ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Choreographing National Identity: The Role of Movement and Biopower in Countries of Real Socialism

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The driving research question behind this thesis is: how do ballet and its derivatives choreograph society in countries of *real socialism*, like Cuba and Yugoslavia, by disseminating political motivations into the body of a nation to construct national identity and project Eurocentric ideals? By using a historiographical evaluation of video evidence, I argue that ballet is used as a physical embodiment of socio-political objectives to rehearse social collectivism and reconstruct national identity from an internal and international point of view, as seen through the construction of the Cuban technique of ballet and the communal mobilization during the Yugoslav Day of Youth. I conclude that institutions of ballet function as sites of social reproduction of ideology that physicalize political objectives under the tenets of choreo-politics and social choreography.

Choreographing National Identity:
The Role of Movement and Biopower in Countries of Real Socialism

By

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A Note on Translation

Wherever possible, I sought out sources translated to English prior to my analysis. For all sources originally written in Spanish, I read them in Spanish and translated them to English myself when applicable. For all other translations, Google Translate was used and the sources were not quoted, as a result of the inaccuracies resulting from the method of translation.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Throughout history, theatrical dance and primarily ballet has enforced social etiquette and normative expectations of the body through movement. Due to these expectations, I claim in this thesis that dance is a domain within which it is pertinent to investigate the disciplining of the body under a political regime.[1] From social dance in Renaissance Italy to court dance in Baroque France, ballet has been a signifier of social status and cultivated elite behavior – specifically under a guise of Western cultural hegemony.[2] Since the earliest competitive movements during the Olympic Games, the cult of bodies in sports has been pivotal in reaching entire civilian masses under a government regime because it adheres ideologically to the convention of aesthetics.[3] This thesis focuses on using the moving body to understand disseminations of ideology and national identity under regimes of socialism. Using dance under the domain of aesthetics as a historical lens allows for a complex understanding of the individual under a body of socialist power,[4] where the government collaborates with culture to construct a portrait of unity.

Based on the theories of Michel Foucault, Mark Franko, and Andrew Hewitt my claim in this thesis is that dance and national identity are constructed in similar ways – as choreographic assemblages of weaving narratives that make sense of complexity.[5] Because dance in its simplest form is human instinct,[6] it often develops simultaneously, yet separately, from political movements, and peaks in popularity as socio-political norms take form. Dance can be utilized to

[1] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 96.
[2] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 50.
[3] Žmak "Ritual Aspects."
[4] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 148.
[5] Croft, "Ballet Nations," 423-424.
[6] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 25.

codify sovereignty, nationalism, and personal identity factors like gender, ethnicity, and race. Dance reflects politicized social constructs back at itself and a public audience.[7] In this way, dance choreographs identity from a political lens as "the fractured body [of the nation is] made whole by performance."[8]

Many theories have examined the political gravitas of ballet within different political regimes, most notably the influence of defectors from the Mariinsky Theater in the Soviet Union like Mikhail Baryshnikov,[9] or that of the 17th century *Ballet de la Nuit* in which Louis XIV portrayed Apollo and earned his nickname of "The Sun King" in Bourbon-era France.[10] However, there are little modern day comparisons that use the functioning of ballet and balletic movement to understand political regimes, like the twentieth century instances of real socialism in Cuba and Yugoslavia.

In this thesis, I will approach two cases of "real existing socialism," socialism not actively failing, in Cuba and Yugoslavia, to explore the use of dance as a method of constructing national identity and address the broader implications of the body as an both agent of politics and a site of government intervention on the individual.

Under Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba, ballet received distinction as an artform with political power, led by the culturally-prominent Alonso family and their Ballet Nacional de Cuba (BNC). In 1960, Castro promised Fernando and Alicia Alonso $200,000 to start BNC and created a permanent subsidy for the ballet.[11] The creation of a Cuban technique of ballet, subsidized by the socialist government and constructed by Alicia Alonso's Italian and French

[7] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 4.
[8] "Body Name," video.
[9] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 233.
[10] Anderson, 54.
[11] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet Nacional De Cuba*, 2.

training, allowed for the generation of a Revolutionary-specific Cuban identity, actualized by the performance of ballet.

In Yugoslavia, I study the annual occasions of collective politicized movement, rather than ballet, which was expressed in the form of *slets*: choreographed displays of ideological adherence to Josip Broz Tito's socialist concepts of national unity and labor.[12] Slets reinvigorated the government's drive to unify the ethnicities within Yugoslavia into a greater movement of a cohesive Yugoslav identity, an idea that was never fully realized outside of state ideology.[13]

Ballet exists as an intervention on the discourse of the body, uniting it with the socio-political discourse surrounding gender, class, and race. Utilizing the specific techniques and training regimens in ballet, social standards and beliefs are embedded into the body and passed down generationally.[14] The case studies in this thesis demonstrate how discourses of difference within ballet and the broader political context can limit identity and expression in accordance with the norms of a newly established political regime, to promote a unified identity. In the case of Cuba, the central point of contention regarding difference is the question of race, or cultivated lack thereof. Comparatively in Yugoslavia, difference was both religiously and ethnically rooted, despite early slets discouraging difference and attempting to remove multiple-nationalities from the aesthetic equation.

Along with the conceptual discourse of difference, by focusing on the impact of biopolitics on society, either directly through the choreo-politics of a dance company like BNC or indirectly through the social choreography of the Day of Youth, I elaborate on how aesthetics

[12] Vujanović, "Social Choreography".
[13] Vujanović.
[14] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 128.

become intertwined with physical movement and political theory. This chapter will outline my research question and answer, explore a concise history of ballet and rhythmic gymnastics, address academic precedents in the literature, and begin to illuminate why the body is an important focus of study within the field of international politics.

Research Question and Answer

My direct research question is: How do ballet and its derivatives choreograph society in countries of real socialism,[15] like Cuba and Yugoslavia, by disseminating political motivations into the body of a nation to construct national identity and project Eurocentric ideals? By delving into the use of ballet as an intervention site for governance, I will explore the biopolitical mechanisms[16] through which the dancing individual is disciplined. The answer to this question as argued in my thesis is that ballet is used as a physical embodiment of socio-political objectives to rehearse social collectivism and reconstruct national identity from an internal and international point of view, as seen through the construction of the Cuban technique of ballet and the communal mobilization of a nation during the Yugoslav Day of Youth.

A Brief History of Ballet and Rhythmic Gymnastics

Ballet has its roots in the theatrical dance of Ancient Greece, believed to be performed for and guided by Apollo, the Sun God of music and dance, Dionysus, the rambunctious God of wine, parties, and celebration, and Terpsichore, the muse of dance.[17] While Ancient Greece seems disconnected from the current popular imagination of ballet, many of the principles of movement and explanations of its power as dictated by the Greek remain relevant to a contemporary socio-political reading of dance. For example, "Dionysus envisioned the universe

[15] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real,'" 196.
[16] Where the body is intervened upon by the political sphere.
[17] Despite their opposing views on the value of dance (Nietzsche, *The Birth*, 8), both Apollo and Dionysus were worshiped in ceremonies dedicated to dance and motion (Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 27).

as a great chain of being in which everything was joined to everything else by divine love and moved eternally in a vast choric dance."[18] Using the divine opinions of Dionysus, it can be said that since its inception, dance has embodied a universality of meaning and understanding, bringing people together across differences and fostering space for the creation of collective physical identity.

Since its inception and formal codification, ballet has engaged with the political sphere, originally as court dance and followed by performance dance.[19] Ballet itself first prospered in Renaissance courts across Western Europe, Italy in particular, as a demonstration of political power.[20] Explicitly recorded and codified by Louis XIV after it gained popularity in France, along with other Italian cultural exports that demonstrated sophistication of thought and elevation of manners,[21] the technique of ballet began to be associated with proper character, strong health, and broader notions of "worthy" nationhood.[22]

Present since the earliest instances of theatrical dance, key components of dance ideology have included the dictation of manners, promotion of desirability, and advancement of nobility. One early example of ballet produced as international propaganda to construct national identity was the *Ballet Comique de La Reine*, a court ballet put on for Catherine de Medici under the rule of Henri III. It featured Circe at the peak of her power, defeating the Greek Gods yet bowing to the King of France. Afterwards, the associated pamphlet was distributed internationally as French propaganda to proclaim the unilateral strength of the French monarchy.[23] The power of the King of France was viewed through the plot of *Ballet Comique de La Reine* and the success

[18] Anderson, 32.
[19] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 10.
[20] Court dance flourished in Italy as rival states used ballet as a method of displaying their competing wealth and sophistication (Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 35).
[21] Anderson, 50.
[22] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 14.
[23] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 42-44.

of ballet generally, a connection that would remain prevalent until the collapse of the French monarchy at the end of the 19th century.

Ballet continued to prosper during the lead up to the French Revolution while performance of ballets moved from the royal court to the theater as it was politically advantageous.[24] Because the audience at the ballet was largely made up of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the public sphere of ballet became a site at which to expose the fallacy of class and disseminate hierarchical aristocratic beliefs.[25] During this era of French ballet, the contemporary imagining of ballet, *ballet d'action* – the first theatrical performance of a solely movement based plot[26] – rose in prominence. Despite ballet's early linkage with the monarchy prior to performance's migration from palace to theater, ballet survived the cultural overturn of the French Revolution, largely because of the economic benefits of ballet being resituated to the theater.

Ballet further solidified its roots under the Romantic cultural movement, which called for increased emotional expression and freedom of imagination. Romanticism sprung from the void between aspiration and actuality.[27] *Giselle*, the *ballet blanc* or "white ballet"[28] most favored by Alicia Alonso, was a Romantic era ballet and epitomized the values of the Romantic period, including expression of emotion and ideological imagination of the surreal. To this day, the aspiring ballet dancer, despite more modern, radicalized views on bodies and femininity, remains

[24] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 10.
[25] Franko, 12.
[26] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern,* 73.
[27] Anderson, 89.
[28] "The phrase "white ballet" refers to large corps de ballet compositions in romantic ballets in which dancers portray supernatural and bodiless beings such as ghosts, wilis, dryads, mermaids, and maidens under spells. They are dressed in lightweight, white costumes synchronously performing movements accompanying the dance of the prima ballerina. Dance "en pointe", flying arabesques-the semantics of the "white" ballet itself as airy and exalted, include all of the most recognized images of ballet and serve as its business card. The ballets Giselle, La Sylphide, Swan Lake, La Bayadère, and The Nutcracker with their large "white acts" comprise the basis of the repertoire of ballet companies throughout the world" (Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 1).

in constant competition with the physicalization of Romantic ideals, as displayed through the bodies elevated in Romantic era "white ballets,"[29] like the *wilis* in Act 2 of *Giselle*.

By the end of the nineteenth century, dance was utilized as a method of spreading material and ideological thought with the purpose of making moral judgments based on classical distinctions between East and West within the artform.[30] As ballet spread across the European continent and to the United States, it helped found and solidify aesthetic conceptions of Western cultural hegemony. One primary example of the spread of ballet beyond Western Europe is the appropriation of ballet by Imperial Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. "Ballet was imported into Russia during the country's first period of Westernization when many European fashions, including dancing, were widely imitated."[31] This pattern of *Westernization* based on European aesthetic expectations also occurred in Yugoslavia and Cuba.

Western standards of gender, class, and race have maintained relevance over time in the international dance world because of ballet's existence as an intervention on the discourse of the body.[32] A lack of diversity within ballet companies and institutions persisted as the artform dispersed from primarily white Western Europe. As a result, race is often discussed and problematized by critics of ballet,[33] dancers themselves,[34] and academics. From a current perspective, the Eurocentric whiteness of ballet appears ingrained in its history, resulting from the aesthetic doctrines of the Romantic era. However, contrary to current conceptions, in ballet's early history, race was not an explicit question, largely because of ballet's origin in historically white Western Europe and the setting of most ballets in Europe. Instead, as ballet spread to

[29] Vincent, *Competing with*, 14.
[30] Hewitt, "The Body," 38.
[31] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 116.
[32] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 128.
[33] Carman, "Behind Ballet's."
[34] Shayer, "American Ballet."

