. I contend *FOI* pushes the definition of choreography both because of the very open parameters of the improvisation score and because the choreography spills from the studio to the Internet page. I engage theories about war reportage, media, and technology (from the Vietnam War era to the contemporary moment) to argue that Gutierrez's live-stream antiwar dance on the Internet employs another kind of multiplicity that I call choreographic re-view. Choreographic re-view provides the virtual online audience with the opportunity to re-view the antiwar protest in a specific configuration, whether through the way the online viewer chooses to position boxes within boxes on their screen, or when and how viewers chose to read the post-performance participant blog posts. Whereas in the previous chapter, I looked at choreographic multiplicity through time, here I look at multiplicity of viewing perspectives enabled by live-streamed Internet performances happening simultaneously in different locations. I contend that re-viewing departs from re-purpose and re-performance by putting the doing again of the performance in the hands of the live-stream Internet viewers.

In Chapter Four, choreography acknowledges that war is ongoing, and rather than trying to stop war, choreographers contend with the subject matter of taking care of those who fought in war, in recognition of the continuations of war. I analyze two contemporary dance works that engage with war veterans as examples: Jeff McMahon's

1991 *Scatter* and Victoria Marks' 2006 *Action Conversations: Veterans*. These examples do not pressure so much what is choreography and what is performance, but instead blur boundaries between what is choreography and what is real life (in relation to choreographed and performed experiences of veterans). I connect the focus on veterans to the Vietnam War, where veterans were first protested as babykillers and years later diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Both choreographies express concern for those returning from war, and instead of attempting to stop or cease war, which has existed throughout history, these dances illuminate the struggles of those wounded directly by war. McMahon and Marks' work serves as examples of choreographic re-imagination and show that artistic representation can influence performers and audiences perceptions of events and further their understandings of past wars in hindsight. Thus in these examples I argue that antiwar dance choreography works backwards to address the past trauma of war. In choreographic re-imagination the goal is not to stop the war, but to make war more humane for some of those directly affected by it. While re-purpose and re-performance are choreographic methods utilized to perpetuate the againness of choreography, and re-viewing is a method for multiplicity enacted by the viewer, in this chapter processing the aftermaths of war through the performing/dancing body (some veterans, some not) offers the possibility of shifting relationships to past war trauma. Similar to the other chapters these examples of antiwar dance acknowledge war as ongoing as they attempt to confront aftermath effects of war.

My research and analyses have implications for contributing to understandings of the complexities of choreography, for the field of dance studies, and for larger

understandings of how dance works. My project engages with several major frameworks. First, I wish to move the discussion of repetition in dance and performance studies beyond discussions of the construction/reconstruction/reenactment of historical choreographies. Instead, I focus on repetitions with differences that are specific to many choreographies. My interest in choreographic repetitions is not purely in relationship to choreography's circulation as an event in and of itself, for example a recognizable series of dance steps or improvisation structure, but the deep social, cultural, and political threads that each choreography brings with its repetitions through time. My project firmly positions early U.S. postmodern dance from the 1970s as the historical antecedent to more contemporary postmodern dance that engages with politics. Postmodern is a genre engaged with politics and at specific moments it intersects with the antiwar movement.

Second, I am interested in bringing dance into dialogue with contemporary performance studies debates on reenactment. My work overlaps with reenactment scholarship in contemporary art contexts such as restaging of historic performances in museum contexts as well as with work such as Schneider's, on civil war re-enactments and protest reenactments. My work implies that repetition, not just within the context of what is important in the white postmodern concert context, but repetition in relationship to the larger contexts of the world (and to other genres/contexts of dance), augments our understandings for the possibilities of how putting movements on your body again and again and again might contribute to the world. My goal is to bring the specific repetitions of dance into performance studies conversations about reenactment, as well as illuminating the more specialized repetitions that I have outlined throughout this project.

Based on this study, my work lays out the specific ways that contemporary dance and choreography repeats and points out more unusual forms of repetition utilized by choreographers in their making of antiwar dances and/or works that comment on war. Dance adds to the antiwar movement and demonstrates yet another way that dance significantly contributes to social and cultural movements off of the stage. I debunk the idea that antiwar choreography was somehow intended to actually stop war, while noting what antiwar choreography does do—respond immediately, respond with nuance across multiple frameworks, keep pace with advances in communications technologies and the mediation of war, and provide a venue for the re-imagination of past traumas. The frame of antiwar dance advances the ways that dance does not disappear at all and instead continues to reappear again, often with difference. In fact, the ways that the antiwar choreographies of this study don't disappear (and instead repeat with difference) are the force that I argue dance has in antiwar comment.

Vietnam Era antiwar activism in contemporary choreography provide insight as to how activism travel through time non-linearly, as well as how dance activism repeat differently than other art genres. In these examples understanding war through the medium of dance holds potential to influence not just the present and the future, but also our readings of the past. Thus in this study dance also provides insights into temporalities.

In my first two examples, choreographic re-purpose of previously choreographed segments of *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole* functioned temporally as an immediate street-ready protest executed (in the case of *M-Walk*) at a super slow pace. These

choreographies—able to react immediately, while responding with slow or truncated movement—offered contemplation and meditation to street protest where their theater and performance art contemporaries were offering bloody and confrontational performance protests. I argue that choreographic re-purpose extrapolated portions of future-existing choreography in order to respond immediately to the actions of the U.S. government, and in doing so revealed an ambivalence as to when a particular choreography comes into existence. While it is common for choreographers to workshop choreographic phrases in dance or company class before the choreography containing the phrase premieres, it is less known that during the Vietnam War crafted parts of a future-existing choreography were taken to the street in urgent protest of military action.

Choreographic re-performance is premised on performing again at a different moment, and my analysis emphasizes the differences between performances. I argue that choreographic re-performance exists in multiple temporal registers—because it has multiple here/nows or presents, and thus also has multiple presences occurring at different times. Choreographic re-performance allows for the same material to be performed again, differently, over time. While this corresponds to how dance performances vary slightly from the night-to-night of performances, the time span of re-performance is longer and also signals that a specific choreography must have a gap in the continuousness of its performance in order for it to be performed again. Over time the same or similar antiwar choreographic material, as was the case with Carlson's choreographic templates, is able to address multiple wars. Choreographic re-performance is available to all choreography. Yet it enables antiwar choreographies specifically to be

able to address different wars with nuance and complex understanding (such as Carlson's different use of the United States flag on the eve of different wars—Gulf War and Iraq and Afghanistan Wars). The same choreographic steps are able to have different meaning during different times as well as multiple presents and presences.

Choreographic re-view, or the over and over again of viewing a particular choreography (including the post-performance blog posts of *Freedom of Information (FOI)*) draws predominantly upon the present in the moment of performance. After the performance was complete, viewing the performance again was an option for the viewer via the blog posts on the *FOI* blog. In the re-view during the moment of performance virtual audiences made real time decisions about how long to watch, how many protests to watch at one time, and how to arrange the window of each protest on their computer screen. Post-performance re-view approximates how video documentation of particular dance performances can be rewound and rewatched endlessly, each time enabling the viewer to learn something different, attain a fresh perspective, and see or experience something they did not see in their previous viewings. Re-view thus draws on the fleeting presence of the live-streamed twenty-four hour performance/protest/ritual, yet relies on the re-view and after effects of the post-performance blog. With choreographic re-view the audience chooses how intense the protest is, and whether to continue engagement or viewing. Following the 'now' of the live stream, the experience of the participants is then revealed after the performance in the blog posts.

Choreographic re-imagination is a longer-term response, which deals with wars past or in progress, and re-imagines the first-hand experiences of those that fought in war.

Re-imagination through the physical body, such as that in *Scatter* and *Action Conversations: Veterans*, is a similar process to the repetition present in technical dance training—where repeated practice changes a dancer’s body and/or technique over time. In re-imagination the repeated choreographic creative process changes the dancer’s understandings to past events by re-examining these events (over and over) as part of the process of making the choreography. This posits choreography as able to influence performers’ and audiences’ understandings of the past, in hindsight, create relief in the present, and influence the future through its suggestion about how to make a better world—not a world without war, but a world where war persists, and we take care of those who are harmed by it.

Overall I examine how specific postmodern antiwar choreographies of today carry particular activist engagements from the Vietnam War era, with special interest in inexact repetitions and re-enactments, or what I term againness. Within the multiple temporal directions of influence, I am compelled by the staying power with which these choreographies repeat activist ideas as well as steps, phrases, and sometimes entire choreographies. My focus on the *doing over again* of these specific choreographies through time is the foundation through which I theorize the activism of these choreographies as long lasting, non-disappearing, and addressing the never ending quality of war. Dance and choreography are thus not very effective against war in the immediate moment, but highly effective in the long-term because of the staying power and ability to create awareness over time. War is never over, and neither is dance, and dance

choreography offers a number of ways to address the ongoing perhaps never-ending problem of military violence.

Concluding Thoughts

Victoria Marks:

“I started the project because I felt very strongly against the war [in Iraq and Afghanistan]. [...] The work with veterans [*Action Conversation: Veterans*] was an effort to find my own way into knowing how to act, how to be a citizen. I felt like that was the question I was asking at the time that led to all the projects that happened⁶⁴. I think that [...] art, even if it is a small audience or a small group of people that it impacts, can create better citizenship, better human relations, but I am not committed to a single cause⁶⁵.”

As highlighted in the epigraphs of each introduction subsection, none of the choreographers I interviewed felt that the point of choreographic antiwar activism was to effect immediate or short-term change. Some of the choreographers felt as though they had to do something to acknowledge their disapproval of the war, or made choreography to grapple with their disapproval of the war, but there was consistent doubt as to the impact of their antiwar choreographies in stopping actual military conflict. Though the point of these choreographies may not be to actually stop war, each of the choreographers I interviewed in this project view their choreography as *doing* something. These choreographers felt as though their work advocated for social change, envisioned a better world, responded to and publicly disapproved of governmental action, created a “radical space” of reflection (as Gutierrez stated in the opening epigraph), propagated “better

⁶⁴ Marks also created a duet in 2007 with Taisha Paggett, which commented on the Iraq War titled *Not About Iraq*.

⁶⁵ Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

citizenship and relations” (as Marks said above), and/or illuminated social issues. These answers indicate the large variety of ways that dance contributes to social change, and also point towards what I argue is one of the strengths of dance in relationship to activism, that dance is ongoing, repeated, changes meaning, and cannot just speak to a singular political goal.

My project examines specific examples of contemporary antiwar choreographies and their non-disappearing repetitions in order to think about what contemporary choreography offers to politics, to our ability to process large, never-ending, unstoppable traumatic events such as war. Processing these kind of pervasive social issues via any art form, including choreography, enables viewers and participants to process difficult truths of life and to imagine various ways to live with the things that are traumatic and painful, rather than attempt to make the root of the trauma go away or cease to exist. Antiwar dance neither ignores the issue nor expects it will result in changing the issue. The antiwar choreographies that I look at in this project do not assume or gesture towards solving the problem of violence or war (or its aftermaths such as post-traumatic stress disorder). Instead the choreographies I examine assume that war will not be solved and instead reveal and suggest that it is continuity between multiple temporal registers and repetitions that offer a solvent (not solution) for the traumas of humanity.

The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Chapter One
Choreographic Re-Purpose:
Yvonne Rainer's *M-Walk* and
Wendy Rogers' *Black Maypole*

Againness. Like doing something again, but not quite the same. Not repeatability, but a repetition of likeness. Just think of the 1970s slogan that applied to both Vietnamese and United States soldiers returning from war: “Same, same, but different.” Though I am certain I had heard the term before, I notably encountered “same, same but different” as a slogan on a t-shirt while travelling in Vietnam in 2006. The friend I was travelling with was compelled by the inherent queerness of the slogan. She felt as though “same, same but different” paralleled queer relationships in that there is the ‘same, same’ of two same-sexed people, but that their relationship was ‘different.’ While riding through the highlands of Vietnam on the back of motorcycles (with the Western-tourist popular Easy Riders) our guide corrected her and revealed that the phrase referred to how soldiers who fought in the war returned to their lives following the American War. In other words, the soldiers that survived were the same as always—same job, same village, same country, same family—but different from the experience of war. An Internet search also revealed that the phrase is commonly used to describe the Vietnam tourist industry phenomenon where multiple hotels in close proximity may have the same exact name but vastly different levels of quality. It is here, in the queered but sobering temporality of againness, in same-same-but-different-ness, that my project begins analyses of specific twentieth and twenty-first century United States antiwar choreographies.

The Vietnam War caused change and made things different for many people. The ethos of same, same, but different from the experience of war, summarizes many peoples experiences of that particular time. In this chapter I explore the same-same but different, or againness, of two antiwar choreographies performed as street protest during the

Vietnam War. I look at how parts of the same choreography, become different, when extrapolated for antiwar street protest. I argue that Yvonne Rainer's *M-Walk* and Wendy Rogers' *Black Maypole* re-purposed future-existing choreography in order to immediately respond to the military actions of the government on the street. Quick response with re-purposed choreography ultimately meant that these two postmodern choreographers offered contemplative and meditative protest action to the Vietnam antiwar movement, rather than confrontation and/or representation of war. Choreographic re-purposing, in the context of Rainer and Rogers' antiwar choreographies, complicates dance and performance studies notions of repertoire and the discussions that ensue around sameness and difference. *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole* illuminate the ambivalence about when choreography comes into being. Both choreographers took portions of their choreography to the streets before the choreographies were performed in other contexts. These choreographies point to possibility that the 'different purpose' or repurposing can happen before the purpose—that is, the different purpose, or protest, came before the whole of the choreography. In order to contextualize the historical moment in which these specific choreographies were performed, I rehearse a brief history of the United States Vietnam antiwar movement with emphasize on the latter part of the movement, which is when these dances occurred. I also compare the contemplation and meditation offered by both *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole* to the in-your face style of street protest common to theater and performance artists of that time⁶⁶. While these choreographers

⁶⁶ Sources consulted for this chapter includes existing archival photo documentation of *M-Walk* (at the Getty Museum), various writings on Rainer and this choreography, and personal interviews both Rainer and Rogers.

participation in and re-purposing choreography for the antiwar movement aided in stopping the war no more than your average protester, these actions show an early kernel of what postmodern choreographers commenting on later wars demonstrate more fully—that dance performance offers space to think about the traumas of the world and how to live with not necessarily being able to do anything about it. These choreographers and choreographies maintain strong understandings that they serve a vital civil function—that they do something—without the pressure to reconcile their lack of ability to stop war now.

**Yvonne Rainer’s *M-Walk* and Wendy Rogers’ *Black Maypole*:
Re-Purpose Versus Repertoire**

“Could anyone other than Pollock have painted a Pollock by re-enacting the Pollock “dance”? Would the work produced by such a re-enacting dancer have been a Pollock in the way that a Graham dance danced by another dancer remains a Graham dance?” –Rebecca Schneider⁶⁷

In the instances of *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole*, Rainer and Rogers extrapolated portions or segments of existing but not yet performed or future-existing choreography, in order to immediately protest a specific military action of the U.S. government—the May 1970 bombing of Cambodia and subsequent shooting of student protesters⁶⁸. The truncated street protest versions of these choreographies were performed before larger

⁶⁷ see Schneider, “Solo Solo Solo”, p. 33, in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Criticism*. Schneider discusses the work of Pollock throughout much of the subsection but does not return to the question of Graham. This elision prompted me to consider how the inclusion of dance examples might expand and complicate these discussions.

⁶⁸ The U.S. government announced it was invading Cambodia on May 4, 1970. Students and other protesters responded with outrage and took to the street and campuses in record numbers. To the total mass disapproval of the public, the National Guard responded to the massive college campus uprisings resulting in four students shot and killed at Kent State University (with nine others wounded) and two additional students shot and killed on Penn State University’s campus.

choreographies that the movement phrases were considered to be a part of. Thus both *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole* point to ambivalence about when exactly choreographies come into being a “thing.” Yet regardless of when the choreography came into being, choreography was able to contain multiple purposes, to shape shift, and to react immediately to a political crisis. As noted by Schneider, the repetition of choreography differently—with different casts and/or directors, or during different historical time periods—is commonplace when a particular choreography is considered repertoire of an individual choreographer or company. In other words, the same-same choreography slightly different, like in the Graham dance example, is one means by which choreographies repeat through time. To the contrary, in the example of a Pollock action painting, the same, same, with difference of a not-Pollock performer, would be too different to still be considered a Pollock⁶⁹. Thus choreography has the peculiar ability to retain identity despite change over time, positioning choreography as both malleable and unstable, yet identifiable. In what follows, I spell out my observation of againness in Rainer and Rogers’ antiwar choreographies and how re-purposing for antiwar purpose complicates notions of repertoire in both dance studies and performance studies context. The utilization of parts, portions, or phrases of choreography-in-progress is common in the context of classes taught by choreographers. That is, choreographers who also teach dance will often work out movement phrases on students, therefore also re-purposing

⁶⁹ Further complicating matters is the fact that while a Graham dance will be considered a Graham dance when performed by different dancers, technically the copyright of a Graham dance is owned by the non-profit Martha Graham School and Dance Foundation, not Martha Graham herself. Therefore, in a legal sense a Graham dance is a Graham dance, yet a Graham dance is not necessarily owned by or overseen by Graham herself (while she was alive). See Braveman.

choreography to a certain extent. The comparison of choreographic re-purposing to repertoire allows me to further explore the conflation of performance, choreography, and documentation that is a cornerstone idea of this project. The specific repetitions, of these particular choreographies, further understandings of how choreography forwards ideas through time.

On May 9 or 10, 1970, and in direct reaction to these governmental actions, postmodern choreographer and filmmaker Rainer took *M-Walk* to the streets of Manhattan as part of the SoHo Arts Festival⁷⁰. Rainer's *M-Walk* was a stylized, slow motion, swaying, unison walk based on the workers' gait from Fritz Lang's 1927 cinema masterpiece *Metropolis*⁷¹. *M-Walk* was later performed as an integral movement phrase in

⁷⁰ It is uncertain from the remaining archival footage whether *M-Walk (Street Protest)* occurred on May 9 or 10, 1970. Different than other specific choreographies examined in this study, *M-Walk (Street Protest)* and *Black Maypole* are the two exceptions of antiwar choreography that I analyze that took place on the street. I justify this inclusion because during the late 1960s and early 1970s much of what is considered to be high art or concert dance took place in alternative spaces such as lofts, gymnasiums, art galleries, schools, auditoriums, churches as well as outdoors and on the street. See Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962–1964*; Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces*; Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*; and Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body*. SoHo stands for south of Houston and was an ex-industrial warehouse district of downtown Manhattan that was taken up by artists and converted into loft spaces in the 1960s. Popular in the late 1800s as an industrial factory warehouse district, artists in the 1960s began taking over the cheap loft spaces of this neighborhood, eventually leading to its transformation. See Glueck, New York Times. Clues to Rainer's personal relationship to the transformation of the SoHo neighborhood exist in a file folder (Box 58/Folder 4) in the Yvonne Rainer Papers at the Getty Research Institute. This particular file contains scraps of paper and business cards for clothing and shoe shops in Lower Manhattan, a violation from the New York Housing and Development Administration (which later branched off to become New York City Department of Buildings) for using factory loft spaces as A.I.R. or Artist in Residences and two copies of New York Magazine. The violation was for Rainer's loft at 72 Franklin Street, a different residence from the Greene Street loft that was the meeting point for *M-Walk (Street Protest)*.

⁷¹ *M-Walk* is, in fact, an abbreviated name for Metropolis-Walk, which refers to the hypnotic unison steps of the workers as they enter and leave the Metropolis factory. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is considered one of the earliest examples of science fiction cinema, emerging from Weimar Era Germany, prior to World War II, in 1927. *Metropolis* has a convoluted history, with footage lost and found throughout the years between its multiple iterations. Multiple versions of this film proliferate. The plot of *Metropolis* follows the son of the wealthy capitalist, who befriends and sympathizes with the workers in his father's underground factory.

Rainer's part-set part-improvised large cast improvisational choreography, *WAR*⁷². *WAR* was a large improvisational game-like choreography that conceptually aimed to reveal the absurdity of war. *WAR*, in Rainer's words, was "[...] a huge sprawling non-competitive game-like piece for thirty people who had rehearsed with me for a month and a half⁷³." Rather than clutched and entwined with fellow participants, as is a distinguishable choreographic component of *M-Walk (Street Protest)*, the choreography of the *M-Walk* of *WAR* dictates that the dancers' hands and arms are at their sides or swaying above their heads. The *M-Walk* of *WAR* also included counterbalances, cantilevering, bodies descending to the ground, and still prone bodies littered on the floor.

M-Walk (Street Protest) attracted an initial mass of thirty or forty people—dancers, artists, friends, SoHo residents, members of the extended arts community, and students of Rainer's from the School of the Visual Arts⁷⁴. *M-Walk (Street Protest)* participants gathered outside of Rainer's studio loft at 137 Greene Street. In personal correspondence Rainer recalled what happened on that historic day: "I quickly arranged them [the participants] in the three-abreast column, provided them with black armbands, and demonstrated the simple move. We reassembled in the middle of Greene St., and

Ultimately he falls in love with a woman who leads the workers to rebel, and when she is killed, the wealthy son resurrects her as a robot.

⁷² *WAR* was performed three times later in 1970—Douglass College, Rutgers University, November 6, 1970; Smithsonian Institute, November, 19, 1970; and New York University, Loeb Student Center, New York University, November 22, 1970.

⁷³ See Rainer, *Radical Juxtapositions*, 140.

⁷⁴ Rainer distinguishes *M-Walk (Street Protest)* from the *M-Walk* movement phrase that appeared in her large-cast improvisation *WAR*.

headed south⁷⁵.” Headed by Rainer, dancers Douglass Dunn and Sarah Rudner, the three-person-wide column of silent protesters proceeded down the cobblestone streets of the SoHo neighborhood with arms linked, heads bowed and gaze downward⁷⁶. The procession looped through SoHo, all the while moving in the same direction as traffic, until the group retraced their steps counter to traffic up Greene Street. There was a single incident where the group encountered pressure from the police to move from the center of the street to the sidewalk. Rainer recalled, “When we arrived at Spring St[reet] we were stopped by a policeman, who told us we could not proceed in the middle of the street. Without looking up or acknowledging his presence, we continued to sway from side to side but inched over to the sidewalk⁷⁷.” As *M-Walk (Street Protest)* continued on, the group dwindled as participants became tired. The slow motion zigzag through the streets of SoHo was completed several hours later with just a handful of dancers remaining⁷⁸.

This description of *M-Walk (Street Protest)*, a choreography that would later appear as a movement phrase in Rainer’s group choreography *WAR*, serves to illustrate how a postmodern choreography during the Vietnam War era protest was re-purposed for street protest and in direct response to the questionable military actions of the U.S. government. The example of *M-Walk* points to a peculiarity of the postmodern choreographic process. Choreographers often have phrases of dances before these dances

⁷⁵ Personal interview with Rainer, November 19, 2013.

⁷⁶ The route of *M-Walk* was south on Greene Street, west on Prince Street, south on Wooster Street, east on Spring Street, and north on Greene Street. see Lambert-Beatty, p. 234.

⁷⁷ Personal correspondence with Rainer, November 19, 2013.

⁷⁸ In our correspondence Rainer confessed, “I was amazed to see that Sarah, Douglas, and I plus another three behind us were the sole survivors of the expedition. All the others had dropped away.” Personal correspondence with Rainer, November 19, 2013.

exist as choreography. Therefore, choreographies or parts of choreographies can be re-purposed before they are performed in a context that distinguishes them as an entity. *M-Walk*, separate from the Rainer's choreography *WAR* and distinguished in this iteration as *M-Walk (Street Protest)*, was simplistic and repetitive and therefore made the teaching of the dance easy to disseminate, and was readily available as an immediate reaction to government actions. This example suggests that choreography can be re-purposed before it is performed in the context of a dance performance (differently, of course, in the context of a street protest). Therefore, the repetition of a segment of choreography—similar to how phrases of choreography are repeated during rehearsal—can exist before the choreography it is a part of exists. Choreographic re-purposing in this example served as a mini-preview to a phrase, which was later used in a more complex iteration and in a performance (not street protest) context. The way choreography repeats can thus be a little ahead of itself—choreographic phrases begin repeating long before they formally achieve status as part of a particular choreography⁷⁹.

Another 1970s anti-Vietnam War choreography that drew upon existing but not yet performed choreography in order to respond to an immediate political situation was San Francisco Bay Area based choreographer Wendy Rogers' *Black Maypole*. Like Rainer, but on the opposite coast, Rogers' *Black Maypole* was also performed as part of massive and widespread street protests in reaction to the U.S. bombing of Cambodia in

⁷⁹ Dance theorist Susan Foster points to the connection between repetition and achieving unison in set choreography. See Foster p.7, *Dances That Describe Themselves*.

May 1970⁸⁰. Rogers, then a student in the dance program at the University of California, Berkeley, was caught in what she calls the “swirl” of the 1970s counterculture moment⁸¹. In Rogers’ case, she and members of the collectively run company Moveable Feast attempted to perform her choreography *Black Maypole* on the pedestrian pathway of the Golden Gate Bridge during rush hour⁸². The group utilized a bamboo stalk from Rogers mother’s garden to construct a makeshift maypole, around which they wove the strands of black crepe paper. *Black Maypole* was a half-set and half-improvised choreography that at the moment of protest, in 1970, was in the process of development as part of rehearsals with Moveable Feast⁸³. For the antiwar protest, the dancers focused on the complex and intricate weavings of the ribbons around the maypole. Unlike Rainer’s street antiwar dance, highway patrol on the Golden Gate Bridge shut down Rogers’ *Black Maypole* almost instantly. Rogers disclosed that the antiwar dance was told to disband or

⁸⁰ In my personal interview with Rogers and my personal correspondence with Rainer, both choreographers recalled performing their respective antiwar dances on the street prompted by the outrage at the U.S. bombing of Cambodia and neither recalled what year, exactly, these protests occurred.

⁸¹ Personal interview with Rogers, December 8, 2013.

⁸² Unlike the street clothes worn by Rainer’s group, Rogers and members of Moveable Feast slipped bold primary colored costumes over their street clothes. The outfits had multi-colored square and rectangular pieces that formed the front and back of the frock. The costumes were white, black, yellow, red, and teal blue evoking a combination of the colors of both Vietnamese flags and gesturing towards peace. Personal interview with Rogers, December 8, 2013, personal correspondence and conversation with Rogers, May 6, 2015.

⁸³ In addition to the attempt on the Golden Gate bridge, Rogers’ *Black Maypole* was also performed by Moveable Feast, on May 16, 1971, at the small theater in one block from Wendy’s childhood home (i.e. the house with the bamboo in the background), as well as on several other occasions. Rogers is certain the dance was performed another time at an outside venue, but does not recall the details of the event, or have ephemera evidence of the event (i.e. program, newspaper clipping, flyer). *Black Maypole* in its’ choreographic entirety also included the reading of an antiwar poem by Mary Norbert Korte. Nine years later, in 1979, Rogers and members of the Wendy Rogers Dance Company also performed a dance called *Dancing Across the Golden Gate Bridge* based on the thwarted *Black Maypole* attempt to dance across the

that they would be arrested, and that the participants were not willing to be arrested, as most of them were students concerned about finishing their studies at Berkeley. Thus, in this instance portions of a future-existing choreography were used as street protest that incited the cops and posed the question for the student protesters as to whether they wanted to forward their education or take a physical stand against the war. Embodiment of re-purposed choreography enabled politically concerned choreographers of the 1970s to react in physical actions on the street with whatever artistic chunk of material they had at their disposal and deemed appropriate for antiwar commentary.

While it seems like an obvious formulation that choreographers would perform on the streets something (steps, phrases) they were working on, it illuminates how choreography, in this context, troubles the moment of inception of a choreographic work or when a choreography becomes a choreography. The fact that choreography can become something (street protest) before it is something (performance) points towards the malleability and changeability of choreography itself. In these two examples, as well as other examples in this study, this ability of choreography to transmogrify along non-linear temporal lines—in other words the ability of choreography to be something other than what it was created for, before it was even fully created—is an activist aspect of dance. In this instance choreographic re-purposing allowed choreographers to bring their works to the street, in action against the government and the Vietnam War. The action of choreographic re-purpose in reaction to war added/adds multiple new perspectives: empowerment and a sense of engagement for those involved, a moment of reflection for

bridge, and *Mile*, a different solo where Rogers danced a mile. Personal interview with Rogers, December 8, 2013, personal correspondence and conversation with Rogers, May 6, 2015.

those who encountered, and insight on how dance functions to comment on the world for those looking back.

Rainer and Rogers' methods of choreographic re-purpose, to react immediately to the government's action during wartime, are repetitions of choreography different from the way that choreography repeats as repertoire⁸⁴. These choreographies depart from philosopher Graham McFee's notion of dance repertoire as means of dance preservation. However, these choreographically repurposed repetitions in their street protest versions align with Diana Taylor's notion of repertoire as bodily archive. Rather than archiving a particular set of choreographic steps, I argue these choreographies archive the embodied cultural production of street protest during the Vietnam War. While McFee writes about dance repertoire as a philosopher and in the context of choreographic preservation of historical works of Western and/or European concert dance, Taylor writes repertoire as embodied culture in a Latin American (including indigenous Latin American) context. Taylor's major argument is that bodily archive and its instability are often overshadowed by the hegemony of the written archive.

McFee frames repetition in concert dance repertoire as rooted in sameness and is concerned with how "deviation from past performances can retain same-work identity"⁸⁵.

⁸⁴ Neither *M-Walk* nor *Black Maypole* remains in the contemporary repertoire of Rainer or Rogers. In the case of Rainer, *M-Walk* is not even included in her curriculum vitae. Interestingly Rogers' is currently involved in a long-term multi-year artistic project, which also challenges conventional notions of choreographic repertoire. *RePo* aims to claim Rogers' whole body of work and "bring forward" the "complex rich histories" legacies of study and technique, as well as personal relationships that go into making any piece of choreography. Rogers share that *RePo* is "a way of bringing more fully out into view the archive, the way the body of work is created by the lively interactions the choreographers has with many many others." Personal interview with Rogers, December 8, 2013.

⁸⁵ McFee, p. 7.

McFee discusses these deviations as inherent to choreography because the physical body is the instrument of choreography. McFee argues differences that manifest in the dancers' bodies do not render the choreography a new work simply because the dancers themselves or the way that dancers execute the work are notably altered. Though the performing bodies and their dance techniques might be different, McFee argues the choreography remains the same. For example, McFee points out that contemporary Graham dancers are more technically proficient than those in the 1930s, therefore Graham repertoire will inherently look different now than it did during times past. Yet despite the differences in the bodies of dancers performing the repertoire, McFee believes the choreography retains same-work identity. In other words, McFee argues a choreography is a still that particular choreography even when the bodies performing the choreography change (both in relationship to company members changing and in bodily techniques changing). His theory of dance repertoire acknowledges difference but focuses on sameness and continuity as manifested in the authorial function of the choreographer—you might call this different, different but same⁸⁶. My work evokes same, same, but different, and instead focuses on how differences and inexactness manifest malleable ideas, and embed multiple and changeable interpretations, contexts, and political expressions. The kind of dance preservation theorized by McFee, through time and contingent upon codified though changing bodily techniques, is how repertoire from a Western concert dance perspective is often conceived. Repertoire, however, is not

⁸⁶ McFee asserts that “performance traditions” across time are responsible for dance choreographies' recognition as particular choreography. Within his definition of performance traditions McFee includes dance techniques such as shape/line (like the extension of the toes) and phrasing, as well as traditions of performance like audience behavior. McFee, p.8.

necessarily continuous through time. Some choreographies fall out of repertoire due to aesthetic trends, popularity, or a general ethos of the new always taking precedent in the trajectory of a dance company.

Typically there is a distinction between disappearance from repertoire that is due to aesthetic trends and popularity, as discussed by McFee, and dance's supposed disappearance in the moment of performance⁸⁷. Taylor's analyses blur the distinctions between disappearance of repertoire and disappearance in the moment of performance⁸⁸. Taylor writes in the context of Latin America and includes cultural embodied practice, not just dance choreography, in her theorization of repertoire. Like McFee, Taylor admits that the "acts of transfer" inherent to repertoire can cause disappearance from repertoire: "It is true that individual instances of performances disappear from the repertoire. This type of disappearance, according to Taylor, "happens to a lesser degree in the archive⁸⁹." Taylor looks to repertoire as a bodily archive that counters the hegemony of print and text based archives. She focuses on the imbalance of power between the archive and repertoire and "focuses on the methodological implications of revalorizing expressive,

⁸⁷ For more on the liveness debates see the Introduction.

⁸⁸ While I concur with Taylor on the issue of difference and repetition as inherent to embodied acts of transfer, I disagree with her strict formulation that performance video recordings (and for Taylor also embodied culture video recordings) are part of the archive and not part of repertoire. Taylor argues: "A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself. (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire)." see Taylor p. 20. In this project, I include live performance and video taped versions of the performance both as inexact copies of the original time/space event in my formulation of againness, or repetitions with difference. However, in this chapter my methods do not include viewing of archival video.

⁸⁹ Taylor, p. 20.

embodied culture⁹⁰.” Taylor argues: “The rift does not lie between the written and spoken word, but between the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)⁹¹.” Taylor argues that this cultural embodied repertoire “allows for individual agency,” yet she also notes that contrary to the archive, in repertoire, “the actions [...] do not remain the same⁹².” Where McFee claims that repertoire perpetuates sameness even though the technique of the bodies dancing the choreography is different, Taylor acknowledges the difference that occurs in bodily transmission, or what she calls acts of transfer. Writes Taylor: “As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same⁹³.” Taylor contends instability is one the reasons for repetition with difference, and I believe it is precisely within this instability, or to invert the meaning, the ability to change, that embodied practice in general, and antiwar choreography in particular can change and adapt to crisis across historical time periods. In the case of Rainer and Rogers’ examples, this changeability and adaptability was conducive to immediate response to the actions of government by re-purposing parts of choreography that were

⁹⁰ Taylor, p. 16-17.

⁹¹ Taylor, p. 19-20. Taylor acknowledges and reports that “Claims manifested through performance...ceased to carry legal weight,” eventually resulting in the demise or complete annihilation of people and their culture. (For example, the binding performed actions such as tying of robes to signify marriage, or performed land claims ceased to have meaning in a culture that valorized the written and spoken). Taylor similarly points out that lives of indigenous people have disappeared because they had no writing, for example the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas.

⁹² Taylor, p. 20.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 20.

ultimately for other means. Taylor asserts that instability is the weakness embodied acts that permits the hegemony of the written archive. Following her argument, I maintain this instability and changeability is precisely the strength that renders dance, choreography and performance powerful⁹⁴. When dances change, they sometimes even shape shift from texts to physical bodies or physical bodies to texts. I advocate for a theory of dance and performance that is not hung up on disappearance but is instead interested in tracing continuities, overlaps, and resonances alongside of inherent changes.

Re-purpose of existing choreography is common in dance and repertoire is one way that already existing choreography can be re-posed—under the original title and with a likeness to some form of the original. In this chapter, however, I look at the re-purpose of specific parts of not-yet-existing choreography in order to protest war on the street. In the cases presented here, these choreographies or portions of these choreographies could have been extrapolated to protest any cause—they were not in any way about war or representative of war. The repetition of future-existing choreography as antiwar demonstration is one way antiwar dance both adds a particular tenor to the antiwar movement as well as shows how dance functions to comment on the world. Usually we think of re-purposing as something that comes after the first purpose or the purpose the thing was intended for in the first place. Choreographic re-purposing in these instances suggests one of the ways that dance and choreography operates outside of expected and linear temporal frameworks. In other chapters I explore how choreography

⁹⁴ It could also be argued that this changeability contributes to why performance is valued by performance scholars.

works backwards through time to change our perceptions of events in hindsight, how viewers are garnered options in the present to shape a particular choreographic event, and how multiple choreographic re-performances enable multiple presents and presences; here, I look at how these particular choreographies pull from the future (future-existing choreography) to forcefully insert themselves into the present political crisis (right now my country is brutally and unethically invading Cambodia). *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole* were taken to the street in protest of the Vietnam War, were made as part of other choreographic works, were not choreographed as street activism against the war, but were nonetheless parsed and parceled as such when the choreographers deemed them necessary. *M-Walk* and *Black Maypole's* re-purpose of already existing choreographic phrases to protest the Vietnam War offered the viewer, passerby, and participant not an end to the war, but contemplation and meditation about the Vietnam War in particular, and violence in general. Yet to read these choreographies only as a space of contemplation and meditation on war undermines the political fervor and commendable momentum of the Vietnam antiwar movement. Even in the simplistic, quiet, homespun quality of these performances there is a doing, an action, a participation in politics and social change that is signaled by these choreographies through the physical bodies of the performers on the streets. Choreographic re-purposing enabled choreographers to insert not-yet-made choreography into the present and provided an opportunity for choreographers to show up on the street and enact quickly. These dances were *doing something*—messing with temporal constructs, responding with immediacy through slow and/or minimalist movement, relating dance to war, opposing stillness to violence,

making passersby stop and think, and providing a venue for artists to express movement in line (literally in the case of *M-Walk*) with the antiwar movement.