America, Asia, and Africa, skin color became problematized – could non-white people participate in ballet?[35] The existing socio-political backdrop of segregation and discrimination present internationally from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries further contributed to this problem. Colorism has been built into modern non-European ballet companies based on the existing de facto segregation and racism regionally prevalent at the time of their founding.[36] This is not to say that racial prejudice was not a problem in sixteenth to nineteenth century Western Europe. Rather, racism was not an element purposefully built into the codification of ballet. Racism in ballet emerged simultaneously with the conversation of racism globally, in time with the collapse of both the international triangle trade and chattel slavery within European colonial outposts.[37]

Building off of the conversation surrounding racial disparity, the culturally ingrained public imagination of ballet is reliant on the existence of difference, specifically seen through the male/female hetero-dichotomy and gender binary. Gendered ballet techniques[38] help to facilitate the construction of gender norms within institutions of dance that are disseminated externally through the performance of embodied ideologies.[39] Ballet requires ballerinas to dominate their bodies to achieve femininity and become dancing objects representative of the pinnacle of male desire.[40] However, the burden of performing heteronormativity is not solely placed on female

[35] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 2.
[36] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, 6.
[37] Prejudice exists beyond racism and extends into gender specific stereotypes, specifically relating the misalignment of gender norms in ballet with gendered stereotypes about black people. The problematization of identity in ballet infiltrated the BNC and perpetuated discrimination within the country and nation.
[38] It is typical in ballet schools for students to be separated by gender for class. Female students train in pointe work during this time, while male students focus on grande allegro (big jumps.) When male and female students come together for pas de deux (partnering) class, the female student embodies ladylike, damsel qualities while the male student becomes a macho savior. Female dancers are "described as "light," "timid," "vulnerable," and "modest," while male dancers [are] described as "proud," "strong," "purposeful," "restrained," and "in command" (Haltom and Worthen, "Male Ballet," 765).
[39] Haltom and Worthen, 765.
[40] Daly, "Classical Ballet," 111-112.

dancers. Male ballet dancers must "negotiate their identities as men while performing a dance form that is highly stigmatized as effeminate. These men do so by actively participating in male ballet culture and engaging in heteromasculinity in performance."[41] Within dance schools, companies, and interpersonal relationships, men often have to prioritize mastering gender specific techniques to avoid stigmatization.[42] Externally through performance, male dancers physically and emotionally present an artificial hyper-masculinity in adherence with heteronormative societal gender roles.[43] The prolific presence of normative identities in ballet regarding gender and race steep ballet in the Romantic era and consistently remind contemporaries of the history of the artform.

The material I analyze in the case of Yugoslavia is significantly different from the explicit presentations of Eurocentric values in the Cuban classical ballet school, but it nevertheless perpetuated similar social norms. Yugoslav slet manifestations, performed on the Day of Youth, blended folk dance and ballet to construct a gymnastics style movement, Sokol, reflective of the social collective. Similarly to ballet, gymnastics originated in Ancient Greece and Rome. Gymnastics was first widely utilized as a training strategy for soldiers due to its physically rigorous nature,[44] and did not gain international popularity as an artistic and athletic activity until centuries later. Modern conceptions of gymnastics are rooted in the use of nineteenth and twentieth century ballet training across both Western and Eastern Europe to create the technique of rhythmic gymnastics.[45]

[41] Haltom and Worthen, "Male Ballet," 764.
[42] Haltom and Worthen, 764-765.
[43] Haltom and Worthen, 765.
[44] Hamza, Ahmed, and Wahed, "The History," 6606.
[45] Hamza, Ahmed, and Wahed, 6607.

Rhythmic gymnastics appeared as a byproduct of ballet's expansion to the East and blending with folk dance[46] in Imperial Russia. When rhythmic gymnastics was first developed and popularized in Eastern Europe, gymnasts were expected to have already received ballet training. Proficiency in classical ballet was seen as advantageous for developing the necessary proper posture, musicality, and an aesthetically desirable body.[47] Rhythmic gymnastics' formal development relied heavily on dance theorizers and thinkers such as Jean Georges Noverre,[48] who first wrote down the ballet technique in his treatise *Les Lettres Sur La Danse et Sur Les Ballets.*[49]

Rhythmic gymnastics was solidified internationally by the creation of a Code of Points: a collection of movements and skills with their associated scores for international competitions. In the Code of Points, ballet movements are directly pulled in terms of nomenclature; the written form of gymnastics, dictated by the Code of Points, contains many explicitly co-opted ballet movements like *grand jetés* and *pirouettes*.[50] Even when labeled as different moves, balletic skill and technique can be seen in moments of transition, dance steps, and rotation across gymnastics disciplines.[51] The provided history of both ballet and gymnastics reveal that the physical artforms carry normative conventions from the Romantic period to modern times, engaging the cases of focus with outdated ideals of body, race, and gender.

[46] Ballet is a "high" dance form, anteceded by "lowly" folk dance. The Day of Youth utilized a mixture of ballet and folk to perform inclusivity, Yugoslav style.
[47] Furtado et al., "BALLET MOVEMENTS," 402.
[48] Furtado et al., 396.
[49] *Les Lettres Sur La Danse et Sur Les Ballets* was written by Jean Georges Noverre in 1760 and promoted the shift from ballet as a multimedia performance including song, dance, and speech, to dance alone. Noverre is widely credited with the creation of the ballet d'action. He called for dancers' movement to be more expressive and less rigid, while codifying the specific steps of ballet into written form (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, September 2023).
[50] Furtado et al., "BALLET MOVEMENTS," 403.
[51] Furtado et al., 396.

Literature Review

Body Politics

Michel Foucault's theory of biopower in *Discipline and Punish*[52] is a core tenet of physio-political analysis. By outlining the foundation of the disciplined body, Foucault explains how power becomes ingrained in interpersonal relations and reproduced onto and within an individual body. Through this lens of discipline and regulation, Foucault's biopower helps demonstrate how dance serves as a microcosm of the larger political landscape's reliance on structure and control. With the consideration of dance under the scaffold of biopower, I expand Foucault's argument to the dance studio and stage, following the existing scholarship on body politics, choreo-politics, social choreography, and ideology outlined below.

One central manifestation of the relationship between biopower and dance is the employment of the body politic in ballet studios. Susan Leigh Foster examines aesthetics' dictatorship over ballet schooling, arguing that ballet dancers seek an illusion of mastery or domination over their bodies fueled by the fleeting rush associated with attaining perfection.[53] In the dance classroom, repetitive exercise according to a specific technique breaks down and recreates the body in adherence with ballet's social codes.[54] Increased awareness of the perceived body and a created language of metaphors isolates the dance community, enabling it to structure norms of extreme body standards. Foster's separation of the body politic of ballet into the "perceived and ideal dancing body" and the larger "body of dance technique" classifies the power dynamics that govern young dancers into internal and external control.[55] I agree with

[52] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
[53] Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 237.
[54] Foster, 239.
[55] Foster, 242-243.

Foster's explanation and use of body politics in the dance classroom, especially when it is united with the Foucauldian concepts of discipline that force bodies to conform to norms.

Choreo-politics is a term that extends biopower into an arts-specific sphere to describe how dance can be utilized to codify sovereignty, nationalism, and personal identity.[56] Mark Franko grapples with this reflection of politicized social constructs by looking at dance's dual status as a private and public site of interference.[57] Choreo-politics relies on the power dynamics that emerge when the dancing body is displayed and exposed in performance. The exertion of power over a dancer is invoked publicly and privately both by the ballet master inside the dance studio, as well as by the audience during a performance.[58] Franko and Foster align in their evaluation of the power dynamics applicable to performance art. Choreo-politics and body politics together make up the bulk of the scholarship on which my argument is dependent. I rely on the use of choreo-politics to broaden the reach of body politics from individual dancers to collective dancing bodies in motion.

Governing collectivity remains a theme of the scholarship surrounding physical culture and unison movement, especially within the work of Andrew Hewitt, whose foundational definition of social choreography grounds my argument. Hewitt unpacks the popular understanding of social choreography – everyday movement confined by social norms and government expectations – by reconstituting the effects of modernism on aesthetics, social engagement, and the compartmentalization of sociopolitics.[59] Hewitt questions the definition of performance and collectivity while examining how social choreography responds to the dialogue

[56] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 12.
[57] Franko, 8.
[58] Franko, 10.
[59] Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 8.

surrounding the integration of physicality wth mentality. I expand Franko's theory of choreo-politics to include Hewitt's social choreography.

In addition to biopower and its resulting iterations, ideology is a prominent concept that unites the ballet world with the political sphere. According to Evan Alderson, ideology manifests itself in two components: as a set of values imposed by a ruling group to determine order and as a veil of "truth" that permeates social groups.[60] By examining the *ballet blanc* in Act 2 of *Giselle*, choreographed by Jean Coralli in 1841,[61] Alderson argues that *Giselle* established the popular ideology of ballet and its resulting normative physical standards of presentation, in accordance with European Romantic era social norms.[62] While I agree with Alderson's argument, I think that Act 2 of *Giselle* is more complicated than he alludes to, especially when considering the question of gender. By the end of the ballet, *Giselle* saves Albrecht, her former lover, from being *danced to death*. Within the inversion of the hero-damsel trope, there is space for a more feminist reading of the ballet that contradicts general thoughts regarding gender and masculinity during the Romantic period. The establishment of *Giselle* as a model for white, Romantic norms is pivotal to my analysis of the manner in which performances of *Giselle* in Revolutionary Cuba constructed Cuban identity, which I will explore further below. In this section I have broadly outlined how the scholarship surrounding body politics and biopower unite to define ballet as an ideologically-choreographed performance of discipline and desire.

Cuba

Ballet in Cuba bolstered colonial legacies of white supremacy and elitism because of its history as an artform brought to Cuba by European colonists.[63] Elizabeth B. Schwall explains

[60] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 123.
[61] Alderson, 102-103.
[62] Alderson, 130-131.
[63] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 4.

how ballet's rise to power during the Revolution in Cuba allowed dance to be an impactful form of expressing socialist political beliefs.[64] Schwall relies on the social status of the Alonso family – the royals of ballet in Cuba – to define them as dictatorial rulers of ballet in Havana and across the nation. The Alonso family's power allowed them to function as a soft power of government influence, perpetuating Eurocentric privilege during the Revolution. Schwall's argument historiographically constructs the power of the Alonso's over the ballet world in Cuba, and sets up my argument for their purposeful inclusion of European aesthetics with the goal of creating a Western-appealing nationality as desired by the government.

Michael Dibb documents Alicia Alonso's political influence by visually reproducing film clips of her spreading ballet to communities outside of Havana, including a group of mine workers.[65] The purposeful pairing of economic development with artistic production demonstrates how Alonso served as an agent and orator of the government, working to spread, ingrain, and glamorize Castro's views of labor and collectivism. Alonso disseminated high-culture to the masses, but infused it with aspects of the socialist aesthetic to aid in the construction of new nationality. I find that Dibb's argument partially ignores Alonso's agency in creating space for ballet under Castro's new government, instead painting a picture of her as a parrot of socialist beliefs, likely resulting from his American point of view and inherent bias.

Lester Tomé, a prominent scholar of Cuban ballet, theorizes a more diffused history of BNC, where Alonso's direct influence over the organization created a Cuban ballet built in a European image, resulting in the uneven valuation of Cuban and European characteristics within the Cuban ballet school.[66] Tomé closely examines the functioning of *Giselle*, Alicia Alonso's

[64] Schwall, 5.
[65] *Classically Cuban.*
[66] Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban," 271.

most acclaimed performance role, in Cuban dance history. *Giselle* and its Eurocentrism provide background into the politics of race problematized within the ideology of Cuban ballet and throughout Castro's Revolution. Schwall and Tomé take a similar position as they raise awareness to the way the Alonso family's racist thoughts and expectations defined privilege in Cuba and revitalized colonial narratives.[67]

Larisa Nikiforova, Anastasiia Vasileva, and Mayumi Sakamoto debate with Tomé and dive deeply into the impact of race on participation in Revolutionary ballet. Contrary to Tomé, they argue that Alicia Alonso utilized the famous European ballets set on her relatively more diverse company to combat racism in ballet and expand opportunities for Black dancers in ballet.[68] I grapple with Tomé as well as Nikiforova, Vasileva, and Sakamoto to present an image of Alonso that is more complicated than simply for or against a white, colonial-infused Cuba. By reviewing the core Cuba-focused literature, I have illuminated the arguments of the foremost scholars researching the history of ballet in Cuba, explained their theories and debates, as well as highlighted the points most impactful in my research and writing process.

Yugoslavia

Many scholars have examined physical culture across socialist and communist regimes to discuss the power of using movement to construct the idea of collective unity. My thesis unites this scholarly work under the broader vocabulary of social choreography, to look at how aesthetic ideals inherent to physical culture were reproduced across socialist Yugoslavia.

Filip Petkovski builds upon Alderson's definition of ballet as ideology and expands it to social choreography. Petkovski navigates how choreography in Yugoslavia became ideological and controlled by outside bureaucratic forces to create a national dance repertoire that promoted

[67] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 68.
[68] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 7-8.

palatable socialist ideologies to the external world.[69] Ana Vujanović, examines the deteriorating neatness and uniformity of performance during the final Day of Youth slet to show how movement can both instill ideology and serve as a site of rebellion against autocratic figures.[70] Similar to Petkovski, Vujanović navigates the inscription of ideology into individuals through stylized movements.[71] Marta Popivoda explores Yugoslavia as a stage for public performance, specifically looking at the choreography of celebrations like Youth Day in contrast with protests in the second half of the 20th century to examine how bodies become vessels for collective ideas. Popivoda's description of the body as a display of collectivism laid the groundwork for my analysis of individualism in the face of national identity.[72]

I build upon Petkovski's theory of social choreography and Vujanović's exploration of uniformity in the context of slets and the Day of Youth in centralized Yugoslavia to argue that despite the slet's intended role as a performance of the unified Yugoslav identity of "brotherhood and unity," in reality collective identity was less appealing to Yugoslavs than their more ancient ethno-religious identities. The collective Yugoslav identity, therefore, failed dismally in using Eurocentrism and balletic movement to convince people that they belonged together as one nation, seen through the violent turmoil of the dissolution of the nation.