An Interpretive History of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement in the United States

What is unique or exceptional about the Vietnam antiwar movement is that what began with just a few key organizations ended with hundreds of thousands of people demonstrating in the streets. Each of the thousands of organizations had distinct ideas about what the United States was doing wrong and about how the United States could remedy the situation. Peace movement historian Charles DeBenedetti defines the antiwar movement as “an amorphous and pervasive social current that connected the war in Vietnam to domestic struggles⁹⁵.” Though the numbers and speed with which antiwar Vietnam protesters proliferated is notable and impressive, the popularity of the street protests, according to DeBenedetti, banked on the growing momentum of several other social justice movements. DeBenedetti contends that the force and popularity of the Vietnam antiwar movement grew from a hotbed of social justice work that began in protests of nuclear arms, the civil rights movement, and an especially strong youth counterculture. U.S. citizens took what they had to the streets as well as developed new tactics of civil disobedience, for example, Guerilla Theater, which I discuss below. Choreographers participating in the Vietnam antiwar street protests re-purposed choreography in order to do part of what dance can do that is so powerful—take what you have, use what you know, and move with it, on the streets, on the bridge, in the studio, or any other space you can find for it. Though during this era of antiwar protest sheer

⁹⁵ DeBenedetti, p.1.

numbers of people trumped a cohesive message of a unified protest, sentiments of protest were nonetheless distilled and are discernible in hindsight. Protesting the war on the street signified personal expression and personal freedom, both tenants of the counterculture or hippie movement. A general distrust in the decision-making capabilities of the government administration ensued following misinformation about the governmental military actions in South East Asia, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., and the Nixon/Watergate scandal. Secretive and unusually brutal combat tactics spurred morality debates around what became known as an unjust war⁹⁶.

In the United States, protests against the Vietnam War were multi-faceted and composed of many antiwar groups and other social justice organizations. Though the United States involvement in Vietnam officially began in 1955 and progressed to land invasion in 1965, the United States had had military involvement in Southeast Asia since as early as 1945. During the 1950s, the United States government had been actively trying to contain the spread of communism—a Cold War Era tactic commonly described as Communist Containment. The United States divestment in Southeast Asia was part of

⁹⁶ In *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer argues that some wars, such as World War II are justified and morally acceptable. Walzer writes from the perspective of a participant in the Vietnam anti-war movement. As an anti-war activist, Walzer takes on the seemingly contradictory task of justifying why wars should sometimes be fought, and if they must be fought, how soldiers should be expected to act with moral consideration for life. Walzer argues that war can be justified in response to aggression or humanitarian intervention, but that regime change, such as that which happened recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, is not a justified cause for war. Walzer theorizes unjust wars as unjustified use of force and violence. For example, Walzer critiques battles during the Vietnam War where superior officers forced soldiers into morally compromising and/or illegal situations. Issues of improvisation in the choreography of war arise when soldiers are given unethical orders from their superior officers. Walzer provides an in-depth survey of many of the issues that arise in the course of justifying the killing of others during wartime, covering topics such as the war convention, civilians or non-combatants, moral responsibility of soldiers versus the moral responsibilities of those in power, and neutrality and non-actions such as not-voting or state neutrality.

this Cold War tactic to prevent the spread of Communism. Vietnam War antiwar protests built on growing solidarity among participants, and went through a number of distinct and distinguishable phases.

Both Rainer and Rogers' choreographic re-purposing as antiwar protests were part of later and more intense phases of the Vietnam antiwar movement. The United States antiwar protests grew enormously in strength in the later phases of the war, approximately 1968-1973⁹⁷. The public disapproval of the Tet Offensive signaled a major shift in civil opinion⁹⁸. Antiwar organizations grew from several dozen organizations in 1960 to a massive twelve hundred organizations by the early 1970s⁹⁹. Numbers at street protests peaked at an estimated half a million in the 1969 march on Washington¹⁰⁰. In May 1970, the United States bombing campaign in Cambodia was one of the tipping points for U.S. public's threshold for unnecessary violence. It prompted notable increases in spontaneous and local street demonstrations and also incited widespread street protest.

⁹⁷ The Tet Offensive occurred in 1968, the Vietnam War officially ended August 15, 1973, and fall of Saigon to Communist forces happened in 1975.

⁹⁸ Television news coverage also played a role in the national and international visibility of wrongs carried out on Vietnamese soil as well as U.S. civilian disapproval during the Vietnam War antiwar protests. I further explore the relationship of the Vietnam War to mediation and television war reportage in Chapter Three.

⁹⁹ DeBenedetti, p.1. According to DeBenedetti's research most of these organizations were "local and ephemeral".

¹⁰⁰ De Bendetti, p.139 photo essay. The march on Washington occurred days after an antiwar march on Arlington Cemetery where upwards of 45,000 participants carried placards with the names of U.S. soldiers killed, Vietnamese persons killed, or Vietnamese villages destroyed.

The antiwar, anti-government sentiment was further fueled when the U.S. National Guard shot student protesters at Kent State University¹⁰¹.

Choreographic re-purposing fostered the ability of choreographers to respond with spontaneity, immediacy and solidarity with these larger efforts. Rainer's antiwar choreography *M-Walk (Street Protest)* crafts a compelling contrast between the urgency to make an antiwar statement and the slow-paced endurance of the event. Rainer and Rogers chose to take to the streets en masse in a similar reaction as other artists and civilians. Rainer and Rogers' street antiwar choreographies are compelling examples of urgency mixed with slow-paced or ceased (literally stopped by cops) movement. The slow-motion gait of *M-Walk (Street Protest)* incites an intense determination to make bystanders and audience stop and reflect. Thus the slow motion perpetuates an urgency not only to stop the air strikes against Cambodia, but also to stop the audience in their tracks in order for them to do something now to stop the atrocities of war. In a way Rainer and Rogers' opening up space for contemplation and reflection, is not only about thinking about war, but about a conscious calculated insertion/assertion/enactment with the tools of a choreographers artistic expression—the physical body and its relationship to and placement in space.

Both Rainer and Rogers and peaceful intentions of taking immediate and empowered action, would be considered on the side of the “doves¹⁰².” According to

¹⁰¹ These particular events—the U.S. bombing of Cambodia on May 4, 1970, and the shooting of student protesters at Kent State University later that day—were the impetus for the three antiwar dance/theater protests I discuss in this chapter. The shooting at Jackson State College occurred about a week later on May 14, 1970, despite of (or perhaps because of) the intensification of street protests nationally.

foreign relations expert, former U.S. State Department speechwriter, and author Adam Garfinkle, the U.S. antiwar movement in hindsight can be described from two basic perspectives—that of “hawks” and that of “doves¹⁰³.” The hawks believed that the U.S. antiwar street demonstrations were prompted and perpetuated by Communist agitators/infiltrators and ultimately caused prolonged combat, a waste of U.S. financial resources, and the securing of Ho Chi Minh’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To the contrary, the doves believed that U.S. anti-Vietnam war street demonstrations were an apex of people’s movements, a nostalgic moment of both personal freedom and the ability to change the world. The doves believed that the large scale, massive demonstrations played a major role in the U.S. administration’s decision to withdraw forces from Vietnam.

I interpret the downcast eyes of *M-Walk (Street Protest)* as expressing dissent, sorrow, and/or somberness, as an embodied refusal to engage with the government perpetrators of war, and as a silent display of disapproval—a physicalization of distrust. I read this aspect of Rainer’s choreography as reflecting the sentiment of distrust in the government, an aspect of U.S. culture that became pronounced during the Vietnam War era. Vietnam War historian Marilyn Young discusses how prior to Vietnam: “A fundamental axiom of U.S. foreign policy had been that this nation is always on the side

¹⁰² However in our interview Rogers elucidated how the era of the 1970s was an era of naïve confidence where many people firmly believed art and personal expression could heal the wrongs of the world and that “obviously we were wrong.” Rainer admits that in hindsight, she felt as though she had little in-depth understanding of the war or what was happening in the war, but felt as though she was swept up in the fervor of the moment nonetheless.

¹⁰³ Garfinkle, p.7.

of freedom and justice.” Young uses the example of how when Vietnam veteran Richard Holbrooke arrived in Saigon as a fresh soldier in his early twenties he “believed everything [he] had been told by the United States government,” he believed fighting the war, a war against Communism was “the right thing because the U.S government *did* the right thing¹⁰⁴.” Young argues that Vietnam “seriously weakened that automatic response”—that the United States always made decisions in the interest of freedom and justice—for veterans like Holbrooke, as well as many others of his generation. Quite to the contrary of U.S. citizens born during World War II, Young contends that many “Americans born during the decade of the war grew up not believing *anything* their government told them¹⁰⁵.” Silent, somewhat abstract, easily teachable choreography was a unique way to enact dissent against the government compared to other art forms of the same era. These choreographies instead reiterate that street protest is not about large scale, impact, numbers, quickness, or agility—but instead it was about being able to respond quickly with the tools and artistic practices that were immediately available to you. The following chapters in this project continue to look at ideas and threads that emanated from this era of protest with an emphasis on the shifting role of flag desecration, media uses, and the aftermath for veterans.

¹⁰⁴ Holbrook’s words quoted in Young, p. 314, author’s emphasis. States Holbrooke, “In those days you didn’t question it.”

¹⁰⁵ Young, p. 314, author’s emphasis. Young argues that “axiomatic evil” of the government’s enemy, Vietnam, and “his [Vietnam’s or Vietnamese’s] indifference to human life, his duplicity, his ruthlessness,” appeared in the Vietnam War as characterizations of the United States.

Richard Schechner's Guerilla Theater and How Dance Did Something Different

Concurrent with Rainer's *M-Walk (Street Protest)* in the 1970 SoHo Arts Festival were a number of other staged artists' protests in nearby Washington Square Park. Because the timing of the festival coincided with the United States' decision to bomb Cambodia, many participants urged cancellation, withdrew participation, or used the festival as a platform to voice disapproval of the war¹⁰⁶. On May 9, 1970, just on the other side of Houston Street from Rainer's slow and contemplative *M-Walk (Street Protest)*, performance studies theorist/founder and theater artist Richard Schechner staged anti-Vietnam war protests with the Guerilla Theater. Guerilla Theater was a method of making political street theater that was taught and learned by numerous groups as a tactic to spread political messages in the 1960s and early 1970s¹⁰⁷. While the impetus of Rainer, Rogers and the Guerilla Theater was same, same—an adamant disapproval against the military actions of the government abroad and domestically—the way this disapproval was carried out was very different. This subsection argues that Rainer and Rogers meditative and contemplative approach and re-purposed choreography countered the kinds of street protest and performance by their contemporaries in theater and performance art. These choreographies show how dance offers something different to dealing with the large traumas of the world. In these cases, choreography offered a temporally reversed re-purposing that resulted in more stillness and slowness than the aggressive new techniques employed by the Guerilla Theater. While both choreographers

¹⁰⁶ Grace Glueck, p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ See Schechner, "Guerrilla Theater: May 1970."

and theater makers were utilizing new methods, the results were on opposite ends of the spectrum of theatricalized commentary—from literal blood, guts, screaming, and forced audience participation, to slow motion non-confrontational walking for hours and hours.

The Guerilla Theater had three main goals: to make audiences aware of the particular problem, to viscerally expose audiences to an experience of the problem, and (hopefully) to demonstrate potential solutions to the problems. Schechner writes that the intention of Guerrilla Theater was “to make a swift action or image that gets to the heart of an issue or a feeling—to make people realize where they are living and under what situation.”¹⁰⁸ Like Rainer and Rogers, the Guerilla Theater staged a protest in reaction to the Kent State massacre of student protesters. Yet different, Guerilla Theater’s action was a bloody and violent act of street theater on the steps in front of New York University’s Loeb Student Center¹⁰⁹. Quartets of students were roped together and paraded down the street by other students posing as guards. The guards verbally and physically assaulted the captives with stage rifles and real, very bloody, animal guts. Following the abusive procession, the captives then ‘died’ by collapsing on the steps of the Loeb Student Center, and pulling more animal guts out of their clothing. Schechner recounts that the performance on May 9, 1970 included a procession with skinned animal heads stuck on the top of sticks. According to Schechner, when passersby heckled or laughed, they were

¹⁰⁸ Schechner, p. 163.

¹⁰⁹ Schechner recounts that he found out about the Kent State student protester shootings from a flyer handed out in his performance theory class. Schechner describes Guerilla Theater’s intention that as similar to this action of handing out a flyer as a disruption to class, that is, the performances of the Guerilla Theater could dispel information to the public. Schechner also writes about the Guerilla Theater’s interruptions of Broadway shows during which they played a recording or recited a transcript of the father of Allison Krause (a student protester killed at Kent State).

pulled into the group of captive students. Other passersby mistook the staged Guerilla Theater event as reality and thought the students had actually been shot and killed, not unlike what had just happened at Kent State.

The tactics of Schechner's Guerilla Theater resonate with violent body-based work by performance artists working in the gallery context during roughly the same time. Art critic and contemporary art historian Kathy O'Dell researches and writes about United States and European masochistic performance art of the 1970s, for example performance works like Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* and Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 10*¹¹⁰. O'Dell is intrigued by the 1970s popularity of extremely violent body and performance art and the possible reasons behind the thrust of these artistic practices. O'Dell observes that the trend of masochistic performance art achieved an apex of trendiness in the 1970s, disappeared during the 1980s, and reemerged as a trend again in the 1990s. O'Dell theorizes that United States and European masochistic performances correlated with major wars and were perhaps in reaction to artists feeling a lack of control over the political situation. However, what the 1970s artists described by O'Dell did not choose to do was to take their art to the street as a reaction to a military action (at least not their art that is canonized in art history books).

¹¹⁰ Ono's *Cut Piece*, was a conceptual performance piece, where Ono silently kneeled onstage, and the audience was given the instructions "cut." One by one audience members would join Ono on stage and cut off pieces of her clothing unless she was naked. *Cut Piece* was performed in numerous international locations in the 1960s and 1970s and was reconstructed and performed by Ono in the early 2000s in response to the post-9/11 moment. Abramovic's *Rhythm 10* was a performance piece in which she quickly stabbed a knife between her outstretched fingers, until she accidentally cut herself. Each time she would cut her finger, she would pick up a different of twenty knives.

Though perhaps not apparent to the quick glance of the passerby, there was a concealed element of pain from the rote endurance in *M-Walk (Street Protest)*, as least for those who completed the entire route. In two separate correspondences Rainer commented on how her hips ached after *M-Walk (Street Protest)*. Similar between these examples of choreography and theater is that they all of respond to the urgency of the situation, and both express the personal freedom of individual expression and dissent. What emerges from these comparisons are different embodiments—one is a representation of the perceived visceral experience of war, while the other is the silent refusal to accept what is going on and perhaps an invitation for others to think on it too. Rainer’s work allowed the passerby to think on the war, while Schechner and the Guerilla Theater’s intervention was to make the passerby viscerally experience a likeness of war. Rainer’s *M-Walk (Street Protest)* and Rogers’ *Black Maypole* demonstrate what protest dance might offer differently from their contemporary performance artists and theater makers—silent refusal and bringing what you have to the street in protest.

While theater and performance artists such as Schechner, Ono, or Abramovic were pushing the uses of theater by breaking down the barriers between representation and real violence, postmodern dancers were employing the quotidian, simple movements, exploring notions of a “natural body,” shedding formal structures of presentation, and experimenting with street clothes as costume. What I see in common between both antiwar dance of the 1970s and its counterparts in theater and performance art are mechanisms that allowed for quick creation of theater, processions, dances, and movements. Quick creation temporally complements the need for urgency, and to re-

purpose soon-to-be choreography accomplished this task. Scores that can be taught, relearned and disseminated in short amounts of time, casts composed of friends and neighbors, constructing props out of materials from your mother's backyard—these kinds of performance mechanisms allow the antiwar performances to respond to the ever-changing political climate of war. Therefore, I contend that quick-made yet powerful works of art serviced 1970s antiwar dissent. The service provided by choreographers opened space for thinking about war, while their counterparts in theater in performance art dealt more with representations of violence. Thus, during the Vietnam War era, performance and performance as protest were accessible enough that on short notice, and in urgent reaction to the actions of the government, artists were able to respond with their art at the drop of a hat, or literally at the drop of a bomb. In all cases, there was a distinct reinsertion of the physical body into the public dialogue about war in the United States. These choreographer's methods of constructing antiwar choreography—choreographic re-purpose—created againness, challenged ideas of when a choreography comes into being, and enabled them to respond to the actions of the government immediately similar but very different from their contemporaries.

Conclusion

“What can be salvaged from the socially deficient avant-gardes of the past that might invigorate the social struggles of the present and future?”
—Yvonne Rainer, 1989¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Rainer, “Revisiting the Question of Transgression,” in *A Woman Who*, p. 105.

In this chapter, I identified an aesthetic of re-purpose utilized by Rainer and Rogers in their 1970 antiwar dance protests. I argued that these choreographers re-purposed in-process or future-existing choreography in order to be able to respond immediately to the actions of the United States government during the Vietnam War. The specific choreographies that I examined—*M-Walk* and *Black Maypole*—were able to be taught quickly, to dancers and non-performers alike, with easily acquirable costumes and props, or quotidian costumes and props, and performed on quick notice in reaction to U.S. campaigns of war. I contend that both *Black Maypole* and *M-Walk* were indicative of the early 1970s when personal freedom was highly entangled with personal expression and antiwar protest. One of the ‘agains’ of each of these choreographies was extrapolating a part or whole of a larger choreography, or re-purposing in order to respond immediately in protest of a specific action of the government. Interestingly, in these choreographies re-purposing occurred before the choreographies were initially performed, and demonstrates how dance repeats in ways that are different from other genres. These choreographies create a foundation for examining how antiwar comment has changed since the 1970s, highlight ideas from the 1970s that are still circulating in antiwar choreography, and provide a comparison for issues that have since emerged and are being addressed by contemporary choreographers. The process of reflecting back on an era, and specifically on specific choreographies of an era, perpetuates another kind of againness. We know in hindsight that these choreographies did not stop the war and my conversations with the choreographers illuminates doubt as to whether they were ever supposed to. Yet each of these choreographies offers an example of what dance adds to

dealing with the trauma of war—and in these instances dealing with wars ongoingness meant taking to the streets, insisting war must end, and taking advantage of the expressions that are most available to you.

The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Chapter Two

**Re-Performance and Choreographic Template:
Ann Carlson's *Flag* and *Too Beautiful A Day* and
Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags***

Getty Research Institute, November 12, 2013.

A chipper librarian hands me the newly digitized DVDs of converted film documentation from Yvonne Rainer's 1970 *Trio A with Flags*¹¹². We exchange a few words about our mutual excitement that the research institute recently made public Rainer's personally owned documentation of this iconic performance. To the institutes and my knowledge, this footage is the sole extant film or video documentation of 1970 *Trio A with Flags*¹¹³. Despite the sterility of the high-tech, high-security Getty Research Institute, once the DVD is in the player, I am immediately struck by the rich context of the performance—the hundreds of flag artworks that cover the walls of Judson Memorial Church; the post-show discussion about nationalism, patriotism, and the symbol of the flag; the antiquated 1970s fashions of the participants; the confidence and the determination of the performers; the thin technically proficient bodies of the female dancers. *Trio A with Flags* is a sextet performance of the choreography of *Trio A*, twice through, naked, and with United States of America flags tied around their necks as though they were bibs¹¹⁴. *Trio A* is a three-minute-ish sequence of steps composed of a

¹¹² David Gordon, Nancy Green, Barbara Lloyd, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, and Lincoln Scott performed *Trio A with Flags* (1970). Three of the performers are women, and three are men; five of the performers are white and one man is African-American (Lincoln Scott). Dance historian Ramsay Burt points out that the Peoples Flag Show was more multi-racial and multi-gendered than some of its contemporary protests. For example, take Robert Morris' withdrawal from the Venice Biennale, which was critiqued as protest by white men that served white men. See Burt, *Performative Traces*, p. 137.

¹¹³ None of the dance scholars who have written about *Trio A with Flags* (Ramsay Burt, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, Lizzie Leopold) have viewed or are aware of this recording, which was made available to the public beginning in October 2013.

¹¹⁴ Following the 1970 Judson Memorial Church performance of *Trio A with Flags*, there is abridged documentation of the public discussion that ensued. Infamous Yippie (Youth International Party) activist, Abbie Hoffman, with a handlebar mustache and American striped and starred shirt, stepped up to the podium at the People's Flag Show. He praised the artists in the People's Flag Show for using patriotic symbols to protest through artwork. An audience member then responded that he would like a discussion

variety of quotidian movements, dance steps, specific spatial pathways, and random familiar movements like a handstand. The entire dance is performed with a focus that does not present forward to the audience and the entire movement sequence was/is performed without emphasis, accentuation, or transition. In the context of the experiments of early New York City postmodern dance, *Trio A* was a rebellion against the privileging of certain kinds of movement over others—mainly the privileging of trained dance movement over quotidian movement¹¹⁵. In *Trio A*, there was an equalization of choreographic steps; each movement in the sequence is important as the movement before and the moment after. The U.S. flags tied around the dancers' necks alternately flip-flop like capes or bibs, depending on which side of the body the flag falls on. The dancers execute the performance with smooth, dancerly and technical precision and are easeful with both the movement and their nakedness¹¹⁶. The sextet performs

about whether the flag is a symbol or just a sign, and whether we should take the destroying of flags seriously. The speaker asked if in destroying the flag, the People's Flag show artists were (symbolically) attempting to destroy the country. He also wondered if it is, in fact, possible to desecrate the flag or if it is actually possible to desecrate the country. See Yvonne Rainer papers, Getty Research Institute, *Trio A with Flags*.

¹¹⁵ The experiments of the early postmodern dancers were quotidian movement, improvisation (including contact improvisation), interdisciplinary, alternative performance venues, collective processes, use of street clothes as costume, juxtaposition and a concept of the natural or untrained body.

¹¹⁶ Rainer biographer and art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty and dance scholar Janice Ross both argue that nudity in the 1960s and 1970s was commonplace and comfortable for both audiences and dancers, but could still cause problems and result in censorship from institutions. Lambert-Beatty points out that although nudity was treated as "blasé" by a New York Times review of Grand Union, that Steve Paxton's 1970 nude performance at the Smithsonian was censored and officially interrupted, see p. 333. Ross argues in her chapter on Ana Halprin that Halprin's 1965 *Parades and Changes* was "about one's freedom to display one's nude body as a form of honestly rather than sexual allure. But in the era of the Vietnam War, it was also possible to read the dance as a statement of staking a claim to one's body, one's freedom to choose not to risk one's life in a war many did not want fight." See *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s*, p.27. Rainer reported that she and the other dancers were "not interfered with" and the dance "[...] felt good to do." Rainer, *Work*, p.172. However 1970s *Trio A* dancer, Pat Catterson, tells another story about her experience performing *Trio A with Flags* naked. Catterson writes she was "so nervous about being naked in public that I decided I needed to give myself something to distract me from my nudity. For some reason my

simultaneously, but far from unison. There are several moments, however, like the extended circling backwards of the arms, when the dancers' executions of the choreography syncs up¹¹⁷. Following the performance, the audience does not clap, and the dancers are seen putting their clothes on with the flags still draped around their necks¹¹⁸.

New York Performing Arts Library, February 1, 2014.

I sit and wait for the technician in the basement to press play on the video recording of the 1999 re-performance of *Trio A with Flags* on the television monitor of the third floor¹¹⁹. In my anticipation I review my notes on the critical reception of the 1999 re-performance. New York Times dance critic Jennifer Dunning reviewed the performance as “surprisingly sweet” despite the fact that the dance was created to “protest repression and censorship¹²⁰.” Dunning interpreted the flags worn by dancers as “anchoring their bodies in space” rather than a comment of patriotism or freedom of

solution was to work the whole dance out retrograde." Catterson goes on to say ultimately the retrograde took longer than her fellow dancers performing the 'regular' *Trio A*. When left onstage, solo, naked, embarrassed and somewhat horrified, Catterson decided to end the phrase early. Catterson, p.7.

¹¹⁷ The final subsection of this chapter addresses the literature on *Trio A*, which I argue is the choreographic template for *Trio A with Flags*.

¹¹⁸ In *Work 1963-1971*, Rainer confirms that flags were tied around the dancer's necks, while their clothes were still on. According to Rainer, the dancers undressed “dragging non-buttoning upper garments up under our chins.” Rainer, *Work*, p.172.

¹¹⁹ *Trio A with Flags* was reconstructed and performed in 1999 as part of a celebration of the Judson Memorial church. Masako Abe, Tatiana da Rosa, Zoi Dimitriou, Marquita Levy, Clarinda Mac Low, Jody Sperling, and Paschal Wettstein performed the reconstruction. The performance of seven women, rather than a mixed gender cast, and without the context of the flag art in the background, changed the tenor of the performance dramatically from the 1970 version. Also, missing in the 1999 context was any kind of protest or political connection. Rainer spoke before the performance about the context of the minimalist art movement in the 1960s.

¹²⁰Dunning, “Earnest Movements Transformed by Time,” New York Times, April 24, 1999.

expression¹²¹. Dance studies scholar Ramsay Burt also gave a compelling account of watching this same video documentation of the 1999 version of *Trio A with Flags* (also performed at Judson Memorial Church), in the same research library where I sit. For Burt, this video made a strong impact when he viewed it in 2001 shortly after 9/11. Burt described the choreography as “subversive” and was cognizant that his reading was greatly influenced by the overwhelming post-9/11 display of flags in New York City at that time. Later that night on this same research trip, Burt also mentioned his encounter with antiwar war activism when he was handed a flyer for the anti Gulf War activist group “Not In My Name” as he walked past Judson Memorial Church.

I have seen no overt display of flags on my travels uptown to the research library today, nor have I encountered any antiwar protesters. It is a cold, bleak, New York City February. By now, the U.S. military has withdrawn from Iraq, and there are, at the least, kernels of political hope from the second term election of Democratic President Obama. One would be hard-pressed to find a United States flags in many locations beyond the local post offices and fire houses. A very different moment indeed from the aftermath of 9/11 when miniature U.S. flags were flown on cars, U.S. flag stickers were pasted on the front doors of businesses, and when the U.S. flag had temporarily become a symbol of remembrance for those lost in the terrorist attacks.

When I finally get the okay on the computer screen, I fast-forward to the segment of the evening that features Rainer and the reconstructed *Trio A with Flags*. The context of the performance was an anniversary of and fundraiser for Judson Memorial Church

¹²¹ Ibid.

titled: “Celebration of Freedom and Art.” Rainer, in a pre-performance speech, describes Judson Memorial Church in the early 1960s. She recalls the highlights of spring 1962, and she ironically marks Steve Paxton’s *Transit*, which was all about marking dance (rather than dancing fully). Rainer historicizes this particular era of dance at Judson Memorial Church as deeply affected by the minimalist movement in visual arts. She thanks choreographer Wendy Perron for pushing the excavation of this dance and credits Clarinda MacLow with teaching the dance to the dancers after which Rainer would come in with some of her “obsessions” and fix the choreography to her liking¹²². In other words, Rainer reveals that although she was not the principal reconstructionist she still exerted final control over the version of the *Trio A with Flags* we are about to see.

Following Rainer’s speech, the video documentation of the choreography begins with a close-up of the dancers, followed by a wide-pan, and alternates between these two shots throughout the fifteen-minute performance. There are seven young women dancers whose bodies exhibit the clear multi-directional lines in space indicative of intensive concert dance training. They fluidly perform the movement sequence of *Trio A*, the mix of quotidian and technical dance movement with ease and without overwhelming effort. In line with the original intention of Rainer for the 1970 version, in this version there is a clear attempt to not privilege one move of the *Trio A* solo over other moves of the dance; the gaze of the dancers is intentionally not directed at the audience; and there is a supposed lack of transition from one movement to the next. Yet, I sense that the dancers

¹²² Quoted from Yvonne Rainer opening pre-performance speech from *Trio A with Flags*, 1999. Video documentation at New York Performing Arts Library.

are somehow more stiff, or lacking some of the fluidity of the dancers in the 1970 version. This was perhaps because of the quality of video recording or perhaps because of Rainer's own filtering of what she thinks the aesthetic of this dance was and therefore should be in 1999 (or how her aesthetic choices have evolved after fifty years of film and dance-making). Other small details and differences stand out: the strained breathing of the videographer is audible and distracting throughout the documentation; the nudity appears somewhat awkward for the performers—the flag costumes were fixed on the front of their bodies, and the performers bodies relaxed visibly when they put on their clothes¹²³; the performers sync up towards the end the performance, whereas, in 1970s, the performances joined and rejoined throughout the performance; when the performance is complete, the performers put on their clothes (as they did in the 1970), and then come out to bow; the audience claps. Though the aesthetics remain similar and within the realm of Rainer's control and the choreographed steps are identical, what was most notably different was the context of the space of the performance at the Judson Memorial Church. At this point in my viewing, I am aware of how the context of the performance and then the context of the viewing (which can be separate, as in the case of myself and Burt, in contrast to a live audience member) both hugely impact the import and, to use Burt's term, subversiveness, of the choreography. Minus the clutter of the hundreds of pieces of flag art, Judson Church appears as a large, white, cavernous and cold space. The open vapid whiteness of Judson's high-ceilinged performance space and the abstract, non-theatrical, non-presentational re-performance of *Trio A with Flags* confirms the influence

¹²³ See Ross and Lambert-Beatty.

of 60s-era visual minimalism noted verbally by Rainer in her opening speech. In fact, the influence of visual art minimalism is much more apparent in this most recent version of *Trio A with Flags*, and adds to my viewing experience a compelling cross-temporal juxtaposition.

I open with this anecdote in order to illustrate how choreography in general, and choreography utilizing United States flags specifically, takes on new meanings both in different contexts of re-performance, different contexts of viewing, and during different political and historical moments¹²⁴. In this section, I argue that the repeated event, when combined with political commentary, gains power through time, and through repeated or re-performance. While it is certainly true that the context changes the meaning of any choreography, or artwork for that matter, my particular interest is in how contexts change antiwar activisms, or change how they are read, through time. I argue choreography's malleability makes it a genre especially conducive to gaining power through time. Choreographies repeat different through time than other art forms and genres, and offer longevity and changeability of political ideas to the larger antiwar movement.

In this chapter, I deploy postmodern choreographer Ann Carlson's choreographic tool of the "choreographic template," which, I argue, takes advantage of the way choreographies command vastly different meaning depending on the context of their viewing¹²⁵. The choreographic template allows for (mostly) the same choreographic steps

¹²⁴ I extend this argument to include choreography that is viewed on video documentation, as with Burt's and my personal experience.

¹²⁵ In the original research that I conducted as part of this chapter, Carlson, in our interview, described her use of the *Flag* movement material in a number of contexts as a "choreographic template," which I have adopted as a key term for my analyses.

and scores to be re-performed with different costumes, props, set, and titles, and thus different (sometimes political) meanings. Carlson's template enables different political readings of similar choreography during different political moments. Where choreographic re-purpose, as outlined in Chapter One, was a choreographic strategy for immediate reaction, re-performance of the choreographic template allows for long-term, complex responses. I argue here that Carlson's choreographic template is a nuanced form of re-performance particular to dance, which enables choreographies and the ideas they forward to repeat through time. Art historian Amelia Jones' writing on re-enactment (a term used to indicate doing over again of performance) brings Carlson's choreographic template into conversation with issues of originality, liveness, and presence. Within the context of re-performance, Jones argues against the possibility of an authentic original event and against a pure non-representational presence, instead advocating for multiple presents and presences. I partner the theoretical framework of re-performance and inhabiting multiple presents/presences with a close analysis of several choreographies—namely, Carlson's *Flag* and *Too Beautiful a Day* (1990, 2006), and Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags* (1970, 1999)¹²⁶. These choreographies incorporate the United States flag in controversial ways across several wartimes—1970s Vietnam War, early 1990s Persian Gulf War, and 2000s post-9/11 wars. Representations of the U.S. flag can clearly be seen shifting in these works as well as in U.S. flag desecration laws. U.S. law has changed in

¹²⁶ For this section I viewed extant video documentation of the various versions of both pieces, reviewed available writing on and criticisms of both choreographies, and conducted interviews with Rainer and Carlson.

conjunction with heightened street protest during the late 1960s and again in the early 1990s.

The ability of choreography to comment on war across time is one of the ways that I see dance functioning to address the large and ongoing traumas of the world, such as war. Choreography may not stop a war, but it will comment on it over and over again, each time with more nuanced meaning. This intensifying quality of choreographic repetition, in addition to the quick response of re-purposing future-existing choreography that I discussed in the last chapter, are the first two of four specific ways that I argue choreography garners power in repetition. In the last chapter, I discussed how not-yet-existing choreography possesses the ability to respond immediately to the governmental military actions. In this chapter, I argue it is choreography's persistence through time that enables antiwar commentary to accrue multiple presents and presences and to transcend multiple wars and political events. I explore Carlson's choreographic template as an unorthodox choreographic tool of re-performance, which disrupts the idea that all choreography must be original and new. The antiwar choreographies I examine in this chapter reveal the ability of dance to co-exist in multiple presents/presences across both short and longer temporal frameworks. Choreography is not simply present, in the moment of performance, or in the moment of spectatorship, but existing over time as a presence intricately related to shifting historical, cultural, and political frameworks.

Ann Carlson's Choreographic Template *Flag*

Flag is a group choreography in which the dancers perform complicated repetitions and variations, including complex and syncopated rhythms from the pounding

of the feet, and exaggerated breath sounds, on top of an actual United States flag¹²⁷. Carlson choreographed *Flag* in 1990 on the eve of the Persian Gulf War, in the midst of the struggle of the Culture Wars, and at the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic¹²⁸. There is a huge amount of againness, or inexact repetition, in the choreography. In our interview, Carlson described her insistent repetition as playing the line between “pathological and interesting repetition¹²⁹.” While Rainer’s *Trio A with Flags* was constructed from within the context of the minimalist art movement of the 1960s, Carlson’s *Flag* was made in the context of the maximalism, peaked emotions, and confrontationalism of 1990s identitarian art¹³⁰. Though Carlson does not necessarily draw on these tropes, *Flag* does possess a heightened engagement with emotional yet abstract narrative. Here, Carlson departs from the early postmodern choreographers such as Rainer who tossed aside

¹²⁷ According to Carlson performances of *Flag* have occurred in New York, New Orleans, Minnesota, Wesleyan University, Michigan, Tallahassee, and Jacob’s Pillow. Carlson wanted to perform *Flag* in Chicago after the Dread Scott incident at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, but was not able to. Of note was a performance of *Flag* at a dinner benefit for downtown New York City’s PS 122 theater. Due to the nature of a benefit performance, the dancers did not have time to properly tape down the edges of the flag before the performance because they were on a bill with multiple performances, and each acts happened within quick succession of one another. Instead the dancers asked the audience to hold the edges of the flag down while they danced on it. Of note in that particular audience was Allen Ginsburg, the poet and iconic counterculture figure. Carlson noted that Ginsburg “sat there bobbing his head, very close to the dancers.” Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹²⁸ In 1990 the National Endowment revoked the Arts Individual Artist Grants from Holly Hughes, John Fleck, Tim Miller, and Karen Finley. Carlson admitted to survivor’s guilt as she was an NEA funded artist in the early 1990s and a close friend of Holly Hughes. Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014. Rainer was also an NEA funded artist during the early 1990s and spearheaded a campaign for funded artists to not sign their contracts unless the decency clause was revoke. See more on this in Chapter One footnotes. Yvonne Rainer Papers, Getty Research Institute.

¹²⁹ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹³⁰ Carlson’s performance artist contemporaries were such brash and brazen women such as Annie Sprinkle, ex-porn star now performance artist who once showed the audience her cervix onstage, and Karen Finley who was also known for performing nude, and performing intense theatrical pieces addressing such heavy topics as sexual assault. For more see Juno, *Angry Women*.

conventions of narrative and virtuosity, in search of a more quotidian dancing body in performance. In addition to the rhythms of the bodies' movements, *Flag* includes a number of highly specific vocalizations—breathy whispers, buzzing, groaning. *Flag* exhibits virtuosic interchanges between the sound of the dancer and the movement the dancer performed, crafting an over-emotive narrative via the not-quite-comprehensible, but very understandable breath/sound/movement language that skillfully seem to spontaneously emanate from the performers¹³¹.

Carlson's *Flag* choreographic template reappeared in and as a number of her later choreographies. Carlson revealed that each time she re-used the choreographic template of *Flag* she changed and played with the material¹³². She employed different titles, different sets and props, different costumes, and varying sized casts of dancers. Carlson explained her re-use of the *Flag* choreography is "like a template, almost like a Warhol or a silk screen, not factory-born but has that capacity" to be repeated¹³³. Carlson said

¹³¹ Aesthetically, the use of complex patterns of breath is indicative of the work of late postmodern choreographers who were influenced by both somatics and release technique.

¹³² Carlson's process of transmission or process for teaching and re-teaching these choreographic templates is from her memory. Carlson states she will continue to teach her various choreographic template "as long as she can still move around," and also admits that each time she uses a template she tweaks the choreography slightly to work with the group and the subject matter. Ann Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹³³ Ann Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014. See Benjamin and McLuhan. Carlson's mention of Warhol positions her choreography and the repetition of her choreography amidst a slew of canonical writings about the reproduction of art. For example, Walter Benjamin suggests that different kinds of reproductions (for example film acting versus stage acting) shift audience perceptions: "Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art." p. 49. Marshall McLuhan similarly argued for the possibilities of reproduction by arguing that the famously arguing that the message is embedded in the medium or that the medium is the message. Repetition and re-production are conditions of possibility for re-performed antiwar choreography, and Carlson (particularly with the choreographic templates) is disrupting the assumptions about what should be repeated and re-performed. Art and its reproduction shifts with the new technologies as is explored more in depth in Chapter Three.

jokingly that often a colleague or fan would say to her, “I saw that same piece with a different title¹³⁴.” I do not wish to suggest or insinuate that the dance steps and breathy utterances of the *Flag* choreographic template are a blank meaningless space into which political commentary is inserted. Instead, I argue the steps of the *Flag* choreographic template, in and of themselves, produce a particular energy and feeling that is conducive to combining with political commentary. The frantic and repeated running and stomping combined with the strange and primal breath-like vocalizations physically set the stage for political meanings to be overlaid.

In her 2002 choreography *Too Beautiful a Day*, *Flag* was performed on a rolled out carpet embossed with the image of the sky¹³⁵. A more recent example of a version of the *Flag* choreographic template took place during the celebration of the centennial of Utah becoming a state and was the result of an invitation to make a dance for the Ririe Woodbury Dance Company based in Salt Lake City, Utah. This choreography, titled *50 Years*, incorporated different scenic elements. For example, a lone tree in the downstage corner referenced Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church. Instead of the choreography being performed atop a flag a group of dancers performed on muslin fabric

¹³⁴ Ann Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹³⁵ *Too Beautiful A Day* was an assemblage that Carlson constructed as she was working through her personal trauma of 9/11 (i.e. during the impending and then actual military conflicts in Afghanistan). Carlson’s *Too Beautiful A Day* (group choreography) included the *Flag* choreographic template, the *Blanket* choreographic template, and the *Too Beautiful A Day* choreographic template. The title *Too Beautiful A Day* was taken from an entirely different 2001 solo about capital punishment choreographed commissioned for well-known Limon dancer and Julliard instructor Risa Steinberg. Carlson performs the solo she made for Steinberg in the group rendition and also wears that flag dress that was crafted for the solo *Too Beautiful A Day*. Another one of Carlson’s templates, *Blanket*, a solo performed by Carlson as the character of an old woman, also appeared. Different from other *Flag* choreographic template, in *Too Beautiful A Day* the forty-foot by forty-foot actual U.S. flag on the floor of the theater was covered over by white marley. The auctioning of tomorrow was derived from a 1991 piece that Carlson choreographed after attending auctioneer school. Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

that represented the sand of the Great Salt Lake. Ririe Woodbury Dance Company later “re-mounted” *50 Years* to mark the occasion of their fifty-year anniversary as a dance company¹³⁶. Carlson also re-utilized the *50 Years* version of *Flag* when invited to work with students at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts Dance Department. Carlson taught the slightly different choreographic template for the NYU *50 Years*, and instead of dancing atop of muslin or a flag, dancers danced on a map of the world. The NYU version of the *Flag* choreographic template *50 Years* had a different ending than other templates. The U.S. flag appeared in this alternate ending—students emerged from prison garb-like costumes to reveal Super Woman underwear outfits and waved little U.S. flags¹³⁷. In each of these examples the template of *Flag* was performed again yet the elements of the choreography were scrambled, assembled differently, and Carlson utilized different props, though not always a new title.

In our interview, Carlson defined the choreographic template as a “template of an aesthetic of movement practice [that] could change meaning, could change metaphor, could change context time and time again¹³⁸.” Carlson described *Flag* as one of many choreographic templates that she has used over the course of the last several decades. The endurance of the template renders the various template-derivative choreographies as both present in a variety of contexts and historical moments as well as possessing a presence

¹³⁶ Carlson, personal correspondence, May 31, 2015.

¹³⁷ Carlson, personal correspondence, May 31, 2015.

¹³⁸ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

because of its persistence through time¹³⁹. While in Chapter One, I explored how Rainer and Rogers extrapolated future-existing choreography that was crafted for performance and changed it into street protest, here, Carlson utilizes not a future-existing choreography, but the present/presence of a re-worked choreography. While Rainer and Rogers inserted their choreographies into the action of larger street protests, the political prowess of Carlson's political commentary is garnered from acting continually in a slew of political contexts and historical moments.

Repetition in dance is commonplace—choreographies are typically performed multiple times, performed with different casts, and dance training relies on the repetition of exercises in order to produce particular aesthetics of bodies and thus choreography. Most choreographies, every time they are viewed, are commonly acknowledged as the same but different, yet same enough to be acknowledged as the same choreography. Carlson's templates enact the reverse; they are the same choreographic steps yet acting as if they are a different choreography. Carlson's templates defy conventional notions of choreography and commonplace dance re-performances, and disrupt conventional notions of dance making. This tool of dance making also resists that new choreographies need to be original, or that new choreography needs to be made of material not previously performed. I read Carlson's choreographic templates as both non-abeyance to the convention of newness and innovation prevalent in modern and postmodern artistic practices and a rebellion against the production of new works that is expected of

¹³⁹ I see this choreographic presence of the longtime performed choreography not unlike the heightened stage presence of well-seasoned or long performing dancers and performers.

choreographers. Choreographic templates raise questions about economies of choreographic reproduction and choreography's position within capitalist cultures. Carlson both does not adhere to the convention of exact repetition or reconstruction of choreography, such as that which is expected in repertoire, and she refuses to choreograph something entirely new. Temporally this refusal of newness creates multiple presences and thus presents of the same choreography in a relatively proximal time frame (in the case of *Flag* 1990 to the present day). This counters notions about dance's disappearance, because even if one version of *Flag* disappeared in the moment of performance, another version of *Flag* could be happening at another time or another place. The againness, continuity, and doing over again, always different, builds upon itself. Dance steps are honed, meanings intensify, and the breath quickens as these choreographies concurrently travel through time.

This type of staging choreographic steps over again differs radically from the two types of repertoire I explored in Chapter One—repertoire as bodily archive and repertoire as historical preservation. The idea of choreographic template differs from repertoire (and choreographic scores), where the same choreographed steps (or score) are performed with the same titles, and similar costumes, props, and sets but where the dancers performing could be different. Repertoire could be considered a conventional method for choreography and its re-performance. Carlson's choreographic template counters conventional dance repertoire because the titles, the props, the costumes, the political meaning are intentionally refined, repeated and changed. The template offers to choreography more changeability and malleability in different historical and political

contexts. A choreographer utilizing a template is able to adjust the props, costumes, and fine-tune the choreography in order to address (or not address) the politics of the moment.

Carlson's choreographic template is similar but not identical to the idea of choreographic re-purpose¹⁴⁰. In Chapter One, I define choreographic re-purpose as the extrapolation of a segment of choreography to be used as protest in immediate response to the actions of the government. While the re-purpose I discussed in Chapter One utilized parts or a whole of in-process, future-existing choreography in order to urgently protest a specific event on the street, the choreographic template is a more complex method of re-purpose that does not respond immediately to specific events, but can respond differently to different events contexts over time¹⁴¹. With the choreographic template, even though the steps of the choreography are basically the same—Carlson admittedly tweaks the steps each time she utilizes a template—other components of the choreography are in flux. With the example of *Flag*, meanings shifted from a protest of impending war and suspected fascism, to: celebration of Utah statehood; to the anniversary of a dance company; and finally to cope with personal trauma of 9/11 and the impending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The choreographic technique of the template has allowed Carlson's choreography to respond to different issues and at times different wars. Thus, the choreographic ability to respond with nuance to a current political

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter One, as with Rainer's *M-Walk* or Rogers' *Black Maypole*.

¹⁴¹ Though, as I point out above, the periodization of Carlson's templates are close in proximity (1990 to the present). Therefore, the over time that I refer to here is more accurately, at nearly the same time.

moment is a different strategy than re-purpose where the goal was to respond immediately.

Choreographic Template and Re-Performance

*Re-performance—to perform again. Like againness—to perform again, differently*¹⁴². With Carlson’s templates, performing the same steps again as a different choreography is the means by which these dances repeat in different contexts and political moments, and how they occupy multiple presents/presences. Repetition and concert dance, as a concept in dance studies, has mostly been discussed as it pertains to a singular choreography reconstructed after its initial season or cluster of performances and/or re-performed as repertoire¹⁴³. On the other hand, repetition and performance has been taken up in performance studies in as an issue of liveness and ephemerality and more recently in regards to reenactment. I argue Carlson’s choreographic templates challenge concepts of repertoire, liveness, and reenactment across both discipline, enabling new insights about how dance and performance sometimes repeats.

¹⁴² *Perform, Repeat, Record* sounds like what happened in Carlson’s work. This is the title of a volume of essays, edited by art historian Amelia Jones and performance studies theorist Adrian Heathfield, that addresses the recent trend towards institutionally supported re-performance of theater and performance art of the past. Yet, essays on dance and re-performance were not included in this six hundred-page anthology. In dance studies, the omission of dance from debates on re-enactment has been taken up by the forthcoming Oxford University Press anthology, *Oxford Handbooks on Dance and Reenactment*, Mark Franko, editor.

¹⁴³ Repetition and repertoire highlight what was long considered a problem of dance re-performance—the impossibility of an authentic original. Dance historian and theorist Mark Franko writes on the reconstruction of historical dance, and critiques what he deems modernity and postmodernity’s obsession with exact repetition of the original time/space event. According to Franko, “consciously avoid[ing] simulation of the original was rare” until the mid to late 1980s. Franko asserts re-embodiment of historical dances, should be considered construction, rather than notion of reconstruction. For Franko, construction rids the re-embodiment process of the expectation that historical choreography be repeated exactly as it was originally performed. Franko, p. 133, “Repeatability, Reconstruction, and Beyond.”

In the early 1990s performance studies scholars Philip Auslander and Peggy Phelan (as well as others) engaged in debates about the disappearance and ephemerality of performance and what is commonly referred to as the performance studies liveness debates. These extended series of scholarly debates posited ephemerality, liveness, disappearance, and presence as constitutive of performance itself. Phelan argued that performance was in fact defined by the moment of fleeting disappearance. Auslander, on the other hand, advocated that evolving technologies no longer necessitated a live body and its disappearance in order for a performance to ensue. In the mid-2000s critical conversations about liveness and performance reemerged, this time focusing on a rash of re-performances of classic performance art from the 1970s, most notably Marina Abramovic's "The Artist is Present" retrospective at the Whitney Museum (in addition to a new fixation with live performance by the institution and the museum). Art historian Amelia Jones coined this scholarship trend as "recent obsession with live art, its histories, and its documentation and re-enactments¹⁴⁴." In these debates Jones argues, "there cannot be a definitively "truthful" or "authentic" form of live event, even at the moment of its enactment¹⁴⁵." As with choreography, Jones argues "one would be hard put to establish a "beginning" for the re-doing of an iconic art performance, since almost all performance artworks were performed more than once in their earlier incarnation¹⁴⁶." Carlson's choreographic template pushes this notion of an original because with each re-

¹⁴⁴ Jones p. 17 "The Artist is Present."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 19

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p.24

performance of the template what is the original shifts and changes. Thus the re-performance of Carlson's template is similar to the re-enactment discussed by Jones in which there "cannot, therefore, be a re-enactment that faithfully renders the truth of this original event¹⁴⁷." Carlson's templates, in fact, render deception. In addition to acknowledging the impossibility of an original event Jones furthers that the original event was also never "present¹⁴⁸." Thus Jones establishes re-enactment "from the get-go as simultaneously *representational* and *live*¹⁴⁹." I see the re-performance of Carlson's choreographic templates as inhabiting multiple presents, across multiple temporal frameworks. Performance studies theorist Rebecca Schneider, in her writing on re-enactment similarly argues that performance re-enactments are "never only live¹⁵⁰." While re-enactment and re-performance are not too unlike, my use of re-performance (and againness) intends to disengage from early debates on liveness, and instead embraces concepts such as Schneider's never only live, as a way of including multiple temporal registers as well as modes of viewing performance.

Choreographic templates enabled Carlson to re-perform steps in multiple works, allowing commentary about war to exist across multiple temporal registers. Antiwar choreographies as understood through Carlson's template concept are time-travelling tools of repetition and performance activism, and hold the capacity to comment on

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p.19

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p.19

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. emphasis of the author, p.20.

¹⁵⁰ I discuss Schneider's syncopated time more fully in the Introduction and in Chapter 2. See Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 92.

multiple wars in multiple historical frameworks. Antiwar choreographies across time build awareness of resistance movements and produce cultures of resistance and activism in the context of one war or multiple wars. There is something about dance's morphability, changeability, its inherent understanding of time passing and dancers changing, etc., that already knows it will need to shift around to stay relevant. In the choreographic template, Carlson changes, recombines, and reformulates the sections and segments of choreography, essentially remodeling them into entirely different choreographies that speak to variable sets of political circumstances. With *Flag*, several times this has addressed war, as well as other relevant social topics, while other times it has not¹⁵¹.

Ann Carlson and Flag Art in the 1990s

Carlson is a postmodern choreographer whose choreographic career is prolific and spans several decades. Carlson worked for many years in New York, and has been employed by numerous prestigious institutions and universities nationally and internationally. In the late 1960s postmodern dance was burgeoning simultaneously to the massive Vietnam antiwar protests¹⁵². In the original research that I conducted on *Flag*, Carlson acknowledged that she choreographed an anti-Vietnam War protest dance in high

¹⁵¹ In our interview Carlson disclosed that she finds the relationship of dance to social justice causes (including antiwar commentary) to be more complicated than simply calling it "antiwar." An antiwar dance is one of the ideas that the choreography of *Flag* conveys, particularly when its iterations where the dancers actively disregards the Flag Desecration Act. Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014. I continue to call Carlson's work antiwar because it is precisely this kind of fluidity of meaning and ability to change that I am interested in this project.

¹⁵² As Carlson reminded me during our interview, there was a larger shift in many art forms writing, music, visual art, etc. Writes Carlson, "postmodernism was not just exploding in dance, [but also] folding into cultural events and aesthetic trends." Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

school and places herself firmly within this historical legacy of postmodern dance. Carlson recounted her high school antiwar dance as aesthetically influenced by the work of Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis and “so heartfelt¹⁵³.” She described an awareness that “your own work is in response to the history of the form¹⁵⁴.” Carlson’s trajectory as a postmodern choreographer emerges from the same historical lineage that Rainer and others are credited as establishing in the late 1960s. In our interview, Carlson alluded to a more personal cause that made war perpetuated by the United States, and combat in particular, very close to her personally. She shared, “war has been a very dominant thing, but that was because both my brother and my father fought in the wars [...]. It is hard not to make work in response to conflict¹⁵⁵.” Though Carlson commented that making choreography about combat because you have a personal relationship to it too easy of a formula, she confirmed that as a socially conscious person making art about the world, that it is difficult *not* to make work about war. Inspiration for choreographers that make dance about the world, in a world that is full of combat or what Carlson calls “conflict,” deems war hard to avoid¹⁵⁶. Choreographies like Carlson’s succeed at addressing wonderfully complicated large issues such as war, and yet show an individual or group of individuals on a stage having a personal relationship to the very same, very large issue.

¹⁵³ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Ann Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ Carlson believes her choreographies are politically engaged work, yet her relationship to commenting on war is not as straightforward as anti- or pro-war. The choreography of Carlson’s *Flag* is not an explicitly antiwar dance. Personal interview, January 14, 2014.

Carlson articulates this as a “micro-to-macro” quality that she strives for in her work¹⁵⁷. Carlson has been choreographing politically inflected work over the course of several decades and in response to multiple wars the U.S. engaged in as well as a number of other ideas including, the gesture, and dances with animals¹⁵⁸. Choreographies like Carlson’s elucidate dances’ inability to stop war yet reveal how dance functions to address the inevitable and difficult truths of the world. The ability of Carlson’s choreographies to simultaneously address the personal and the large and incomprehensible indicate how multiple presents/presences (in this case, the macro and the micro) function within a single choreography to position seemingly polar perspectives in close relationship.

In 1990 New York-based repertory dance company CoDanceCo commissioned Carlson to create choreography and the result was *Flag*. The late 1980s and early 1990s, similar to the Vietnam War era, were a time period rife with debates about flag art and censorship. In 1968, in reaction to a number of public flag burnings in protest of the Vietnam War, the first Federal Flag Protection Act was passed. This act outlawed the

¹⁵⁷ See Carlson, *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*.

¹⁵⁸ The trajectory of Carlson's body of work includes choreographic investigations with animals and with non-performer or non-dancer identified people, such as track athletes, lawyers and nuns. For many years, Carlson worked with what she used to call the “Real People Series.” These works with non-performers were made with diverse groups of people in order to create a “bridge between studio and the outside world” and “aestheticize the everyday.” Carlson’s impetus was to categorize people by what they do in an attempt to take a closer look at capitalism and at labor. She sites her inspirations for these investigations to be “echoes of the real in photography, in photorealism” and explorations of “issues of expectation and innocence.” She no longer uses "Real People Series" to categorize her dances with non-performers (she now finds the language problematic), but she is still interested in the idea of the “naïve gesture” which was a key investigation of these earlier works. The naïve gesture is present in her most recent work *Symphonic Body*. (I was fortunate to view a paired down version of this work at the 2012 Performance Studies International Conference at Stanford University). Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014. Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

desecration of the flag including burning the flag or allowing the flag to touch the ground¹⁵⁹. The issue of flag art again became prevalent in the late 1980s in conjunction with the controversies surrounding revoked federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1989, the First Amendment (right to free expression) was twice evoked in relationship flag-burning cases during protests. Flag desecration as a symbolic action of antiwar protest was present during the Vietnam War and surfaced again on the streets and on the stage (in Carlson's work) during the early 1990s.

Carlson's 1990 artistic choice to confront federal law through the use of a technically illegal prop was situated amidst vast civil unrest. Other U.S. flag art had been targeted by censorship in major institutions, for example, the infamous 1989 piece, *What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?* by then School of the Art Institute of Chicago student, Dread Scott¹⁶⁰. Scott's piece, *What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?* was a display of a number of photographs of coffins with flags draped over them from soldiers returning from war. There was also a registry, where viewers were asked their opinion about the photographs, but in order to walk up to the registry mounted on the wall, viewers had to walk on a United States flag draped on the floor. Thus, the art installation staged a direct confrontation with patriotism for the viewers, based upon their choice to walk or not walk on the flag. The piece was extremely controversial, often

¹⁵⁹ See Luckey.

¹⁶⁰ Carlson sites her artistic inspirations for *Flag* as rooted in 1980s artwork visual artist Jasper Johns multiple flag paintings, French choreographer Maguy Marin's Beckett-inspired 1986 choreography *May B*, and the film *Midnight Express*. Johns Flags paintings were a series of painted and collaged United States flags. Maguy's visually expressive dance piece was based on a Beckett play and incorporated grotesque dancers covered in clay throughout the performance. With the 1978 film, *Midnight Express* (directed by Alan Parker), Carlson says she was inspired by the repetition of walking around in a prison in Turkey, which happens in the plot of the movie after a U.S. citizens gets caught with drugs in Turkey.

protested by angry veterans and sometimes resulting in audience members who walked on the flag being arrested by police. Ultimately the artwork caused the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to lose its federal funding¹⁶¹.

The issue of flag desecration persists into the late 2000s, the First Amendment (right to free expression) has still not been overturned, and since the late 1960s the one aspect of this law that has changed is that it is no longer illegal to wear clothing that resembles the United States Flag¹⁶². It was however, still illegal, to allow the U.S. flag to touch the floor as well as to “trample” on it¹⁶³.

According to Carlson, the upside down United States flag taped to the stage, on which the choreography was performed, was a symbol of a nation in distress and what Carlson felt at the time were signs of the “impending fascism” to come¹⁶⁴. Though some audience members and critics suspected that Carlson painted the flag on the stage, Carlson confirmed that she had indeed purchased a thirty-foot by forty-foot United States

¹⁶¹ Similar censorship and funding issues arose during the Brooklyn Museum’s 1999 “Sensation” Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection” art exhibit that showcased Chris Olifi’s painting of a black virgin Mary made from pornographic collage and dung. (Interestingly, as pointed out by Fraser, issue was taken with the dung and religious iconography, not the pornography). When then mayor Rudolf Giuliani was not legally able to revoke city funding from the museum Saatchi himself pulled funding. See Fraser.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ “Whoever knowingly mutilates, defaces, physically defiles, burns, maintains on the floor or ground, or tramples upon any flag of the United States shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.” See “Flag Desecration,” American Civil Liberties Union.

¹⁶⁴ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014. New York Times critic Jack Anderson described Carlson’s controversial prop as “a floor cloth adorned with stars and stripes so that is resembled an American Flag.” See Anderson, “In Motion Ambivalence About a Flag,” New Yorker dance critic Joan Acocella also did not recognize the U.S. flag as real. In her summary of ‘the year in dance,’ Acocella wrote “dancers dance on a floorcloth painted with the design of an American flag.” Quoted in Leopold, p. 21.

of America flag from the Betsey Ross House in Philadelphia¹⁶⁵. For Carlson, buying a flag was the more economical choice than painting the flag over and over on the stage floor. As well, she was interested in the fact that dancing on the flag was a protest in and of itself¹⁶⁶. In our interview, Carlson described “beautiful” and official instructions from the Betsy Ross House that included the directions for a specific way of folding the flag, warning that the flag should not touch or brush the floor, and language about the flag being a “living symbol¹⁶⁷.” Carlson’s interest was sparked around the idea of the living symbol and she questioned whether symbols lost their potency when you put them onstage. The idea of the flag as a living symbol, but an ambivalent living symbol in a theatrical setting, connects to my reading of Carlson’s templates as possessing multiple presences. The notion that the U.S. flag is a living symbol—is an entity, not unlike a human, that has a life force—imbues the flag with a particular presence, aura, or degree of energy, whether or not one believes the flag is actually alive. In performance, the U.S. flag evokes intense presence because it is present in that moment on the stage. Presence is an aspect of performance that choreography can get at, and as I have argued, is always already linked and entwined with multiple presents. The flag is utilized on stage to

¹⁶⁵ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Carlson’s choreographic template, *Flag*, when performed on top of an actual U.S. flag, resonates the protest tactic of flag desecration that stems from the protests against the Vietnam War. *Flag* reflects ideas about the legality and public opinion of desecrating the U.S. flag, which has continued to shift in relation to different wars. Of note is that Carlson covered over the U.S. flag with a white dance floor in *Too Beautiful A Day*. This occurred during the post-9/11 context where flags were everywhere (as recalled by scholar Burt in my opening anecdote) and would have made the action of dancing on the flag unbearable to witness or Carlson may have just been too traumatized to make the provocation. See also dance scholar Lizzie Leopold who relates both Carlson’s and Rainer’s use of the U.S. flag to multinationalism. Leopold also writes on Alexandra Beller’s 2008 choreography with a U.S. flag, *us*. Interestingly, Beller performed as a student in Carlson’s *Flag* as a student at the University of Michigan.

¹⁶⁷ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

enhance the kind presence that choreography and performers attend to. Therefore, Carlson's provocative question as to whether that very life force might be altered or diminished by the flag's presence the concert stage, points out how performance (and dance) can also work to reduce the potential power and loaded meanings of objects and actions.

Carlson elucidated that *Flag* was not initially well received. New York Times critic Jack Anderson described that the dancers "ran frantically back and forth" and "dashed madly, only to collapse as if physically flagged¹⁶⁸." In addition to comments by critics such as Anderson, it was also a piece that her family would not attend because they felt as though it was disrespectful of her father's military service. Carlson talked about how *Flag* provided the opportunity for audience members to choose a side on the issue of flag desecration. For some *Flag* audience members, the work exemplified a patriotic act; dancing on the United States flag was an expression of free speech, a patriotic act of dissent. To others, Carlson's choreography on the flag was unpatriotic, the ultimate disrespect of the United States, and downright unacceptable. Carlson recalls that while on tour at the Florida State University, Tallahassee, during the 1990s, one lighting designer refused to work on her production once she found out that the choreography desecrated the U.S. flag. Despite the controversies that cropped up around *Flag*, Carlson nonetheless found it a fruitful teaching tool to bring into the academic and university setting. Through the performance and teaching of *Flag* Carlson was able to utilize this choreography to talk about both performed and conceptual ideas such as patriotism,

¹⁶⁸ See Anderson, "In Motion Ambivalence About a Flag."

nationalism, and cultural conditioning¹⁶⁹. Thus, while *Flag*, did not intend to stop war, it was an extremely useful tool for spurning discussions about war-related issues.

**Ann Carlson's *Too Beautiful A Day*:
A Re-Performance of *Flag* On the Eve of Another War**

Too Beautiful A Day is an assemblage of multiple parts, including the choreographic templates, *Flag* and *Blanket*, both made in 1990¹⁷⁰. Like *Flag*, *Blanket* was also initially choreographed in 1990. While the concept of the choreographic template reads as a rejection of the conventions of newness and innovation prevalent in modern and postmodern dance, here Carlson's suggests that the refusal to make new choreography was as much in response to her personal trauma, as it was in relation to her lineage as a postmodern choreographer.

The choreography of *Too Beautiful A Day* is sparse, yet the sound and vocal score, in high contrast to the movement, is dense and overwhelming. *Too Beautiful A Day* is choreographed minimalism overlaid by maximalism, to the effect of a jarring, disjointed, and powerful experience for the audience. The choreography is ninety-six minutes of a delightfully complex mixture of sounds and embodied images referencing the cycle of life reproduction while abstractly critiquing US political projects. The video documentation of Carlson's *Too Beautiful A Day* begins on the sidewalk outside of uptown New York City's prestigious Symphony Space (Broadway and 95th Street) as twelve dancers dressed in billowy white costumes unroll a sizable stretch of carpet. The

¹⁶⁹ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

¹⁷⁰ I viewed a video recording of the group choreography *Too Beautiful A Day* from May 8, 2002 at the New York Performing Arts Library.

dancers chatter an impressive mixture of sounds, exaggerated breaths, grunts, and groans as they spatially clump, re-clump, fall into chaos, and meticulously order themselves out of chaos. The frenetic steps and aural expressiveness of the *Flag* choreographic template opens *Too Beautiful A Day*, sans flag, on the street, and atop instead a carpet embossed with an image of the sky. The outside segment of the performance ends when the dancers roll up the sky rug, hoist it confidently onto their shoulders, and briskly walk inside the theater. The dancers proceed to perform the *Flag* choreographic template on the sky rug over and over again between the various assembled solos performed by Carlson in *Too Beautiful A Day*. Later in the choreography the stage-sized U.S. flag is covered over by a white dance floor and the character of the auctioneer wears a dress constructed of U.S. flag print material. I contend this shift in the use of the flag signifies an awareness of the raised political stakes of the symbol of the U.S. flag in the post-9/11 moment.

In our interview, Carlson discussed how the assemblage of *Too Beautiful A Day*, the group choreography, was in many ways a response to her personal trauma of surviving the 9/11 attacks on downtown Manhattan, where she had been living at that time. Laments Carlson, “I couldn’t really make any work; I could just basically sit there¹⁷¹.” The ‘on-the-street’ and ‘in-between’ *Flag* choreographic template sections of *Too Beautiful A Day* were created while Carlson was working with students at Bennington (these same students performed in the performance I write about). During the creation process, Carlson and her students found themselves learning the *Flag* choreography outdoors, in the small rectangular space under the flagpole. The resultant

¹⁷¹ Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

choreography became a “loop” to complete in a confined space. The sky embossed rug that was rolled out and rolled up between each repetition symbolized the beautiful day and the beautiful sky in New York City on the fateful day of September 11, 2001. As Carlson recalled “9/11 was on such a beautiful day¹⁷².”

Blanket, one of Carlson’s other templates in the assemblage, is a thirty-minute choreography, during which Carlson, dressed as an old woman, shuffles forward extremely slowly, like an old woman, while she simultaneously wails like an infant. Thought initially Carlson didn’t know the two went together, in hindsight Carlson feels that *Blanket* and *Flag* were a diptych—as they would often be performed together in future performance. Carlson’s choreographic template allows for and perhaps even encourages multiple presences within one performer (like the many characters portrayed within one performance by Carlson) as well as multiple presents, or co-existence of the same choreography in multiple ways at a similar time.

The headline of the New York Times review of *Too Beautiful A Day* reads: “A Woman Goes to Decorate The Grave of the 20th Century.” Within the review, dance critic Jack Anderson notes: “Confusion reigned onstage as well as in the world”, referring to the post 9/11 invasion of Afghanistan, and the fact that we once again find ourselves in a repetition of Carlson’s performance on the eve of the US invasion of Iraq. Program notes from the Symphony Space performance cite *Too Beautiful A Day* as a “re-investigation of the issues and themes from *Blanket* and *Flag*” and that the 1990 choreographies of

¹⁷² Carlson, personal interview, January 14, 2014.

Carlson's were originally created on "the eve of the Gulf War"¹⁷³. Theater critic and scholar Jill Dolan describes *Blanket* as "the flow of the past through the present into the future"¹⁷⁴. I read this section of the performance as more aligned with Schneider's syncopated time that punctuates the then-and-now in exciting, fruitful, and powerful ways. The narrative content of *Blanket and Flag* additionally conveys a sense of time where the past, the present and the future punctuate each other in odd ways. For example, in the *Blanket* segment the sound score alternates between disjointed fragments of historical reference and nonsense, for example: "I want my blanket. I threw the ring in his face. Glissade, coupe, jeté, assemble. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the death penalty. Bob saw Perry Como in his shorts." Baby-like babbling—"bah, bah, bah" (which sounds uncannily like the Bob who saw Perry Como in his shorts). As described by Dolan, *Blanket* visually and aurally conjures temporally incongruent arrangements of the old and the young in a singular body. Historical events, such as the Supreme Court upholding the death penalty, puncture the now/present of a very slow-moving old woman, and signify the simultaneous existence of multiple temporalities. However, my viewing experience of the performance was not a flow of the past into the present, but a disrupted and intrusive sense of a present perforated by the past¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷³ See program notes, Carlson, New York Performing Arts Library.

¹⁷⁴ Dolan, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ Austin Chronicle arts reviewer Molly Beth Brenner also not Carlson's choreographic play with time in *Blanket*. "Memory tells stories in vastly different ways than do history books. [...] In memory, time takes on a plastic quality; while the present moment my seem infinite, remembering the entire fourth grade may take no more than 90 seconds. [...] Aurally, we witness a person's maturation within the span of 15 minutes—Carlson drives this home by repeatedly asking the audience for the time. [...] Time here is distorted, yet somehow more true to the relationship between present time and memory than a more chronologically correct depiction of events would have been."

Too Beautiful A Day repeats because it is an assemblage of choreographic templates and repeats in the content and structure of the choreography. Between each of these sections, the mob of dancers, and the carpet of the sky return to the stage, and re-perform the choreography atop the carpet of the sky. The most obvious form of the multiple appears in *Too Beautiful A Day* as the mass of dancers, the re-use of the choreographic templates, and the many sections in which Carlson takes on the roles several different characters—Carlson multiplies herself as the middle-aged woman narrated by a child, the elderly woman, and the auctioneer. This kind of repetition, both through time in Carlson’s templates (made throughout Carlson’s career) and in the choreography itself, is againness. This demonstrates the changeability of againness, in these case repetitions through time and multiple political contexts.

In *Too Beautiful A Day* it is as though the various choreographic templates are diced and parsed, and in a way repeated and reinvented in small doses—another repetition of sorts, and one in which the original grows, expands, replicates and reproduces in tinier, yet more prolific chunks. Historical time periods and various wars collide, demonstrating how the device of the template maintains enough changeability to adapt to new political situations. Carlson’s choice to perform these two versions of her choreography during different wars, as well as the shift she made in the use of the United States flag—itself a very loaded symbol of patriotism, utilized choreography’s ability to change, its ability to be different in order to respond to the different political circumstances. Carlson’s choice to restage these works during multiple wars illuminates a particular way that thoughts, ideas, and choreographies can travel through time—in this

case, particularly in the aftermath of the trauma of 9/11, as an assemblage and re-performance of choreographic templates. Carlson's comment upon and critique of two different wars, the Persian Gulf War, and the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, were expressed via a similar template but in two different moments of U.S. combat. The non-specificity or mutability of a choreographic device such as a choreographic template, allowed these politically charged choreographic ideas, including antiwar commentary to reoccur. In 2001, the unexpected moment for Carlson was the 9/11 attacks, thus *Too Beautiful A Day* (utilizing various choreographic templates) reflects the trauma, the sadness, the stillness, the anger, and the inability to move that Carlson experienced as a resident of Manhattan.

Trio A with Flags, Again,
Or
Is Yvonne Rainer's Trio A with Flags a Choreographic Template of Trio A?

Trio A with Flags was first performed as part of the People's Flag Show at Judson Memorial Church in November 1970¹⁷⁶. The event was a mass display of art utilizing United States Flags in protest of the 1967 prosecution of gallerist Stephen Radich who had exhibited Mark Morrell's sculpture that desecrated the flag and critiqued the Vietnam

¹⁷⁶ The People's Flag Show opened at Judson Memorial Church on November 9 and closed on November 14, 1970. Though the show was ordered to close by the District Attorney on November 13, 1970, the exhibit remained open despite the controversy and the court order. Martin p.151. Rainer recalls that New York-based GAAG (Guerilla Art Action Group) founders John Hendricks and John Toche asked her to participate in the People's Flag Show. Hendrick and Toche's GAAG were known for their bloody, theatrical, and often public antiwar action very much on par with Schechner's Guerilla Theater described in Chapter One. For example, GAAG organized a quartet (two men and two women) to wrestle in the lobby of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) to protest the Rockefellers manufacture of war weaponry. Rockefellers were/are major supporters of the MOMA. The wrestling mass, dissolved into a pool (of animal blood), and left that behind in the lobby along with flyers about their cause. GAAG claimed that the production of weaponry was masked by the Rockefellers' participation in art. Martin p.151. Also see Rainer, *WORK*, p. 171 and Kimmelman, *NYT*, May 2, 1997.