Secondary literature surrounding Sokol (gymnastics) and slets (performance) themselves features the work of Lucija Balikić and Vojtěch Pojar. Balikić and Pojar examine Sokol propagandists' use of eugenic theory to argue for controlling the genetic makeup of the Yugoslav national body with physical exercise.[73] The discourse surrounding the makeup of a national body

[69] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 100.
[70] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[71] Vujanović.
[72] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.
[73] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic."

separated from an individual body that Balikić and Pojar engage with ties back to Foucault's original theory of biopower. The international lens of this thesis allows me to expand on Balikić and Pojar's work to foster dialogue and comparison between physical culture in socialist Yugoslavia, the communist Soviet Union, and Nazi Germany.

Three scholars specifically researching the Day of Youth are Ana Petrov, Mirjana Stošić, and Jasna Jasna Žmak. Ana Petrov tracks the construction of physical culture in Yugoslavia by analyzing the governments' micro-management of free time of youths.[74] The pressure to pursue physical activity like gymnastics and games during free time aided the infiltration of aesthetics into the socialist management of the body. The Day of Youth served as a representation of bodies moving with joy, constructed by Titoist philosophy. Mirjana Stošić explores the concept and implications of a signature as a question of identity and individuality under socialism, specifically Tito's use of bodies to sign his name on the field during the Day of Youth.[75] When government leaders who worked in youth organizations and sports societies choreographed the bodies of participants to inscribe Tito's name, Tito became more significant than the individual moving body.

Jasna Jasna Žmak utilizes a framework of rituals to explore the Day of Youth.[76] Ritual provides an individual with a curated place within the collective and allows the state to govern and discipline under a veil of celebration. For the Day of Youth, the physical nature of the ritual lends itself to comparison with sports competition – giving rise to the notion of a *competitive collective*. Petrov, Stošić, and Žmak each have individual arguments about the Day of Youth but agree regarding its resonant impact. I will build upon their work and include elements of dance

[74] Petrov, "Telesni projekti."
[75] "Body Name," video.
[76] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects."

historiography to argue that the Day of Youth slet helped advance a Yugoslav identity reflective of Western European norms. By outlining the work of preeminent scholars grappling with the link between Yugoslav physical culture and constructed nationalism, I have illuminated the key concepts of uniformity, bodily control, and ritual that constructed norms on the Day of Youth.

So What? The Body in Society and Understanding Normative Discourse

By providing comparison on a global scale, my thesis will be able to address this indirect question: what is it about the power dynamics at play in the ballet world that makes the artform so susceptible to political intervention? Through examining countries of real socialism in the context of larger globalized authoritarian regimes, I illuminate the autocratic nature of the ballet master to explore how ballet classrooms function as micro-institutions of biopolitics.

Art is united with politics because of the personal relationship the creator has with a given piece – when art is created it is infused with individualism and individual political opinion. Thus, dance is dependent on both the dancers who perform and the choreographers who create it, resulting in a unique blend of ideological motivations behind a given piece.[77] For dance as an artform in particular, the "semiotic relation of dance to the modern nation-state has become relevant to postcolonial identities in international situations,"[78] inherently politicizing ballet.[79] The existing relationship between dance and the modern nation-state means that performance can serve in two main ways: either to bolster a political idea and regime, or as a form of protest against one.[80]

[77] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 17.
[78] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 4.
[79] Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology*, 63.
[80] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 6.

Performance arts like ballet are valued simultaneously as sites of economic and social exchange.[81] Performance is a site of emboldening collective consciousness that quantifies value and expands the audience's and performers' understanding of social experience.[82] Despite the prescribed intentions behind performance, control of the audiences' perception is not unilateral. While the choreographer has the power to dictate the movement, expression is the responsibility of the dancers and interpretation is primarily dependent on audience interpretation.[83] When dance is performed on stage, even if tradition and choreographic integrity are "preserved," the audience's invasive gaze strips the movement of its original intentionality.[84] Given the nature of performance, adherence to outside ideals is inevitable, resulting in the eradication of authentic individualism. The exploration of performance as a construction of identity reflects Mark Franko's concepts in "Dance and the Political:"

> "When we speak of dance and politics, we speak of the power of dance to make and unmake identities. Because dance molds the body and its ways of moving, it cannot help but propose models of subjectivity in either an affirmative or a negative sense. Sound, costume, staging, plot, and text influence such models to various degrees. When we speak of dance and the political, we also infer the politics of interpretation."[85]

This interpretation of dance enables the aesthetic artform of dance to reflect a false sense of collaboration; in actuality it functions more like a top-down indoctrination of choreographed identity.

The display of the body of the performer adds a further layer to the discourse of performance: dance is an intervention on the body politic. Utilizing the body in politics often prompts fear in society because it demonstrates an existing level of outside control most

[81] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 82.
[82] Martin and Aronowitz, 83.
[83] Martin and Aronowitz, 92.
[84] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 101.
[85] Franko, "Dance and the Political,' 7.

individuals are willfully ignorant to.[86] The body seen by the audience becomes especially vulnerable to the perceptions of aesthetics,[87] because the audience has historically rendered the performing body thoughtless.[88] Thinking politically, alienating the body from thought creates a void where the dancing body loses a sense of personal agency and conspires with the choreographer's thoughts. The domain of aesthetics asserts that knowledge and truth are constructed by society and implemented into the individual via the performance of an agentless body.[89]

Dance structures national identity into movement that is both replicable and easily understandable.[90] Repetition and digestion of movement are essential to ideological dissemination, as repetitive movement inscribes performing bodies with the recursive memory of ideology.[91] The dancing body then shares this ideology and identity with the audience under the mask of aestheticized performance. Thus, dance exists as a reflection of social culture, specifically regarding the aesthetic motivations of physical performance art.[92]

Classical ballet in particular represents a critical case because it is a physical and aesthetic fine art. The hierarchy of fine arts transfuses onto the surrounding community,[93] elevating certain aesthetics over others. The valuation of a fine art commands a certain feasibility despite the inherent bias it carries resulting from centuries of class and race supremacy.[94] By choosing to present a fine art like ballet, the surrounding society beyond the performers and the audience is also elevated in international status. "Ballet conspires with the [visuals] of Western

[86] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 3.
[87] Rancière, "The Distribution," 12.
[88] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 117.
[89] Thomas, *The Body*, 19.
[90] Winter, "'The Healthful," 36.
[91] "Body Name," video.
[92] Thomas, *The Body*, 93.
[93] Rancière, "The Distribution," 17.
[94] Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology*, 52.

culture"[95] to infuse international spaces with Western aesthetic ideology. "Ballet, with its roots in many countries, exemplifies how artists reformulate representations of the nation through everyday experiences onstage and off, sometimes in ways far removed from concepts of nation circulating in global politics."[96] Because the ideals of aesthetics pervade ballet, the audience is rendered blind to the socio-historical implications of the artform.[97] Thus, the burden is on scholarly analysis and arguments like the one I present in this thesis to illuminate the hidden social agendas of politics in dance.

Conclusion and Chapter Summaries

The presentation of dance as an endeavor to prescribe unity[98] is the core of my argument in this thesis. Through dictated movement, socialist regimes in Cuba and Yugoslavia attempted to choreograph, despite existing difference, a singular national identity, easily transferable to individuals through performance. While collective identity became a fallacy of the socialist myth, the intentions behind distributing national ideology remain an interesting intervention of politics on the body. Dance was a successful vessel for ideological transmission because of the embedded body politics and dynamics of aesthetic performance. The aesthetic domain of dance that promotes ideology, combined with the nature of ballet training that builds a docile normative body, allowed governments to construct a physical representation of their ideal national aesthetic identity equipped to further disseminate national autocratic thought.

In this chapter I have described my driving research question, a history of ballet and rhythmic gymnastics, the relevant scholarly literature that grounds my argument, as well as briefly investigated why understanding ballet biopolitically is relevant to international social

[95] Thomas, *The Body*, 109.
[96] Croft, "Ballet Nations," 421.
[97] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 122.
[98] Croft, "Ballet Nations."

politics. To continue building my argument, Chapter Two will focus on methodology and decisions, as well as articulate my explicit argument. Chapters Three and Four are case studies on Cuba and Yugoslavia, which present evidence to bolster my argument. The "So What?" grappled with at the end this chapter will be united with the case studies and potential questions for further research in my concluding chapter.

Chapter Two: Choreo-politics and Social Choreography: The Dancing Body as Government Agent

Introduction

The intertwinement of ballet and power allows for dance's historical occurrences to be analyzed to argue for the government's co-option of the culture behind movement with the purpose of constructing a collective identity. In biopolitical theory, the body has been constructed as an agent of both political adherence and resistance.[99] Ballet therefore frequently exists in conversation with political movements and overarching regime changes, especially because it utilizes the body as a storyteller of history and ideology.

Ballet is governed by the theories of choreo-politics, a concept which specifies Michel Foucault's theory of biopower to the organization and distribution of power across dancing bodies,[100] and of social choreography, the physical performance of social aesthetics and guidelines.[101] Foucault's biopower explains why the body responds physically to changing cultural ideals and government pressure. Foucault's original theorization of biopower relied on an analysis of the methods of public punishment employed by pre-modern monarchies, to display the interrelatedness of the history of authoritarian rule and the formal construction of the concept of biopower.[102] Because ballet was founded under monarchical rule across Europe, it is an artform that is deeply connected with the historical tenets leading to the emergence of biopower as a concept.[103] In addition to the ballet theater's status as a biopolitical institution,[104] the ballet school emerged as a site of centralized surveillance and discipline simultaneous to the expansion

[99] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 13.
[100] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 8.
[101] Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 35.
[102] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 36.
[103] Thomas, *The Body*, 95.
[104] The ballet theater is a space of biopolitical intervention because it unites the physical body with societal visual judgment to create norms and monitor governance.

of public engagement with ballet during the late eighteenth century and throughout the Romantic period in Western Europe.[105]

The qualification and analysis of dance schools and theaters as biopolitical institutions draws into question the manifestation of individual agency during dance training and performance. The interdependence of the private and public spheres creates a culture of surveillance and generates opportunity for governance and control of the body in dance. Dance schools could be understood as artistic reinterpretations of Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, where normal rules of government[106] do not apply and individual agency is revoked by a lack of governing norms.[107] Agamben theorized states of exception to broadly include prisons, concentration camps, and mental hospitals – all examples of places that operate under their own laws and do not adhere to the laws of the society within which they exist. Because institutions responsible for the proliferation and spread of ballet are governed by the laws of aesthetics, they retain aspects of exceptionality.

Bolstering the argument for dance schools and broader physical culture as a state of exception in Cuba and Yugoslavia, socialist systems viewed labor as an aspect of the cultivation of new bodies and ideas.[108] This valuation of labor parallels the reverence towards effort within a dance classroom or company. The discipline required in ballet training isolates the moving body from individual agency in the same way as mass labor on a Cuban sugarcane farm[109] or voluntary labor to construct public infrastructure in Yugoslavia.[110] In both cases, politics are

[105] Thomas, *The Body*, 47.
[106] Evidence of normal government includes the separation of church and state, multiple branches for judicial and legislature, and fair representation.
[107] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2.
[108] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 138; Thomas, *The Body*, 51.
[109] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 4.
[110] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 63.

passed body to body through enthusiasm for physical movement.[111] Therefore, under the exceptionality of ballet and physical culture in socialist Cuba and Yugoslavia, choreo-politics and social choreography emerged as effective strategies for mobilizing an adaptation in political thought and generating bodies representative of a newly theorized nation-state.

The central claim of this paper, that ballet physicalizes political objectives, requires a baseline understanding of the concepts that unite body, ballet, and power. A deeper explanation of political theory and integration of dance with scholarly discussion will help clarify and corroborate my argument surrounding the evidence presented in Chapters Three and Four. This chapter will utilize definitions and scholarly debate surrounding body politics, ideology, aesthetics, socialism, and national identity to construct a line of reasoning for understanding ballet institutions internationally as ideological state apparatuses responsible for the dissemination of choreo-political intervention and social choreography. Additionally, I will unpack the reasoning behind my decision to use a historiographical evaluation of video evidence to build my argument, as well as elaborate on the meaning of the language chosen and the rationale behind electing the two case studies.

Argument

Ballet is governed by the principles of choreo-politics and social choreography, which allow aesthetic and political ideologies to be spread top down through training and laboring bodies within an institution of dance education. By training bodies, political regimes can disseminate thought from multidirectional angles into the minds of individuals and mobilize these bodies to be orators of a new national culture.[112] The bodies of dancers are influenced simultaneously by their teachers and the bodies around them, creating a cycle of ideological

[111] Hewitt, "The Body," 46.
[112] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 152.

repression stemming from the government but infiltrating intimate communities nationwide. To construct these cycles of ideological dissemination, nation-states are oftentimes reliant on erasing aspects of cultural history to elevate a normative body,[113] partially constructed with the highly politicized and organized repetition of movement and discipline of bodies fostered by ballet training.

Through using ballet and balletic movement, the socialist governments of Cuba and Yugoslavia in the second half of the twentieth century infused their nations with European *high-culture*, despite their commitment to radical, anti-capitalist political ideas. High-culture refers to the perceived hierarchy of artistic expression set by international institutions of fine arts like museums and theaters. By elevating a high-culture activity like ballet within a politically revolutionary nation-state, identity was inscribed with dissonant Eurocentric ideals. Thus, even while critiquing political and economic structures, like capitalism and elitism, and building new nations theoretically based on the lack of social stratification, socialist governments partially catered to the Eurocentric sphere of discriminatory influence that elevates white, norm-adhering bodies. The case of classical ballet in Cuba and the case of ballet-based movement during the Yugoslav Day of Youth mass celebrations highlight how the biopolitical monitoring and control of bodies in preparation for dance performance aligned with the ultimate goals of the socialist sovereign power determined by choreo-politics and social choreography.

Docility and Malleability: Understanding Biopower

Scholars have often grappled with Foucault's theory of biopower to inform bodily understandings of disciplinary[114] power under real socialism.[115] Originally, the body was

[113] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 99.
[114] Discipline is defined by the transition from human body object of utility and example of control (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 137-138).
[115] Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 16.

theorized by philosophers as an extension of the "self," potentially distorted by the viewer themselves.[116] However, with the eradication of the able-self following periods of discipline and punishment, the body instead became a dynamic link between power and object.[117] Power in this instance is not solely an outside force; discipline of the body ingrains power into the individual subconscious, prompting the individual body to self-regulate according to the goals of the governing body.[118] In summary, to discipline the mind, the body must be worked to exhaustion: the point at which the mind gives in to the ideology of the dominating body of power.[119]

In general, the nation-state governs the reconstruction of bodies to dramatize and physicalize political ideations.[120] The physique of an individual reflects both their social status and work habits.[121] Jasna Jasna Žmak investigates the integration of ancient and traditional ritual with the modern socialist state. Thus, "[t]he classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body - to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces... A body that is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved."[122] By intertwining the classical, Foucauldian interpretation of a docile body with an understanding of bodies under socialism, Žmak argues for the existence of a disciplined body produced by social labor.

Bodies are created by labor and work;[123] discipline produces docility, disconnecting the body from personal agency and separating the individual from the manifestations of their

[116] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 113.
[117] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 24.
[118] Foucault, 27.
[119] Foucault, 154.
[120] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects."
[121] Thomas, *The Body*, 56.
[122] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.
[123] Agamben and Kotsko, *The Use of Bodies*, 20.

labor.[124] Simultaneously, labor acts to preserve human identity – work is a core tenet of individual identity and existence.[125] Work organizes the body to align with Foucauldian definitions of discipline: "The tendency to order and organize the body freshly severed from its earthly representation, so that it finds its way to the industrial workplace, suggests both a discipline and a freedom. The discipline attempts to make the body respond as a unit of labor."[126] The presence of labor as an indicator of both collectivism and individualism illuminates a potential problem inherent to a government's success while utilizing biopower to generate a disciplined nation: laboring bodies always present the risk of revolutionary individualism.

As labor creates bodies and collective nationality, labor power must be reproduced throughout its production.[127] Utilizing that definition of social reproduction, the subjection of individuals under disciplined ideology is what allows for the reproduction of labor-specific power dynamics.[128] A disciplined body is translational because discipline in one aspect of life infiltrates other aspects.[129] Discipline possesses a degree of judgment, either positive or negative, that controls and trains the individual body to seek validation from the power holder and limit behavior necessitating correction.[130] Besides explicit forced labor, ideological discipline of the body is seen through care for the body and the resulting maintenance of proper bodily utility.[131] When familiarity and governance is established by an authority figure, the care of the bodies of citizens can be ensured and therefore bodies can be utilized with ideological and economic efficiency.

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[124] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.
[125] Agamben and Kotsko, *The Use of Bodies*, 20.
[126] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 58.
[127] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 88.
[128] Althusser, 89.
[129] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 152.
[130] Foucault, 180; Docility and malleability makes a dancing body susceptible to power exertion, but also successful during their dance career.
[131] Agamben and Kotsko, *The Use of Bodies*, 43.

Discipline makes individuals into instruments of a larger body of power.[132] This dissemination of biopower across individual bodies allows the body to be the first instance in which a government can propose and instill collectivism. The exertion of power over the body is meticulously detailed, separating the body into infinitesimally small pieces available to be micromanaged and rendering the existence of power undefeatable by the individual.[133] The body according to this Foucauldian theory of radical embodiment is a place of both discipline and discussion because it is a live object that perpetuates certain desirable truths.[134]

The intertwinement between body politics and philosophy means that no real socio-historical context is needed to understand why or how the body is shaped by power.[135] That being said, history illuminates why the construction of certain bodies and norms was prioritized in a given time period. While some political history will be provided for each of the following case studies, the purpose of this thesis is not to provide a historical understanding of socialism's rise and fall in Cuba and Yugoslavia. Instead, dance will be used as a lens to explore the different dynamics of cultural production under socialist regimes, and the utilization of discipline of the body to construct the idea of national unity through choreo-politics or social choreography. By using a historic lens, desire and agency become visible from behind the mask of performance, especially when performances are compared across political periods, illuminating ideology from disciplined labor.[136]

[132] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.
[133] Foucault, 140.
[134] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 96.
[135] Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 13.
[136] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 80.

Understanding Ideology and Institutional Transmission

Physical movement affects personal thought and overall mentality, just as ballet relies on the body and both its physical and visual manifestations to garner public recognition.[137] The physical knitting of the body with thought allows for the transmission of ideology through embodied practice. Therefore, the institution of ballet internationally, composed of schools and companies, can be viewed as an "ideological apparatus"[138] responsible for the indoctrination of ideology, together with multiple other institutions, like the family and the education system. Ideology is passed down personally and politically because of the existence of ideological state apparatuses. While my case studies focus on movement as an ideological institution, everyday Cubans and Yugoslavs who did not participate in dance or physical culture were still able to understand the motivations behind the movement because ideology touched them via other reproductive mechanisms.

Because ideology is both a value set and a dissemination of thought beyond the confines of institutionality into social groups and greater societal dynamics,[139] ideology and institutions of ideological power are multifaceted. They serve as the sites of discriminatory struggle while simultaneously being the producers of discrimination themselves.[140] In this way, ideology is not a system of governance itself but rather governance is reproduced amongst individuals vis-a-vis institutions,[141] where ideology is taught to the individual by leaders of institutions and further exploited by those carrying power.[142]

[137] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 6.
[138] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 98.
[139] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 123.
[140] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 99.
[141] Althusser, 111.
[142] Althusser, 89.

Institutions maintain ideological rule by violently exerting power over the body to shape and build it into a model of the nation-state's ideal.[143] Ideological institutions are guarded by a repressive sovereign while ideological power assertions are made possible for the bourgeoisie[144] by the same repressive government.[145] This bourgeois ruling class can take shape through economic, social, racial, or governmental elevation of a specific identity, allowing for the flexibility necessary for repression to be altered to fit the goals of differing governmental regimes. Therefore, ideology itself is not dependent on a pre-existing capitalist or socialist economic structure; rather, ideology emerges as a conceptualization and dissemination of power across government structures and political regimes.

Analyzing dance and expanded practices of choreography[146] exemplifies the role of ideological state apparatuses in disseminating political thought to citizens. As explained earlier, an ideological state apparatus is an institution that distributes state power by indoctrinating ideology.[147] Both Ballet Nacional de Cuba and Yugoslav gymnastics societies are examples of ideological state apparatuses – they are governed by cultural ideology but function on a large scale to symbolically mold citizens and encourage the reproduction of productive repression.

The Influence of Aesthetics and the Performance of Politics

Examining a socialized cultural history of art exposes the power aesthetics have over identity cultivation,[148] because politics of culture are determined by visual perception, and

[143] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 29.
[144] Under a socialist regime, this 'ruling class' is less explicit as class *supposedly* doesn't exist.
[145] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 101; Alicia Alonso's "antiracism" explored in Chapter Three demonstrates this shield.
[146] In taking a literal approach to understanding choreography, reality becomes grounded in the physical action of movement allowing for a focus on the embodiment of ideals not through gesture and emotion but through movement itself (Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 11).
[147] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 98.
[148] Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology*, 11.

therefore are governed by the existence of aesthetics and visual preferences.[149] Aesthetics can be defined as a visual way of looking at a physical artform by focusing on the degree of beauty from an individual perspective.[150] Aesthetics can also be defined more broadly in the political context as the norms of behavior and appearance generated by the larger confinement of existent acceptability,[151] determined by a ruling-elite class. The physical aesthetic regime removes the authentic intention of original artistic representation,[152] as anyone with a normative, able body can physically reproduce the art of dance. Thinking broadly, participation in aesthetically idealized production and reproduction can often promote, but not guarantee, a lack of critical thinking and instead promote an acceptance of outward, explicit interpretation,[153] as was part of the goal of ballet in Cuba and the Day of Youth in Yugoslavia.

Aesthetics collaborate with the concept of the four practices of freedom – freedom to change work, freedom of daily movement, freedom to be artistic, freedom to live outside the norms[154] – to place limitations on the true agency of the perceived body. The practices of freedom define how identity and difference interact internally and externally to define power and shape persona. The four practices of freedom are employed in political theory to call attention to the invisibility of a powerholder exerting biopolitical force.[155] Spaces governed by aesthetics are similar to states of exception, as they exist beyond the reach of traditional government and therefore the power dynamics that govern them do not abide by logical forms of transmittance.[156]

[149] Rancière, "The Distribution," 8.
[150] Rancière, 4.
[151] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 121.
[152] Rancière, "The Distribution," 28.
[153] Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology*, 59-60; This would have been desirable for a socialist regime, where production was dependent on acceptance of the myth of equality, and surface level aesthetic evaluation would serve to elevate socialist thought.
[154] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 114-115.
[155] Beausoleil, 114; The practices of freedom are visible within the dancing body, emphasizing the body's ability to also serve as a site of democratic intervention and personal power (Beausoleil, 117).
[156] Rancière, "The Distribution,"18.

When the four practices of freedom are not preserved, as in the two cases in this thesis, the intentions of individual representation within aesthetic art are limited. In Cuba, while performance could be individually motivated, it was sculpted by the ideology ingrained into the dancing body during ballet training. In Yugoslavia, the practice of Sokol in preparation for slets implemented the socialist aesthetic into the dancing body and limited intentional agency in performance.

Aesthetics were naturally integrated into performance with the creation of the public cultural sphere.[157] Aesthetics influence perception and subjectivity from a political lens by introducing new manners of viewing both individuals and collectives under a larger "configuration of experience."[158] Because of the nature of performance and promotion of extremity, classical dance exists beyond the boundaries of an "aesthetic attitude."[159] Ballet is intertwined with historical precedent and social standing, but simultaneously pushes the limits of accessibility – aesthetically appreciating ballet requires a keenly trained eye for the technique, effectively limiting the reach and ostracizing unfamiliar individuals in the audience. In addition to limiting general reach, the professionalization of dance performance requires dancers to conform to existing normative aesthetics and train their bodies into obedience, eradicating full bodily autonomy and agency by disengaging with the practices of freedom.[160]

Dance and Power

Because ballet's unique identity as an aesthetic-athletic artform braids it with biopower, instances of power dynamics are commonly exploited across all aspects of dance training and performance. Ballet training serves to increase capacity for bodily discipline and limit productive

[157] Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 31.
[158] Rancière, "The Distribution," 3.
[159] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 121.
[160] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 112.

agency.[161] On a macro level, dance depends on the tension between training and freedom. It relies on the human ability to control and discipline a body until the dancing body appears to move with freedom and effortlessness on a surface level.[162] The body in ballet generally is defined by existing discursive projections of man vs. nature. The mastery of nature and born ability are central to achieving success in the ballet world.[163] This domination of physical nature until freedom is feigned evokes the invisibility of biopower under political governance. Ballet performance then becomes a public site of private negotiations of emotions, made possible by immense awareness of and control over the body.[164]

Key to unpacking ballet's emergence as a fine art, the socializing of the body contributes to the impartation of ideology onto the body from an outside reference source by exploiting a lack of bodily consciousness, predisposed by surveillance.[165] In the context of ballet, socializing of the body primarily occurs in the dance classroom, where it is trained into dancers from a young age by their teachers. The dance classroom is an enclosed space where the disciplinary voice of the ballet master[166] is sole and all-encompassing; as enclosure is one of the facets of Foucauldian theory,[167] the mirrors of a dance studio can be interpreted as a non-carceral manifestation of the Foucauldian panopticon.[168]

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[161] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 119-120.
[162] Beausoleil, 119.
[163] Thomas, *The Body*, 108-109.
[164] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 119-120.
[165] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 37-38.
[166] In classical ballet companies, teachers, choreographers, and directors are often called ballet masters. (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, September 2023) In the ballet world, the ballerina is enslaved by the doctrine of the ballet master.
[167] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.
[168] The Panopticon is a prison theorized by Jeremy Bentham in which the illusion of surveillance was constant as a result of light beamed from the center of a cylindrical arrangement of jail cells. "Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behavior; knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised" (Foucault, 204).