War. Radich was consequently charged with flag desecration. Ultimately the three organizers of the show, John Hendricks, Faith Ringgold, and John Toche, also known as the “Judson Three,” were also charged with flag desecration and lost a court appeal filed by the American Civil Liberties Union. While the People’s Flag Show was not a specifically antiwar event, the event certainly grew out of the antiwar movement and contained many works that referenced or expressed disapproval of the Vietnam War. The sentiment of the posters in advertisement of People’s Flag Show was that if the flag can be used to justify killing, then the flag should also be available to people to attempt to stop the killing abroad¹⁷⁷. Rainer stated in a recent interview with art historian Douglas Crimp that *Trio A with Flags* was both an antiwar dance and a dance against censorship¹⁷⁸. While Rainer had already used the United States flag in her 1970 *WAR* she writes, “the issue of “desecration” did not seem a relevant one in this particular situation [i.e. the performance of *WAR*]. The flag functioned simply as an object that enhanced the subject and imagery of nationalist conflict.” However, with *Trio A with Flags* she “felt a need for a statement with stronger political overtones. [...] To combine the flag and nudity seemed a double-barreled attack on repression and censorship¹⁷⁹.” Rainer’s interpretations of the function of the United States flag demonstrate how flag art can

¹⁷⁷ Martin p.151.

¹⁷⁸ Writes Rainer “The People’s Flag Show was organized to protest the prosecution of Stephen Radich, a gallerist who had shown a sculpture that allegedly desecrated the flag. It was a huge show in the sanctuary of Judson Church. Jasper Johns had something in it, Kate Millett—anyone who did anything involving the flag was invited to contribute. So five of us who knew *Trio A* took off our clothes and tied five-foot flags around our necks and draped them in front of us, and we performed *Trio A* that way. The flags waved around and revealed our privates. I considered it a double protest against censorship and war.” Quoted by Douglas Crimp in “Yvonne Rainer: Dance Mom.”

¹⁷⁹ Rainer, *WORK*, p. 172. For more on Rainer’s choreography *WAR*, see Chapter 1.

serve as a complex multivalent symbol—at once a representation of nationalism, a metonym for repression caused by war, and an aid to challenge artistic censorship.

As my opening anecdote suggests, *Trio A with Flags* serves as a clear example of how choreographic re-performance, when paired with various political ideals, can travel through time and acquire new meanings—in this case what is symbolized by the United States Flag. However, *Trio A*, rather than inhabiting multiple presents and multiple presences like Carlson’s templates, embodies an extended presence because it is one of the most written about and performed choreographies of the postmodern dance canon. Dance historian Ramsay Burt argued that “*Trio A ‘with Flags’* suggested common ground between the radical, iconoclastic nature of the generic work of *Trio A* and the radical nature of libertarian protest¹⁸⁰.” Burt also argued that this generation of choreographers positioned dance alongside of political events, and in doing so, that new potentials were opened up for choreography. In other words, Rainer’s choreography of the 1960s and 1970s took on new political meaning because of the events in the world. Burt argued “that, by breaking down, blurring, or transgressing artistic conventions and disciplinary boundaries, artists associated with Judson Dance Theater opened up new spaces in which to place dancing bodies side by side with events and thereby generated new social and political meanings¹⁸¹.” Burt credits avant-garde US dance of the 1960s for opening up space for new political and social meanings through transgressing dance conventions and the discipline of dance itself. Burt suggested that Rainer’s choreography alongside of the

¹⁸⁰ Burt, p. 135.

¹⁸¹ Burt, p. 117.

Vietnam antiwar protests, literally dressed in a United States flag, in a room full of flag art, transformed her otherwise “generic,” “antispectacular” choreography into fodder for the “double-barreled attack¹⁸².” Thus, Rainer’s political work was evoked from taking a previously existing choreography and putting it next to various political and social justice issues. Lambert-Beatty makes a similar argument about *Trio A with Flags* and further adds emerging televisual technologies theorizes the time of Rainer’s *Trio A with Flags* as a very potent moment where “spectatorship, representation, and embodiment¹⁸³.” Lambert-Beatty historicizes the “the relation between bodies and pictures in the context of a changing culture of mediation¹⁸⁴.” The relation of bodies, pictures, representation, and mediation manifested in the cross-temporal archival viewing of *Trio A with Flags* that I discussed in my opening anecdote. Here, Burt’s reading of *Trio A with Flags*, sounds as if Rainer were employing choreographic re-purpose and Burt does not distinguish the 1970 and 1999 version as re-performance of the same choreography with difference¹⁸⁵. I read Rainer’s 1970 *Trio A with Flags* as a choreographic template of *Trio A*, and 1999 *Trio A with Flags* as a re-performance of 1970 *Trio A with Flags*.

Yet two questions linger. First, is *Trio A* repertoire of Rainer? *Trio A* is probably Rainer’s most performed and well-known choreography. *Trio A* was/is the three-minute-ish phrase of movement, used as the choreographic template of *Trio A with Flags*, that

¹⁸² Burt, p. 134.

¹⁸³ Lambert-Beatty, p. 131.

¹⁸⁴ Lambert-Beatty, p. 131.

¹⁸⁵ As I argue she did with *M-Walk* in Chapter One.

garnered Rainer's choreography much acclaim and propelled her burgeoning career to another level of recognition. Art historian and Rainer biographer Carrie Lambert-Beatty describes the *Trio A* aesthetic intervention as "antispectacular" movement which is "counter to the attack, suspension, and recovery" of the modern dance phrase¹⁸⁶. Lambert-Beatty compares the constant motion of "disarticulation" in *Trio A* as similar to removing the pauses between words in sentences¹⁸⁷. Lambert-Beatty writes that *Trio A* "is Rainer's most reproduced and reproducible dance¹⁸⁸." What Pat Catterson provocatively describes as the "lure of the dance's ongoing-ness" is in relationship to the choreography itself but also suggestive of what I theorize here as multiple presents/presences¹⁸⁹. Catterson also offers insight into how this choreography and the physical states of the performers might have contrasted embodiments of wartime and perhaps even wartime protest: "The contrast between the performers' vulnerable tender flesh, and what seemed to us then a garish symbol of violence and all that was wrong with this country and our government, was very moving¹⁹⁰."

Rainer's iconic choreography was created in 1965 amidst the 1960s minimalist art movement, first performed in 1966, and continues to be performed today. *Trio A* recently appeared in Rainer's 2010 solo in honor of Judson Memorial Church *Trio A: Geriatric*

¹⁸⁶ Lambert-Beatty, p.133

¹⁸⁷ Lambert-Beatty, p. 134

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 159.

¹⁸⁹ Choreographer Pat Catterson is currently one of the official disseminators of *Trio A* and was a *Trio A* dancer in the 1970s. Catterson, p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ Catterson, p.6.

Version with Talking, and in her latest group performance *Group Assisted Living...*(2013). Dance theorist Jens Richard Giersdorf contends that *Trio A* has become so iconic that it “stands in for an entire era of dance¹⁹¹.” The status of *Trio A* is prolific yet not attached to the continuous control of a single author or company and therefore I want to suggest that it might be beyond repertoire. Performance studies theorist Rebecca Schneider in an essay on an origin of solo performance art in 1960s calls Rainer’s *Trio A* “One of the most obvious instances of “solo” working against its own singular status [...]. Rainer composed a solo dance, performance at various times as a trio, as a solo, or by and for multitudes “skilled, unskilled, professional, fat, old, sick, amateur¹⁹².” Yet Schneider also points to the discrepancy that *Trio A* is actually a solo: “The title of *Trio A* underscores a certain absurdity in denomination (because the trio is a solo, but also, the solo it’s a trio). As a trio, when the piece is performed by one person it unbecomes its name¹⁹³.” Art historian Julia Bryan–Wilson writes of her personal experiences learning *Trio A* as a non-dancer at the University of California, Irvine in 2012. Bryan-Wilson posits *Trio A* as “haunted—by single set of motions routines and gestures¹⁹⁴.” Bryan-Wilson points out the “dozens of diverging versions” of *Trio A* listing: “a backwards or “retrograde” version; one in which the performer was confined to a small platform; one

¹⁹¹ Giersdorf, p. 22.

¹⁹² Schneider, p. 36, *After Criticism*, quoting Rainer in *Work*.

¹⁹³ Schneider, p. 36, *After Criticism*.

¹⁹⁴ Bryan-Wilson, p. 55.

danced by a group of students on the sidewalk outside of Rainer's hospital; on set to the Chambers Brothers' song *In the Midnight Hour*, etc.¹⁹⁵”

Trio A was initially made as choreography to be performed by the masses. It was learned and taught by movers and non-movers alike. Rainer reflected: “For the first decade of *Trio A*'s existence, I was teaching it to anyone who wanted to learn it [...] a postmodern dance evangelist bringing movement to the masses¹⁹⁶.” As best stated by Rainer, during those in between years, “I finally met a *Trio A* I didn't like. It was fourth or fifth generation, and I couldn't believe my eyes. It was all but unrecognizable¹⁹⁷.” Dancer Catterson describes that in the early 1990s, after not working with Rainer for twelve years, how her muscle memory of *Trio A* differed from both Rainer's and recent student of Rainer's Clarinda MacLow's renditions¹⁹⁸. Decades later, Rainer rescinded the transmission of *Trio A* to anyone and everyone, and made it so that only official transmissions of *Trio A* by official transmitters could be taught¹⁹⁹.

Giersdorf describes this more recent phase of *Trio A*, including its live performance at the Museum of Modern Art in 2009, as succumbing to the “landmarks of canonization²⁰⁰.” Yet the years where *Trio A* could be taught and learned by anyone

¹⁹⁵ Note that Bryan-Wilson mentions *Trio A with Flags*, but does not distinguish it by a different title, merely by the context of 1970 “People's Flag Show.” Bryan-Wilson, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ Rainer “Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” p.16.

¹⁹⁷ Rainer “Genealogy, Documentation, Notation,” p.16.

¹⁹⁸ See p. 8. Catterson also noted in her article on *Trio A*, she believed she “saw it [*Trio A*] differently, perhaps, from someone who was not a dance practitioner.” Catterson p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ See Rainer “Genealogy, Documentation, Notation.”

²⁰⁰ Giersdorf, p.19.

complicate the notion that *Trio A* is repertoire, or more accurately that at some point in its career, *Trio A* was not repertoire. How possessive Rainer was of a Rainer dance remaining a Rainer dance, depends on the phase of Rainer's lengthy (and very much still happening) career. Thus this particular phase of *Trio A*'s lengthy career as the iconic, canonical, solo/not-solo of postmodern dance troubles its own inclusion as repertoire both in the historical preservationist sense of the term (McFee) and the bodily archive meaning of the word (Taylor). Giersdorf names the peculiar transmission of this choreography over the long course of its career as perhaps the reason behind the status of *Trio A* as canonical²⁰¹. Like a choreographic template, but gaining meaning with each performance Giersdorf points to how with each performance "*Trio A* accumulated different meanings through the context of each new reenactment²⁰²." While with Carlson's choreographic template *Flag*, I pointed out the possibility of shifting meaning over time, here Giersdorf signals the possibility of not merely shifting meaning, but accumulating meanings with each performance, once the number of times a piece is performed reaches a certain threshold. Whether *Flag* becomes as iconic and canonical as *Trio A*, only time will tell, but in the meantime, yet another version of *Flag* is slated for re-performance at the University of California, Berkeley, in April 2015.

Performance studies scholar Ryan Platt's recent article in *Dance Research Journal*, as with many of the other articles about *Trio A* with the exception of

²⁰¹ Writes Giersdorf, "Without questioning the innovative imagination of the dance, I want to suggest that this status is caused more by the transmission of the dance and response to that transmission than by its choreographic structure. See p. 22.

²⁰² Giersdorf, p.22.

Giersdorf's, does not mention re-performance or re-enactment. This left me with my second lingering question: How can one re-perform or perform *Trio A* again differently, if the dance has never stopped being performed? Re-performance thus suggests an inherent gap between times of performance. A performance must be at least somewhat over before it can be re-performed. While choreographic re-purposing, explored in Chapter One, points towards an ambivalence about when choreography comes into existence, re-performance similarly suggests an uncertainty about when a choreography ceases to be performed, and can thus be re-performed. Re-performance parallels re-purpose in its challenge to choreography as an entity with any sort of clear and discrete lifespan.

Conclusion

Ideas, thoughts, and philosophies spurred by protest against the Vietnam War are reflected in art in general, dance in particular, and the choreographies in this chapter in specific. I have explored how U.S. flag desecration is present in three choreographies: Rainer's *Trio A with Flags* and Carlson's *Flag* and *Too Beautiful A Day*. Rainer and Carlson's choreographies demonstrate againness because they were performed a multitude of times (in the case of *Trio A* for over five decades), and sometimes under titles and with slight differences (as in the case with Carlson's templates and Rainer's many *Trio A with 'fill-in-the-blank'*). However, againness is also present in the way that these choreographies keep ideas from the Vietnam Era antiwar protests alive yet changing in multiple political contexts. Againness is re-performance again, differently, in different political contexts. In the case of Rainer's work the flag was worn as an act of

protest against war, against censorship, and as an act of expressing the right to create art and express oneself. Carlson's use of the flag served as social and political commentary, including antiwar commentary. Carlson employed a choreographic technique, the choreographic template, which allowed her choreography to transmit political ideas in multiple temporal registers. The choreographic template allows for a nuanced response to different wars across time, counter to choreographic re-purpose, theorized in Chapter One as useful in immediate reaction to the actions of the government. While in Chapter One, I examined examples of antiwar dance performed on the street, in this chapter, I looked at several dances of political import that were performed within the contexts of the theater or inside the Judson Memorial Church. Like the physical body in street protest, the physical body onstage (especially when wearing or on top of a U.S. flag) is one of the ways that these large political ideas, such as the dissent against war or a questioning of patriotism, can be embodied. These choreographed and embodied antiwar activisms are not unique to dance as a form of protest art, but show that dance has specific modalities such as the choreographic template, where the physical body plus symbolically potent objects such as flags equals potent political commentary.

In this chapter, I identified re-performance, perpetuated by the choreographic template, as allowing activism to transcend multiple temporalities (as the choreography is performed through multiple political events). The multiple activisms were deployed both over time periods, multiplied within shorter timeframes, and in relationship to different contexts. Work such as Carlson's *Flag*, suggests that the goal of these choreographies was/is more in response to the ongoingness of war, rather than trying to cease a particular

war. In other words, these antiwar dances suggest that war is inevitable and never-ending, and making art about war is one way of dealing with its never-ending quality. There is always another present—the present presence of war and the presences present that contest war.

The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Chapter Three
Choreographic Re-View:
Miguel Gutierrez's *Freedom of Information*

During the Vietnam War era, televised war reporting relied on speedy news coverage to convey images of overseas war atrocities. The immediacy of these images of war coming back to the U.S. from Vietnam was unprecedented, in part due to new technologies that allowed video recording in more remote locations and faster accessibility to these images. The up-to-date news coverage gave impetus to and reason for massive street protests by U.S. antiwar protesters. Evolving technologies of mediation during the Vietnam War brought a distant war into the living rooms of the U.S. public. Distant civilian viewers, sitting in the comfort of their lazy boy chairs and sofas and far from the physical turmoil of combat, were privy to real-time images of the extreme violence via television war reporting. The battlefield experience for many U.S. civilians was watching the nightly news on television at home.

On February 1, 1968, the living room war in the United States was in full swing. What U.S. television viewers witnessed on this particular day was a Viet Cong officer spontaneously and brutally shot dead by the South Vietnamese National Police Chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan. The small-statured officer stands in civilian clothes, a plaid flannel shirt, arms tethered behind his back, his face dirtied and misshapen, his body already visibly subject to much violence. Chief Loan's arm is outstretched, with a small handgun in hand, and inches from the about-to-be-executed suspected officer's skull. I still feel the tormented officer's facial expression deep in the pit of my stomach, even though I have seen this photograph many times before, and even though it is nearly fifty years after the initial time/space event.

Hardly looking like an ominous enemy in this moment, the small and disheveled man is captured in a photograph literally in the seconds between living and dying²⁰³. The look of fear and agony on the just-executed officer's face is contrasted by a cool, calm, almost righteous expression on the face of the South Vietnamese commander—the South Vietnamese Army being the side that the U.S. military supported during this war. This particular image, for which combat photographer Eddie Adams later received a Pulitzer Prize, is one of the iconic images that have lived beyond the Vietnam War as a representation of the actual war. This particular moment in history—a suspected Viet Cong officer shot dead spontaneously by an aggressive, unwieldy South Vietnamese Military Officer—has been described by journalists and theorists as a “galvanizing” moment in the United States public's disapproval of the Vietnam War²⁰⁴. The South Vietnamese army was caught in an act of a brutal execution, during a war that was already full of controversies in regards to the ethics of battle from both sides. Interestingly, the photograph of the event was broadcast on the nightly news and in the daily papers the next day, before film footage of the event, which was broadcast the

²⁰³ See Lambert-Beatty, p.312.

²⁰⁴ The Loan execution was committed as part of the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, which is commonly considered a pivotal turning point in U.S. public approval of the war. This incident was in relationship to the Tet Offensive An Quang Pagoda battle. Cultural studies theorist Marita Sturken argues that this particular image was one of the most remembered images from the Vietnam War and that when people remember a “Vietnamese shot dead on TV” it was often this particular public execution. Sturken argues that it is in fact the ability of photographs to catch facial expressions of individuals that render them at times more emotionally impactful and enduring through time than film or video of the same events. Sturken argues this is true in the case of the Loan execution, as well as with the photographs versus video of the accidental napalm strike on Trang Bang Village. The photograph that has become iconic from the napalm strike is that of the adolescent girl, Kim Phue, naked and running down a dirt road with other children from the village that had just been napalmed by the U.S. Army. See Sturken Chapter 3. See also Thomas, New York Times.

following evening. The film footage, in fact, does not capture the actual moment of death, as someone stepped in front of the camera for a fraction of a second. The scene skips from the pointing of the gun to a man slumped on the ground profusely bleeding²⁰⁵.

In March 1968, one month following this incident, choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer composed a statement that included the following passage: “This statement is not an apology. It is a reflection of a state of mind that reacts with horror and disbelief upon seeing a Vietnamese shot dead on TV—not at the sight of death, however, but at the fact that the TV can be shut off afterwards as after a bad Western. My body remains the enduring reality²⁰⁶.” Art historian and Rainer biographer Carrie Lambert-Beatty interprets this statement of Rainer’s as directly related to the iconic image described above. Rainer’s objection was that the living-room war viewer had complete discretion about when the war is on and when the war is off. Rainer’s powerful response to the mediated iconic image of a Vietnamese man shot dead serves as a backdrop for my exploration of the use of mediation in relationship to choreographed antiwar activism. The photograph, snapped in the immediacy of the moment, has endured decades beyond capturing the death of this one man among hundreds of thousands killed during the Vietnam War. This iconic image represents seemingly incompatible temporal

²⁰⁵ Both Sturken and art historian and Yvonne Rainer biographer Carrie Lambert-Beatty have published this photograph in their books, Sturken on p. 91 and Lambert-Beatty on p.147. The scene on film has been described as both too difficult to watch and less dramatic than the photograph. Thus it was the photograph broadcast on the nightly news that was shared with the world in the closest proximity to the time of the event and that has endured as representation of the event (and as representation of the brutality of the Vietnam War at large) in hindsight. See Lambert-Beatty p. 312 and Sturken p. 9.

²⁰⁶ Rainer’s statement appears in Lambert-Beatty p. 145 and was originally published in the program for *The Mind is a Muscle*, Anderson Theater, New York, April 1968, and is also reprinted in Rainer, *Work 1961-73*, p. 71. See Chapter 1 for discussion of Rainer’s *M-Walk*, and Chapter 2 for discussion of Rainer’s *Trio A with Flags*.

frameworks—immediacy and againness over decades. It is precisely these kinds of unruly temporal partnerships that I identify throughout this project as those which garner dance with the power of time-travel and ability to shift meaning in different contexts.

The central focus of this chapter is the relationship of antiwar dance to mediated wartime bodies. I investigate the power of film, video, and photographic images as technologies to report on war, report on dissent against war, and serve as artistic representations of war. During the Vietnam War media played an unprecedented role in war reportage and in reportage of domestic street protests. Since that time, war and its relationship to knowledge dissemination has taken a number of new trajectories. In the early 2000s, the U.S. public was subject to repeated television broadcast of images from an event that led our country into military conflict with Afghanistan and war with Iraq—planes flying into the World Trade Centers, bodies jumping from the upper floors, and the towers crumbling in billows of smoke. Mediated images of war from the resultant U.S. military endeavors in Afghanistan and Iraq were then highly restricted to U.S. public. In response to the frustration of knowing your country is at war and receiving very little information about it, postmodern choreographer Miguel Gutierrez three times staged the twenty-four hour performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation *Freedom of Information (FOI)*²⁰⁷. Performed as a solo in 2001, a nationwide thirty-one-person event in 2008, and an international duet in 2009, *FOI* was a blindfolded and ear plugged

²⁰⁷ For this section, I reviewed available reviews on the performances; interviewed Gutierrez; interviewed select participants in the second and third stagings of *FOI*; and draw upon my viewing of the 2009 performance. I use the term “performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation” throughout this chapter as a moniker for Gutierrez’s choreography because Gutierrez uses these words interchangeably in his press releases, call for artists, and writing on the *FOI* blog.

improvisation where performers attempted to move continuously for twenty-four hours. In the latter two stagings the choreography was simultaneously live-streamed on the Internet from different geographical locations. I had the experience of viewing ten-plus hours of *FOI* during the 2009 third performance, happening concurrently in Berlin and Kansas City.

I describe Rainer's reaction above as a historical example of a choreographer's response to mediation and bodies during the time of war. Rainer's comment from 1968, relates the endurance of the immediate physical body to mediation and the faraway bodies/victims of war. I describe below how Gutierrez's performance protest also found endurance through the physical body and produced disbelief in the viewer, via technology of live-stream Internet. Different from 1968, the disbelief I experienced as a viewer was not the result of turning the television off, but what occurred when I turned my computer back on – and the protest was *still* happening on the Internet. Between turning it off in the 1960s and turning it on in the 2000s, media technology and world news dissemination have dramatically evolved. In what follows I describe technological advances in communications technologies and explain how televisual war reportage and protest has shifted to shared-upload sites during contemporary wartimes. During the 1960s, the nightly news, from a temporal perspective, served as distinct hours when viewers could opt to turn on and tune in to world news events. Currently the fast-paced all-the-time insistence of the news streaming on the Internet provides a different kind of platform for hearing about world events—one where viewers choose when and how to

turn on the news twenty-four hours a day. Methods of mediated antiwar protest, including antiwar choreography, have likewise evolved.

In this chapter, I examine the triangulation of war, antiwar protest, and media. I draw upon my viewing of *FOI 2009* to illustrate my individualized viewing experience in order to theorize what I call choreographic re-view. I argue choreographic re-viewing is present in the choice of the viewers to watch the performance over and over in different configurations on their computers. In this particular instance, the choreographic re-view results in againness, or diverse repetitions, which mirrors the diverse responses and experiences of the participants. These responses ranged from “it was the best performance of my entire lifetime” to “that was a traumatic experience.” Personal interviews with Gutierrez, his 2009 performance partner Katherine Ferrier, and interviews with several participants from the 2008 performances confirm the varied and multiple experiences of performing this antiwar choreography. In order to think about media technologies in relationship to war, I examine theoretical work by media historian Friedrich Kittler who argues that communication technologies were first used for combat and second used by civilians for more mundane purposes of connectivity. I also look at more recent developments in war reportage—the CNN effect, commonly associated with the Persian Gulf War, and military YouTube channel MNFIRAQ (Multi-National Force Iraq), associated with the Iraq War. Lastly, I also forward and examine choreographic re-viewing as multiple visits to the choreography’s online blog. As with other choreographies in my dissertation project, I contend that it is the againness of this antiwar choreography that engages in an activism of meditation and contemplation through the

physical body and through the witness (both mediated and live) of the physical body. I argue that this antiwar choreography in particular, and dance in general, recognizes continuance and continuity, and that savvy and politically astute choreographers, like Gutierrez, play with these temporal elements of choreography in order to create pointed political commentary. In allowing the audience to turn it on and turn it off, I argue Gutierrez's choreographic re-view models our literal ability to turn on or turn off our engagement or disengagement with war in faraway place. Thus the repeated antiwar commentary of *FOI* illuminates our desires to be engaged, to be against war, but to possess the ability to turn it off when it is too much, knowing full well that war is always on, always happening somewhere in the world.

Living Room War Revisited: Antiwar Activism from the Comfort of my Bed

“For me, I have always experienced [war] as a remote reality.”—Miguel Gutierrez, 2014²⁰⁸

In 2009, I watched the third iteration of *Freedom of Information* on my laptop computer from the comfort of my bed in Bushwick, Brooklyn. From noon to six p.m. on Saturday afternoon, midnight to three a.m. Saturday night (actually Sunday morning), and eight to ten a.m. on Sunday morning: I watched, from my apartment, the continuous performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation in Berlin and Kansas City. The device of the laptop computer, gently propped up on my legs, or placed next to my reclining head, brought the living room war into an even more intimate chamber of the U.S. public's home, the bedroom. The video streams played side by side creating small confined squares within the rectangle of my computer screen. Stuck in the miniature

²⁰⁸ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

virtual rooms, Gutierrez and Ferrier embodied antiwar protest on my computer screen in my bedroom. Although I cannot claim to have been entirely immersed in the performance for such a long duration of time, the non-stop hours and hours of improvisation produced quite the mesmerizing effect. My random viewing choices, the way I positioned myself as a spectator, and the way I arranged the live video (screens within a screen) on my desktop, created an individualized experience of *FOI*.

A sense of distance and the feeling of loneliness overwhelmed my viewing. Though the movement score of the improvisation was simply to move continuously, the actual choreography or sequences of movements performed by Gutierrez and Ferrier were quite bland. The movement was typically isolated in the extremities, often included an internalized focus of the dancer, and was devoid of strong or specific spatial patterns. Presumably as a coping mechanism for the physical endurance of *FOI*, there were also long, frequent, suspended moments of gestural repetition. It was almost as if the performers were in an altered modality of performance time, quite different from the usual spectator/spectated hour to two-hour performance. For example, for about ten minutes Ferrier's hand circuitously meandered towards her body, then away from her body: the rhythm of the movement was steady and the effect was spellbinding (both for me the spectator, and for her the performer – her facial expression became glazed over). Though this may sound similar to a wave, the motion completely lacked quotidian or pedestrian connotation.

Several absolutely stunning moments happened during the time I was engaged with *FOI*. The duet—blindfolded, ear-plugged, and physically located on different

continents— sometimes improvised as though they were dancing in the same studio. At one point they removed their jackets within seconds of one another. During another moment, they paced with syncopated timing, on parallel spatial pathways. Another poignant image occurred Sunday morning when I turned my computer back on— sunlight streamed into the Berlin studio creating a gorgeous, nearly religious background framing Gutierrez’s dancing on the far wall of the space. Predictably, perhaps due to the improvisational nature or technological mediation, much of what happened during *FOI* was not aesthetically interesting movement choices, but was about my ordeal as a spectator. I was expecting that my participation as spectator would result in more of a sense of collective protest, and less of a sense of solitude. When I did leave my computer, I felt dazed, unable to shake the static knowledge that a daylong performance endured without my spectatorship. When I woke up Sunday morning, I was compelled to turn on my computer before I even rolled out of bed. The experience of watching was eerie and isolating – and somehow in the space of observation I found myself deep in thought about activism, mobilization, efficacy, and the project of political dance. I went through several phases of experience, and though I can’t remember the exact order of experience in hindsight, my reactions can be summarized as – dazed, inspired, annoyed, tired (eyes were hurting), invigorated (wish I was dancing with them), alone, and intrigued by choreographing the size and shape of the boxes within boxes on my computer screen.

In previous choreographic examples in my dissertation, I have theorized againness as elements of the choreography itself—for example, the repetitive steps of Rainer’s *M-Walk* or Ann Carlson’s choreographic tool of the choreographic template. In

this choreography, one of the ways againness was perpetuated was the turning on and turning off of my computer. That is, during *FOI* 2009, I posit the virtual spectator's/my choice to watch again was choreographic re-viewing. Choreographic re-view, as the choice to turn on or turn off the protest, created an againness of political consciousness for the duration of the performance. That is, viewers were able to return to their political consciousness via their visual engagement, each time a little differently.

To review, minus the dash separating re and view, is generally thought of as to look over material you have encountered before, such as 'review a lesson before the midterm,' or 'review the archival footage of a dance performance.' Review is an encounter with the exact same fixed material or event from which you can check details and facts. To re-view, in the context I am using it here, means to watch again with difference. In the passage above, my re-view was my ability to exit or reenter *FOI* at different moments. In viewing again with difference, I had a multitude of experiences of the performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation. The choreographic re-view was also my ability to view the performance in different configurations of my choosing. For example, I adjusted the size of Gutierrez and Ferrier's performances in their respective windows on my computer screen, so that the size of their bodies appeared the same despite differences in studio size, camera angle, and crispness of the video live-stream. Multiplicities in my individual viewing experience resulted from the choice of when to be watching (or not), how to be watching (how to position the screens within the screen), and where to be watching (my bedroom, the library, live, with friends, or alone).

The re-viewing I describe as a spectator of *FOI* demonstrates choreographic againness, in this instance in the hands of the audience. Gutierrez's choreography—a choreographic score with few parameters, a blindfold, earplugs, and continuous movement for twenty-four hours—puts multiplicity in the hands of the viewer through live-stream Internet projection²⁰⁹. *FOI* was a choreographic score but would not be considered re-purpose, repertoire, or re-performance. *FOI* was not part of another choreography of Gutierrez's and extrapolated specifically to protest against war and thus is not choreographic re-purpose. *FOI* is not in Gutierrez's company repertoire, in fact, he doesn't "foreground" *FOI* as a major work, or include it at all on his curriculum vitae or in professional contexts²¹⁰. The score of *FOI* is too loose to be considered re-performance or choreographic template as with Carlson's work that I discuss in Chapter Two. I contend that re-viewing departs from re-purpose and re-performance by putting the doing again of the performance in the hands of the live-stream Internet viewers. With the example of choreographic template, I identify choreographic multiplicity through time; here I am interested in the multiplicity of viewing perspectives enabled by live-stream Internet performances as well the multiplicity of experiences had by the participants (which I discuss in the final subsection of this chapter). Choreographic re-view does, like

²⁰⁹ Because there were also non-virtual audience for some but not all of the *FOI* performances, my argument could extend to talk about choreographic re-view of in-person *FOI* viewers. In-person *FOI* audience members could come and go, and position themselves in the performance space as they chose. This could also be considered choreographic re-viewing. However, for the sake of my argument and its focus on the relationship of mediation and war, I will not pursue this line of argument in this project.

²¹⁰ During our interview, Gutierrez did mention that he would sometimes bring it up as an example when he is teaching composition and a student wants to do something hard or with endurance. As well, *FOI* and a link to the *FOI* blog, are listed on his website. Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

re-purpose, re-performance, and re-imagination, possess temporal frameworks that move through time in distinct and non-linear fashions. In this case, I argue Gutierrez's perspicacious use of time enables multiplicities of reception for the audience and experiences for the performers.

As with the other particular choreographies that I investigate in this study, I have focused on what dance offers to ameliorate the large, never-ending traumas of the world. Similar to the 1970 street antiwar choreographies discussed in Chapter One, the stated intention of these antiwar performances was to provide time (twenty-four hours) for contemplation on the war in Iraq and military conflict in Afghanistan—but not in any way to stop or even represent the experience of war²¹¹. I argue that choreographic re-viewing, pinpointed in the choreographies here, provides another example of a choreographic method used in non-cause and effect motivated antiwar dance activism. Choreographic re-viewing, as I am using it in this context, is coming back to viewing again, coming back to thinking about *FOI* again, reflecting on the ongoingness of war, again. Againness is also present in the proliferation of *FOI* from a solo, to a thirty-one-person group performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation, to an international duet. *FOI* happened again, each time different, each in protest of war but without intent or expectation to stop the war.

²¹¹ The representation of refugees of war was an issue that came up repeatedly in press and in the blog discourse around *FOI* 2008.

Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Media and War Reportage

Gutierrez's choice to employ live-stream Internet during the latter two versions of *FOI* was in response to the war reportage (or lack therefore) during the war in Iraq and military conflict in Afghanistan. It suggests a relationship to media reports of war, media reports of antiwar protest, and more generally media representation of both war and antiwar protest. Fresh out of the experience of 9/11, Gutierrez was disturbed by the ban on certain kinds of war reporting during the early 2000s. Images of flag-draped caskets (with dead U.S. soldiers inside) returning to the United States, and images of Iraqi civilian casualties, both of which had been iconic during Vietnam, were not permitted to be broadcast on the nightly news or published in U.S. newspapers²¹². In response to his "know[ing] less and less what is happening," and a generalized horror at the actions of his country, Gutierrez staged these three performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisations²¹³. Gutierrez utilized mediation, in this case live-stream Internet, to comment on protest, comment on the war, and create a venue for choreographic activism that aptly addressed the complicated relationship of war, antiwar activism, and media technologies.

Gutierrez's tactic of commenting on the war and commenting on activism is similar to how news reporting on domestic antiwar protests is historicized during the Vietnam Era. The living room war was fought with both reportage on the war abroad and

²¹² The ban on these images of war was instituted during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and was lifted in late December 2009 with the change of governmental administration from President Bush to President Obama. See Bullmiller, New York Times.

²¹³ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

reportage on the domestic protests. Vietnam War historian Martin Small presents evidence that this mainstream news greatly influenced public opinion in regards to both war and antiwar protest²¹⁴. Television news reporting during the Vietnam War era covered the war itself and protest against the war. The U.S. public actively debated whether the reporting swung too far towards the dove perspective or too far towards the hawks' perspective²¹⁵. Small discusses how the Vietnam War was a defining moment in understanding the influence that media, in this example news coverage, can have on public opinion. He argues, as well, that the influence of media coverage during Vietnam has impacted how post-Vietnam wars and antiwar protests are approached (both by

²¹⁴ Small presents a number of quantitative research findings about the power of media to effect of public opinion about both war abroad and domestic antiwar protest. Small's reports on public opinion were based on a statistical analysis of magazines, newspapers, and television. Unlike many studies in the field of media studies, Small only included mainstream news (with particular attention to headlines and photographs) and did not include editorials. Small's major argument is that war media coverage, the nightly newscast, headlines, and photos in particular, greatly influenced public opinion about the Vietnam War and the domestic protests. See p. 17. In relationship to street protests covered in mainstream media, Small documented different "frames" of success the media utilized to distinguish whether were successful. See p. 162. These frames of antiwar protest success included crowd size, the types of people in attendance, and the kinds of activities they were engaged. Small contends that mainstream media focused on levels of violence at street protest and often misrepresented the amount of or prevalence of violence at protests. Small chronicles that "public attitudes toward the media began to change after 1968 in response to the attacks launched by politicians against them." See p. 12. Though Small points out the manipulations of mainstream media, he also documents that by 1971, coverage on major news networks had become much less opinionated, and reported more fairly. Small argues: "During the Nixon years, the Moratorium, the Washington demonstration after Kent State, and the VVAW and NPAC Washington protests in late April 1971, all received full and relatively fair coverage from most of the media examined in this study. At the least, the coverage was more positive than that accorded comparable movement activities before the Tet Offensive. In part, journalists may have been responding to the Nixon administration's direct attacks against them, especially the three networks and the *Times* and the *Post*." See p. 165.

²¹⁵ As discussed more at length in Chapter One, the doves were the left-wing pro-peace contingency while the hawks were the right-wing pro-war faction. The hawks believed that the U.S. antiwar street demonstrations were prompted and perpetuated by Communist agitators/infiltrators and ultimately caused prolonged combat, a waste of U.S. financial resources, and the securing of Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To the contrary, the doves believed that U.S. anti-Vietnam war street demonstrations were an apex of people's movements, a nostalgic moment of both personal freedom and the ability to change the world. The doves believed that the large scale, massive demonstrations played a major role in the U.S. administration's decision to withdraw forces from Vietnam.

government and by news media outlets). Small's research points towards an increased post-Vietnam awareness of the power of mainstream media to influence public opinion²¹⁶. Since the Vietnam War, protest organizers and military administrations have been more aware of the effect of mainstream media on the U.S. public, and consequently have utilized media coverage with more awareness about the impact of its effects. Gutierrez's performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation plays the line of using media technology, in this case live-stream Internet, as comment on war, as antiwar activism, and as reportage of activism. Thirty years after the Vietnam War, Gutierrez was certainly aware of the impact that mediation has during wartime and he chose to employ a more contemporary form of mediation—live-stream Internet²¹⁷. I contend Gutierrez intentionally utilized endurance choreography combined with the Internet to create what he described in our interview as the “radical space” of “alternative temporality²¹⁸.”