Power is consolidated at the top of the ballet world,[169] and success in classical ballet is determined in a large part by genetic and nurtured thinness in combination with early commitment.[170] The functional sites created by repetitive dance training can be utilized to differentiate ideals and instill power. Repetitive exercise in adherence with a specific technique, like that of ballet, breaks down and reconstructs the body in a communal setting, in accordance with site-specific norms.[171]

In ballet class, students start by working at the barre, warming up their bodies and completing exercises designed to target and train specific steps, starting with the feet and working their way up the leg. These exercises, once mastered, are built upon in the center of the room, where the added challenges of balance and artistry become the focus. After center, the steps are combined for larger movements across the floor including fast traveling spins, leaps, and grand gestures. The order of a ballet class is never changed and, albeit the existence of small changes in different schools, is the same internationally. Each piece of ballet training at the barre separates the body into individual working parts, exercised in the same order, for the same amount of time, daily.[172] Over time the body of a dancer is disassembled into segments capable of articulating individual movement. The disruption of regular body functionality exposes the student to a lack of interpretive freedom.[173] The isolation of parts of the body is an example of the exertion of power over ballet students by ballet masters; power is seen within the disruption of the collected individual body and its separation into aspects that limits overall bodily agency.[174]

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[169] Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 237.
[170] Foster, 242-243.
[171] Foster, 239.
[172] Thomas, *The Body*, 97.
[173] Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 242-243.
[174] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 152.

The developing dancer is simultaneously restricted by the boundaries of their perceived body and serves as an example of the desirable body to those around them;[175] dancers are expected to adhere to norms passed from teacher to student, but still uphold the norms and perpetuate their existence by simply living in normative bodies. The teacher's authoritarian rule over a classroom combined with the presence of mirrors and fixation on the body creates competitive division amongst those who should function as peers and allies. Competition is further driven by the way dancers are taught from a young age that they are never enough and could easily be replaced by those around them.[176] The aesthetic standards for perfection and necessity of mastery for advancement make comparison innate to the ballet environment.

Simultaneously, self-selection for ballet leads to failure across the entire dance world,[177] as perfectionist tendencies can limit artistic growth and diversification of performance quality. While ballet is rigid and prescribed, performance is supposed to appear individualized. The ballet dancer's main goals, imposed personally and by instructors, are accuracy and precision; in ballet, there is a right and wrong way to do everything.[178] Dancers seek an illusion of mastery coupled with a perceived domination over their bodies, craving the rush of moments where it feels attainable to be perfect.[179]

In ballet, the body acts as both an object to be controlled and a site of artistic freedom.[180] Through dance training, the body has been reconstructed with the goal of stasis in the face of movement, but also has been encouraged to express itself within prescribed choreography, allowing for embodied practices of critical inquiry and agency to be part of political identity.[181]

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[175] Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 242-243.
[176] Foster, 242-243.
[177] Foster, 243.
[178] Thomas, *The Body*, 97.
[179] Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 237.
[180] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 2.
[181] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 112.

Control within the ballet world extends beyond the dancers to the audience.[182] When the body performs, freedom and resistance are enacted publically.[183] Freedom of the body to be an agent of desire, the dominating instinct behind consciousness in performance,[184] is limited by the confines of society's preconceived expectations regarding laborious production.[185] The contemporary laboring body appears in the body of a performing dancer, as social construction is expressed physically and reflected back to an audience.[186] The disciplining of the body is then transferred to the audience, who absorb the hyper-control and receive the dictated message of social norms,[187] crafted by the nation-state and disseminated through the ideological apparatus.

The physical act of dancing in a performance of ideology is not solely enough to transfer a dancer or director's ideology onto a community. Rather, the performance must be extended beyond the theater and into the ethos of the company to fully prosper.[188] Despite the body's emergence from objectivity into a space of agency, it cannot be read explicitly by non-aestheticized social thought. Instead, body performance is utilized as a "corrective to contemporary political practice," where consent and consciousness meld within individual bodily pride and resistance.[189] Because ballet is an artform of sculpted movement and mime, the meaning is hidden behind layers of prescribed intention from choreographers and dancers.

With ballet's techniques and training regimens discussed earlier, social standards and beliefs are embedded into the body and passed down generationally.[190] In the West, women's

[182] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 138.
[183] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political,* 2.
[184] Martin and Aronowitz, 9.
[185] Martin and Aronowitz, 67.
[186] Martin and Aronowitz, 45.
[187] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 122; The relative autonomy and seeming lack of agency of a choreographer under a socialist regime represses desire and inhibits performative analysis (Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political,* 128).
[188] Martin and Aronowitz, 175.
[189] Martin and Aronowitz, 11.
[190] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 128.

bodies are commoditized and viewed as a socially constructed idealization of femininity.[191] The female body in dance is manipulated physically to eradicate individuality and become vulnerable to public discourse.[192] The ballerina becomes a symbol of desirability and femininity through domination of the body. Because of the invasive gaze of desire, inequality looms large in the world of classical ballet. As previously described, female dancers do not bear the sole effects, but carry the bulk of the negative results of desire on the physical, aesthetic artform. For male ballet dancers, "hegemonic masculinity is heterosexualized" by the invasiveness of desire.[193] Classical ideals of masculinity are embodied by male dancers to proactively counteract the culturally inherent emasculation of ballet. Like the bodies of ballerinas, male dancers are expected to represent heteronormative notions of gender by professing and elevating the athleticism and elitism of male techniques in ballet.[194] The bodies of dancers become especially effective intervention sites for other societal norms, because they are already *success stories of biopolitical intervention*.

These totalitarian dynamics of ballet, like the isolation of aspects of the body, drive for perfection, and cultivation of competition, are visible in aspects of the real socialist agenda. My claim is that in the cases of Cuba and Yugoslavia, dance training serves as an example of national transformation and ideological indoctrination. In Cuba, ballet disseminated ideals of labor and race reflective of Castro's government policies that constructed the valor of the New Man and the persistence of "racelessness." In Yugoslavia, physical culture proliferated a Eurocentric and youthful identity devoid of ethno-religious differences that the Titoist regime struggled to induct into the Yugoslav population, as a mechanism of undercutting the damage

[191] Thomas, *The Body*, 35.
[192] Winter, "'The Healthful," 37.
[193] Haltom and Worthen, "Male Ballet," 758.
[194] Haltom and Worthen, 770.

done by ethno-religious massacres during WWII. The highly surveilled ballet classroom in Cuba and the artistic-athletic training during Sokol in Yugoslavia helped to diminish the agency of the individual body and indoctrinate ideology into dance performance.

Methods and Design

Decisions and Discussions: Cultural History, Evidence, and Historic Language

This thesis takes a culturally historiographical approach towards unpacking the socialist politics of nation-states. Dance historians and students use cultural history to unite political moments with historic choreographed work and expose patterns of movements to look critically at dance's broader social impact.[195] In addition to the accepted practice of using cultural history to understand dance history, cultural history diffuses the political narrative and distributes power from a singular person in history to a community of actors who bolstered government ideological missions.[196] The rewriting of history to centralize cultural figureheads and activities in of itself is similar to rechoreographing or setting a dance performance with contemporary political motivations, as occurred with *Giselle* and the Day of Youth.

I chose visual evidence as my method of interpretation for a culturally rooted argument because of the aesthetic nature of ballet and balletic movement. While secondary analysis of movement is prolific, descriptions and interpretations of physical events and performances cannot replicate or rival watching the event itself. I studied ballet pre-professionally for 16 years, 15-25 hours a week, at a Cuban training school under Cuban instruction. Since moving to college, I have continued my dance training more casually at a school that prioritizes Vaganova (Russian) style training. Because I will be using my dance training and tuned eye for the ballet technique in my interpretation, the videos, supplemented with written primary and secondary

[195] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 7.
[196] Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 5.

sources, will enable me to construct my argument based on personal perception and interpretation.

The broader context for my thesis is the greater history of the Cold War and its influence on socialist policies in both Cuba and Yugoslavia. Currently, historians struggle with understanding Castro's and Tito's regimes as simultaneously part of and removed from the global context of the Cold War.[197] While it is impossible to ignore the geopolitical influence the USSR and Stalin's tension with the United States had on contemporary developing socialist nations, for concision, discussion of this greater global climate will be limited. Using a cultural historiographical method, as well as my outside perspective, provides me with the agency to highlight the connections most central to my argument, and disengage from prescribed narratives of capitalism vs. communism. By looking from a Cuba-centric and Yugoslav-centric point of view, the discussion productively focuses on the revolutionary ideology of real socialism that both Castro and Tito presented to their respective nation-states.[198]

I will use historically influenced terms to refer to race and ethnicity throughout my thesis. In the case of Cuba, I will use Black and Afro-Cuban to indicate Cubans of African descent. Because of the diversity resulting from centuries of racial blending during and after Spanish colonial rule in Cuba, race is an incredibly varied and complex topic in the nation. Where possible, I will base my use of racialized terms on those used in the literature as well as the primary sources utilized as evidence. I use historically accurate terms alongside politically correct vocabulary to emphasize the tone and classification of race at the time, while retaining a sensitive dialogue. On a different note but relating to vocabulary specific to Cuban history, I will

[197] Lambe and Bustamante, 15.
[198] Lambe and Bustamante, 5.

use the term "the **R**evolution"[199] to refer to the period immediately following former president Fulgencio Batista's ousting in Cuba and the following decades of real socialism under Castro.[200] For the case in Yugoslavia, I will be referring broadly to ethnic and religious diversity across the South Slavic region. When necessary, I will delineate between different regions and religions, but as I focus on the ideology of Yugoslav collectivity, I will not give much detail to the experience of specific ethno-religious groups.

Why Study Cuba and Yugoslavia?

This thesis examines two cases of dance performances or ballet-inspired movement under socialist regimes at the peak of national support for the socialist dream. In order to utilize the framework of real socialism, I have selected video sources from time periods during which the myth of the success of socialism was alive and thriving within the two nations to use as my primary form of evidence,

In Cuba, I chose to analyze *Giselle* and its relevance to Alicia Alonso and Cuban ballet because of its Romantic heritage and canonical association with Alonso's fame. Alicia Alonso took creative liberties with Romantic era choreography, and used Romanticism to solidify international recognition of the Cuban school of ballet.[201] *Giselle* represented the pinnacle of Romantic ballet when it premiered in 1841,[202] and to this day proposes Romantic era values like "the triumph of the bourgeoisie in a veiled way."[203] Because of the link between *Giselle* and Romanticism, ballet was able to function in Cuba as an advocate for the prosperity of Eurocentric culture. Alicia Alonso's first performance of *Giselle* in 1942 challenged the notion of

[199] The capital "R" indicates a differentiation between revolution and "The Revolution," a specific era in Cuban history.
[200] Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 2.
[201] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 168.
[202] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 102-103.
[203] Alderson, "Ballet as Ideology," 127; The use of the term veiled here evokes the earlier discussed definition of ideology. In this case, romantic ballet is a veiled distributor of bourgeois ideology.

ballet being solely for Europeans, and also broadened American's imagination of Cuba, which previously had been relegated to vivacious clubs, music, and art.[204] Alonso's dancing embodied a core paradox of Cuban nationality – the struggle between European classicism and indigenous culture. Alonso's popularity also presented the questions: "How could something be Cuban and European at the same time? How could Alonso's classicism be faithful to its European origins if her dance had a Cuban tone? How could her Cubanness be authentic if it was tackled through a European canon?"[205] To answer these questions and elaborate on the presence of cultural discrimination in Cuba, I refer to a 1980 video of Alonso performing the titular role of *Giselle*.[206]

Alongside the impact of ballet in Cuba, a rich history of modern and folk dance exists in the country that was choreo-politically significant after 1959.[207] However, folk dance would warrant its own thesis that is disconnected from ideas of Romanticism and Eurocentrism, so my thesis will solely focus on ballet. Additionally, this chapter does not intend to ignore the different sentiments dancers at BNC felt toward the Cuban government. Governmental support was not a singular narrative. Cuban ballet did not uniformly accept and bolster government ideology – relations between government and dancer were more personal and complex, as ballet absorbed aspects of totalitarianism like the power dynamic but rebelled against expectations of performativity.[208] However, because this case centralizes Alicia Alonso, an avid proponent of Castro's beliefs, pro-socialism is the narrative my argument follows.

For the case in Yugoslavia, I chose to focus on the Day of Youth because of the balletic movements present and the characteristically socialist aesthetic resulting from widespread

[204] Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban," 263.
[205] Tomé, 265-266.
[206] "Cuban Prima," video.
[207] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 65.
[208] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 163.

national practice of the same movements. The choreography of the movement has meaning that can be extrapolated, separate from discussing whether it was successful as a method of constructing identity. In the former Yugoslavia, *slets* were massive, ritualized, socio-political events hosted by the government on different occasions.[209] At the heart of conceptual ritual is practice, preparation, and maintenance of a socio-physical skill.[210] This practice is similar to the training in a dance classroom, where the individual body is disciplined to become a physicalization of aesthetic ideology. Through the politicized choreography of slets, "ideology [was] inscribed directly into the body."[211] In addition to the relevant embodiment of ideology, the presentation of slets allows them to be analyzed from a lens of sports history or dance history even as they are neither, strictly speaking.[212] This genre freedom allowed me flexibility in my interpretation of the movement, opening up conversations that united physical culture in Yugoslavia with both East and West throughout history.