²¹⁶ For example, Small pointed out that post-Vietnam the anticipation of public opinion has effected decisions such as which kind of people should march in the front of a protest march, based upon a concern about how they might be wrongly construed in mainstream media. For example, Small points out that during the early 1990s these concerns were the reason gay pride put dykes on bikes—i.e. lesbians who ride in the gay pride parade on their motorcycles— in the back of the march. On the relationship of Vietnam to the Gulf War antiwar protest in DC on Jan. 26, 1991, Small notes that the New York Times called the demo “throwback to the sixties,” but that it was covered fairly. Small critiques mainstream news coverage, but not that of the Village Voice. See p. 172.

²¹⁷ Similar to Rainer's contention that *M-Walk* reached few people beyond the cast of performers, the actual reach of the performance was mostly the participants and their circles of friends and family, and other artists in the community. Gutierrez questioned whether any of the three stagings of *FOI* should have even had an audience. The 2008 version of *FOI* received press coverage in a number of states, including a preview by Claudia La Rocco in the New York Times and several participants interviewed on NPR. In our interview, Gutierrez disclosed that he felt positive about press, but also conflicted – unlike other performances of his, he felt ambivalent whom exactly should *FOI* be advertised to. Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

²¹⁸ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014. For the full context of the quote see my Introduction.

Any discussion of media technologies utilized *during* war must be investigated alongside of media technologies used *as* war. War historian and political scientist Frederick Münkler contends that the New Wars of the twenty-first century employ media as a form of combat, especially where there are asymmetrical power imbalances. For example, Münkler cites dragging the bodies of disfigured U.S. soldiers through the streets in Mogadishu, Somalia as gory violent acts of war fought through media²¹⁹. Internet media technologies enable those with little power to accrue more and those with lots of power to manipulate the masses²²⁰. Media technologies are also often utilized in the context of military intelligence and combat before being used as technologies of everyday communication. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler argues that technologies of war and technologies of media developed hand-in-hand and cannot be extricated from one another. For Kittler, the concept of information technology, in and of itself, suggests a direct relationship to strategies of war. Kittler contends that medias developed around sight and vision served the dual purpose of warfare technology and in molding the general public to accept how warfare was fought. In other words, Kittler argues that communications technologies are first developed for war then are widely used as communications for the general public, and as a result the general public is less critical of

²¹⁹ Münkler also mentions the mediation of SCUD missile attacks during the Persian Gulf War. See also Sturken Chapter 2.

²²⁰ I add to this the more recent example of Iraq ISIS/ISIL beheadings on the Internet. These performances are now no longer just “caught” on video but explicitly made for video precisely because it provokes a globalized internet audience.

how war was fought with said technologies²²¹. Though most participants, audience, and critics were not critical or suspicious of Gutierrez's use of Internet live-stream, one participant shared skepticism over the choice to stream on the Internet. In our interview, a performer who wished to remain anonymous shared that she was "weirded out about the technology" because "technology seems to reaffirm warfare and spectacle/commodity, [...] and reify capitalist structures." As well, the anonymous participant felt the live-stream venue mirrored government "surveillance," and she therefore exhibited "hesitation and cautiousness around it²²²," and ultimately chose not to live-stream her performance. Most participants however, as Kittler suggests, did not question the relationship everyday media like the Internet might have to war itself or to the government's ability to watch (and therefore better control) antiwar activism.

While Kittler examines the relationship between media technologies and war in a broad historical time frame, media and information technology scholar Steven Livingston looks at war media technology related specifically to the Persian Gulf War and beyond. Similar to Kittler, Livingston's research looks at media technologies and their relationships to war and power. Comparable to the living-room war of the Vietnam Era, the twenty-four hour television channel, Cable News Network or CNN's coverage of the

²²¹ In relationship to the Vietnam War, Kittler discusses the representation of soldiers and mediated war coverage. Kittler argues that during and after the Vietnam War media technologies resulted in wars that could only be fought with public approval of government policies. This would suggest that mediated war reportage made government decision-making more democratic. Kittler also compares soldiers in Vietnam to the soldiers in the trenches of the World Wars and their relationship to the film/novel device of the doppelganger or dark double. He argues that the dark double for the Vietnam soldier was the doubled image of himself that appeared on TV war reportage or in the movies, while the doppelganger soldiers faced in the trenches was themselves. He also talks about the representation of Vietnam War era masculinist films. See Kittler, p.181-182.

²²² Personal interview with anonymous *FOI 2008* participant, September 27, 2014.

1991 Persian Gulf War was an influential trend in war reporting. This CNN effect was comprised of live audio news reports and included real-time narration of invasions as well as live interviews with key figures in the war, for example, Saddam Hussein²²³. During the Persian Gulf War it became popular to broadcast these news reports twenty-four hours a day on channels such as but not limited to CNN. Different from the Vietnam War, the images from the Persian Gulf War were not graphic images of violence, but instead cold and digitized images that looked more like a neophyte video game—for example the digitized imagery of SCUD missile attacks—rather than bloody hand-to-hand combat²²⁴. Similar to how media coverage worked during the Vietnam War era, the CNN effect greatly influenced both governmental policy and opinions of the general U.S. public. In addition the CNN effect (and similar live broadcast news coverage) has been theorized as effecting both wartime political climate and the economy. Though CNN is still an active twenty-four hour news broadcast channel (and now also an Internet site), Livingston argues that in discussions of contemporary war reportage, it is necessary to think beyond the CNN Effect. Livingston posits that technology since 2008 has progressed to the point where satellite uplinks are highly portable and small enough to be carried in a suitcase. Livingston contends that these and other technological advances allow news agencies and audiences to access geographies that have previously been

²²³ Livingston discusses how the CNN and similar news relied on the media technology of the four-wire circuit. The four-wire circuit enabled Persian Gulf War correspondents to transmit live audio reports from remote corners of the world.

²²⁴ In reaction to warfare fought primarily from remote-controlled bombs controlled from locations far from the space of where actual blood, death, and destruction occur, Baudrillard infamously produced the essay titled “The Gulf War Did Not Exist.”

inaccessible, and therefore warrant a new theorization beyond the CNN effect. Livingston contends that today, Internet methods of temporal collage have blurred the boundaries between the producer and consumer thus effecting information communications and technologies of the twenty-first century. Similarly, media studies scholar Christian Christensen suggests that when soldiers or those directly involved in war become the news reporter and producer on shared access websites such as YouTube or Vimeo the credibility and believability that was once ascribed to the nightly news or twenty-four hour broadcast shifts to the hands of the subjects, in this case soldiers. In live-streamed performances of Gutierrez's performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation, both performer and audience became producer—the performers (or assistants/friends/loved ones of the performers) set-up and maintained the live-stream video, while the audience configured an individualized viewing experience.

Christensen examines the shifting terrain of United States military propaganda during the era of YouTube and other video-sharing sites. He writes on the U.S. military YouTube channel MNFIRAQ (Multi-National Force Iraq), and posits that the Internet is a place that perpetuates believable truth due to the anyone-can-post-nature of the open-source access. Christensen argues that the military's use of YouTube and the military's subsequent restriction of YouTube from soldiers' fighting in Iraq was propaganda to reinstate trust in the government's military actions from the general public. Christensen describes a mix of Internet sites that display both overtly positive images and depict negative, anti-social, overtly violent, and illegal documentations of military forces in Iraq. Ultimately he argues that MNFIRAQ was a means of generating propaganda that

depicted believable truth due to the anyone-can-post-nature of the video-sharing site²²⁵. This proposition suggests that the anyone-can-post aspect of open-access or video-sharing sites like YouTube, in the twenty-first century, might replace nightly news war reportage as the purveyor of the information about far-away wars.

While in the twenty-first century war can be fought with media, Gutierrez's *FOI* demonstrates that in the 2000s, war is protested via the Internet. The protest that takes place on the Internet can be turned on and off, again and again, and the viewer chooses the amount of time she watches, where she places the windows with each of the performances on the screen, and from what perspective she views the performance—lying in bed, sitting at her kitchen table, lounging in the living room. Where in Chapter Two I examined the temporal multiplicity of Carlson's *Flag* and *Too Beautiful A Day*, here I analyze multiplicity and againness in the hands of the audience in Gutierrez's *FOI*. While Rogers and Rainer (examined in Chapter One) heard about Vietnam Era bombings in Cambodia on the nightly news or in the newspaper, the online mediation and dissemination of the *FOI* performance—live stream Internet and post-performance blog—parallels and reflects changes in mediated war reporting in the twenty-first century. To think about re-view in this context helps us to understand how looking at *FOI* again both historicizes the relationship of war to mediation and provides an idea of where we were and where we are coming to in relationship to bodies, mediation, and war. These changes in technologies and the way we receive information and world news broadcasts

²²⁵ Christensen hypothesizes the ban on military use of video-sharing sites, was enlisted in order to curb and discourage the negative stereotypes that resulted from the videos uploaded by soldiers. He utilizes a quantitative social sciences methodology for this research and goes to great lengths to explain the number of sites visited and under what circumstances.

play out in choreographies and on the dancers bodies differently—but similar enough to distinguish continuities—across time. This choreography is a citation of how war is mediated through bodies and through cameras, whether on the nightly news, CNN, or shared-access Internet sites.

FOI 2001, 2008, 2009:
Movement Score, Versions, and Hailing Back to Vietnam

“For me, I think perhaps the kind of epic or operatic nature of a lot my work is while not explicitly political in some sort of direct sense of like I am naming a situation, it is perhaps a kind of tipping of the hat to the phenomenon of excess, or the idea of décor kind of extending beyond itself to impinge into our consciousness as like an undeniable reality, right, that’s like for me that is one of the gifts that queerness can offer. Queerness can be this kind of too-much-ness, and this too-much-ness that kind of demands a seat at the table, and I think that has been in some ways a way that I have been enacting a kind of politics in my work. This space of a humanity that will not be restrained or constrained. Which, again, in context is made possible by living in a fairly privileged environment and a safe environment, [...] no one is shutting my show down, no one is coming in and saying you are not allowed to say that. Here. I may encounter that in other contexts in different kinds of ways, but not so much. I am not Pussy Riot²²⁶.”
–Miguel Gutierrez, 2014

Before forming his company *Powerful People*, Miguel Gutierrez was known for his performance with two major dance companies, first Joe Goode Performance (based in San Francisco) and second with John Jasperse Company (based in New York). In 2001, Gutierrez produced his first evening length company work, and has continued to make choreography that is highly respected, produced, and written about in the downtown New York postmodern dance scene, as well as internationally. Recently, Gutierrez’s choreography was presented as part of the highly prestigious Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In addition to making choreographies that are

²²⁶ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014

“challenging and thought-provoking performance experiences,” Gutierrez has also taken part in direct social justice activism with groups such as San Francisco’s Queer Nation, and to a lesser extent ACT-UP San Francisco, and the Open Doors Project in New York City²²⁷. Gutierrez shared in our interview that for him, his most direct or personal experience of “war” was with the War on Drugs, because of his Colombian heritage. Gutierrez revealed the War on Drugs, like his experience of remote wars in far-away geographic locations, was also highly mediated. As a U.S. born person of Colombian descent, Gutierrez said that the War on Drugs commonly took the form of myths about distant relatives (“cousins maybe”) who still live in Colombia. He stated “I grew up here” and the War on Drugs “is not my story,” yet that for many years he was aware of how this “discourse of militarization around drugs” illuminated racism in relationship to “arrest, conviction, [and] jail” for people of color in general, and Colombians in particular. Gutierrez likewise mentioned “war” in relationship to diseases such as “AIDS and cancer,” and how language such as “battle” and “survive” are prevalent in discourses about the body. Here, Gutierrez suggests that identities and medical conditions both influence physical bodies, and that wars are fought against and with these physical bodies in a multitude of ways. Gutierrez talked about how the Persian Gulf War and the Culture Wars were the wars of his generation, yet that from the time he was a child he identified himself as a “pacifist or as an antiwar person.” Mused Gutierrez, “I don’t think there was

²²⁷ Quoted from migelgutierrez.com. Queer Nation and ACT-UP were organizations, which fought homophobia and AIDS during the 1990s (ACT-UP continues to do so today). Open Doors is a program funded by the Theater Development Fund where he has volunteered for the last seven years. Open Doors takes high school students to see six performances a year, after which they write and dialogue about their experiences. Gutierrez also shared that teaching “can feel like a social justice space.” Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

some huge come-to-Jesus moment” about it, “[but it was like] yeah of course I would be that way²²⁸.”

Though clearly impacted by a number of different wars and different kinds of wars in the United States, during our interview Gutierrez shared that he felt “Vietnam ghosts our experience as Americans. Especially because of the white postmodern movement being so contemporaneously with it²²⁹.” 2008 *FOI* participant Brianna Skellie commented during our interview that she “was coming from a place where her Dad was drafted into the Vietnam War” so she “talked to him in preparation” for *FOI*²³⁰. Her conversational preparations with her veteran father were vital for her clarity of intention in participating in the performance. Gutierrez’s duet partner for the 2009 *FOI* also commented on Vietnam during our interview. In relationship to the Vietnam War, Ferrier commented that during *FOI* she “felt [her]self connected to a larger effort historically” and “energetically aligned with those protesters.” Ferrier stated that Vietnam War images

²²⁸ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

²²⁹ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014. Gutierrez also spoke of artists that inspired him and they were predominantly artists whose work rose to fame during the 1960s and 1970s—Anna Halprin, Deborah Hay, Nancy Stark Smith, and Tehching Hsieh as well as contemporary artists Juliette Mapp and Wafaa Bilal. Mapp was an influential peer of Gutierrez. In the mid-2000s she also made antiwar choreography, *One*, with a cast of seventy plus people, and *War Pigs*, which Gutierrez performed in. Gutierrez credits that it was a conversation with Mapp that prompted him to restage *FOI* with a large cast of participants. A participant in *FOI* 2008 also commented that her upcoming visit to Vietnam would result in her “real” understanding of war: “i am going to Viet Nam for the month of may (FIRST TIME OUT OF AMERICA WHOA) and look forward to spending time in an environment so deeply impacted by war. i will need no blind fold or simulation to feel the reality of displacement in a post-war country. it will be so real.” See *FOI* blog, Marlee Cook-Parrott participant response.

²³⁰ Personal interview with Skellie, December 4, 2014. Skellie shared she and her father discussed at length what it meant “to have the identity of a soldier” and “the things that come into play as to why certain people go to war.” Talking to her father solidified for her that she was taking an antiwar stance, but not an anti-soldier stance. For more on the relationship of veterans to antiwar choreographies, see Chapter Four.

were part of her childhood and “iconic in [her] psyche²³¹.” Ferrier’s performance experience connected her through time, to protest efforts of the past. Ferrier’s statement illuminates one of the ways I argue dance operates—as a bridge and connection to the past, to create continuities in the present and the future. Unlike Gutierrez, Ferrier shared on the *FOI* blog: “I have never been an overtly political person, and certainly wouldn't consider myself to be a "political artist" whatever that means. I've always lived in the territory of "the personal IS political". This piece pushes me, and I have questioned my motives throughout this process²³².” The title *Freedom of Information*, in fact, refers to the 1966 Vietnam War Era Freedom of Information Act, which allowed U.S. civilians access to previously restricted federal government records. Like the Vietnam Era antiwar choreography of Rainer and Rogers, which I discuss in Chapter One, Gutierrez’s impulse to enact the performance protest was a sense of urgent frustration with the U.S. invasions in Afghanistan and later war in Iraq. Also similar to the antiwar choreography of Rainer and Rogers, I argue that Gutierrez’s work aimed to create space for meditation and contemplation on the war, for the audience, and perhaps more importantly for the participants. Yet different from Rainer and Rogers’ work, I argue that the meditation and contemplation occurred through a bodily experience—one experienced by the participants and the spectators. The method for creating space and contemplation was through the physical body, either interiorly for the participant or from witnessing live or

²³¹ Personal interview with Ferrier, September 29, 2014.

²³² See *FOI* blog. Ferrier also commented in our interview, that since *FOI* she has become involved in the local politics of the small town in New Hampshire where she now lives. Personal interview with Ferrier, September 29, 2014.

by live-stream Internet. The space of meditation and contemplation occurred through a sense-deprived recognition of one's own body or through witnessing an imagined bodily experience (either live, on the Internet, or from reading the blog). This reliance on physicality is especially poignant because of the element of live-stream Internet. Similar to Carlson, whom I discussed in Chapter Two, Gutierrez staged multiple iterations of *FOI*. I consider the movement score performed by increasing numbers of performers to be one of the inexact repetitions or againness of *FOI*. Though what was repeated was a simple movement score, the score translated quite differently for each of the participants.

The multiple iterations of *FOI* were—a solo production on December 31, 2001; a group staging with thirty-one other participants (each representing a state in the United States) on December 31, 2008; and an international duet on January 24, 2009. The latter two iterations were (for the most part) live-streamed on the Internet. The solo production was performed as a post-9/11 response to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Gutierrez chose New Year's Eve because “New Years Eve [represents] time passing [...] and time to reflect²³³.” In a preview of the 2008 version, New York Times dance critic Claudia La Rocco describes her impressions of video documentation from the 2001 solo performance:

“The original “freedom of information” was a physically and emotionally intense experience for Mr. Gutierrez. Video documentation gives a sense of this: toward the end, he resembles a marathon runner pushed far beyond his limits of endurance and into a trancelike state impressive, even on tape, for its rawness and vulnerability. Small blooms of movement, like the flick of a beautifully pointed foot morphing into a shuffling walk with arms extended, evoke all manner of troubling narratives when done by an exhausted, blindfolded man. His white T-

²³³ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

shirt becomes dirty and torn; the walls of the studio take on a faint red patina, as Mr. Gutierrez repeatedly slides against them in his red sweatpants²³⁴.”

The second staging, on December 31st, 2008, aimed to include a solo participant from each state and succeeded in enlisting thirty-one participants from thirty-one states²³⁵. Like the first iteration, the date New Year’s Eve was of importance. Wrote Gutierrez:

I thought it would be appropriate to perform this action on December 31st again, because as one year ends and another begins, we have the opportunity to reflect on not only our own lives, but on the lives of others, and we can attempt to begin the new year in a heightened state of consideration and mindfulness²³⁶.

Gutierrez wrote on his choice of repeating the action:

“Here we are 7 years later, embroiled in two horrible wars that have killed, injured, and displaced thousands of people. [...] I felt like I wanted to do something to acknowledge the people whose lives were being disrupted by this conflict, who maybe suddenly found themselves having to leave their homes, not getting to experience the serenity of even resting at night [...]

“On December 31st 2008, I did the action again in New York, and 30 artists in 30 states participated ranging from Vermont to Alaska, Montana to Texas. Freedom of Information 2008 was a nationwide action of contemplation. Several of the participating artists created “channels” on ustream.tv, a live streaming website so that we could be seen doing the action by anyone with internet access. I liked the symbolic power of the artists engaged in a common struggle, while remote from one another. It seemed to me an apt metaphor for how resistance movements

²³⁴ See La Rocco, New York Times.

²³⁵ Gutierrez had intended to have one representative from each state, and succeeded in finding thirty-one participants. Gutierrez recruited participants through a general call he put out on email. Most of the people who participated in *FOI* were not people Gutierrez knew well before *FOI*. 2008 participants, listed alphabetically by state, were: Alabama, Rhea Speights; Alaska, Kyli Kleven; Arizona, Aileen Mapes; Arkansas, Malinda Allen; California, Jesse Hewit; Colorado, Lily Brown-Johnson; Connecticut, David Dorfman; Georgia, Diana Crum; Hawaii, Brianna Skellie; Illinois, Marissa Perel; Iowa, Amanda Hamp; Kentucky, Ben Asriel; Maryland, Sharon Mansur; Massachusetts, Jesse Zaritt; Michigan, Marlee Cook Parrott; Minnesota, Taja Will; Montana, Harmony Wolfe; New Hampshire, Gregory Holt; New Jersey, Joshua Bisset; New York, Miguel Gutierrez; North Carolina, Janice Lancaster; Ohio, Lena Lauer; Tahni Holt; Pennsylvania, Jung E Kim; Tennessee, Layard Thompson; Texas, Daniel Adame; Vermont, Selene Colburn; Virginia, Zap McConnell; Washington, Tonya Lockyer; Washington, D.C., Maida Withers.

²³⁶ See Appendix B.

reach out to each other across time and distance²³⁷.”

On January 24th, 2009, Gutierrez staged a third production of *Freedom of Information*. This final staging was an international duet between Gutierrez at the Politics of Ecstasy Festival in Berlin, and dancer Katherine Ferrier, who performed in Kansas City. Writes Gutierrez on the 2009 version:

“A few months ago Jeremy invited me to do freedom of information for this festival. This is the first, and possibly last, time I am doing it in a festival context. I am intrigued by the way that the action fits into the subtitle of the festival: altered states of presence. However, stripped of the significance of performing the action from midnight to midnight on December 31st, and re-located out of the context of performing it in the United States, the country responsible for instigating the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I am curious about how this action will feel for me and how you will perceive it. Coupled with these new parameters is also the historical context of the new, hopeful “Obama era,” one in which the decisions about how to address these wars have only begun to unfold. Obama has promised to withdraw the troops from Iraq (although he is committed to maintaining some military presence there to continue to train Iraqi troops), but he has also vowed to increase the military presence in Afghanistan.

Originally I was to do freedom of information here alone. However, Katherine Ferrier, a dance artist who wanted but was not able to do the action in 2008, approached me about performing the action simultaneously in Kansas City, Missouri. I am excited and relieved to have her do it, because the idea of sharing the difficulty of the action with someone else is now, to me, an inextricable part of the action. And joining me for the last two hours of the action will be visual artist/musician Fritz Welch, whose music will assist me in making it to the end of the event. Fritz is an old friend and collaborator, who was present at the first incarnation of the event in 2001²³⁸.”

Gutierrez’s intention was that the score was open enough to work and be safe for participants on an individual basis. The *FOI* score was to “move continuously” for twenty-four hours while blindfolded and ear plugged. In our interview Gutierrez shared

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ See Appendix C.

that he preferred to take a loose, hands-off or “light” approach to the score and participant’s ability to complete it²³⁹. He was open to how each person did the practice, for example, following Gutierrez’s lead some participants adhered to strict spatial confinement and did not leave the room for the duration of the event. Others, as they deemed necessary, would take breaks, eat dinner, and exit the room in order to use the bathroom. Participants were encouraged to include a written statement somewhere in the room, or posted on the door of the performance as well as provide a journal for audience members to respond in. Some allowed, even encouraged, audience to attend the live performance, or invited local press. Others performed alone their only connection to others, the live-stream video on the Internet. Some choose not to live-stream, others intended to live-stream but couldn’t get the connection running. Internet links failed all together, or midway through performances; some were regained, while others were not. There were also a few cases of people who just stopped and could not complete the full twenty-four hours due to technical difficulties, bodily injuries, mental blocks, or space that was not conducive to movement. Gutierrez called each participant individually on

²³⁹ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014. In our interview Gutierrez stated: “I work collaboratively not collectively. My name is advanced as the primary author and that feels appropriate, at least with the work I am making up until now.” Yet he also discussed at length his role as conceptual director to be a position that he chose to navigate as with a consciousness towards the “politics of power.” He strongly identified with choreographer Stephanie Skura’s contention that dance is not political because of what it says but because how it is made (that is the choreographic process). See Skura, “The Politics of Method.” Stated Gutierrez, “I have a big identification with that.” Gutierrez’s directorial attitude was one of the ways that he tried to approach the work from a place respectful of the internal politics of power that arise “when you direct and when you work with other bodies.” Gutierrez continued: “I do agree that the way pieces are made or constructed and the equality of interactions is a huge model for a discussion of power and administration and how you want the world to be.” Gutierrez discussed how “micro-level decisions of how you interact,” such as maintaining amenable relationships with all people involved from performers, to maintenance workers, to producers, create “politics to cast across the way that choreography manifests itself in a piece.”

the telephone at the beginning of the performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation and then many (but not all) participants responded on the blog afterwards as personal reflection on their experience. Each of participants from the 2008 version had quite different experiences—from harmful mentally to rejuvenating to alienating to having metaphysical connections to other participants. Though the point of *FOI* was to create a space of contemplation and meditation, that intention proved to be quite unwieldy. Several participants went as far as saying it was the most effective performance experience of their life, while others felt deeply traumatized. Some participants had political issues with the intention of the action, or their community's critique of the performance, while other's experienced a profound sense of connection to being human in the world²⁴⁰.

A Brief Review (no dash)

Technologies of mediation brought graphic images of the distant Vietnam War and scenes of domestic mass protest into the living room of the U.S. public. Similarly, during the Gulf War, the CNN effect brought constant live audio reports into the living room of the U.S. public twenty-four hours a day. In the early 2000s, during the war in Iraq and military conflict with Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers uploaded both positive and negative videos of themselves in combat, which could be accessed by the worldwide public on YouTube. Gutierrez's performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation contained all of these elements of mediation used during war—*FOI* was broadcast-live on the Internet for twenty-four hours at a time, utilized a number of open-source and live-

²⁴⁰ See *FOI* Blog.

stream video sites as the venue of performance, and had homebound spectators²⁴¹. Gutierrez's choice to employ these technologies of mediation positions his Internet-broadcast antiwar choreography in a landscape of complex relationships between distant wars, online expressions, and pro/antiwar positions. I argue that *FOI* audience's choice to turn off or turn on one's computer, as well as how and how long their viewing experience happened, created unique and individualized (and vastly different) spectator experiences²⁴². This multiplicity of spectatorship was intended to provide both participants and viewers with the twenty-four hours of space for meditation and contemplation about the ongoing war and military conflict. As Gutierrez says, "What stops something as big and terrible as the U.S. government from doing what it wants to do²⁴³?" Instead, *FOI* provides a forum for thinking about how the constraints of physical freedom might impact bodies physically affected by war. It also provides an example of how remote or long distant viewers might come to an understanding of war—through deprivation of one's physical body or witnessing consensual deprivation of another's physical body. *FOI* participants also often wrote of their experiences of repetition through the many hours of the performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation. I contend that moving one's body in extreme ways through time, such as the endurance

²⁴¹ As I will discuss in the subsection on the score and the participants, not every participant chose to livestream, some participants had technical difficulties with the livestream or the livestreamed failed to work due to Internet connectivity issues. As well, some participants were unable to complete the score for twenty-four hours due to environmental or health issues.

²⁴² *FOI* spectators who visited the physical spaces of the performances, when permitted, had similar choices such as where to view the performances, whether to interact (again, when permitted) with the performers, and how long to stay.

²⁴³ Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

and sensory deprivation in *FOI*, provides physical understandings for both the performer and the witness that can, for some, open up new perspectives on distant wars.

While the initial time/space event of the performances each took twenty-four hours, I contend these contemplations and potential understandings transcended the initial time/space of the performance. As evidenced in the participant responses below, many experienced an altered or non-linear sense of time. Non-linear temporalities are a byproduct of choreography that offer both continuities and better understandings of large traumas of the world. This concept is a major thread I trace throughout this project. In Chapter One, I discuss choreographic re-purposing of future-existing choreography and in Chapter Two I discussed the multiple presents/presences that resulted from the re-performance of choreographic templates. In Chapter Four I theorize choreographic re-imagination, which alters past events in hindsight. Even my progression through this chapter is somewhat backwards from a strictly chronological linear temporal progression—I started with the 2009 performance and close with the 2008 performances, I discuss Chapter Four before you have even encountered it.

FOI Blog and Participant Responses

“i think that doing foi, does "do" something. i think that committing to this kind of an action changes the person who is doing it. i think that directing your intentions to a situation that is out of your control, but that you have strong feelings about, is "something." i don't think it's everything, it may not even begin to be enough, but it is something. planning this event is turning into a real education, for which i am grateful. and that is something also.” –Miguel Gutierrez, *FOI Blog*, 2008

Like Gutierrez, I also think that *FOI* does do something. Yet for me, pinning down exactly what that “something” does was very unwieldy. I don’t believe, and

Gutierrez would second me, that *FOI* stopped war military engagement, but it certainly did have an impact on individuals²⁴⁴. As Gutierrez states, that “something” is perhaps not enough but “something,”—perhaps a step towards peace or, more accurately, a step towards envisioning what peace might look like. Throughout this chapter, I argue my 2009 *FOI* viewing experience was choreographic re-viewing (as a virtual audience member) and that that experience was both unique, not what I expected, and sometimes contradictory with itself—for example, how I felt alienated but inspired. Another strong component of my experience was reading the blog postings from the thirty-one-person 2008 version of *FOI*.

I first learned about this performance/ritual/antiwar protest/improvisation in 2008 when a call for participants was circulated via email²⁴⁵. I had contemplated participating, as I was planning to spend time in New Orleans for New Year’s Eve and the state of Louisiana had not yet been claimed as a location. I decided that it was too intense for me to participate in. This did, however, cause me to think about what the experience would be like in excruciating detail. Prior to witnessing the performance, I had imagined, conjectured nearly to the point of experiencing, much about the risks, potential humiliation, and sheer endurance of moving continuously, while deprived of vision and hearing for twenty-four hours. How is the moving body aware of time passing or the end of time? Do seconds slow down or speed up; do hours elongate or flash by? How do the

²⁴⁴ This statement brings up the choreographed tension between the mass performance and the individual performer. The large number of performers is partially what rendered the performances so powerful, yet the individual recounting of the experience (i.e., how Gutierrez choreographed the piece to showcase the individual experience) resulted in choreographic re-view that brought forth the overall richness of the work.

²⁴⁵ See Appendix A.

dancers sense time without sight or sound? How and where does one urinate? Do the sight and sound-deprived dancers feel firmly rooted in their bodies? Is touch, taste, and smell heightened? Does experiencing it while others are experiencing it across space, at the same time, change the experience? Do the dancers sense multiplicity and repetition? Do they experience this out-of-mind state as being inside or outside of their heads? Do their bodies become exhausted, exuberated, angry, hurt, exhilarated? Did participants need to prepare for the performance, and if so, how? Though I didn't witness the 2008 performance, in the month following the performance, I recall checking the blog several times per day to see if more responses had come in²⁴⁶. As articulated by participant Tonya Lockyer, in the month following the 2008 performance, "the blog posts rolled in across the continent²⁴⁷." As a virtual reader who had not witnessed any of the 2008 performances, I experienced the performances through the subjective individual writings of the blog respondents. Each of the nineteen blog respondents had extremely different experiences—from painful to enlightening to lonely to ecstatic. In hindsight, after witnessing many hours of the 2009 *FOI*, I believe that the blog was more politically provocative than the performance itself. I argue that the blog, in fact, was part of Gutierrez's choreography for *FOI* 2008. Therefore, I include my many re-views of the blog in the choreographic re-view that I argue this particular antiwar dance illustrates.

²⁴⁶ As I stated before I was in New Orleans over New Year's Eve 2008 and though my apartment rental was supposed to have Internet connection, the Internet connection was not working at all on that evening (looking back faulty Internet seemed a lot more prevalent in 2008/2009 than it does now). I had contemplated going to a café or someplace else to watch the action, but instead opted for an evening out dancing and merry-making like many other New Year's Eve-ers. Though I was a follower on the *FOI* blog, I do not remember receiving messages in my email when a new post was made.

²⁴⁷ Personal interview with Lockyer, September 29, 2014.

Each time I have re-viewed the blog, and its sprawling hundred-plus pages of responses, it has revealed new experiences and nuances of understanding. The blog re-views happened and continue to happen after the performance—though the entries could be thought of as hindsight recollections of the event, they serve more to insert the past into the present. That is, when I read the blog entries I still feel as though the performance is happening now, again, and not exactly as it happened before.

As you will read below, I have chosen to excerpt participant responses from the *FOI* blog that further my argument in four ways. The first set of quotes demonstrate how the *FOI* antiwar choreography operates outside of cause and effect temporality or in modes of non-linear and/or altered time that could be described as multiplicity. The participant blog responses illustrate how the process of performing endurance choreography followed by reflecting on the experience of that choreography is inherently a process that jumps through time. The experience of the performance happened and it was then reflected upon in hindsight, filtered through others' responses (many entries quote other participants). The blog also allows people from afar to re-view the performance years after the initial time/space event.

Next, I have chosen quotes that illuminate the multiplicity of participant experiences. As I argue throughout this chapter, Gutierrez and the participants' intentions were not to stop the war but to create nationwide antiwar solidarity. The quotes demonstrate that this intention worked wonderfully for some and fell short for others. I contend that even if the cause of this choreography were to create nationwide solidarity among the participants, that the failure of the result (some felt connected, some felt

alienated), reifies *FOI* 2008 as not necessarily concerned with ending war but instead interested in opening space to think about war (for some that was life-altered, for others they realized how impossible it was to make art that did something about war). In some cases the action changed the person performing it; in others it made the performer more skeptical about their relationships to social justice activism, or was downright a bad experience.

Third, I chose participants writing from the blog that addresses the inexact repetition or againness of the *FOI* score as a means of tapping into a physical experience. In *FOI*, I contend that this meditation and contemplation happens through the experience of the physical body, for both the audience and the participants. Many participants spoke of an interiority that they experienced perhaps because of the sensory deprivation, endurance, or a combination of both. The quotes below present evidence about how againness affected *FOI* participants physically, mentally, and emotionally, as well as produced deeper understandings about the world, more questions about war, artistic response, safety, and solidarity.

Lastly, the participant responses address whether the Internet made the participants feel more connected to each other, and to the world at large (or not), either through the blog or through the live-stream Internet during the performance. My intention in closing with quoted excerpts from the *FOI* blog is to allow the reader to re-view these responses in order to have a first-person experience of one of the examples of choreographic re-view I theorize in this chapter.

I contend, and participant responses concurred, that FOI created a skewed or altered sense of time, which was sometimes a multiplicity of time, through the extreme physical state of sensory, sleep, and food deprived bodies that has been moving or attempting to keep moving for twenty-four hours.

“the beginning was difficult, the middle was easy, and the last 5 (?) hours were miserable. i guess i feel like those last 5 hours are the reason i was there. i thought about other people in the world suffering because of greed and power and fear and stupidity and while i didn't know how much longer of my 24 hours i had to go, they have no idea if any end will ever come²⁴⁸.”

“Time is relative, moving continuously twenty-four hours with its cycles and surges of exhaustion, energy, boredom, intrigue... desperation and strength, loneliness and profound connection... checking out and back in... coordination and nausea, disorientation and center. [...] Most of what folks have asked about has been my sense of time over the twenty-four hours. It seems to be the viewers' point of piqued interest. Time/space - something that we all manage linearly, but experience subjectively - can understanding it one day ever dismantle violence as means²⁴⁹?”

“i thought i heard two people enter the space and take their coats off and sit down i jumped up and danced and danced for twenty or so minutes who knows for them for me for all of us who knows i started to get a bit tired and noticed that there was no rustling no breathing no nothing out there i had just manufactured friends or onlookers perhaps so i could dance that's what we always do we manufacture a lot of our lives [...] the last six hours i started to hallucinate quite fiercely and i started to lose my ability to place myself in the lovely octagonal room when i finally took daniel nagrin's scarf (he died that monday before we all danced) off my tired eyes to the sound of bells and chimes played by dan and marya i couldn't believe that i had been in that space [...]”²⁵⁰

“What I was sure was nearly the end of the 24-hours lasted for a very long time,

²⁴⁸ See Rhea Speights Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author's lowercased i's.

²⁴⁹ See Janice Lancaster Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵⁰ See David Dorfman Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author's lowercased i's.

and it became very difficult to stay conscious. It was simply hard, and to some extent, I was suffering. Though I had a choice, and the freedom to stop at any time, I had submitted myself to the commitment, so I had a feeling of being subjected to something. This is when I started to have, rather than only a cognitive understanding, a more experiential comprehension of people who suffer subjection to displacement, violence, torture and confinement. Because of this action, I feel empathy differently for those affected on both sides of war²⁵¹.”

“I’ve been trying to honor the amount of time that it’s taking me to process the experience. I think I’m just letting myself listen to you while remembering what happened to me, too. [...] There was so much banality for so much of it, maybe most of it... there was so much, oh my god here I am again. Here I am again. Oh and here I am. Again. [...] And look I have to pee again. And again. And again. And again. I was embarrassed at how much I had to pee. And so sometimes I did just do it in the bathroom in the corner of the studio and not in the jugs. I pee a lot when I’m tired, but this was ridiculous. It was like, move a little, pee, bump into shit, pee, moan and groan, pee²⁵².”

“When I left [...] it was as if I had just arrived. The last twenty-four hours were a dream, a blip in time that may or may not have really happened. I looked at the sky and saw so many stars²⁵³.”

This created a multiplicity of experiences for the participants, as demonstrated below, (and for the audience as demonstrated throughout this essay).

“In many ways, it felt easier than my day to day life. [...] Yeah, the blindfold was scratchy. Yeah, midnight seemed farther away than I expected...but it felt amazing, beautiful, decadent, totally beyond my expectations. Yes, Decadent. I am so fucking lucky that I can spend 24 hours blindfolded, moving, creating a space for reflection. That I can respond this way to war, censorship, the desire for peace, the desire for freedom...²⁵⁴”

“I was slightly terrified. So I spent most of the night sitting in a dark corner, rocking. Around 2 or 3am, I heard an extremely loud noise outside and

²⁵¹ See Amanda Hamp, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵² See Miguel Gutierrez response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵³ See Janice Lancaster, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵⁴ See Tonya Lockyer, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

consequently took my blindfold off for a few hours. [...] Pedestrians could also watch through the glass wall and read the information posted in the window. I felt like a spectacle. [...] The spectacle feeling was not a good thing for me. [...] As if the windows (and the media attention) made me the all-knowing, outsider artist who was there to enlighten the public. I know that was NOT the original intention of the project, but that's where it went for me. [...] I had thought that if I knew something about the experience of doing "foi 08," I could be more compassionate and therefore more helpful. While dancing, I felt that such curiosity was rather grotesque. Why would I ever want to know what that's like? In the moment, it seemed to belittle the more gruesome experiences of being imprisoned. And I realized that I was also grouping all political prisoners together. I was grouping on refugees together. In a radio interview, I actually said, "those people." [...] When I really focused on imagining imprisonment, I just saw movies in my head. Fictional episodes related by Hollywood actors. [...] From 4:30-5:30pm, someone I knew took over the "door duty." He also played music for me. And he danced with me. I found enormous peace in the relief from my own self-deprecating thoughts. After he left, I was alone again and knew that I would be until midnight. So I stopped. I felt like my practice was over. It was 6pm. I posted a sign on the door thanking everyone and went home. My only regret in doing so was leaving the rest of you dancing with one less person²⁵⁵."

"For me it was an empowering experience, the best combination of body cracking open thought and heart. [...] I was happy to be moving and expressing. I felt grateful and abundant in light and love to be making art, and exercising that freedom. How healing²⁵⁶."

"hmm. for me, it was-- less. in most ways. less everything. less isolating, less emotional, less discovery. half hearted. the room was too small and everything i did felt truncated. i couldn't work up any real speed, any real hysteria, any real devotion. just boredom; totally aggravating and constant. [...] i connected to my breath as this thing which could hold my mind and body away from flipping out about losing all (most) other landmarks. i counted breaths into the thousands, and they stayed slow and deep even when moving relatively rapidly around²⁵⁷."

"overall...I felt a sense of lightness, ease and balance immediately after and through all of new year's day and is still with me now²⁵⁸."

²⁵⁵ See Diana Crum, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵⁶ See Janice Lancaster, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁵⁷ See Gregory Holt, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author's lowercased i's.

²⁵⁸ See Sharon Mansur, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

“This was a hard twenty-four hours for me.[...] Its cold here (about -15 degrees). It was cold in the small room I moved in (about 50 degrees). I was only able to keep down about twenty ounces of water during my twenty-four hours. I threw up the rest²⁵⁹.”

“i ended the action much sooner than i thought i would. i made the mistake of not checking to see if my space had heat, and on a northern california winter night, that was unworkable. it wasnt just that i was very cold and could never get warm, it was that i didnt know what to do to get okay with it. i tried everything. i over-moved, trying to get my body heat up, but had panic attacks about how this was taxing me too early on in the morning. [...] it was easlily one the most prolonged and painful interrogations of myself i had ever induced. and yet, there was finally a moment when i accounted for the practical hurdles in my situation, i cried a little more, and i said out loud, " i am stopping now." [...] and nothing could be richer. [...] **i feel that i made one of the most meaningful pieces of art to date**²⁶⁰ .

I argue and excerpts from the FOI blog present evidence that againness or inexact repetition or repeating movement over such a long amount of time offers intense physical understandings (which relate or don't relate to war).

“ ...exhaustion tasks, repetition, buzz, fear, distrust, obsession, truth, compassion, becoming, morphing, trans- formation, forming, itional, itioning...
...what happens next, then, after all that I know, all that I can do²⁶¹ ...”

“displaced memories... bringing them all back together...important to remember it ALL...dark and light [...] my Lebanese heritage...how does that relate? Lebanon's civil war history, can't visit safely to see where my father's family is from, a cousin's husband caught in Beirut summer 2006 conflict, got back to the U.S. ok, I've been called a terrorist...[...] another cousin of college age, same side of the family, is serving in Iraq, an out of the box choice for our family [...] what would he say in response to this? [...] some recurring movement themes- repetition....lots of repetition²⁶².”

²⁵⁹ See Kylin Kleven, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁰ See Jesse Hewit, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, my emphasis, author's funky spelling and lower-cased i's.

²⁶¹ See Tahni Holt, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶² See Sharon Mansur, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

“my left hip, obstructed somehow, not rotating as smoothly as I’d like calming figure eights, calming repetition²⁶³”

“It was extraordinarily different doing it this time, compared to 7 years ago, because of that support. [...] And also I’d done it once before. So inside of the panic or misery or fear of what it was going to be was the underlying knowledge that it WOULD, eventually, end. I wasn’t trapped. [...] I mean, over and over again during foi, I kept realizing that I had “more” than I thought I had. I had more love, I had more energy, I had more work, I had more movement, I had more acceptance, I had more bullshit thinking going through my head. It was a lot. [...] I wonder how I am going to do this again in 2 and a half weeks as part of a festival in berlin. During foi and shortly after I first thought, oh no, I can’t possibly do this again. But then over the weekend it hit me, no, I CAN do it again, and in fact, I SHOULD do it again. [...] If I try to imagine that that event will be like last week’s, well no way could I do it. But if I try to approach it as another practice of compassion, another attempt to stay awake to turbulence of my continually-seeking-full-actualization body, then I think I’m okay²⁶⁴.”

“i must be honest and real to let you know : i thought very little of war during all of this. [...] i will never know what it feels like to be displaced by war. or in general for that matter²⁶⁵.”

“I get frustrated because even though this is supposedly a protest piece, I can't access anything to make me think about the world. [...] I have a serious confrontation with something - my own intentions going into this, what art means to me, why this is artistic, why this is political, why I am alive. [...] A projection of images begins to slowly revolve before me: -the brutality of police officers at the WTO/IMF protest in Washington, D.C. in 2000 -protesters getting mauled by horses during the Republican National Convention a few months later -women in fur coats and cowboy hats during Bush's first inauguration -the black spiral of my body going off a mountain's course and hitting a tree -x-rays of the fractures, - looking down at my body bandaged and swollen, bleeding -sitting at the kitchen table in the loft I shared with Miguel and Jaime unable to sleep due to the pain - writing at 3AM or 5 AM -one morning sitting down and seeing the paper filled with images from Abu Graihb. More images: Guantanamo, and testimony from detainees. Being beaten to a pulp in the chest and genitals, electrocuted, bound, made to perform sexual acts on others, being forced as a man to wear ladies

²⁶³ See Janice Lancaster, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁴ See Miguel Gutierrez response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁵ See Marlee Cook-Parrott, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author’s lowercased i’s..

underwear, being given pants with the crotch cut out, bathing in your own urine so no one will come near you, telling someone the food is drugged and then blacking out for an indeterminate amount of days, and then being told you have to go on medication, the number of people who tried to commit suicide in these circumstances, and who were dragged, drugged and humiliated because of it, being separated from your family, losing your home, breathing in the toxic fumes from missiles exploding, giving birth to a child that will never live, getting cancer, not being able to find a safer place, fighting in a war and then coming home with a tumor in your leg, losing a leg, both legs, arms²⁶⁶.”

I argue that the live-streamed Internet connected some participants and alienated others.

“Streaming online inspiring me to keep going²⁶⁷.”

“When I was dancing, I didn't feel connected to you all. I even tried to place you all in my consciousness, but I just felt utterly alone²⁶⁸.”

“i was so ready to quit. i was like what's the point?!?! i could tell everyone that it was over. i could fake an internet problem and cut the streaming and just stop. [...] did i fail because i think i passed out for some blank amount of time during the first night, because i didn't exhaust myself athletically, because if i went to the window i could tell if it was daylight or not and so refused to totally surrender marking time, because i didn't meditate very much about how to learn political truths from my body?[...] **but then i briefly looked in on some of the west coast dancers**- one had a chair which she was pushing around listlessly with her feet, one was walking slowly across the back of an empty room, one was just lightly hugging himself and rocking. not in agony or insanity or pain, just sort of shifting weight. could have been for hours. and i was filled with so much compassion, so much empathy, so much awe for the beauty of some kind of spirit which cannot be contained, which is so much more powerful than our ability to rationally know or be certain even that it was there. may the spirit we have shared fill our work²⁶⁹.”

²⁶⁶ See Marissa Perel, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁷ See Janice Lancaster, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁸ See Diana Crum, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁶⁹ See Gregory Holt, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, my emphasis, author's funky spelling and lower-cased i's.

“[I found out] later my friend and dance colleague Gesel stayed up to watch that entire segment online, she recalled I said I wouldn’t have anyone with me in person [...] glad I chose to have it relatively private, at home, with support from afar [...] truly felt the collective energy of our group as well as those witnessing online, don’t know if I could have kept my focus without that palpable presence [...] P.S. my cat was a fabulous witness...²⁷⁰”

“this is...easily one of the most readable and fucking FASCINATING discourses i have ever experienced. seriously...this shit is phenomenal. [...] I am OBSESSED with hearing each of your voices on these threads. It's is so incredibly dynamic to feel each of you processing your experiences with foi, making sweeping assessments and teeny suggestions of your abilities as art-makers, as change-seekers, and and as doers, finishers, strong people. [...] it feels ABSOLUTELY wierd, becasue the only folks of you i've even et are miguel and jesse z. [...] i think that having many folks do this action in places that are just far enough away from eachother to where they cant quite hear or see one another, induces a kind of trans-geographical empathy and love that is beyond RADICAL and extraordinarily timely and appropriate for the dire issues that we are thinking about in undertaking this in the first place²⁷¹.”

“Tuesday night I went to the studio with two friends who had promised to stay with me the whole 24 hours. I warmed up and thought about how unprepared I was and how weird and invisible and pointless I was, maybe just making some attempt at righteousness. I couldn't stop thinking that I ought to spend all of my time relishing in my freedom, not torturing myself with sleep deprivation, hunger, isolation, and fear. [...] During the next six hours I moved in ways I have never moved before, moaned and hiccuped in agony on the floor, burped enormously and repeatedly, imagined beauty, attempted seisure-like movements to stay awake, fell asleep, tried to find you all in the darkness and failed, and finally hallucinated gunshots and took the blindfold off at 6 a.m. [...] I went home. I slept for 5 hours. I woke up and could feel nothing but my own weakness, selfishness, etc. [...] **I went to the library to watch the live videos of those of you who had web cams up. [...] I have never been so moved by an artistic attempt in my whole life.** Thank you for your strength and your struggle and your web cams and your blind, stupid beliefs. **I went to a friends computer when the library closed and was absolutely euphoric at watching you finish.** Thank you thank you thank you²⁷².”

²⁷⁰ See Sharon Mansur, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

²⁷¹ See Jesse Hewit, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author’s emphasis and misspellings.

²⁷² See Lily Brown-Johnson, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, my emphasis.

“i want it. i want to be a part of this community. with these 30 or so other people, two of whom i have met only briefly, and most whom I have never spoken to. the energy of of your movign bodies flowed through me during those 24 hours, and i don't know what the hell i would have done without you²⁷³.”

“I don't know that I was aware of [other people doing *FOI*] the whole time. I know that I spent a lot of time, particularly when it was hard, envisioning each of you and dancing “with” you for part of the time. It was simple stuff really... a lot of time it was just a mind game to see if I could remember all of the people and all of the states involved. But I loved doing that, loved the different ways that people's bodies and faces and general spirits entered and exited my consciousness. Some of you I still haven't even spoken to, so that was super abstract, of course. I felt so lucky, so very grateful, to have you as support though²⁷⁴.”

Abstraction, Mediated Bodies, and Racialized Wars

Gutierrez's closing comments suggest that long-distance virtual collaboration without verbal communication may result in abstraction. The Internet abstracts to a certain extent the idea of a physical body in space next to another physical body; however, in some ways mediation concretizes the fact that we are at war. The insertion of the physical bodies into a virtual space such as the Internet is thus both hyper-real and less real²⁷⁵. The blog posts also assist the abstract style of improvised postmodern choreography to become more visceral. The choreography felt less distanced and more immediate, even though the performance had long ago concluded. In addition to conjuring, reiterating, and bringing up many thoughts and ideas about physical bodily experience, the blog posts also make clear that dancing and choreographed bodies carry a

²⁷³ See Marlee Cook-Parrott, Participant Response, *FOI* blog, author's funky spelling and lowercased i's.

²⁷⁴ See Miguel Gutierrez response, *FOI* blog.

²⁷⁵ As one participant stated, during their performance, they began to image in themselves as a Hollywood actor in a movie. “When I really focused on imagining imprisonment, I just saw movies in my head. Fictional episodes related by Hollywood actors.” See Diana Crum, Participant Response, *FOI* blog.

certain amount of predetermination for being read one way or another based upon their race, class, ethnicity, and gender. Abstraction can also serve to erase hierarchical, institutional, and systemic dynamics of power, which can result in erasure or invisibilization of highly racialized aspects of contemporary war. Gutierrez did not choreograph the disclosure of the participant's identity into the choreography of *FOI*. *FOI* participants were not asked to respond to if and how their gender, ethnic or racial identity was brought forth or altered during their participation in *FOI*. Nevertheless, several participants chose to bring this up in their responses—the blog posts include references to Lebanese heritage, relatives in combat, fighting in the Israeli army, personal struggles with mental health issues, and “grotesque” curiosity to know what it is like to be a person in a refugee camp. War became personal with the individuals whether individuals had personal connections to war or not. On the blog, photographs appeared adjacent to each of the participant's biographies, and this was another way that ethnic or racial identities, when visible, were revealed. The choreographic re-view of the blog entries brings up issues of bodies that are not present in the antiwar choreography in three ways. First the re-view creates an elision of the complex identity markers of the individual dancers. Second, what appeared to be mostly white dancers displace the racial and ethnic groups affected by the war by substituting artists living in the U.S. for them. Third, the abjection of the horrors of torture and confinement during war is constitutive of and necessary in order for the construction of the concerned and artistically active dance artist. These various registers of abstraction in *FOI* potentially serve to invisibilize highly racialized aspects of war. As Gutierrez so astutely stated (and as I already quoted),

“Vietnam ghosts our experience as Americans. Especially because of the white postmodern movement being so contemporaneously with it.” Yet there are other ghosts of Vietnam, namely dead, wounded, and harmed Vietnamese people. When Asian or other racialized bodies are killed overseas and out of sight (except for on television broadcasts and newspaper war reportage) war can also become abstracted.

Dance and performance studies scholars Yutian Wong and Karen Shimakawa both discuss Asian-American performance as a form that emerged post-Vietnam War and provide insights as to the consequences of bodily representation versus actual physical bodies in the context of war and performance. Wong juxtaposes Asian bodies during the Vietnam War against the newfound artistic masculinities of the white male bodies of U.S. early postmodern choreographers²⁷⁶. Wong identifies how early postmodern white male dancers relied on the absence of actual Asian bodies and the appropriation of Asian cultural forms in order to create an artistic masculinity counter to masculinities of war²⁷⁷.”

²⁷⁶ Wong argued: “The 1960s and 1970s would mark another era when Eastern aesthetics would re-emerge as another defining moment in American dance history.” Wong (and other scholars) posit the first era of modern dance that relied heavily on Orientalism and appropriation of Eastern dance forms as the white women pioneers of early modern dance, such as Ruth St. Denis. Writes Wong “If postmodern dance is indeed a result of the anti-war, civil rights, and women’s movements” and “early modern dance has been defined through female genius while postmodern dance has been associated with male choreographers. [...] Like the early modern dancers able to re-define femininity through Orientalism, the postmoderns were able to access new definitions of masculinity. Postmodern choreographers and contact improvisers are noted for their deconstruction of gender roles, no doubt enable by the rise of the women’s movement.” See Wong, p.77.

²⁷⁷ “Characterised as a response to the social turmoil caused by the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Steve Paxton, and other postmodern choreographers are credited with revolutionizing American modern dance by deconstructing choreographic structures and inventing new movement techniques using the I-Ching, Zen Buddhism, aikido, and tai chi. The Vietnam War era signals another twist in American Orientalism’s love/hate relationship with Asia. [...] The Vietnam War offered another gendered discourse—that of the American male soldier. The anti-war movement framed the soldier as the hyper masculine ‘baby killer’ or the unenlightened lackey of the state. Embracing Asian aesthetics would allow ideological access to an alternative image of American

As pointed out by Wong, these newfound white artistic masculinities erased the Asian bodies affected by war overseas during the Vietnam War²⁷⁸. Wong argues that new Orientalist choreographic appropriation aided in creating a new masculinity amongst male dancers, contrary to that of the “babykiller” Vietnam soldier²⁷⁹.

Performance studies theorist and Asian American theater scholar Shimakawa theorizes a process of abjection that jettisons or expels Asian American bodies away in disgust, yet absorbs the otherness of the Asian American body as constitutive to the construction of Americanness. Abjection as the push pull quality of other-but-not-me, according to Shimakawa, posits Asian Americanness as essential in the construction of whiteness. Shimakawa contends that Asian American bodies are in an abject relationship to white American bodies on and off the theatrical stage. Shimakawa writes: “one does not check all visual/cultural associations at the door of the theatre [...] it is precisely for this reason I argue theatre is an ideal place in which to interrogate the process of abjection²⁸⁰.” Shimakawa also theorizes abjection in relationship the legacy of the Vietnam War. She points to the pushing away of the Vietnam War as a painful and failed

masculinity. Intellectual love of Asian culture (academic Orientalism) could function as a symbolic disavowal of the male chauvinism embodied by the image of the uneducated Vietnam veteran.” See Wong, p. 76. Wong reminds us that military with conflicts with Southeast Asia were quite common in the years leading up to Vietnam.

²⁷⁸ I would also add silenced the disproportionate number of people of color that fought in Vietnam as soldiers. For more on people of color and the Vietnam War draft, see Chapter Four.

²⁷⁹ Wong, p. 76.

²⁸⁰ Shimakawa identifies a number of examples of Asian American theatre that draw upon the abject quality of Asian Americanness in their theatrical performances, for example Ping Chong’s *East-West Quartet*. Shimakawa’s intention is to identify the formation of what we today would call Asian American Theater. Shimakawa, p. 19.

historical experience of the U.S. public, while concurrently the U.S. nation absorbed the actual physical bodies of Vietnamese refugees²⁸¹. Shimakawa contends, “The Vietnam War and its aftermath represent an abject history from which the U.S. Americanness must repeatedly distance itself [...]” Theatrically, Shimakawa sees the process of abjection as clearing the U.S. audience’s conscience “of blame and free of the taint of war or Vietnameseness²⁸².” Under Shimakawa’s lens *FOI* appears to have an abject relationship to the tortured refugee Arab bodies. There is a simultaneous pushing away and displacement of these bodies both in the actual lack of Arab participants and in the repulsion (expressed in the blog) as to whether this choreography even represents such bodies. The participants bring up solitary confinement, torture, and images from Abu Graib, yet it is the other-but-not-me connection to these images that is emphasized in the participant response.

Wong’s analysis begs the question of Gutierrez’s choreography—what bodies are the physical bodies of *FOI* (sometimes hallucinating and subjecting themselves to conditions similar to solitary confinement and torture) displacing? Is the displacement of physical bodies, tortured in Abu Graib, for example, by a white, middle-class, female dancer performing in Iowa, a similar substitution to Wong’s example of white male early postmodern choreographers? The direct appropriation of Afghani or Iraqi or generalized

²⁸¹ Shimakawa writes: “[...] the influx of Southeast Asian refugees resulting from the war and its aftermath may be seen as literal embodiments of that abject history, which threatened to (and occasionally succeeded in) collapsing the conceptual borders protecting a phantasmatic U.S. Americanness free from the “taint” of that war. [...] Refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia by their very presence forced a reckoning by U.S. Americans with “our” involvement in the history that brought them to the United States and with their complex but undeniable claim to “Americanness.” See p. 14. Marita Sturken also addresses less-than-ideal histories, carried out on physical bodies,, in relationship to the Gulf War Syndrome. See Chapter Four.

²⁸² Shimakawa, p. 26, p. 14.

Arab forms is not present in *FOI*, and the controversy (in blog posts) around whether *FOI* was representational of refugees was telling that there was/is much unresolved tension about how to physicalize bodily experiences of torture and war. Like Shimakawa's push/pull of abjection, *FOI* jettisons Afghani or Iraqi bodies, or some vague notion of refugee bodies out the equation and away from participation in the performance. Thus under the lens of abjection, *FOI* is premised on the absence of actual physical bodies affected by war. This creates a performance where (mostly) white untainted-by-war performing artists displace war-touched bodies in order to enact disapproval of the treatment of these very bodies. Tortured or refugee bodies of Afghani, Iraqi or vaguely Middle Eastern descent need to exist elsewhere in order for the protest to be protesting something, but these bodies also need to *not* to exist within the performance/protest/ritual itself. The point was instead to open up mental space, for postmodern, largely but not exclusively white, privileged dancer/performers, but not exactly physical space for refugee bodies. Under this lens, contemplation and meditation seem inadequate, and do not seem to be doing enough. What if actual refugees had been part of *FOI*? How might that have shifted connections, continuities, and solidarities? How might this have made the audience or the performers even more uncomfortable?

Vietnam War was a racialized war, as are all wars. Wars and Asian bodies during the Vietnam War, and war and Afghani and Iraqi bodies in contemporary times, have played out on the white or mostly white bodies of postmodern dancers. In a way this could be said to be the white postmodern artistic masculinity Gutierrez is carving out may be at the expense of invisibilizing Iraqi or Afghani bodies, or more general bodies of

refugees. Where white bodies are prominent in sidelining Asian American bodies during the Vietnam War, Iraqi and Afghani bodies are similarly missing in Gutierrez's (and all of the choreographers I examine) choreographies about those wars. This kind of inevitable racialized reoccurrence, through bodies in war, bodies protesting war, and bodies in choreography about war, is one way that ideas circulate through choreographies in ways that demand intervention. In this project, I suggest that it is precisely by examining these choreographies through and across time, in the peculiar temporal frameworks that dance employs, that patterns and continuities emerge and meanings and meaning making shifts.

Conclusion

“If I were to do *Freedom of Information* again, let's say, I would be **A LOT** more critical and a lot more specific of what it is and what it isn't, there are just more and more layers of knowledge and understanding. I already am this way, but I think I would be extraordinarily selective about the language and the way in which I would represent what I was attempting to do.”—Miguel Gutierrez, 2014

In this chapter, I explored the connections between open-access website dissemination of United States military propaganda, antiwar activism, and antiwar dance. I historicized war reportage and media, with special attention to late twentieth and early twenty-first century technologies such as twenty-four hour real-time news broadcasting and shared or open-access video-uploading websites such as YouTube. I argue that Gutierrez's antiwar choreography *Freedom of Information* employs choreographic re-viewing in two ways. First, in the Internet viewer's ability to craft her experience individually. Second, in the individual recounting of 2008 participant experiences on the *FOI* blog. Whereas in previous chapters I looked at re-purpose of choreographic material

and choreographic multiplicity through time, here I look at multiplicity of participant experiences, as well as the multiplicity of viewing perspectives enabled by live-streamed Internet performances. I argue that choreographic re-viewing, pinpointed in the choreographies here, provides another example of non-cause and effect motivated antiwar activism in dance. Similar to the 1970 street antiwar choreographies discussed in Chapter One, the stated intention of these antiwar performances was to provide time (twenty-four hours) for contemplation on the war in Iraq and military conflict in Afghanistan—but not in any way to stop or even represent the experience of war. I argue that, in this example, meditation and contemplation was achieved through the deprived state of the physical body for the participants and through witnessing (in text, virtually, or live) of the altered physical state of the participants by the viewers. The choreographic re-viewing of my online viewing experience and of the *FOI* blog perpetuated the quality of againness, which I have also identified in other specific choreographies of this project.

The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Chapter Four
Choreographic Re-Imagination:
Victoria Marks' *Action Conversations: Veterans*
and Jeff McMahon's *Scatter*

For veterans that suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, haunting war memories from the past can punctuate the present as though the horrors were happening now. To these vets the past is never behind and can emerge in the present in unexpected moments and as traumatizing as when it first happened. My father is a veteran who has lived with post-traumatic stress he incurred serving in the Vietnam War. In the Appalachian Mountains, where few opportunities exist for talented drummers, he raised three children on a railroad worker's salary. One day during my first year of undergrad, I found out my father had been sent away from the small town where my parents live to a mental health facility in Florida. There had been an incident at work, I was told. My father wrote me one letter from Florida warning my teenage self to stay away from needles and use condoms—two things he had not done and suffered the consequences from in Vietnam. I later found out he had been stalking his railroad boss with the intent to kill him, and had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The local veteran's association had intervened in the situation and luckily he hadn't lost his job.

At home my father was a sweet, caring, and sometimes emotionally removed Dad. But witnessing him at his musical performances was another story all together. Onstage I would see him transformed, overtaken—pounding on his drums, sweat pouring from his balding head, his big man body rocking back and forth. His sweat sloughed off the struggles he carried with him every day and his world filled with possibility. His eyes would grow wide with joy and his muscles would relax, flexing only as he cracked at his high hat symbols at all the right moments. Every beat of his drumsticks conveyed focus, intensity and conviction. I could sense he was someplace else, a place of passion,

empowerment, and release. I grew up awestruck and perplexed by this transformational thing I witnessed at my Dad's gigs. Performance and music are for him a relief from both the horrors of war memories and the struggles of everyday working-class life.

I begin with this anecdote in order to illustrate the subtle and overt ways in which war impacts lives beyond the lives of those directly involved in combat, and to introduce what I have come to understand as the kernel of my early investment in art's relationship to war. My personal story also gestures towards how even the most banal or stereotypical antiwar art, for example, the covers of Janis Joplin or the Grateful Dead that my father has performed for many decades, serve as a vehicles for processing war experiences. My experiences of watching my father perform these stereotypical hippie or counterculture songs were the most tangible way that my father expressed his anger and dissent towards his Vietnam War service. My witness of these performances guides my thinking about the ways that war and performance take on new meanings and aid in understanding the past through physical bodies.

In this chapter I examine two choreographies that address the struggles of veterans in order to examine how performance works backwards to address the past trauma of war. In order to think about how veterans and non-veterans choreographically embody experiences of war through their bodies, I introduce the concept of choreographic re-imagination. Choreographic re-imagination of war through physical bodies shifts understandings of war in hindsight. Similar to the other chapters, the examples of antiwar dance do not intend to cease war, but instead relate the acceptance that war is ongoing and inevitable. Rather than pointing towards the termination of war,

these choreographies exhibit concerns for the welfare of combat soldiers. The “re” signals that for veterans, theatrically expressing their war experiences was imagining again but differently; and for non-veterans the imagining again differently happened because they choreographed on their bodies an imagined experience of war. While re-purpose and re-performance were presented in previous chapters as choreographic methods utilized to perpetuate the againness of choreography, and re-viewing was a method for multiplicity enacted by the viewer, in this chapter I explore choreographed and embodied representations of war performed by veterans and non-veterans. I examine Victoria Marks’ 2008 *Action Conversations: Veterans*, which was created with and performed by veterans in recovery from their combat experiences in the Iraq War and Afghanistan (non-veterans were also part of the process and performance) and Jeff McMahon’s 1991 *Scatter*, which was created in response to the first Persian Gulf War²⁸³. I look at Rebecca Schneider’s writing on Civil War reenactments and Robert Blackson’s definition of reenactment as history altering. I connect the focus on veterans to the Vietnam War, which I historicize as the moment in United States history where veterans evolved from heroes to victims.

Theatricalized and/or choreographed doing over again of veteran’s experiences provides an example of antiwar commentary void of the impulse to stop the war but rife with compassion for the individual soldier. The ability of dance to re-imagine individual experiences of large incomprehensible events alludes to the genre’s capacity to address

²⁸³ For this chapter my research method was viewing extant footage of both choreographies, close readings of documentary footage from *Action Conversations: Veterans*, and videoed artists’ talk backs about both works, consulting criticism of both works, reading writing about choreographic process authored by both choreographers, and interviewing Marks and McMahon.

large and ongoing traumas of the world with a certain accessibility and finesse. I argue that processing the aftermaths of war through individual performing/dancing body offers the possibility of altered relationships to past war trauma. The specific choreographies I examine in this chapter serve as yet another dance specific method that deals with repetition operating within non-linear modes of time—in this case the ability of the present to alter the past. Againness occurs in three distinct ways in the choreographies I analyze in this chapter. For the veteran performers, they are imagining again an experience they had in a very different way—as a theatricalized and distilled embodiment of an experience from which they are now recovering. For non-veterans performers, they are imagining again differently, as an outsider, as a person who did not have the original experience. In addition to the repetitions of embodiment, both works utilize choreographic motifs that appear and then reappear again (in varied embodiments) throughout the choreographies. Lastly, the performances recurred in yet another form and format when I viewed them. I observed both of these choreographies as video documentation. Both choreographers retell combat experiences, again but differently, through the performers' bodies and through choreographic texts.

Choreographic Re-Imagination: Embodying Again, Differently

“Between Iraq and a hard place. Between girlfriends. Between the sheets. [...] Between the earth and sky. Between light and dark. [...] Between stop and go. [...] Between dancing and stillness.”

—John Tingley, U.S. Air Force, four years, and Aaron McCullom, U.S. Coast Guard, nine years, performed in *Action Conversations: Veterans*, 2008

As he does in the epigraph above, throughout *Action Conversations: Veterans*, Aaron McCullom returns to and repeats more situations and circumstances that veterans

find themselves between: “Between wars. Between service and civilian. Between art and life.” In this choreography veteran (military) performers find themselves performing between non-veterans, at times literally caught in mid-air between the other bodies. In a particularly poignant motif of the choreography, six men and one woman in street clothes move quickly and chaotically between each other looking as if they were intentionally getting in and getting out of each other’s way. The movement is excited, full of jolts, and quick changes in direction, but hardly moves through space at all. One person’s arm, or a quick step seems to be always in front of someone else as the performers squeeze through each other’s negative space. Sneakers squeak on the floor because of much stopping and starting of the continuous, yet continuously truncated motion. At the command of the word “help,” one performer after another leaps into the air (or collapses towards the ground), and is caught by the other members of the group. The jumper is then returned upright to their feet by the rest of the group. This movement motif repeats with variations throughout *Action Conversations: Veterans*. After hearing the one-minute biographies of each of the veteran performers (which come before, after, and throughout this performance), it becomes clear that this movement references the support that combat veterans need when they return to civilian life. *Action Conversations: Veterans* illuminates the moral compass—between hero and villain—that veterans contend with through the repetition of the spoken motifs, “I am good. I am bad.” and “This is my story it happened to me.” Marks draws upon military formations like the basic training line, with some members of the cast being commanded to perform push-ups while others are

commanded to cry. In response veteran John Tingley states, “I don’t fake cry. I fake normal.”

McMahon, in his solo *Scatter*, portrays a veteran between aggression and woundedness, between control and loss of control. Dressed in a tan janitor-like jumpsuit, McMahon furls and unfurls his body into a monologue of “un’s” and “dis’s.” “Because you’re the underclass, you’re the underdog, you’re the unneeded, the unnecessary, the unknown, the unfelt, the unfed, the forgotten [...] you’re disappeared, disconnected, disenfranchised [...]” After he rolls up from the floor, he very aggressively walks towards the audience pointing and spewing in a militaristic tone, “you’re third class, third grade, and daddy’s gonna kick your butt [...]” The un’s, the dis’s repeat and repeat each time differently, each time adding new information, or new nuance to the accompaniment of the rolling up and down his spine. Without a prompt, he recoils and begins softly weaving through space. Small ripples of superfluous movement jettison through his body, a momentary loss of composure, a momentary loss of control contrasts with the fluid propulsions. He continues in this cycle—as his body regains control, he deliberately loses it again. The choreographic fluctuations between having control and losing control repeat throughout the performance.

Choreographic re-imagination through physical embodiment of war, again, but differently, functions differently for the non-veteran and veteran performers in these examples. In the case of non-veteran performers, choreographic re-imagination meant crafting their estimation of the physical embodiment of war itself, and/or of the aftereffects of war. For McMahon this meant conjuring experiences of war, again, this

time in the imagination as a soldier. When McMahon embodies his solo *Scatter*, he is figuring out through his physical body and through his theatrical embodiment what it might mean to be a soldier returning from war. For the non-veteran cast members of *Action Conversations: Veterans*, they re-imagine their role as a role of support, contrary to what had previously been (for most) a role of disapproval against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq at large.

For veteran performers in Marks' piece, choreographic re-imagination works to distill, recreate, and theatricalize actual past combat and military service experiences. This at times meant embodying their experiences of life-threatening combat and/or life-altering realities that they were not successful at returning to civilian life (and therefore find themselves recovering in a VA hospital). The veterans McCullom, Tingley, Manuel Flores, and Cidkyee Williams in *Action Conversations: Veterans* imagined and embodied again, in extraordinarily different circumstances, their experiences of war. As shared by the veterans in the documentary that accompanies the DVD recording of the performance, the re-embodiment process called on them to sometimes remember what they had forgotten and approach it through their body. The results of this were not always pleasant. Williams shared that during the performance-making process: "I had a vomiting spell cause I got a migraine so hard, that I had a flashback from [it]. I had forgotten something. It has been a soul-dumping, wrenching experience²⁸⁴." For Williams the past is altered because it now contains an event that he had been repressing, yet he was able to literally physicalize and purge that event in vomit as a result of choreographic re-

²⁸⁴ See Kaneko, *Action Conversations: Veterans* documentary film.

imagination. Flores, on the other hand, began to accept the complexity of his role as a combat soldier: “Talking about the taking of another person’s life, the taking of another human life, and just accepting that, and just dealing with that. To then be quote, unquote glorified for it, and said you’re a hero. Fuck, I was just doing my job²⁸⁵.” Whether purging a flashback memory through vomit, or coming to terms with the contradiction of being a killer and a hero in hindsight and a worker in the moment, choreographic re-imagination produces an altered/changed past as the experience in the moment influences understandings of what has already happened. In their choreographic re-embodiment, the veterans are both not in combat and not in recovery at the hospital. They are no longer on the killing fields and they are in the precarious moment of post-military-discharge mental breakdowns. They are recovering and re-imagining their experiences through their bodies as part of the attempt to “fake normal²⁸⁶.”

Curator and art critic John Blackson theorized that reenactments, similar to the choreographic re-imaginings I discuss in this chapter, require personal motivation but not exact historical replication, thus resulting in a shift towards “personal preference and away from prescriptions of the past²⁸⁷.” Personal motivation was the hands-down singular

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Line of veteran John Tingley in Marks’ *Action Conversations: Veterans*.