May 25th, Tito's birthday and the Day of Youth in Yugoslavia, was the most popular annual slet.[213] "The Youth Day stadium spectacle offered the most comprehensive image of Yugoslav socialist aestheticism that could be surveyed in a single glance."[214] The novelty and ritualization of the unison movement on the Day of Youth generates relevant comparison with Baroque era movement,[215] the time period during which ballet was first codified.[216] Physical culture in Yugoslavia sought to bring together different ethnicities to perform the regime-

[209] Vujanović, "Social Choreography".
[210] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects."
[211] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[212] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects".
[213] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[214] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 97.
[215] From a dance history perspective, the spectacle of the Day of Youth mimics the spectacle of *Ballet Comique de La Reine*, where dance, song, music, and acting came together in a dynamic presentation of loyalty to the King of France. In the Day of Youth, multimedia performance and physical activity combine to pay tribute to Yugoslavia's illustrious leader, Josip Broz Tito.
[216] Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 50.

imposed illusion of a unified country.[217] The regular rehearsal of the Day of Youth alongside its performance highlights the impact of social choreography – ordinary people representing ordinary people, whose bodies are mechanisms along which collective history takes shape.[218] From the several Day of Youth celebrations whose recordings are still available, I chose to examine the earliest recordings I could find, which serve as a close to accurate representation of the intention of the choreographed movement, as well as reflect the belief in the Yugoslav mission, before support began to dissipate following Tito's death in 1980. While several scholars have examined the deterioration of order within slets performed after Tito's death and leading to the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia,[219] my main visual analysis is on a clip from the taping of the 1957 Day of Youth.[220] Because this video clip is incomplete, I will supplement my analysis with references to the recordings of the 1972[221] and 1979[222] slets, which are complete.

My argument relies on the contrasting elements of these cases. This thesis is not an exploration of classical ballet universally under totalitarian regimes. Rather, it uses two different infusions of ballet under socialism to explore how movement mobilizes citizens towards a new ideological understanding of nationhood. Dance, like socialism, manifested itself differently under varying government regimes with the purpose of constructing alternate and new notions of nationality. While certain elements, like the heroism of labor, remain consistent across the cases analyzed, definitions of gender norms and delineations across race and ethnicity differ greatly, as demonstrated visually by the divergent balletic moments.

[217] Djeparoska, "Macedonian Cultural," 11.
[218] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.
[219] Vujanović, "Social Choreography;" *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*; Petrov, "Telesni projekti."
[220] "Prvi DAN MLADOSTI," video.
[221] "DAN MADOSTI 1972," video.
[222] "DAN MLADOSTI 1979," video.

What is Nation and How is it Different from State and Nation-State?

Political science makes important distinctions between nation, nation-state, and state, to clarify the systems of power being analyzed, referenced, and exploited. Nation is a coalition of power resulting from shared language, land, and cultural history – it clings to the modern apparatus of the state to become a nation-state possessing the power to disseminate cohesive ideology.[223] The modern iteration of the state both altered and partially constructed the modern nation by integrating more bureaucracy and overall economic governance. Materiality of the state influences the production and reproduction of the more natural sentiments and aspects of nationality.[224] According to political theorist and philosopher Louis Althusser, "[t]he state (and its existence in its apparatus) has no meaning except as a function of *state power.* The whole of the political class struggle revolves around the state."[225] Because the establishment of the state requires class struggle and Marxist-socialism eradicates the existence of class, the state itself has no place in discussion under formal Marxism-socialism. The nation, however, can exist beyond the state and maintain its prominence under regimes of socialism, communism, or capitalism.[226]

Because the time periods of the cases in Cuba and Yugoslavia discussed in this thesis were periods of *real socialism* when adherence to Marxist theory in its pure form was prioritized, the countries will be referred to using "nation" or "nation-state." In these cases, the formal, class-dependent state does not exist on its own. When referring specifically to the institution of the state, its leaders, actors, and exertions of power in the case studies, "government" or "institutions of governance" will be used, as the state on its own cannot exist within the socialist definition. While state power is rendered irrelevant without capitalism, it is manifested as governmental

[223] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 96.
[224] Poulantzas, 99.
[225] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 94.
[226] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 93.

interference within the existence of the nation-state.[227] Under socialist governments, biopolitics are controlled by nation-state power.

Defining Socialism and 'Real Socialism'

Central to my argument is the concept of *real socialism*, specifically related to how it differs from general socialism, dictatorial socialism, and communism. Marxism calls for a re-centralization of innate humanity, which defined socialism with a broader sense of equity and humanistic tone.[228] Using a background of Marxism, colloquially, real socialism is historically seen simply as "'real existing' or 'developed' socialism."[229] However, in greater discussions of political theory, real socialism can be explained by three main definitions. First, real socialism is pure socialism that centralizes the working class and encourages reforms from an authoritarian model based on Marxism-Leninism. Secondly, real socialism is understood as a fixed time period within the socialist scheme that precedes communism, relying on stability in the face of existing or future instability.[230] Thus, real socialism emerges prior to socialist totalitarianism. Finally, the third definition of real socialism is socialism normalized and legitimized by cultural and societal production – specifically, a reform of communism.[231]

For this thesis, I will utilize the third definition and elaborate upon it; in addition to real socialism being a reform of communism constructed by cultural activity, I add that real socialism is socialism that is not actively failing.[232] Extrapolating beyond this definition, real socialism is the time period during which socialism was a real political option of governance in some parts of the world.[233] From our contemporary point of view there has been no real socialism. But, from

[227] Poulantzas, 99.
[228] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 198.
[229] Mervart, 196.
[230] Lebowitz, *The Contradictions*, 29.
[231] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 204.
[232] Carden, "In Search," 72.
[233] Carden, 74.

the lived perspective socialism was real in moments. Real socialism in Cuba and Yugoslavia was dependent on an ideological structuring of the nation by individual leaders while the nation was being built by the population from a clean slate – a new nation-state formulated by metaphorically reborn bodies, enlightened by new political theory.[234] The centralization of nationhood in this definition reconnects to the discussion of biopolitics in both Cuba and Yugoslavia.

Even as real socialism designates a time period where socialism was the political option allegedly supported by a majority, totalitarian aspects of governance were not entirely avoided; both Fidel Castro in Cuba and Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia demonstrated how a singular mythical figurehead can generate totalitarian thought amongst citizens and politicians. In this thesis, the concept of a state of exception will be utilized in understanding the rise of authoritarianism after the examined periods of real existing socialism, but mainly to understand the functional exceptionality of the dance classroom in general, as previously explained.

Labor and the resulting production of commodities are two key tenets necessary to understand the power dynamics of all political regimes.[235] Nation-state power is made material through both initial production and the social reproduction of labor.[236] In a period of real socialism, the modern body is valued by its utility to the political and economic goals of the nation-state through subjugation of the laboring body,[237] rather than the monetary value of their

[234] Lebowitz, *The Contradictions*, 12.
[235]There is a difference between the power exerted over a laborer by an authority when driven by capitalist motivations. Labor under capitalism is perceived as a performance of agency to achieve monetary supplementation (Lebowitz, 13).
[236] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 14.
[237] Foucault coined the term subjectification as the double existence of the subject central in the philosophical tradition and subjugated in the political sense (May, "Subjectification," 496-497); Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25-26.

production. Workers under socialism were reliant on the maintenance of the social contract[238] between the individual and the socialist government. The real socialist valuation of the socialist morals of the working class over the capitalist morals of the peasant class validated and strengthened the social contract.[239] Power was given up and agency revoked by citizens with the idea that the benefits from the governing regime would be automatically distributed equally back to the people.[240]

Socialism was validated by an existence of physical culture because of how it ideologically constructed the worker and their materiality through labor and production.[241] The production of labor simultaneously reproduced civic standards of morality,[242] because labor groups functioned as ideological state apparatuses. Strict time-tables of education and physical activity were core to socialist thought: management of time was key to maintenance of discipline.[243] While discipline was unilateral, nation-state repression was administered differently across the manifestations of intellectual and manual labor within a socialist regime.[244] For this thesis, ideological repression of the physically laboring body will be the focus. By recentering the body and focusing on the connections between dance and labor, ideology is reframed as an aspect of national identity circulated to and between individuals. The laborer is a construction of ideology and absorbs identity, therefore adapting to reflect constructed nationality.[245]

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[238] Harkening back to the earlier discussion and definition of real socialism, another point of view dictates that real socialism is the period of time in which the myth of the social contract was believed and supported (Lebowitz, *The Contradictions*, 132).
[239] Lebowitz, 136.
[240] Lebowitz, 132.
[241] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 99-100.
[242] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological," 89; This is the same process under which ballet 'teaches' morals.
[243] Time-management is also one of the main lessons taken from years of dance training. The discipline instilled by the power of the dance master regulates the individual body to their own internal re-productions of time tables (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 151).
[244] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 55.
[245] Lebowitz, *The Contradictions*, 24.

With the ideological repression of the physically laboring body, socialist regimes blurred the lines between individualism and collectivism in art.[246] Aesthetic performance and self-management are linked by the socialist control of the individual.[247] "It is from this perspective that it is possible to raise the question of the relationship between the 'ordinariness' of work and artistic 'exceptionality.'"[248] Because under socialist regimes individualism was to be avoided,[249] the relatively dominant presence of the individual within culture was at odds with the forced collectivity of real socialism.[250] This contradiction led to variation in government support of cultural activities. Arts were simultaneously under-funded and over-developed depending on whether they represented the self-management central to the political economy of the socialist aesthetic.[251] Culture was defined under socialism by the human subject[252] and bourgeois sentiment was to be eradicated to democratize culture.[253] Out of the eradication of bourgeois sentiment came the influence of "aesthetic socialism" which combined the strands of thought that separated cohesive social order under arts and the stratification of worthiness. Here lies a main contradiction and problem with the genre of aesthetic socialism: despite the erasure of class and vocal disgust toward bourgeois-coded cultural productions, aesthetic socialism in Cuba and Yugoslavia primarily deemed the European, Western practices of dance worthy of analysis and reproduction.[254]

[246] Rancière, "The Distribution," 39.
[247] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 5.
[248] Rancière, "The Distribution," 39.
[249] Poulantzas, *State, Power*, 66.
[250] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 203.
[251] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 11.
[252] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 203.
[253] Mervart, 205.
[254] Hewitt, "The Body," 39.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have elaborated upon my argument, that ballet and ballet-inspired movement under socialist regimes wrote Eurocentric ideals onto the bodies of non-European individuals to construct national identity with a goal of public approval, using the political and philosophical theories of biopower, ideology, and aesthetics as rationale. I have also outlined the basic political and philosophical principles and concepts I will utilize throughout my case studies in this thesis, as well as explained why they are necessary for visually reading ballet movements. With this backdrop, elaborations in the following chapters specifying the use of choreo-politics in Cuba and social choreography in Yugoslavia will be easier to discuss.

Chapter Three: Choreo-Political Reproductions of Romanticism: The Legacy of Colonial Power Hierarchies in Revolutionary Cuba

"Because, for us, to dance is not only to make poetry with the movement, but also to express, in the sensuality of this movement, in the aerial grace that characterizes our ballet, the quality of humanity and joy of life of our country."

- Dame Alicia Alonso, 2002[255]

Fig. 1 Alicia Alonso in *Giselle*, 1977 (Singer, "Remembering Alicia")

Introduction

When Alicia Alonso stepped onto the stage to perform *Giselle* in 1980, she was approaching the show with close to four decades of experience as the titular role and countless performances of the Romantic tragedy. In the ballet, Giselle, an ordinary peasant girl, is seduced by and falls for Duke Albrecht, disguised as a peasant, before finding out he has no intentions of marrying her.[256] Albrecht's betrayal drives Giselle mad and leads her to kill herself, becoming a

[255] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 183.

[256] Interestingly, the story of *Giselle* was inspired by an earlier law from the Middle Ages, the *Droit du Seigneur*, which granted the lord of an estate the permission to take the virginity of any of his peasants without obligation to marry (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, September 2023).

wili – the ghost of a scorned woman who comes alive at night to haunt her former lovers and force them to dance to death.[257]

Giselle, while firmly fixed in Romantic era sentiments and heteronormative gender dynamics, has often been read by the modern eye in a more feminist light. Myrtha, the queen of the wilis, attempts to kill Albrecht by forcing him to dance to death, but Giselle rescues Albrecht from his violent ending, despite him having taken her virtue and broken her heart.[258] This inversion on the typical motif of the damsel in distress rescued by a man is reminiscent of the relative power Alicia Alonso held in post-Revolutionary Cuba, despite the government's attempts to isolate women's labor to the household. As she disrupts gender roles, the character Giselle can exist across the two main worlds of the Romantic period – the real world and the mythical world.[259] Every time Alonso took the stage and became the role of Giselle, she cemented the public's imagination of herself as an untouchable superstar. With the choreography and repertory of the Ballet Nacional de Cuba (BNC), Alonso created a mythical status for herself in national politics. Reverence for Alonso in Cuba granted her the power to help create a new national identity that aligned with the vision of the socialist state.

Giselle occupied a core place in Alonso's heart and mind not just because of the success it brought her but also because of the Romantic heritage of the ballet and centrality of the story to ballet history. Alonso said:

> "I believe that out of all the classical and traditional ballets, *Giselle* can become the one that most easily manages to retain an original form, when approximations are made [due to the physio-oral nature of choreography]. The music and libretto are so defined, that if they are simply followed, the ballet emerges practically identical under the direction of any dance master."[260]

[257] Schwartz-Bishir.
[258] Schwartz-Bishir.
[259] Schwartz-Bishir.
[260] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 101.

Alonso's focus on the integrity and authenticity of the ballet highlights a central goal of the construction of Ballet Nacional de Cuba – the maintenance and reproduction of proper European technique despite the prominent and dynamic indigenous heritage and culture. Alonso's ability to mimic revered qualities of European ballet was bolstered by her historical knowledge of the Romantic period. Alicia was seen by dance critics at the time as a "Cuban heir of Fanny Essler,"[261] a French Romantic era ballerina known for her artistry.[262] Alonso fused her European training with her Cuban expressiveness to create a Cuban *school* of ballet[263] that blended classical and socialist aesthetics.

Giselle is just one example of the classical repertory selected by Alonso for BNC in an attempt to maintain the purity of the artform in Cuba. The classical repertory also limited critique from upholders of the international institution of ballet, acting with dedication to ensuring the longevity and authenticity of ballet as an artform.[264] Alonso's selection of classical repertory from the Romantic period highlighted her commitment to and reverence of the history of ballet. Choreo-politically, Alonso utilized ballet to mirror aspects of European aesthetic priorities onto identity in Cuba.

Alonso's double identity as a proponent of European dance and proud Cuban dedicated to the prosperity of the socialist Cuban nation-state, determined the course of the history of Cuban dance. Alonso fought to establish herself and Cuba as a dominant force in ballet and the arts broadly. Despite Alonso's prolific teaching and role on the global stage, it remained difficult to define what exactly was Cuban about her dancing. While she often referenced femininity and musicality when describing ballet, these identifiers are central to the foundations of ballet in

[261] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 169.
[262] RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, September 2023.
[263] Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban," 267.
[264] Tomé, 268.

general – not just in Cuba.[265] The link between national identity and ballet in Cuba created a feedback loop, where identity influenced art simultaneous to the efforts of art to construct identity. The embedded pre-existing Cuban nationality makes Cuban ballet stylistically different from other schools of ballet, but the Cuban identity is not always clearly visible. With her described poetry of movement and elevation of grace, humanity, and joy, Alonso created a ballet technique that aimed to reconstruct national identity.

The choreo-politics of Alicia Alonso's *Giselle* presented Cuban national culture under socialism as grounded in European norms. During Alonso's tenure as artistic director at BNC, Cuba's racialized histories of colonialism were not critiqued. Rather, Alonso's style of dance constructed a "New Man" that reflected ideals of labor and race aligned with Castro's visions for the country. Despite their claims to "racelessness," both dance and the Revolution were not a break from the past but rather an extension of biopolitical colonial policies and ideologies.

Ballet in Cuba: Intimately Intertwined with Politics

During the Revolution, Cuban ballet became a codified school of movement which emphasized its "Cubanness," based on the stylistic choices but also the purported equity with which dance was both performed and consumed. Dancers "performed revolutionary qualities of loyalty, discipline, and sacrifice and highlighted how their work contributed to the Revolution by garnering international acclaim or fostering antiracist and populist priorities."[266] Dance was a soft power, capable of accomplishing international narrative changes regarding policy that politicians could not.[267] As Cuban ballet, specifically BNC, became internationally revered,

[265] Tomé, 267.
[266] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 96.
[267] Schwall, 159; While touring internationally, all Cuban dancers were seen as "exotic" and non-white, despite their actual skin color. This bolstered Alonso's feigned "color blindness" (Schwall, 172). As Cuban dancers were allowed to tour across Europe and the US, their diversity became used as a political means of exploitation, in order to show the social benefits of socialist regimes (Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 9).

cultural appreciation of socialist Cuba increased despite the West's retained hostility towards socialist policies that were present during the Cold War era.

Alicia Alonso, neé Martinez, was born on December 21, 1921, in Havana Cuba, and grew up in a middle-class family with two siblings. She was first exposed to dance at a young age on a family trip to Spain;[268] upon her return to Cuba she began studying drama, cultivating the acting skills for which she became renowned.[269] Alonso began her ballet classes at *Sociedad Pro Arte Musical*, a local arts organization run by her future mother-in-law Laura Rayneri de Alonso.[270] During Alonso's childhood, the ballet classes at Pro Arte were taught by Russian emigrant Nikolai Yavorsky,[271] who was committed to revitalizing ballet internationally.[272] One of Pro Arte's missions was to extend ballet training beyond the dominant elite class in Havana;[273] regardless of this mission, Pro Arte remained dependent on bourgeois funding.[274] During Alicia's training, her mentors and teachers were wealthy Europeans and Russians and her fellow students were mainly white, as most communities of *high-culture* were prior to the Revolution. Alicia trained and performed under a variety of teachers like Yavorksy,[275] Enrico Zanfretta (Italian), and Alexandra Fedorova (Russian).[276] Additionally, it was at Pro Arte where Alicia first met Fernando and Alberto Alonso, Laura Rayneri de Alonso's sons.[277]

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[268] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 3.
[269] Terry, 4; Giselle is a role in ballet which requires tremendous acting skill, specifically in the famed mad scene at the end of Act 1.
[270] Terry, 5.
[271] Yavorsky touted the importance of bodily perfection, saying "[dance] is one of the most complete and ennobling exercises known to educate the body" (Yavorsky quote from Schwall, *Dancing with*, 14).
[272] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 14.
[273] Schwall, 24.
[274] Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban,' 270; In this case, bourgeois refers to the middle class fixated on financial and social gain.
[275] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 14.
[276] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 12; While the variety in training styles Alonso receieved led to the development of her distinct style, in retrospect, Alonso deemed her training in the Italian school with Enrico Zanfretta, and her training in Fokine-style Russian ballet, were most influential (Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 27).
[277] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 5.

Alicia and Fernando Alonso were married in 1937, shortly after they moved to New York City, and had their first child, Laura, in 1938. The two were involved with many theatrical and dance performance troupes during their time in New York. Most notably of these due to the international fame it brought her was Alicia's involvement with an early iteration of American Ballet Theater.[278] Alicia officially joined the recently founded Ballet Theater in 1940, a time during which the company was growing and indivisible in spirit.[279] While in New York, Fernando also became a company member,[280] "thus making it possible for the two not only to be together in the same company but also to be free at the same time for visits to Cuba and for the initial efforts to give ballet a professional foothold in Havana."[281]

Alicia Alonso had a major retina surgery in 1941 and was bedridden for the better part of the year, during which she prepared for her first performance of *Giselle*. Alonso regarded her study of the role while blind in her bed as a sort of metaphysical-bond building between herself and the movement.[282] She continued to dance against doctor's orders, leaving her with permanent partial blindness.[283] During Alonso's residency with Ballet Theater, dance critic John Martin wrote frequently about her, noting in 1945 that the "extraordinarily brilliant young

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[278] Terry, 12-13; Alicia's career at American Ballet Theater was particularly notable because American Ballet Theater remains one of the two most influential ballet companies in the United States, alongside George Balanchine's New York City Ballet. At Ballet Theater, Alonso met and worked with Michel Fokine. Fokine greatly altered the construction of ballets and motivations behind dancing. "Early in his career, Fokine concluded that ballets should be artistically unified, that outworn conventions should be discarded, and that choreographers should seek to be expressive at every moment in their productions" (Anderson, *Ballet and Modern*, 127-128). His drive to generate new, unified works that retained the magic of old school ballet but pushed towards modern boundaries was foiled by the new work Alonso later commissioned as Artistic Director at BNC.

[279] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 12-13; Sir Anton Dolin, famed English dancer and choreographer, spoke of Alonso's time at Ballet Theater with reverence, "I first worked directly with Alicia in my staging of *Pas de Quatre*, which we were going to do for our second season, at the Majestic Theater. Nana Gollner was the Taglioni; Nina Stroganova, the Grahn; Katherine Sergava, the Cerrito; and Alicia was my Grisi" (Terry, 16-17). Dolin references famous ballerinas of the Romantic period, demonstrating the deep historic and cultural ties ballet has, which unite individuals across differences in culture and identity.

[280] Terry, 12-13.

[281] Terry, 18.

[282] This reflects the general ethos of ballet dancers – that nothing is worth not dancing for.

[283] Terry, 22.

ballerina from Cuba will one day be one of the great Giselles." Alonso became a principal dancer with the company in 1950, after a decade performing ballet of different styles: Russian, Italian, French, and American.[284] Alicia's early performances of Giselle within the Americas and across the European sphere of influence helped solidify her as the international image of a Cuban ballerina.

Contemporaneously, Alberto Alonso, Fernando's brother, worked to establish a vibrant and thriving Cuban ballet community. Cuba at the time was internally regarded as a country of people "without history," having been culturally decimated by the Spanish colonial power,[285] and Alberto viewed ballet as a way to undo this cultural erasure. His commitment to dance was marked by a trip with Yavorsky to Europe to try and revive the Ballet Russes.[286] Beginning in the 1950s, the competing dance schools and companies founded and run by the Alonso family liberated the ballet landscape and reignited cultural fire in Cuba. Ballet Alicia Alonso was established in 1953 under the direction of Alicia, Fernando, and Alberto as a school and performing company, before Alberto split off to found his own company, Ballet Nacional.[287]

United in their goal of broadening appreciation of ballet in Cuba, Ballet Alicia Alonso and Ballet Nacional differed in politics and day-to-day governance. Ballet Alicia Alonso was later described by dancers as an autocracy run by Alica herself, while Ballet Nacional dancers felt they were a part of a democratic ballet company.[288] According to Caridad Martínez, a student of Alicia Alonso's, "[e]veryone was caught under the monopoly of Alicia."[289] The ballet world

[284] Terry, 31.
[285] Lambe and Bustamante,"Cuba's Revolution," 8.
[286] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 10; Diaghilev's Ballets Russes was a company based in Paris in the 1910s-1920s which brought ballet into the modern era. Notable amongst the Ballets Russes choreographers and dancers are Vaslav Nijinsksy and George Balanchine (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, October 2023).
[287] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 34.
[288] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 18.
[289] Martínez quoted from López, "'No Hice."

in Havana revolved around the Alonso family dynasty; regardless of which company aspiring dancers wanted to join, connections to the family were vital for success as a dancer.[290] The power of the Alonsos in the dance world in Cuba granted them biopolitical agency to sculpt bodies while creating and enforcing social norms.

Ballet Alicia Alonso and Ballet Nacional faced a crisis with Fulgencio Batista's rise to power. Batista's dictatorship attempted to limit the cultural productions of Cuba, including ballet. Batista, President of Cuba from 1940 to 1944 and 1952 to 1959, withdrew subsidies from dance companies and attempted to shut down all cultural production in Cuba. With public support, Alicia Alonso responded by refusing to perform again in the country while he retained power. On September 17th, 1956, she and the members of Ballet Alicia Alonso performed at a rally against Batista's government. This rally was the company's last performance until after Fidel Castro's socialist Revolution.[291] By the time of the July 26th, 1959, overthrow of Batista, ballet appreciation was isolated to a remaining few within the primarily Havana-based Cuban cosmopolitan bourgeoisie.[292]

After Batista cut the dance budget, Alicia and Fernando focused on potential future support from a different political regime, intertwining the ballet world with the socialist movement.[293] Because ballet was limited under Batista's dictatorship, performance itself became an act of protest and demonstrated allegiance with the burgeoning Revolutionary regime. Alicia and Fernando found support from Castro's government. In 1960 Fidel Castro promised Fernando and Alicia Alonso $200,000[294] to start the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, which from then on was

[290] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 22.
[291] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 39.
[292] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 147.
[293] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 35.
[294] Or equivalent in USD at the time.

permanently subsidized by the Cuban socialist government.[295] Ballet Alicia Alonso became Ballet Nacional de Cuba, and Ballet Nacional under the direction of Alberto Alonso ceased to exist. Castro himself professed that "[b]allet, without any doubt, constitutes one of the highest and most beautiful of artistic manifestations… It has already established a tradition in our country due to the effort made by private institutions, primarily the Ballet Nacional de Cuba."[296] Their simultaneous efforts to transform culture and identity inspired Castro to fund Alicia's ballet.

The Revolution created a political climate in which ballet in Cuba could be codified – taught, performed, culturally ingrained – and thrive.[297] Castro was inspired to alter culture and views of history in reflection of the new political structure. To increase support for a new national government, Cuban political and cultural leaders tried to foster an identity based on differentiating themselves from their own colonial past.[298] One key rationale the Alonsos used to receive government funding was the economic benefit of keeping talent within the Cuban nation-state, instead of sending dancers for training abroad.[299] When establishing funding schemes, the Consejo Nacional de Cultura (CNC) divided dance into two subgroups – ballet and everything else. While modern and folk companies fought for more government support, ballet maintained financial and socio-cultural superiority, codified by the CNC's created hierarchy.[300]

Resulting from the direct funding of the ballet, BNC became a microcosm of exception under the socialist nation-state. In Cuban dance schools, young aspiring dancers were trained to

[295] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 2.
[296] Castro quoted from Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet*, 52.
[297] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 45.
[298] Colonial reproduction was largely frowned upon by strict Revolutionaries, but historians at the time questioned the relationship between apparent colonialized cultural reproduction and politics (Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 8).
[299] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 31.
[300] Schwall, 82; Modern and folk dance groups in Cuba were fighting against a government and society already so enveloped in ballet that there was little space for other dance achievements (Schwall, 76).

serve as physical examples of ideal Cuban bodies, as well as orators of the politics of the Cuban nation-state. At BNC, Revolutionary loyalty by ballet dancers necessitated close attention to Alicia Alonso and a general aspiration to rival her artistically and politically.[301] This competition with the idolized Alonso created an ideology surrounding ballet where Alonso's own physical attributes and political beliefs were the model for Cuban identity: white-domination, heteronormativity, social privilege.