²⁸⁷ Blackson, p. 30. Blackson writes about both contemporary art and contemporary culture, or what he calls “flexibility in our palette of tastes between contemporary culture and art.” Blackson delineates the four terms: reenactment simulation, repetition, and reproduction. Simulation is “facilitation of future conclusion, in service of theory. For example, Israeli urban warfare training city.” Repetition “stuck in the present”, all reenactments are repetitions, but few repetitions become reenactments. For example, the baseball pitchers pre-throw is a reenactment. Reproduction is in the image of the original, but embedded more in the object and less in the “act that reproduced it.” Reproductions include stand-ins or imitations of an original. See Blackson p. 28, 30.

reason that any of the veteran performers chose to work in Marks' project—there were a number of other veterans and non-veterans who at some point worked on the project, but chose not to continue. Blackson contends that reenactments are “for better or for worse slowly eroding the need for accountability to an original source and relying instead on the efficacy of the performance or the reproduction²⁸⁸.” The slow eroding of an original source is core to the veteran's experience. In post-traumatic stress disorder, specific moments of the past are replayed separate (and thus different) from the environment of the original time/space event. The insistent out of context, out of time repetition can draw question as to what ‘really happened’ during the original time/space event. The PTSD repetitions of the past in the present can effect or change memories of the original time/space event. Thus both performance and the isolated repetition of specific memories that occur in post-traumatic stress disorder erode or alter details of the original time/space event. In an interview with LA Times critic Josephs, Marks stated that *Action Conversations: Veterans* gestured towards healing because it “created antidotes in their [the vet's] memories for what happened²⁸⁹.” This suggests that when the past crops up as a horrifying memory of war that it may be countered with a more current positive memory of that same experience of war choreographically re-imagined. Where in other

²⁸⁸ Blackson, p. 40.

²⁸⁹ In our interview, Marks admitted that she had a directorial role in these antidotes. Marks disclosed there were moments that the veterans had wanted to include in the choreography, for example, a description the smell of burning flesh, that she felt were inappropriate for the performance context. As Marks put it, there was a learning curve for her in this project, she was concerned about ethics and wondered, “How do I navigate a variety of ethical issues? Like one is, I am not trained, these guys are in a hospital [...] [Also, the ethical dilemma of]: I have no right to be in a room saying let's make art out of your experience. This would not be appropriate. So what would be appropriate?” Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

examples in this study I have looked at how examples of antiwar choreography repeat through time, in this section I present two final examples of choreography that effect memories and experiences in hindsight. My focus here is on addressing veterans who have returned home from war, therefore, choreographic re-imagination effects understandings of war (both the audiences and the soldiers) backwards through time.

Audiences played an important part in antiwar choreographic re-imagination for the *Action Conversations* veterans. The veterans found themselves on the theatrical stage, dancing, being supported by both the performers and audience around them (at times even literally supported or suspended in the air by their fellow dancers). For the performing veterans re-imagining past trauma provided the opportunity to rewrite the narratives of their pasts for better or for worse²⁹⁰. The audience witnessed the veteran's stories, implicating the audience both with insider knowing and as participants in the after-war process. Audience witness became an exchange of public sharing and public service. Sharing stories, with words and through choreography, became a method for veterans to reckon with the trajectory of their lives. I would argue that both veterans and non-veterans were imagining and drawing on their imagination, and thus changing or at the least challenging their relationship to the event in hindsight. Thus, re-imagination of past combat events offered new understanding of events in hindsight, either for the first time for non-veterans, or again but differently for veterans.

²⁹⁰ While Marks was clear that there were no therapeutic intentions in inviting the veterans to perform, there is a technique used in narrative therapy, often with PTSD-inflicted war veterans, called restorying, that at a first glance appears to be very similar to Marks' approach.

This reading of choreographic re-imagination as a disruptor of the original time/space event demonstrates how performance can alter historical events backwards in time. These choreographies show us that there is no cure for war or for PTSD. Choreography and war both live beyond the initial time/space event of the performance or combat, and the initial time/space event can be re-imagined in hindsight. I am proposing that dancers/choreographers understand the events of war in hindsight in an alternative way because of the fact that they reinvestigated war through their bodies. Dance, through embodiment and choreographic re-imagination, produces different understandings of the trauma of war from other more popular antiwar artistic antiwar expressions, such as poetry and music.

Both McMahon and Marks' choreographies were made specifically in relationship to particular wars, but would not be considered re-purpose. Re-purpose as reaction to U.S. military action was the case with the choreographic examples of Chapter One—Yvonne Rainer's *M-Walk* or Wendy Rogers' *Black Maypole*—when a phrase or chunk of a previously existing choreography was extrapolated in order join massive street protests against the government. If choreographic re-purpose functions as an immediate reaction to a military action of the government, choreographic re-imagination is thoughtful response capable of altering an event in hindsight. As I argued above, this altered past produces positive results such as reckoning with your role as a soldier and negative results such a remembering an event that you have been trying to forget (and the resultant flashback, migraine, and vomiting). These choreographies did not re-perform a critique of war during the time of another war, or utilize past choreography with different

meaning because of the historical timeframe, such as in the Chapter Two example of Carlson's *Flag*. However similar to Carlson's choreographic template as a methodology for creation Marks' has continued to use the format of *Action Conversations* as a method for creating dances and bringing communities into conversation through physical embodiment. Following *Action Conversations: Veterans*, Marks has proceeded to create other *Action Conversations*, such as *Action Conversations: Bellows Falls*²⁹¹. Unlike Miguel Gutierrez's *Freedom of Information*, it was not the re-view of the virtual audience or an online blog that perpetuated *Action Conversations: Veterans* and *Scatter* through time.

I argue that these examples of antiwar choreography relate to long-term health concerns for both individuals and communities. These choreographies articulate that we must live with war, and one way to make peace with it is to take care of combat soldier suffering from PTSD and struggling to return to civilian life. As Marks keenly articulated in our interview "My feeling is that I want it [the *Action Conversations* methodology] to stay as a creative process, but if healing or growth is the result of it fantastic, but that is not my goal. I do know that art provides some sort of way of dealing with our lives, [...] but I don't want its purpose to be to make people better²⁹²." Marks proposes that healing from choreographic re-imagination may be an outcome, but it is not the purpose of her choreographic *Action Conversations* investigations. These examples highlight the

²⁹¹ *Action Conversations: Bellows Falls* was about mothers and daughters who struggled over ideas for the future of the daughters (with issues such as teen pregnancy) in the small town of Bellows, Vermont. See Marks, *Contact Quarterly*.

²⁹² Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

impossibility of war and war-induced mental suffering being solved or disappearing. Instead they illuminate that these are facts of the world we live in, and that what dance in particular and art in general offers these huge problems of the world is some understanding, way to cope, way to give voice, and/or way to manage living with war and/or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Jeff McMahon's *Scatter* and Victoria Marks' *Action Conversations: Veterans*

“A guy walks up to a vet and says: Have you killed anyone? The vet says “Not yet, but the day’s still young.” --John Tingley, U.S. Air Force, four years, performed in *Action Conversations: Veterans*, 2008.

Scatter opens in darkness with McMahon belting an altered version of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” In 1991, on the stage of iconic downtown performance venue, PS 122, the sole figure of young McMahon begins this antiwar dance in a stark pool of white light, rapidly rolling up and down his spine while in a stationary position. This choreography is a twenty-seven-minute postmodern solo, choreographed and performed by McMahon, and incorporating both text and song as dominant components²⁹³.

In general, the tone of this choreography is hostile and melancholic. McMahon vocalizes throughout the entire piece and his vocalizations (speaking, sounding, singing) are often performed in synchronicity with the affect of the movement—that is the words and the movement work in a similar emotional tone or conjunction with one another, rather than convey different or divergent ideas (which was also a technique utilized in

²⁹³ *Scatter* was presented on March 23, 1991 at PS 122 as part of their New Stuff showcase. I viewed video documentation of this performance at the New York Performing Arts Library. *Scatter* was later presented at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival (Massachusetts), Highways Performance Space (Los Angeles) and the Cleveland Performance Art Festival.

choreography of this time). As with Carlson's *Flag*, which I discuss in Chapter Two, *Scatter* also possesses a particular confrontational style of dance performance prevalent in the 1990s that I have been calling maximalism²⁹⁴. In our interview, McMahon described this particular style as a particular trend in the experimental downtown New York postmodern dance scene: "There was a kind of work being done around PS 122, it was somewhat reactive, immediate and topical, and less focused on concert dance²⁹⁵." McMahon historicizes this moment as when downtown postmodern Manhattan dance trends shifted back towards technical virtuosity, yet the choreographic trend in the community of PS 122 instead swayed towards unabashed political commentary. McMahon shared, "for those of who weren't as highly trained, [our] vocabulary tended to be political narrative²⁹⁶." Though humble about his success and technical abilities, McMahon's abilities to craft choreographic political commentary were noted by LA Times reviewer Cathy Curtis: "Anti-war themes are familiar territory in performance art dance. So how is it that Jeff McMahon's solo, "Scatter" [...] is so fresh and vivid? Mastery of style, tone and technique are the crucial factors²⁹⁷."

McMahon choreographed *Scatter* by working consistently and methodically in a regularly rented dance studio in the Lower East Side of Manhattan (near PS 122).

²⁹⁴ I define maximalism in contrast or antithesis to early U.S. postmodern dances relationship to minimalism and cogent to the AIDS activist slogan, silence equals death. Maximalist aesthetics include blatant political content, heightened emotional states, and confrontationalism prevalent across genres in 1990s identitarian art.

²⁹⁵ Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014. This quote is also in my Introduction.

²⁹⁶ Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014.

²⁹⁷ Curtis, LA Times.

McMahon contextualizes that in the early 1990s New York City was much cheaper and part-time day jobs and consistent studio time were financially viable²⁹⁸. During the time that McMahon made *Scatter*, he was a member of the thriving downtown dance scene and frequented spaces such as PS 122, as well as participated in the Open Movement series held at that space. McMahon attributes his dance training to significant study with Mangrove, Joan Skinner, Ruth Zaporah, David Schein, and exposure to the work of performance artists Tim Miller, Peter Rose, John Bernd, Eric Bogosian, choreographers Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, and many others McMahon continued to pursue a highly successful career as a performer and choreographer. He is currently Associate Professor in the School of Film, Dance and Theatre, Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. Over the years his work has continued to respond critically to current political affairs. *Heel* (2001) was created in response to 9/11, and *Honorable Discharge* (2003) juxtaposes the murder of a suicidal fifteen year-old by police with the ongoing situation in Iraq. These days McMahon works primarily in theater performance with less emphasis on dance, yet he continues to craft theatrical productions with political themes²⁹⁹.

While in the studio during the process of creating *Scatter*, McMahon would turn on the radio, which was covering the impending Persian Gulf War, and respond with words and movement³⁰⁰. During our interview he shared that at one point in his life he

²⁹⁸ Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014. See also McMahon website.

²⁹⁹ See McMahon website, and personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014.

³⁰⁰ Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014. In our interview McMahon stated: “[*Scatter*] was responding” to the contemporary moment. “Respond” is language that Gutierrez and Rainer both also used.

had wanted to be a journalist, and in the making of this choreography in particular, he was using his art to do just that, respond to, report on and critique the world. While choreographing *Scatter* McMahon did just that—walked around the studio talking to himself as a response to the news on the radio³⁰¹.

In *Scatter*, McMahon’s choreographic embodiment of a soldier returning from war contained explicit homosexual and sexual references – there is a movement sequence where his hands gesture to accentuate his crotch, or give an oomph, included in his performance text are the phrases “chasing the biggest dick”, “kiss me Johnny”, and “ejaculate ourselves into the glorious future”. A bizarrely out-of-place virtuosic attitude (the ballet movement, not the disposition) is at several times inserted in a movement/text sequence which alternates between an angry, resentful, staccato, gestural, upright character and a vulnerable, soft-spoken, limb-floating, prone character. The physically demanding yet daintily executed attitude embodies the tension between “the assumed hetero hero and the possibly more complex sexuality of the actual soldier³⁰².” In our interview McMahon positioned his political inquiry of *Scatter* within the larger cultural landscape of the AIDS epidemic, which was peaking in the arts and LGBT communities in the early 1990s. In personal correspondence, McMahon explained his relationship to making *Scatter*:

³⁰¹ McMahon contrasted this to the style of work that he made in the 1980s which was “theatrical speech very self-consciously poetic, influenced by work like Patti Smith, more rock and roll, get a rhythm let it come through your body.” Personal interview with McMahon, June 6, 2014.

³⁰² Personal correspondence with Jeff McMahon, May 4, 2015.

“SCATTER was very much a vehicle to examine my relationship to masculinity. War has been, up until Vietnam, the expected process for defining/establishing/promoting masculinity, too often without questioning or even acknowledging the humanity of the individual soldier. For those of us with the great fortune to not be drafted into war, we were left with a variation perhaps of survivor's anxiety about not experiencing this passage. Though we may critique/reject it, it's still there. The AIDS crisis was a different kind of war, and one that did not, of course, have the support structures in sentiment and institution that war veterans have access to (or are supposed to), nor a universally acknowledged national disaster (I'm writing this having returned from the 9/11 Memorial at WTC, which is deeply affecting).

So I tried to let SCATTER, as I later did with HONORABLE DISCHARGE (2004) and HEEL (2002) be a container to oscillate between various identities, voices, and affinities, with differing responses and relationships to threat, fear, honor, sentiment, violence. There were aspects of the theatrical concept of "as if" to this; how to respond as if I were a soldier but also not one. I wanted to avoid sentimentality or ennobling, yet also honor the dialectic/contradictions.

[...] SCATTER was, perhaps, an attempt by a man (me) who was not a soldier to imagine that multiplicity³⁰³.”

McMahon aligns the Vietnam War with both masculinity and humanity and contextualizes the events of Vietnam in comparison to the AIDS epidemic, which was in full crisis during the time he choreographed *Scatter*. His process of choreographic re-imagination was to imagine the multiplicities of these various responses, relationships, and ideas, through his bodily actions, as both imaginary soldier and actual non-soldier.

Action Conversations: Veterans opens when choreographer and performer Victoria Marks recites what I assumed was a pre-performance talk. Marks enters the stage in street clothes and says, “What I want to do now is tell you how we got here. How we got here. I am a choreographer. I wanted to mention that because that might not be apparent at all throughout the evening. It gives me great pleasure to think of myself as a

³⁰³ Personal correspondence with Jeff McMahon, June 6, 2014.

choreographer, even in the unusual ways that I fulfill that task. My project has been to think about how to represent bodies onstage and think about what they are doing.” Standing in one place, directly addressing the audience, and occasionally gesturing with her hands, Marks continues. With vulnerability and slight apprehension she remarks: “That is choreography, right? And I am also thinking that my work is about making political meaning and I even like to think about that it is about thinking about social change.” She shares that she has been working with choreographic representations on the theatrical stage or what she call “choreoportraits of people.” With choreoportraits, she examines “who is performing, what are they doing.” Marks shares that the birth of her two sons, 9/11, and the war with Iraq had her thinking about “citizenship and art-making.” She closes by telling the audience what they are about to witness: “This project is about meeting and talking to veterans and learning how to speak with veterans [...] action conversations started as a workshop where artists and veterans would come together, and as we were working, we decided to share it with you³⁰⁴.”

Marks informed me during our interview that this opening was, in fact, a technique practiced in workshop and then used in performance called “one-minute me³⁰⁵.” Marks’ choreographic motifs, like the “one-minute me,” aided in the construction of believability that the men onstage were real veterans struggling to acclimate to civilian life. Sections such as these blur the lines between the real veteran and the representation

³⁰⁴ Marks, *Action Conversations: Veterans*, DVD.

³⁰⁵ Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013. In the *Action Conversations: Veterans* documentary, veteran Aaron McCullom, states called this choreographic motif “one of the moments that is most difficult for me.”

of the veteran on the theatrical stage. As succinctly articulated by Los Angeles Times writer, Susan Josephs, “Marks manages to articulate political opinions without coming across as overly earnest, heavy-handed or didactic³⁰⁶.” I concur that the choreography was not heavy-handed or didactic but because of Marks’ theatrical convention of talking about creative process as part of the performance, I assumed that the representation of veterans were ‘real’ and true to how they might represent themselves. Similar to McMahon’s *Scatter*, Marks’ choreographed veterans as suffering individuals or victims of war, which counters the Vietnam derived stereotype that all U.S. vets are warmongers. Instead this choreography paints intimate portrayals of complex individuals and the evils of war that linger beyond the discrete event of military combat.

Action Conversations: Veterans began by Marks interviewing student veterans on campus, who in 2008 had just started returning to University of California, Los Angeles’ campus from military service. From there she became acquainted with the Military Veterans Organization who pointed her toward the West Los Angeles Veteran’s Association Hospital and a program that the hospital ran for rehabilitating combat veterans. Marks held weekly meetings/action conversations workshops with the veterans, and eventually a consistent group of participants, veteran and non-veteran, emerged. Marks received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts for the project, and for ten consecutive weeks on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. she met with the group for the workshop and dinner. The veteran performers were given an honorarium for consistent participation and pizza and soda for dinner. Though Marks did not start the

³⁰⁶ Josephs, LA Times.

project with a plan in mind for a performance, the *Action Conversations: Veterans* group extended its meetings beyond the funding, and eventually it was decided that the material was rich and needed to be shared with an audience. *Action Conversations: Veterans* was performed one weekend at Highways Performance Space and a few more times at University of California, Los Angeles, where Marks is currently on faculty in the Department of World Arts and Culture³⁰⁷.

Like in McMahon's *Scatter*, much text is spoken throughout Marks' antiwar choreography. The one-minute me's surface again and again throughout *Action Conversations: Veterans*. The againness of the one-minute me's—there is always another compelling and moving story by another one of the seven participants—frame the connectivity of the performance as a whole, as well as create a platform which conveys truthful biographies and stories of war. Marks' opening, in fact, sets up this truth. I presume a large portion of the audience members knew Marks, or at least were familiar with the fact that they were going to a performance choreographed by Marks. Had Marks begun the performance by proclaiming she was a veteran, and telling the audience about her experiences at war, our expectations would have been that what followed was fictional. Instead, from the beginning the audience is convinced that these are real stories told by real veterans. By the end of the fifty-minute piece we have gotten a glimpse of

³⁰⁷ A short documentary film by Ann Kaneko accompanies video documentation of the February 9, 2008 performance at Highways Performance Space. The documentary film aids in positioning the veteran's stories as fact, not fiction. The format of DVD with video documentation of the choreography and a documentary about the process of making the performance is also utilized for Bill T. Jones' *still/here*—Jones' infamous choreography that included performance by terminally ill patients, which NY Times critic Arlene Croce refused to write about because it was "victim art." See Martin, in *Of The Presence, Of The Body*, p.57.

each of the seven performers. *Action Conversations: Veterans* was performed by Marks, veterans: Flores, McCullom, Tingley, and Williams, and non-veterans Eva Aymami, and David Leonard³⁰⁸.

There is nothing necessarily unexpected in the way that these veterans were depicted onstage, yet their physical bodies performing choreographic re-imaginings were powerful (even on DVD). For Marks this choreography was “about American soldiers at war [...] it wasn’t about should we be at war, should we not be at war, [instead] I think I was really trying to understand the experience of what it is like to go to war³⁰⁹.” As Marks states, “most of those guys would go back if they could³¹⁰.” In a way, Marks’ choreographic re-imagining enabled these veterans to go back. But rather than going back to a geographical location, the veterans went back to their war experiences in their imagination, re-imagining their experiences through their physical bodies and under the direction of a skilled, socially engaged choreographer. The war that they went back to was in a process, on a theatrical stage, and through their physical bodies enacting (not replicating) experiences of combat. As veteran Tingley stated, “All the of the rehearsals put together, really builds a camaraderie between my fellow ex-soldiers that I miss from the service.” I suggest *Action Conversations: Veterans* wields the power of hindsight as a temporal device of choreographic re-imagining. Through working with the veterans

³⁰⁸ Of the veterans Cydkee Williams had prior performance experience. Of the non-veterans Eva Ayami was a dancer/performer working towards her Master’s of Fine Arts at UCLA and David Leonard was a war veteran social worker that found Marks’ project a fruitful way to work with and understand veterans.

³⁰⁹ Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

³¹⁰ Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

Marks re-imagined choreographically how a veteran might want to return to combat and life-threatening circumstance. Through working with the choreographer, Tingley, McCullom, Flores, and Williams created new understandings of how and why they entered combat, as well as new understandings of war because of the reality of their struggle in the aftermath.

Vietnam War Veterans:
Veteran as Hero to Veteran as Victim and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

“I guess they can’t teach you what it’s like after you kill somebody. Do you know what I mean? The whole participation in battle, the physical act of slapping a magazine in your M-16, chambering a round, pointing it at another human life, and then squeezing the trigger. And then repeating that process over and over again for hours.”
--Manuel Flores, U.S. Marine Corps, four years, performed in *Action Conversation: Veterans*, 2008.

McMahon and Marks’ focus on the struggle of the individual soldier returning from war is, like the other examples in this study, a specific way of critiquing war as a whole. Different from my other examples, McMahon and Marks focus on sympathy for combat veterans. That is, they focus on compassion towards the people on the ground that actually killed in the name of the United States. McMahon and Marks’ choreographies distinctly address how war can linger beyond the discrete event in the body of the soldier. Both of their works suggest that war is inevitable therefore let’s take care of and be concerned with those directly impacted by it. I argue these choreographic responses are directly related to the extremely negative way that antiwar protesters treated veterans returning from the Vietnam War.

Lasting for over a decade, the numbers of U.S. soldiers that fought during the Vietnam War was staggering—over two million went to Vietnam, and of those two

million nearly three quarters were in combat³¹¹. Because the military draft privileged young men who were college educated or were in college, the combat soldiers were disproportionately working-class or poor, African-American, and/or lacking education. Cultural theorist Marita Sturken concludes that “the treatment of the veterans was also a direct result of who the veterans were—not the white middle-class men who had graduate school deferments but working-class whites, blacks, Latinos, Guamanians, and Native Americans³¹².” The soldiers of Vietnam were also young (often in their late teens), served a year tour of duty, and once the draft happened, not always enlisted in the military of their own accord.

The average age of a U.S. soldier in the Vietnam War was nineteen, as Vietnam War historian Marilyn Young points out, “five to seven years younger than in other American wars³¹³.” Young historicizes that as early as 1971, two years before the official end to the war and four years before the United States withdrawal, “dissent and disobedience were endemic.” Young reports that for 500,000 to 750,000 Vietnam

³¹¹ Young, p.319. Young cites these statistics as from Lawrence Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). p. 8-10.

³¹² Sturken, p. 65.

³¹³ See Young, p. 319. Young points out that this tendency for soldiers to be from underserved and disenfranchised populations was worsened because of Project 100,000. Project 100,000, spearheaded by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, lowered the standards for test scores and qualifications to join the military. Young argues that as a result many of the Project 100,000 soldiers were not trained and did not develop the job skills promised, but instead left military service with “service records that would make civilian life far more difficult than if they had never served at all.” Young also points out that by 1971—around the same time as the Tet Offensive and a major shift in U.S. public opinion—“dissent and disobedience within the armed forces were endemic,” resulting in many dishonorable discharges. See p. 320-321. Choreographer Miguel Gutierrez pointed out in our personal interview that the draft made Vietnam a different war than any of the other wars that the United States has fought since then. Personal interview with Gutierrez, May 21, 2014.

veterans who received “less than honorable discharges,” that this “bad paper” followed them back into civilian life, making it extra difficult for less than honorably discharged veterans to find and keep employment and to receive medical and educational benefits. Young points to the possibility that serving in Vietnam was difficult, in part, because the soldiers were young, underprivileged, and not willing to follow the rules of the military. Though many of these soldiers thought service would bring them a more promising future, dishonorable service in many ways left them worse off than before they joined the military.

McMahon’s segment on the un’s and dis’s suggests representation of the underclass that often comprised that war’s generation of soldiers. In *Scatter*, this sentiment is expressed in the following choreographic sequence. Quick nods of his head are the impetus to throw McMahon’s body off balance. As his body suspends and falls through space, the monologue proceeds “you’re the wrong sex, the wrong race, the wrong crime [...] follow the man, follow the man [...] chasing the biggest dick”. Marks similarly chose to highlight a number of common stereotypes about combat veterans—post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, addiction, suicide attempts—yet because the process of creation was collaborative, there was a deep sense that these stereotypes came directly from the veterans’ perceptions of themselves and their process of recovery. Choreographically Marks lightened or made palatable heavy subject material by frequent interruptions with humorous, kid-like, or light-hearted moments. For example, when the veterans stand in a line and alternate making goofy poses while saying silly happy things like “sunsets”, “cotton candy”, and “strippers.”

U.S. veterans returning from the war in Vietnam were first protested, next passed away unexpectedly from exposure to Napalm and Agent Orange, and decades later contended with post-traumatic stress syndrome³¹⁴. Young reports that “homecoming” was much more difficult for Vietnam veterans than expected. Years after service “many veterans would tell stories of having been spat upon by anti-war protesters, or having heard of veterans who were spat on. It doesn’t matter how often this happened or whether it happened at all. Veterans felt spat upon, stigmatized, contaminated³¹⁵.” Young also describes how mass media portrayed Vietnam veterans not as heroes who had done right in the world by their country, instead, Vietnam vets were “psychotic killers, crazies with automatic weapons” as if “anyone coming back from Vietnam would, even should, feel a murderous rage against the society that sent him there³¹⁶.” Sturken describes the plight of the stereotype of the Vietnam veteran: “Veterans were labeled social misfits and stereotyped as potentially dangerous men liable to erupt violently at any moment³¹⁷.” Veteran George Swiers also describes the negative stereotype that many Vietnam veterans faced as “malcontents, liars, wackos, losers³¹⁸.” Sturken points out that “the

³¹⁴ Young, p. 320. Napalm and Agent Orange were also suspected to have affected the health of unborn children of Vietnam veterans after they had returned home from war. The temporally complicated trajectory of Vietnam vets reception in the U.S. is yet another example of how war lasts beyond the discrete event of combat in ways that have continuity yet bounce unexpectedly through time—first they were babykillers, next they were dying from chemical exposure, and then decades later they have to contend with memories of the past that disrupt the present.

³¹⁵ Young, p. 320.

³¹⁶ Young, p. 321.

³¹⁷ Sturken, p.66.

³¹⁸ Quoted in Sturken, p. 66. From George Sweirs, “ ‘Demented Vets’ and Other Myths,” in Harrison Salisbury, ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p.198.

scapegoating of the veteran as psychopath absolved the American public of complicity and allowed the narrative of American military power to stand³¹⁹.” In other words, the focus on the individual soldier as madman, killer, psychopath obscured the U.S. government’s responsibility for the war. While in World War II, and other pre-Vietnam Wars veterans were treated as heroes, during Vietnam soldiers returning from war were treated as killers and madmen. Thus in the transition from veteran as hero to veteran as victim, the trope of veteran as killer/madman holds precedent.

McMahon’s veteran character sings the patriotic tune, “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” as he explores the stereotype of the wounded, angry uncontrollable veteran. Belts McMahon: “When Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah. When Johnny comes marching home again, we’ll stitch him back together again...”

Young hypothesizes that it was, in fact, the disapproval of the U.S. public and the charged and sometimes protested homecoming of these veterans that caused the effects of combat to linger for so many years beyond the initial time/space event of the war. Following psychiatrist and wartime psychology expert Robert Jay Lifton’s pivotal study on PTSD and Vietnam vets, Young argues that with World War II combat soldiers struggling with the return to civilian life, “the purpose and significance of what they had done was universally affirmed and most were able to accept it³²⁰.” In other words, during

³¹⁹ Sturken, p. 66.

³²⁰ Young, p. 322. Though when most people imagine a PTSD-inflicted veteran of the Vietnam War, they envision a man, Young points out that women who served in Vietnam also experienced PTSD. It was not until 1982 that the Veterans Administration acknowledged that women who served in the Vietnam War were also experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. In part this was due to an inclusion that veterans who were “prone to fire,” not just ex-combat soldiers were experiencing PTSD, Young, p.323. (This was also the situation of my father, who was not a combat soldier, but a communications officer who was required to

WWII, experiencing the horrors of war had a larger purpose for the greater good of the world. When veterans who chose to go to war and believed in the war completed military service, their warm welcome home and appreciation for their combat abroad aided in healing physical and psychological effects of combat.

Choreographic Re-Imaginations of “HELP!”

McMahon’s body exits but his hand stays behind. This hand—open and inviting, disembodied, a referent of the entire body, and just beyond the gaze of the audience—serves as a poignant metaphor for many things. The longing, reaching out for help, the emptiness that a soldier might experience when returning from war, or a beckoning of the rite of passage of masculinity that a gay, male, non-veteran dancer in the 1990s might have felt the pressure of. In an intricately woven sequence centered on the movement of the hand manipulating of the head, the hand, in the end, breaks away from the disembodied groping, and begins to wave at the audience in slow motion. Critic Curtis also noted the metaphor of the waving hand: “At one point, McMahon suddenly turns to stare at his waving hand—his hands are his most casually eloquent tools—and slaps it and collapses into a sort of delicate, stumbling dizziness, careening on the sides of his feet. It’s an image of patriotism gone awry [...]”³²¹ The hand beckons the audience to come hither, to come closer and to perhaps position ourselves as the veteran, as the

frequent communication sites that were “prone to fire.”) Sturken also discusses the Women’s Vietnam War Memorial, p.67. I think it is vital to point out how intertwined masculinity is with stereotype of veteran as hero and veteran as victim.

³²¹ See Curtis, LA Times.

victim, as the ill. Both hands are gingerly placed over the eyes. Recorded music comes on as McMahon leaps across the stage with sprite-like glee. As a trumpet solo croons, he begins shaking his head like a broken bobbing-head toy animal. The lights dim as he descends backwards into the darkness. His flamboyant waving hand and debilitated head reigns as the final image.

Marks discussed how she constructed the performance so that the stories of the veterans had more prominence than the stories of the non-veterans. Marks posed this quandary as “how do you have a conversation where certain stories have more importance?” Her choreographic solution was that the civilian performers had to “experience burden of information” and to “support the stories/experience³²².” Like the physical support of the cast, when a veteran called ‘help’ and leaped into the air, Marks also choreographed the non-veterans in the support role with the stories of the vets.

The cultural landscape for veterans returning from war changed following the Vietnam War. Sturken contends: “The veterans of the Gulf War were supposed to exorcise the specter of the Vietnam veterans³²³.” Despite a supposed rectification of the treatment of veterans upon their return from war, Sturken argues that the bodies of Gulf War soldiers held the traumas of war—the bodies of the soldiers still revealed the secret horrors of war in the symptoms they displayed. Different from Vietnam vets, Gulf War veterans fought in a short war, did not suffer through year-long tours of duty, were

³²² Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

³²³ Sturken, p. 142.

ushered home with a celebratory parade, and were largely supported by the U.S. civilian public. According to Sturken, in order to remedy wrongs perpetuated towards Vietnam veterans, Gulf War veterans “were greeted as returning war heroes” and as well were the subject of public debates about their welfare³²⁴. Sturken argues that the experiences of bad homecoming for Vietnam Vets influenced how antiwar demonstrators protested the Persian Gulf War: “Gulf War protesters sought not to repeat what is now considered a mistake of the Vietnam War protesters: failure to separate the warrior from the war-monger³²⁵.” However, similar to Vietnam veterans, veterans of the Gulf War have also been physically debilitated by unexplained symptoms—“fatigue, headaches, rashes, aching joints, memory loss,” chronic upper respiratory symptoms, and later neurological disease that causes paralysis³²⁶. Though initially diagnosed as PTSD, the unexplained post-war ailments of Gulf War vets became known as the Gulf War Syndrome³²⁷.

Ultimately Sturken argues that Gulf War veterans failed to erase the plight of

³²⁴ Sturken, p. 143-144.

³²⁵ Sturken, p. 141.

³²⁶ Sturken, p. 142.

³²⁷ Post-Gulf War Syndrome, “traumatic brain injury” is currently the injury of highest concern amongst veterans returned from Afghanistan and Iraq. When interviewed by the Los Angeles Times Marks disclosed she initially wanted to work with disabled vets but instead encountered vets suffering from PTSD. For Marks, this transforms her thinking about vets, disability and visibility: “I realized that disability is not necessarily visible, especially when you consider that traumatic brain injury is the signature wound of Iraq. I think that ‘disability’ is going to be redefined because of this war.” See Josephs, LA Times. Sturken points out how the language of *syndrome*, in Gulf War Syndrome evolved to infer physical symptoms of “susceptibility,” while the Vietnam Syndrome was “defined as a mentality of overprotection, a weakness of resolve and a fear of repeating a national mistake.” Sturken argues that where in the Vietnam War cultural memories were made through the repetition of iconic war reportage images, that during the Persian Gulf War cultural memories were asserted through the physical bodies of the veterans and their families. Thus, during the Gulf War the weakened physical body of veterans comes to stand-in for the weakened nation, both considered syndromes. Syndrome refers to susceptibility, first in the nation and second in the physical body of the veteran. Sturken, p. 143. Another syndrome Sturken uses as an example is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Vietnam veterans because the physical bodies of Gulf War veterans provide “troubling reminders of the costs of war³²⁸.” Sturken’s main argument is that bodies of soldiers are the cultural memories of the Persian Gulf War, and building upon her work, I examine the re-imagination through dance choreography that makes antiwar comment against both the Persian Gulf and the Iraq War, yet are based upon ghosts of the Vietnam War. Like the antiwar protesters of the Persian Gulf War, the specific choreographies in this chapter distinguish the individual trauma of the U.S. veteran from the warmongers of the U.S. government. I contend that this antiwar commentary is in direct relationship to the maltreatment of Vietnam vets. The concern for the welfare of veterans aligned with a post-Vietnam antiwar attitude by taking blame away from the individual soldiers who fought the Persian Gulf War and the war and military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these aftereffects of war—birth defects and deaths from Agent Orange, to the post-traumatic stress syndrome of Vietnam Vets, to the Gulf Syndrome—represent how the effects of war linger in veterans’ lives long after the initial time/space event of combat, and have effects on family for years and sometimes even generations beyond the initial war.

The relationship of post-traumatic stress disorder, veterans and artistic practice as a means of processing the war is long-standing. Memorials, war poetry, and mainstream Hollywood cinema have historically been places where vets process their feeling about

³²⁸ For example, because the Gulf War Syndrome proved to be contagious to family members, including being passed to children of veterans born after they returned from war, it was suspected to have been an unknown form of bacteria. It was also suspected to be a chemical warfare attack made on the troops or insecticide sprayed on the troops. Most recently, skeptics and conspiracy theorists have blamed anti-chemical warfare drugs given to the troops as the cause of the Gulf War Syndrome symptoms. See Sturken, p. 142-144.

and memories of war. As Sturken (and many other scholars) have reported the Vietnam War Memorial is a monument that provides veterans a space and a place to process their experiences of war. Hollywood mainstream cinema also processed the Vietnam War experience in a rash of conservative Vietnam War movies in the early 1980s³²⁹. Young likewise describes the experiences of Vietnam veterans using the words of numerous veteran poets³³⁰. *Scatter and Action Conversations: Veterans* offers examples of how re-imagination, through physical bodies on the theatrical stage, offers other ways of processing these experiences both for veterans and civilians. This differs from McMahon's approach as a non-veteran, grappling with notions of masculinity's multiplicity, responding to the Persian Gulf War, and in the midst of the impact of the AIDS epidemic. McMahon's choreography could be interpreted as transposing the dying he was experiencing in close proximity from the AIDS epidemic onto the imagined body of the soldier from the Gulf War. In Marks' work, veterans in a domiciliary program and in recovery from addiction, mental health, and post-traumatic stress chose to participate

³²⁹ Cinema and literature scholar Tony Williams argues that it was the delayed response in dealing with the aftereffects of the Vietnam War that allowed "conservative ideological forces to regroup" in early 1980s Vietnam War cinema. Williams theorizes that in the gap between when the Vietnam War ended, and when the surge of popular action adventure movies about the war surfaced in the 1980s, that the influence of leftist doves (which was a full force at the end of the war) receded and a generation of more conservative opinions about Vietnam emerged. See Williams in *Inventing Vietnam*, p. 119. Sturken posits this kind of delayed response as typical during circumstances of cultural trauma. She argues that the public processing and reconciling of cultural trauma in popular culture and art are the process by which "cultural memories" are formed. See Sturken, Introduction p. 1-17. Williams points to the blatant conservative overtones in late 1970s and 1980s Vietnam War cinema such as *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Rambo: First Blood* (1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), *Platoon* (1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), *Rambo III* (1988) and *Casualties of War* (1989). See also Doherty in *Inventing Vietnam*, p. 251-268. Williams notes a "virulent" attack on media coverage of the war in 1980s Vietnam movies and points to motifs of gender, hero, and rescue. Williams in *Inventing Vietnam*, 121. Gender, hero, rescue on 127, 125, 128. Williams points to instances in *Hamburger Hill* and *Full Metal Jacket* movies where the media is somehow blamed for losing the war.

³³⁰ Young, p. 322-323, 326-327.

in Marks' program, first as an embodied conversation and second as dance performance for an audience.

Influenced by several distinct legacies of Vietnam—post-traumatic stress disorder, veteran as victim, the legacy of war played out in the physical bodies of those who fought in war—both examples in this chapter make a strong statement against various wars (Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan), yet they by no means intended to end or even address ending war. Instead, both choreographies look at the damage to the physical body of veteran returning from war, or the lingering effects of war as manifested in the bodies of those who participated in fighting war. The effects of war/military battle after the discrete event manifests in the (alive) physical bodies of veterans. Choreographed re-imagination of veteran as victim or veterans as still living with and thus still experiencing (the traumas) of war beyond the initial time/space event makes visible this phenomena. These examples demonstrate through the choreographed bodies of veteran as victim that war lasts beyond the initial time/space event, and so does performance. Choreographic re-imaginings of past wars possess the potential to affect the audience and the performer's understandings of war in hindsight. Perceptual attention via choreography and dance can make an experience that has already happened a changed event. Because dance taps back into previous memories, experiences, and ideas in its' repetition and againness, choreography enacts and engages through mediation, not of the Internet, as I argued in Chapter Three, but of time. The ability of dance to tap back into memories, techniques, past experiences, or ways of thinking enables it to produce or reproduce the past in a different way. The ways dance recurs pulls the past into the present for both performers

and audiences. The past emerges from present-time choreographic re-embodiment in a transformed way. Sugary sweet sunsets, cotton candy, and strippers are collapsed with the crude smell of burning oil fields, which enacts the past in a different way. Fake normal is exposed and revealed in the very act of the vulnerable performers onstage. Ideas condense, temporalities breakdown, and an oscillation and negotiation between the past and the present inform the now and influence the future.

War is Over Here

“The war is never over.”

-Anonymous homeless Vietnam War veteran suffering from PTSD, interviewed on the nightly news, 1987³³¹.

The icon of the PTSD-inflicted Vietnam War veteran is an image that has thrived in popular culture and in mainstream news media for decades. I argue that following the Vietnam War the U.S. public began to have concern for the long-term welfare of veterans, in part because of the post-traumatic stress disorder that many veterans experienced. I contend that this long-term concern for the veterans returning from war is in direct response to what is considered one of the failures of the Vietnam antiwar movement: the vilification of soldiers (killers) returning from Vietnam. In hindsight, the act of protesting, in some cases literally spitting upon veterans, was radical because of the irreverent boldness and unwavering insistence to make the war stop by any means necessary. In hindsight, however, this in-your-face aggressive style of protesting did more to harm individual veterans and less to influence governmental policy. In contemporary wartimes—Persian Gulf War, Iraq War, military conflict in Afghanistan—

³³¹Quoted by war historian Marilyn Young in 1990, see p. 323.

antiwar protesters have not focused on the evils of individual soldiers, but instead on the wrongs of the government administration³³².

Both of the choreographies that I discuss in this chapter have the subject matter of veterans wounded by war, yet neither example of antiwar choreography makes the claim to stop war nor heal the veteran's wounds. I contend these choreographies suggest, through veteran as victim re-imagination, that war hurts even those who are consensually involved. The two examples of antiwar choreography that I analyze in this chapter focus on the physical body of individual veterans as the site of war trauma. Thus utilizing re-imagination across bodies positions dance as the suitable artistic genre with which to examine these issues. I argue that the slow chipping away and alteration of the original memory from repeatedly replaying that memory through one's body as part of choreographic processes of re-imagination, can transform memories backwards through time or in hindsight.

The way that veterans were portrayed in these two choreographies correlates to how the idea of veteran shifted for the general public following Vietnam. The PTSD-inflicted vet, the struggling vet, the wounded vet, the vet as victim were all themes that emerged in *Scatter* and *Action Conversations: Veterans*. Both Marks and McMahon's choreography deals with veterans, and recounting the stories of veterans in hindsight, through choreographic re-imagination of war. Both choreographies depict battle scenes

³³² An exception to this might be the 2003 Abu Ghraib incident of torture and prisoner abuse in Iraq. Though the government as an entity, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in particular, was accused of issuing the orders for torture and abuse, individual military personnel working at the prison detention center, most notably Charles Graner and Lynndie England, were held accountable and prosecuted for the horrific wartime abuses against Iraqi prisoners. These individual military officers, though not necessarily spat upon or protested, were (and I would argue rightly) vilified by the U.S. public.

not based in realism and include narratives of facing the difficult transition back to civilian life. For example, in Marks' *Action Conversations: Veterans* there is a kid-like mock battle scene. Each of the dancers is assigned a role in the war drama, and following their assignment of which character they are to play (for example, the hero pilot, the enemy plane) they proceed to act out their parts. They circle the stage making airplane noises, their arms outstretched as though their bodies were planes. In the documentary about *Action Conversations: Veterans*, participant veteran Aaron McCullom states: "It's a bunch of grown men, pretending that they are kids playing war like we did when we were kids, except the twist on it is it's combat vets that really were part of war³³³." McCullom's statement gives us a window into the kind of perspective-changing effect that re-imagining war trauma through one's physical body has. During the process and performance of *Action Conversations: Veterans*, McCullom re-embodied his early childhood understandings of war as an adult. McCullom's reflections on his actions as part of the dance piece, allowed him an understanding of the past in hindsight that was revelatory. Veteran Flores similarly commented on that particular airplane battle scene of the performance: "I forgot how much fun it was to play war as a kid. I was playing war with my younger cousins, you know. About seven young boys and we were all running around shooting dart guns together and I had a blast. And I was just like; this is why I joined the military. Because this is what I thought it was³³⁴." Through the experience of re-embodiment their understandings of war as a young boys, McCullom and Flores

³³³ See Kaneko, *Action Conversations: Veterans* documentary film.

³³⁴ Ibid.

articulated that they began to understand how naïve they had been when they entered military service. Their physical exploration, as part of the process of choreographic re-imagination, offered them the opportunity to intellectually come to terms with how difficult his re-acclimation into civilian life was. It was the doing over again and choreographic re-imagining of their past experiences through their bodies, in both rehearsal and performance, that aided in their altered understandings of those events in hindsight. As I have suggested above, I contend that these choreographic re-imaginings create what Blackson theorizes as the “slow eroding” of and “accountability to an original source,” and what Marks calls a memory “anecdote,” effectively altering in hindsight memories and relationships to past events.

More common and more historically prolific re-imaginings of war battles have been written about by performance studies theorist Rebecca Schneider and her work on war and protest reenactment³³⁵. While the antiwar choreographies in this project are not art historical protest reenactments, I nonetheless find Schneider’s lens useful because it conceives of both war and antiwar protest as ongoing in reenacted forms. Schneider argues that for Civil War reenactors in the moment of performance, the Civil War is happening again, still happening, perhaps never-ending, or as the anonymous PTSD vet said on the nightly news in 1987, never over. She argues that Civil War reenactors posit the Civil War as now, thus creating room for what could be called the never-ending

³³⁵ Schneider discusses reenactment in relationship to both war reenactment and to contemporary art affiliated restaging of protests. Debates around re-performance such as reenactment are a contemporary extension of the performance studies liveness debates of the early 1990s (mostly famously between Peggy Phelan and Paul Auslander). For more information on the liveness debates see the Introduction and Conclusion sections of this dissertation.

project of antiwar protest. Schneider's analyses of war and protest reenactments complicates claims that performance is ephemeral and disappearing and that war is over or over there. Both the Civil War reenactments and the choreographic re-imaginings I describe in this chapter bring representations of war from over overseas (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan) to over here, via physical choreographic re-imagination. Schneider advocates that cross-temporal repetition of historical events from the past allows discrete events to live on beyond the initial time/space event of war/performance, thus troubling the authenticity of the original time/space event and/or changing how the original time/space event is viewed in hindsight. Schneider's analysis illuminates the potential that reenactments and interpretations of past historical events are inextricably entwined. Thus, in these examples it is the here-and-now-ness combined with altered memories of the past that I theorize as powerful in these examples. This non-chronological back and forth through time, or mutually constitutive relationship between the past and the present, is how I theorize choreography as particularly apt to addressing large, traumatic, and never-ending conditions of the world.

Conclusion

The veterans that performed in Marks' *Action Conversations: Veterans* repeatedly point to the post-combat disjunction they had while returning to civilian life. I argue throughout that their hindsight observations about their experiences, obtained through re-imagining their experiences through their bodies, aided in deepening their understandings of the traumatic past, and setting sight for their goals for the future. (Though, according

to Marks, many of them have continued to suffer and decline in health in the post-performance years)³³⁶. The text of *Action Conversations: Veterans* positioned them in the precarious circumstance of having had the experience of war, sometimes traumatic, and the expectation that they return to so-called normal civilian life³³⁷. In McMahon's *Scatter*, he re-imagined through his physical body what a soldier returning from the Persian Gulf War might go through. In hindsight, McMahon had the realization that it was him who was deepening his understandings of masculinity as expressed through war. McMahon's re-imagination through his physical body provided him a perspective of what it might be like to be a (possibly) gay soldier returning from war. These two choreographies, McMahon's *Scatter* and Marks' *Action Conversation: Veterans*, explore the embodiment of veterans who have returned home from war, different. This concern is directly related to Vietnam because they are purposefully concerned with not vilifying the individual soldier. Thus these examples inherently address the effects of war beyond the initial time/space event of combat. These choreographies don't say, end the war, they instead say, let's take care of those who fought in the war.

³³⁶ Personal interview with Marks, November 13, 2013.

³³⁷ In McMahon's work, text and movement are overlaid, always happening concurrently, while in Marks' choreography there are moments of individual monologues or soliloquies developed from a workshop exercise called the "one-minute me." Marks' choreography also includes moments of just movement, and moments where the predominant action or focus is movement but that single words or simple phrases layers onto the movements. These vet's stories are told again, but differently, through words and through physical bodies.

The Againness of Vietnam in
Contemporary United States Antiwar Choreography

Epilogue
Sidesteps Towards Africanist and Indigenous
Models of Againness

“These are stories that end with a question or call for a discussion, rather than a solution.”
-Brenda Dixon Gottschild³³⁸

Brenda Dixon Gottschild was an influential mentor and professor of mine when I attended Temple University in the early 1990s. Following Dixon Gottschild’s above provocation I end this project with questions, a call for discussion, and a dance move—sidestep, sidestep, hand(s) up. As a closing, I want to both rise to the occasion and raise the suspicion that Dixon Gottschild’s bodily transmissions to my young undergraduate self, resonate and will resonate throughout my scholarly work (and my body), backwards and forward through a multitude of times. These transmissions inherently contain both Africanist and Europeanist influences as well as influences from countless other complex sources³³⁹. This is the point of my work and the crux of my argument in many ways—that ideas get passed through people and people’s bodies, through choreography, and in doing things over not exactly as you did them the first time, power is gained, and ideas are changed and exchanged. All of these things occur in irregular or non-linear temporal pathways, so it is particularly suitable that I am concluding this project with the promise of a future return to this material, differently. That is, in the not-so-distant future, I plan to revisit and readdress this material to explore what African American scholarship on dance and inexact repetition and Indigenous scholarship on performance and continuity

³³⁸ See Dixon Gottschild, p. 8. In the context of Dixon Gottschild’s writing, she is referring to how “open endedness” is a characteristic of African dilemma tales. She includes this under the umbrella of the Africanist aesthetic of contrariety and argues that contrariety is one of the Africanist aesthetics present in US cultural production. Though engaging with another genre of art, this quote seemed particularly well suited to conclude this project.

³³⁹ I would also argue that there are a multitudes of indigenous and transnational influences in U.S. culture and cultural production.

might offer analyses of postmodern choreography. This epilogue is a salute to Dixon Gottschild's long-lasting influence on my work as well as the staging of a duet of questions/calls for discussion provoked by her contentions and directed at my work. In what follows I stage two sidesteps or careful sideways motions towards the future potential of narrowing the gap between performance studies scholarship on ephemerality and reenactment in Europeanist dance practices and African American and Indigenous theorization on repetition in embodied Africanist and Indigenous cultural practices³⁴⁰. I then perform a brief and provocative gesture of salute in the form of two short paragraphs.

**Sidestep #1: Why does U. S. postmodern dance theory
still privilege Europeanist ideologies?**

Alongside of choreographic re-purpose, re-performance, re-view, and re-imagination sit Margaret Thompson Drewal's ritual and change, Dixon Gottschild's repetition-as-intensification and Thomas DeFrantz's versioning³⁴¹. I use the verb "sit" intentionally to signal that these texts are humbly on the sidelines of the major theoretical foci of this project. Repetition as an Africanist aesthetic intervenes in and illuminates the

³⁴⁰ I use the term "embodied cultural practices" following Diana Taylor's work in *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. I use this term in an attempt to be as broad as possible in including a variety of dance forms and locations of performance including but not limited to concert dance performance (such as the work of Alvin Ailey or Seneca choreographer Rosy Simas), dance as ritual or (such as the West African Yoruban ritual researched by Margaret Thompson Drewal or Tewa ritual researched by Jill Sweet), and social dances (such as that analyzed by both Thomas DeFrantz and Dixon Gottschild).

³⁴¹ I cite Dixon Gottschild, DeFrantz, and Drewal in my Introduction, but also want to include that there is a need in future projects, my own, or others to also read theoretical work of other historically marginalized populations in the United States and their take on repetition and performance in relationship to postmodern choreography. I address this briefly with the work of Diana Taylor in Chapter One and make note of the ethnographic work on repetition and dance in Southwest Tewa tribes by Jill Sweet in the Introduction. While this still remains on the short list of future directions and possibilities, I hope this call for action will spark the interest of other emerging dance scholars.

lack of inclusion or lack of recognition of Africanist worldviews and theories in discussions of repetition and postmodern dance. Long after my research on postmodern antiwar choreographies had been completed, and as I was sharpening my theoretical framework and fine-tuning footnotes, I encountered immense overlaps in my project with the work of African American scholars, such as Dixon Gottschild, who research and write about dance and performance in the United States and other African diasporas. What started as a small footnote, and turned into a larger footnote, next found its way into my Introduction, and is now what I envision as the future direction of this project. The astute observations of African American dance scholars and theorists certainly informed my thinking. However, the overlap that is now, in hindsight, clearly present between my work and their work, did not reveal itself until the late stages of this project. I was honestly somewhat aghast when I found myself engaging predominantly with white and Europeanist theories of dance and repetition to talk about postmodern antiwar choreography, when what I was saying actually aligned more closely with Africanist models of dance and repetition. African American scholarship deems repetition in dance performance as not so unusual after all and it is peculiar to me that these scholars work was not more in conversation with the work by white theorists discussing repetition in relationship to ephemerality, liveness, and presence. It revealed the extreme myopia of Europeanist writing and scholarship on postmodern dance. My latecomer realization of this rift illuminated just how white or white-coded concert dance still is, despite the enormous presence and recognition of choreographers of color, particularly African

Americans in modern and postmodern dance—Katherine Dunham! Pearl Primus! Alvin Ailey! Bill T. Jones! Bebe Miller! Many, many others!

However, reading the againness of contemporary performance only within a black/white or Africanist/Europeanist binary poses the danger of (re)inscribing race as only about blackness. To demarcate lines only between black/white notions of race silences and directs attention away from worldviews and ontology grounded in other cultures. In my future-existing research I also intend to include theorizations from other historically marginalized locations and cultures. Similar to African diasporic embodied cultural practices, theories of Indigenous dance in relationship to theories of Indigenous temporality offer much insight to the inquiry of repetition, performance, and the transmission of ideas through time and bodies. Scholarly writing on contemporary Indigenous performance and theories of Indigenous temporality address repetition (often with difference) in embodied cultural practices as cultural continuity, as aesthetic dance principle (not necessarily for entertainment), for the purpose of spiritual and social uplift, and as war against continued settler occupation³⁴². Indigenous embodied cultural practices, such as dance, can neither simply be relegated as traditional and therefore not in the contemporary postmodern moment, nor are they in the process of disappearing³⁴³.

³⁴² See Philip DeLoria, Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Jill Sweet, Scott Richard Lyons, and Mark Rifkin.

³⁴³ Even the term “indigenous” is a product of what Indigenous scholar Mark Rifkin calls the “double-bind of dominant settler time. Either they are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined on non-native terms.” (from forthcoming publication) In the volume of essays entitled *Indigenous Experience Today*, cultural critic and linguist Mary Louise Pratt points out that from an indigenous perspective, the indigenous became indigenous in the time after the settler arrived. That is, indigenous was birthed at the moment in time when colonization or conquest was fulfilled and indigenous people were ‘found’ or ‘discovered’ by outsiders. Pejorative temporal signifiers such as primitive, tribal, peasant, and savage have historically been used to describe Indigenous cultures that were supposed temporally behind of European/Western-imposed linear time. Anthropologists Marisol De La Cadena, Orin Starn, and Pratt

So why then does U.S. postmodern dance theory *still* privilege Europeanist ideologies? From a temporal perspective *still* signifies impatience with the lack of change over time, and from a movement perspective the term suggests the absence of movement. This is a call to action for these discussions, these movements to begin. These are necessary and vital interventions in the fields of dance and performance studies.

Sidestep #2: How Can Dance Be Ephemeral for Some and Concrete Evidence of Cultural Continuity for Others?

Since the late 1980s African American scholars have been approaching African diasporic performance in U.S. social, entertainment, and concert dance contexts as continuing and continuous syncretism of African and European cultural expressions and values³⁴⁴. Scholars such as Dixon Gottschild argue against the prevalence of reading contemporary dance as Europeanist without question. The lack of recognition of

identify these pejorative cultural markers as inextricable from temporality and often employed in service of cultural hierarchy. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty on modernity and temporality in the India national context.

In their self-reflective co-authored article, “Manaakitanga in Motion: Indigenous Choreographies of Possibility,” dance studies scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy and choreographer Jack Gray address the continuities and exchanges that play out between Indigenous worldviews and settler practices, and how often Indigenous worldviews are always-already present. Shea Murphy contends, as she does elsewhere, that Indigenous processes of choreographic creation were absorbed into what is now considered postmodern choreographic processes of feeling and knowing. Gray shares his moving account of returning to his Maori homeland as an urban-raised Maori and feeling more at home in the choreographic process about his return home than on the land itself. For Gray, the continuity of his indigeneity was also always-already there in his danced artistic engagements. See Shea Murphy and Gray, p. 22.

³⁴⁴ Dixon Gottschild and DeFrantz both argue that contemporary artists and dance companies, such as the Ailey Company and Rennie Harris Puremovement, employ aesthetics that are amalgamations of Europeanist and Africanist aesthetics. Dixon Gottschild argues specifically that all contemporary dance contains these divergent aesthetics from multiple and complex cultural sources. DeFrantz argues that work such as Ailey’s, though it may contain Europeanist ballet aesthetics, expresses and embodies African American culture. Researching a earlier time period, roughly the 1950s through 1970s, Susan Manning (In *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*), argues that early African American dance and early modern dance were mutually constitutive but mutually exclusive. Manning argues that early modern dance was considered modern because it was not African American concert dance, and vice versa. I follow the work of Dixon Gottschild and DeFrantz who emphasize continuity and multiple cultural sources.

Africanist aesthetics in both white and African American dance forms is, according to Dixon Gottschild, “invisibilization³⁴⁵.” Similarly Indigenous theorists problematize the narrative trope of Indigenous culture as disappearing³⁴⁶. To the contrary, white/Europeanist scholars have been intrigued by performance’s ephemerality, resulting in longstanding scholarly debates about liveness, ephemerality, presence, reenactment, temporality and the impossibility of a danced authentic original³⁴⁷. While Europeanist postmodern dance and performance is considered vanishing and live only in the moment of performance, repetition and divergent temporal registers in an Africanist context acknowledge an amicable merge between young inspiration and old traditions (to cite DeFrantz as I did in the Introduction), understanding that the two are one in the same, but different³⁴⁸. The contrast between disappearance as ephemerality and disappearance as the death of a culture is stark.

The obsession of white/Europeanist scholars with dance and disappearance on the surface reveals assumptions about disappearance that reify seemingly modernist and postmodernist desires for newness, invention, and innovation. If dance always disappears, then each time it is performed it must always be replicating an inherent newness. In

³⁴⁵ See Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*.

³⁴⁶ See Rifkin (forthcoming) and Scott Richard Lyons. Work by performance studies theorist Diana Taylor addresses both disappearance not only within the framework of performance, but also as the actual non-existence of indigenous cultures in the Americas.

³⁴⁷ More in depth overviews of the 1990s liveness debates and 2000s reenactment scholarship can be found in the Introduction. See Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, Marcia Siegel, Andre Lepecki, Mark Franko, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, and Rebecca Schneider.

³⁴⁸ See the Introduction of this project for more on DeFrantz’s notion of “versioning.”

relationship to the experimental postmodern dance of the 1960s and early 1970s, there was also a romanticized notion that that which disappears cannot be commodified. Thus during this era, white/European dance, is often historicized amidst multidisciplinary “happenings,” as that which was not repeatable. Fascinatingly in the early 2000s, many iconic works from the era were re-performed, and even gained monetary and cultural value retrospectively because they were once considered disappeared.

In some ways it seems that Indigenous theories of temporality and performance and Africanist aesthetics and theories of cultural continuity in African diasporic communities are premised on the opposite, that dance and performance do not disappear but combine, amalgamate, and synch with other forms, genres and aesthetics. In other words, againness is always already there in other cultural and theoretical locations, and I want to confront this theoretical segregation. Indigenous, African and African American religious, social, and/or improvisational forms that have long had to prove their merit and value by justifying how even the newness of a performance is premised on training, practice, and codification even if it is being danced differently each time or made up in the moment³⁴⁹. As Dixon Gottschild pointed out decades ago “it is in the African-Asian-inflected postmodern era that repetition, in a Europeanist context, resonates as a value rather than a demerit³⁵⁰.” To posit ephemerality in light of the cultural continuity renders questions such as: Why is the Europeanist realm blinded to this continuity? How might

³⁴⁹ This leads to crossover with other Africanist disciplinary interests with more long-standing discussions of repetition and innovation, such as jazz improvisation. Constance Valis Hill’s recent scholarship on improvisational jazz dance is one of the more recent and exciting texts to take up repetition as both common to dance and firmly rooted in African and Africanist aesthetics.

³⁵⁰ Dixon Gottschild, p. 8.

an Africanist or Indigenous perspective on repetition inform these Europeanist assumptions about innovation and newness? What are the implications of naming inexact repetitions, which are deeply embedded in white-coded contemporary antiwar choreographies, as Africanist or of applying Indigenous frameworks of understanding to the againness of dance?

Dixon Gottschild advocates for an approach to dance studies that acknowledges syncretism and embraces the multiple influences and cultural sources of postmodern dance in the United States. Thus the specific againness or inexact repetitions, which I examine in this project as aesthetic choices and political tools particularly in a postmodern choreographic context, could be considered Africanist in nature. The resonance and crossovers of scholarly work by African American and Indigenous dance and performance studies scholars on repetition intervenes in discussions of postmodern dance, which has long been caught up in discussions of disappearance and ephemerality. Repetitions with difference, or the againness I have theorized, render the antiwar choreographies I address in my dissertation as manifestations of culturally rooted Africanist aesthetics and as in conversation with Indigenous understandings of repetition and embodied performance. Influenced by these scholars, I deem dance, across numerous genres, styles, and forms at once continuous, syncretic, changing and therefore of the contemporary moment yet far from disappeared.

Hand Up or Hands Up: The End

As U.S. military troops are slowly pulling out of Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. citizens and popular media have become fixated on and appalled by an internal war,

which I would argue is one of many continuations of racism, and manifesting in this historical moment (thanks to the technology of video on smartphones) with high visibility. The shooting of unarmed black men on the streets by (mostly) white police officers is, unfortunately, the latest in atrocious state sanctioned/sponsored violence. The list of names seems to grow by the week. In my closing, I specifically evoke the shooting of the unarmed black man Michael Brown, by white police officer, Darren Wilson, in Ferguson, Missouri. Witness accounts, though inconsistent, say Brown's hands were up as Wilson fired twelve shots. This incident prompted massive nationwide civil unrest and street protest. Protesters took up the slogan "Hands Up! Don't Shoot!" and embodied the action of two hands in the air as acts of choreographed civil disobedience in the streets³⁵¹.

This dissertation ends as I raise my hand, similar to how I did in Dixon Gottschild's Dance in Cultural Perspectives class over two decades ago. This gesture serves as a reminder to myself to conjure provocative questions about the omission of Africanist and Indigenous worldviews in scholarly work about postmodern dance and repetition. Yet even a simple hand up versus hands up contains radically different connotations and meanings between African and Anglo American citizens and between instances of altercations with police (arrest versus protest). One hand or two hands, the color of my skin, the context of the gesture, the moment in time, all signal how the same gesture performed differently can radically alter meaning. The malleability of this final gesture speaks to the power and at times weakness of choreography, dance, movement

³⁵¹ See dance scholar Anusha Kedhar's, "Hands Up! Don't Shoot!": Gesture, Choreography, and Protest in Ferguson." <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/protest-in-ferguson/>

and embodiment. Yet, as I have argued throughout, the shape-shifting time-travelling manifestations of choreographies re-doings, again, but always different, offer us insight into how dance and choreography offers ways to cope with, though hardly to solve, the large and ongoing traumas of the world.

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Appendix A—Call for Participants, Freedom of Information 2008

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2008

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

realized i forgot to post the call for participants that i sent out recently.. here's a copy of what i sent out:

hello friends

7 years ago on december 31, 2001, in response to the frustration I felt about the US invasion of afghanistan I did something called freedom of information, a 24 hour performance/protest/ritual improvisation in which I tried to move continuously for 24 hours while blindfolded and earplugged. it was an intimate event, performed in my home studio, and mostly friends came to watch, but it was an extraordinary experience. I felt like I wanted to do something to acknowledge the people whose lives were being disrupted by this conflict, who maybe suddenly found themselves having to leave their homes, not getting to experience the serenity of event resting at night, instead, having to be constantly on the move.

here we are 7 years later, embroiled in two horrible wars that have killed, injured and displaced thousands of people. I am interested in reprising the action I did in 2001. only this time I am trying to get one artist in each of the other 49 states as well as washington, D.C. to participate in their respective states. my hope is to create a nationwide contemplative action of protest, reflection and solidarity. again, the event will happen on december 31st, 2008. I think it will be really incredible.

I've been lucky to get a bunch of folks who are already interested, but there are still a lot of states that we need to "represent!" so i'm including that list here and if you or someone you know is interested in this unique event, please let me know as soon as possible by writing to this email address: miguel@miguelgutierrez.org

thank you!

miguel

POSTED BY MIGUEL AT 3:24 PM

Appendix B—Statement on freedom of information 2008

Seven years ago, on December 31, 2001, in response to the frustration that I felt about the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, I decided to do a 24-hour improvisation titled *freedom of information* in my home studio in Brooklyn, NY. The rules for this improvisation were simple. I was blindfolded and wore earplugs. I stayed in my empty studio, I didn't eat anything for the entire day and I attempted to move continuously through the space for 24 hours. Moving continuously meant walking, dancing, rolling, running, sliding, crawling, etc. I allowed myself to drink water and tea, and, because I had stipulated that I wouldn't leave the room, I urinated into empty milk jugs on the periphery of the space.

My interests were threefold. First, by continuously moving, I wanted to create solidarity with the people in the world who are displaced by armed conflict, who do not have the basic right of rest after an active day, and who instead have to remain ever-vigilant for violence, ready to flee from their homes at any hour, and in worst case scenarios, become refugees. By depriving myself of seeing and hearing, I wanted to highlight and enforce both the disorientation that constant movement creates as well as the self-examination that happens when those basic senses are taken away. By depriving myself the freedom of leaving the room, I wanted to show how my ability to roam where I want when I want is actually a privilege, while for others, having to constantly move and find new shelter is a form of imprisonment.

The title *freedom of information* alludes, of course, to the American legislation, originally signed into law on July 4, 1964, that "allows for the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States Government."* In choosing this title, I was also thinking about the constant stream of thoughts, images and feelings that emerge out of a practice of sensory deprivation and continuous movement.

I considered this action an intimate performance, protest and ritual. I notified the people on my email list, and people were free to come and watch throughout the 24 hours. I had a notebook in the space for people to write or draw their responses to what I was doing, and I set up a video camera in one corner of the room to record the daylong event. *freedom of information* was extraordinarily difficult, at times harrowing and excruciating. Some people came repeatedly throughout the day, and there was a good-sized group there at the stroke of midnight on New Year's when the piece ended. The extreme euphoria and compassion I felt in the moments after it was over and I was finally able to rest and take the blindfold off and the earplugs out were unlike any emotions I had experienced before or have known since.

Considering that we are, unfortunately, still engaged in the war in Afghanistan as well as the war in Iraq, it struck me that it was an appropriate time to reprise *freedom of information*. This time, however, I am inviting one artist in each of the other 49 states and

Washington D.C. to perform the piece as well, in their respective states, creating a nationwide contemplative action that underscores a solidarity with the thousands of people who have been affected by these horrible wars and solidarity with the community of people who still resist and reject the U.S.' interventionist tactics abroad. In inviting other artists to participate in *freedom of information 2008*, I am interested in multiple expressions of the original action, in a wide variety of spaces that will be accessible to a broader segment of the population. My hope is that the participating artists will, on their own, identify spaces that they want to perform in with the co-operation of those spaces, which I hope will be donated to the artists free of charge. As with the original action in 2001, the event will be free and open to the public. Again, I hope that there will be opportunities for spectators at all of the sites to write their responses to the event. I am also talking to an artist about creating a video link so that people everywhere can follow the action on the web.

Obviously this endurance based action, while certainly a physical, emotional and psychological challenge for whoever chooses to participate in it, is not and cannot be a direct reprieve for the many people in the world who do not have the ability at the moment to alter their current conditions. We, the artists participating in the action, can ultimately take off the blindfold and earplugs when we want, we can leave the room, we can return to the creature comforts of our daily lives. I believe that *freedom of information 2008* is definitely a symbolic gesture, one of many, of solidarity with the many bodies that the action is meant to acknowledge, with the other artists involved and

with the people who come to watch. I think of it as a ritual because it is a practice of consciousness, an exercise in paying attention and in engaging the unknown, and an opportunity to propose an alternative contemplation of the word "freedom."

I thought it would be appropriate to perform this action on December 31st again, because as one year ends and another begins, we have the opportunity to reflect on not only our own lives, but on the lives of others, and we can attempt to begin the new year in a heightened state of consideration and mindfulness.

This blog is intended to document the preparations, ideas, activities and difficulties leading up to and around *freedom of information 2008*, with contributions from the participating artists, myself, and whoever is interested. Thank you!

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_Information_Act_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_Information_Act_(United_States))

Appendix C—Press Release for Freedom of Information 2009

Story of an action: freedom of information 2009 for Politics of Ecstasy Festival

Welcome to freedom of information 2009, being performed simultaneously in Berlin and Kansas City, Missouri, by myself and by Katherine Ferrier respectively. Visual artist and musician Fritz Welch will play live music during the last two hours of the event here.

Seven years ago, on December 31, 2001, in response to the frustration that I felt about the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, I decided to do a 24-hour improvisation titled freedom of information in my home studio in Brooklyn, NY. The rules for this improvisation were simple. I was blindfolded and wore earplugs. I stayed in my empty studio, I didn't eat anything for the entire day and I attempted to move continuously throughout the space for 24 hours. Moving continuously meant walking, dancing, rolling, running, sliding, crawling, etc. I allowed myself to drink water and tea, and, because I had stipulated that I wouldn't leave the room, I urinated into empty milk jugs on the periphery of the space.

My interests were threefold. First, by continuously moving, I wanted to create solidarity with the people who are displaced by armed conflict, who do not have the basic right of rest after an active day, and who instead have to remain ever-vigilant for violence, ready to flee from their homes at any hour, and in worst case scenarios, become refugees.

Second, by depriving myself of seeing and hearing, I wanted to highlight and enforce both the disorientation that constant movement creates as well as the self-examination that happens when those basic senses are taken away. And third, by depriving myself the freedom of leaving the room, I wanted to show how my ability to roam where I want when I want is actually a privilege, while for others, having to constantly move and find new shelter is a form of imprisonment.

The title freedom of information alludes to the American legislation, originally signed into law on July 4, 1964, that "allows for the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States Government." In choosing this title, I was also thinking about the constant stream of thoughts, images and feelings that emerge out of a practice of sensory deprivation and continuous movement.

Last year, considering the fact that the U.S. is still engaged in the war in Afghanistan as well as the war in Iraq, and infuriated by the sports game-like promises of "victory" and "success" being made by the presidential candidates when discussing these wars, it struck me that it was an appropriate time to reprise freedom of information. This time, however, it seemed important to expand the action somehow. So I invited artists across the US and Washington D.C. to do it in their respective states.

On December 31st 2008, I did the action again in New York, and 30 artists in 30 states participated ranging from Vermont to Alaska, Montana to Texas. freedom of information

2008 was a nationwide action of contemplation. Several of the participating artists created “channels” on ustream.tv, a live streaming website so that we could be seen doing the action by anyone with internet access. I liked the symbolic power of the artists engaged in a common struggle, while remote from one another. It seemed to me an apt metaphor for how resistance movements reach out to each other across time and distance.

Obviously, this endurance based action, while certainly a physical, emotional and psychological challenge for whoever participates in it, is not and cannot be a direct reprieve for many people in the world who do not have the ability at the moment to alter their current conditions. We, the artists participating in the action, can ultimately take off the blindfold and earplugs when we want. We can leave the room. We can return to the creature comforts of our daily lives. On December 31st 2008, confronted with a variety of insurmountable obstacles, some of participating artists did just that. I believe that freedom of information is a symbolic gesture, one of many, of solidarity with the many bodies that the action is meant to acknowledge, as well as solidarity with the other artists who have performed or, in this case, are performing the action (more on that in a second), and solidarity with the people who come to watch.

For this reason, the action straddles multiple definitions of performance, protest and meditation, touching upon each of these concepts while not landing squarely in any one of them. Something I do know is that freedom of information is a practice of consciousness, an exercise in paying attention and engaging the unknown, an opportunity

to propose an alternative contemplation of the word “freedom,” and an attempt to connect empathically with a host of real and imagined bodies.

A few months ago Jeremy invited me to do freedom of information for this festival. This is the first, and possibly last, time I am doing it in a festival context. I am intrigued by the way that the action fits into the subtitle of the festival: altered states of presence. However, stripped of the significance of performing the action from midnight to midnight on December 31st, and re-located out of the context of performing it in the United States, the country responsible for instigating the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I am curious about how this action will feel for me and how you will perceive it. Coupled with these new parameters is also the historical context of the new, hopeful “Obama era,” one in which the decisions about how to address these wars have only begun to unfold. Obama has promised to withdraw the troops from Iraq (although he is committed to maintaining some military presence there to continue to train Iraqi troops), but he has also vowed to increase the military presence in Afghanistan.

Originally I was to do freedom of information here alone. However, Katherine Ferrier, a dance artist who wanted but was not able to do the action in 2008, approached me about performing the action simultaneously in Kansas City, Missouri. I am excited and relieved to have her do it, because the idea of sharing the difficulty of the action with someone else is now, to me, an inextricable part of the action. And joining me for the last two hours of the action will be visual artist/musician Fritz Welch, whose music will assist me

in making it to the end of the event. Fritz is an old friend and collaborator, who was present at the first incarnation of the event in 2001.

I invite you to share your thoughts about anything you'd like regarding this action in the guestbook.

Live video streams are being fed onto the internet so that you can watch Katherine and me throughout the 24 hours.

Katherine's channel is:

www.ustream.tv/channel/freedom-of-information-2009---kansas-city

(note the three dashes between 2009 and kansas)

My channel is:

www.ustream.tv/channel/freedom-of-information-2009-berlin

And for more information about the 2008 event, please go to freedomofinformation2008.blogspot.com

Thank you for coming.

m