Ballet became an educational tool on the principles of Revolutionary socialism as well as a cultural export that allowed the Revolution to appeal to artistic communities abroad.[302] Dancers were able to tour internationally despite travel restrictions under Castro's regime, demonstrating the power ballet had in managing government affairs and the international perception and imagination of Cuba.[303] Critical to this power, however, was widespread national support for the ballet. Education, including arts education, was core to the Revolutionary sentiment of modernization. For educational modernization to occur, dance had to appeal to Cuban audiences. Therefore, dance organizations had to teach the public how to enjoy watching dance, particularly ballet.[304] At BNC, the democratization of ballet was attempted or at least displayed; post-Revolutionary ballet performances were accessible and affordable.[305] BNC dancers performed at venues for cosmopolitans and farm laborers alike, often at a heavily subsidized rate. In addition to more standard performances, BNC orchestrated outreach programming with the intention of teaching communities how to watch and discuss ballet.[306]

[301] Schwall, 91.
[302] Schwall, 167.
[303] Schwall, 158-159.
[304] Schwall, 130.
[305] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 8.
[306] Tomé, 8.

Despite the purportedly diverse national identity ballet in Cuba upheld, the nature of ballet as a historically white, bourgeois artform limited the reality of the social outreach. "Alicia Alonso's childhood and youth took place during the period of the blossoming of the Cuban avant-garde, highlighting the images of national (aboriginal and African American, Caribbean) identities."[307] Regardless of Alicia Alonso's personal childhood experiences, ballet under the Alonso family and Alicia Alonso in particular represented a discourse of high-culture that made the Revolutionary image within the country and abroad more sophisticated and refined, from a Eurocentric point of view.[308] Ballet in Cuba in the 1960s represented a space for citizens to move between *espíritu revolucionario* (revolutionary spirit) and *conciencia revolucionaria* (revolutionary consciousness) as socialism grew both in popularity and critique.[309] While serving as a primary form of national revitalization, BNC acted as an ideological apparatus of the Cuban socialist nation-state and utilized choreo-political practices to construct the identity of the new socialist nation.

Physical Labor and Ballet: Building the Body of the New Man

Cuban ballet dancers exemplified the desirable work ethic presented by New Man ideology within socialist Cuba.[310] Labor in Cuba was ideological and became aestheticized through various efforts from the Cuban government to create physical projections of national identity, such as the ballet. The New Man, a term coined by Che Guevara during the Cuban Revolution, referred to the encouragement of heroic-masculinity and idealization of physical labor to mobilize communities towards constructing the industry and culture of the new

[307] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers" 6-7.
[308] Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 19.
[309] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 148; At the heart of revolution is "mimicry masquerading as opposition." Fragments of political difference manifest themselves as cracks of social awareness (Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 7). The conflict between revolutionary spirit and consciousness reflects the notion of repetitive history regarding Batista and Castro's eventual overthrow.
[310] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 4.

nation.[311] "The performance of daily heroism determined the New Man,"[312] because the New Man of the Revolution was a citizen dedicated to a life of labor and hard work without complaint.[313] Ballet dancers' heroic embodiment of New Man ideology manifested itself both inside and outside the studio as they performed socialist ideals of work and production.[314]

Read within the political context of the New Man, ballet was an example of the necessary physical labor for societal transformation.[315] By highlighting the labor required for intensive training, ballet in Cuba moved beyond simply an aesthetic artistry and became concrete in its imagery and public perception; the laboring ballerina body is one explicitly defined in Cuba and transferable because of the integration of biopower to the dance classroom. Training and performing at BNC was seen by the government as a form of labor for the new nation, valued equally with working on farms or building infrastructure.

> "Each Cuban to his place of combat: the farmer to the plow, the worker to the workshop, the professional to his own activity; on our part, we [dancers] pledge to work toward our organization and professional growth with more dedication than ever, to take the best of our art to our people [and] carry a message of love and beauty to the 'poor of the land.'"[316]

By taking the stage daily, ballet existed to bolster socialist party beliefs, specifically the prioritization of daily physical labor,[317] as defined by the image of the New Man. The artistry required of dancers at BNC allowed them to channel the sentiment and feeling of heroism definitive of the New Man into their aestheticized performances of labor.[318] Because the choreo-politics of ballet in Cuba aligned labor with classical repertory, the choreography of the

[311] Cheng, "'Let Them," abstract.
[312] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 12.
[313] Tomé, 11.
[314] Tomé, 7.
[315] Tomé, 11.
[316] Ballet de Cuba, 1959, Quoted from Tomé, 8.
[317] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 9.
[318] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 12.

movement sculpted the body of the ideal Cuban New Man to be one reflective of Romantic era lines.[319]

The utilization of ballet, an elitist artform, as fuel in a proletarian movement relied heavily on publicly displaying the images of ballet dancers and workers together.[320] BNC's performances illuminated the similarities between ballet and other types of manual labor. Like farming or mining, ballet was a labor-intensive activity that required continued practice and daily movement.[321] The idea to use ballet as an aesthetic example of the power of a labor force was not a new idea invented by the Cuban government: "A wide variety of late-nineteenth-century labor theorists turned to the example of dance in their writings to explicate their notions of a natural labor that might harness and regenerate labor power rather than simply use it up."[322] This idea that natural labor, disciplined by the government into the body of the individual, could help reproduce labor power is exactly the cycle Castro attempted to construct in Cuba. Marxism and humanism approached the arts as a necessary and natural cultural production key to the advancement of broader society.[323] Castro utilized the Marxist idea of culture as a necessity and the concept of regenerative natural labor to posit the power of a uniquely Cuban ballet and create identity-driven work.

National demonstrations used ballet to increase awareness of Revolutionary ideology and positive perceptions of work and labor.[324] Dancers from BNC performed in factories across the

[319] In ballet, line refers to the line of the dancing body, generally referencing the shape and fitness of the limbs and the individual as a whole.
[320] Tomé, 6.
[321] Tomé, 10.
[322] Hewitt, "The Body," 40.
[323] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 198.
[324] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 7.

country, teaching laborers how to watch and appreciate ballet, while simultaneously showing their support for Castro's workforce.[325] Alicia Alonso believed that:

> "The people learn in these performances. . . . Their eyes become accustomed to watch, appreciate, discover details, and differentiate the perfect turn from one with small errors. . . . The Cuban people . . . learn and acquire knowledge with incredible rapidness, because they are offered good 'ballet' constantly. It is not the same to read a book one time a week as learning, reading, every day."[326]

These performances paired together the physical building of the *new* nation and the cultural building of new nationality. The performances often began with a demonstration of the daily barre exercises, to show the aesthetic beauty found in the monotony of repetitive practice.[327] Prompted by the movement from opera house to farm, the distance between ballet and the peasant class of rural Cuba was shortened. The standardized audience versus performer dichotomy was eradicated in these performances, which became sites of honesty and social fluidity for pro-socialist individuals.[328]

While dance itself was a form of labor, dancers also participated in the dynamic agricultural revolution occurring in the 1960s.[329] Alonso encouraged dancers to partake in farming coffee and sugarcane as a way to stay connected to more pastoral parts of Cuban national culture.[330] Despite dancers' inefficiency in fields, often seen dancing instead of working, their mere presence continued to aestheticize physical labor.[331] With their performances of labor, dancers drew attention to the de facto segregation rampant in Cuba: white dancers were viewed by Black citizens as mocking the daily heroism of historically Black laborers. Dancers' efforts to

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[325] *Classically Cuban.*
[326] Alicia Alonso quoted in Schwall, *Dancing with*, 141; The demonstrations of ballet to laborers solidified the racially based isolation of artforms (Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 11).
[327] Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 10.
[328] Tomé, 9.
[329] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 9.
[330] *Classically Cuban*; Sugarcane fields were historically sites of black and brown labor (Tomé, "Swans in Sugarcane," 14).
[331] Tomé, 15.

continue to labor outside of the studio and stage and onto crop fields demonstrated the desirable never-ending work ethic of the New Man.[332] With every performance, poster, and publicly displayed interaction between Alonso and Castro, the dancing body was choreographed to become a primary image of a united national workforce.

The "Raceless" Aspirations of Ballet Nacional de Cuba

Ballet's ability to rise to a place of social and political power in Cuba was partially due to its historic connections with whiteness and bourgeois expression, exposing the contradiction between Revolutionary sentiment and the mere existence of a Cuban school of ballet.[333] The question of race as a part of the definition of "Cubanness" exposes the political tension existent during Castro's presidency. Both consumption and production of ballet were critical to Castro's aspirations of racelessness in post-Revolution Cuba. Inspired by Castro's vision for a raceless and equal society, Alonso's ballet envisioned a raceless dance stage. By reproducing Revolutionary Cuba's *myth of racelessness*,[334] Alonso's ballet attempted to erase the country's legacies of racism and failed to thoroughly interrogate the lingering historical links between power and whiteness.

Beginning in 1959, the same year as Castro's original funding of the BNC, Castro had pushed forward with political missions to realize his ambitions for a raceless society through an anti-discrimination campaign designed to promote "racelessness" and national "unity."[335] Castro viewed racelessness as a necessary prerequisite to creating equity after generations of anti-Black racism under slavery. Under Marxist thought, racism cannot exist without capitalism, as

[332] Tomé, 13-14.
[333] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 12.
[334] Cuba at the time was governed by the fallacy of "racial democracy:" a social lack of race based on years of interracial mixing under colonial rule and chattel slavery with the purpose of whitening the skin tone of the nation as a whole (Garth, "'There Is No Race," 387).
[335] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet, 2.*

capitalism creates the structural hierarchy of individuals racism requires;[336] because of Castro's commitment to pure Marxist socialism, racism could not continue to rule over the social dynamics in post-Revolution Cuba. The efforts to neutralize race and integrate Cuba spearheaded by Castro between 1959 and 1961 had limited effects.[337] While formerly white only spaces were systematically opened up to all races and legislative racism was abolished, after the Revolution it remained socially difficult to establish oneself as a Black citizen.[338] Color prejudice in Cuba adapted to be enacted through class prejudice, in which upper-class-coded cultural activities pointed to worthiness and whiteness, and therefore lower class, often Black, cultural practices experienced discrimination.[339]

The development of cultural racism valorized certain cultural activities associated with whiteness to discriminate against Black people without defaulting to legally abolished, explicit anti-Black racism.[340] *La nivel de cultura* (in English the level of culture), the explicit valuing of cultural activities and exports that elevated white Cuban culture and subjugated Afro-Cuban culture, helped facilitate this valorization. "Nivel de cultura functions as a white supremacist ideology… contemporary racial thinking in revolutionary – and post-revolutionary – Cuba is a continuation of colonial racism."[341] La nivel de cultura upheld the historic model of whitening the nation developed by colonists, therefore playing into the racist constructions of cultural hierarchy that discriminated against Black bodies.[342]

[336] Garth, "'There Is No Race," 389.
[337] Benson, "NOT BLACKS," 24; Despite his vocal and physical efforts to eliminate racism, Castro retrospectively admitted that race remained a problem for post-Revolutionary Cuba (Benson, 25).
[338] Benson, 24.
[339] Garth, "'There Is No Race," 394.
[340] Garth, 389.
[341] Garth, 389.
[342] Garth, 387-388, 396.

Cuba's *quieted* racism under la nivel de cultura was a result of the history of colonialism and chattel slavery. Colonial rule both created overt racialized hierarchies of labor and extraction and prioritized and privileged white European cultural exports.[343] The racist legacies and histories of colonialism that relegated Black Cubans to farmlands and rural areas while elevating white Cubans to urban Havana were deeply embedded in the public collective mindset and social power dynamics, even after dramatic regime changes. Despite the Revolution's efforts, the government could not erase racism and discrimination from history and society in two short years.[344]

Ballet Nacional de Cuba aspired to democratize the high arts, expand the country's cultural proficiencies across race and class and produce a new national identity rooted in cultural endeavors. According to Alonso,

> "Ballet is a transformation over many years of dance that came from the people, it doesn't spring from any one class. That's why the Revolution thought it was important. Not only ballet but other arts as well which previously, for economic reasons were enjoyed by only one class. Now everyone in Cuba has the chance to enjoy them and participate in them."[345]

Alonso's empty aspirations echo the Castroism of "not blacks, not whites, but Cubans,"[346] suggesting that ballet itself was a component of Cuban identity representative of the country as a socialist whole. This aesthetic nationalism constructed as an amalgamation of aspects of movement and expression of all races, when in fact it was a reproduction of racist, colonial norms.

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[343] Garth, 396.
[344] Black women and mulatta women were particularly influential in raising awareness of their presence and discrimination faced during the anti-racism movement of the Revolution and decades of a supposedly raceless country that followed (Benson, "NOT BLACKS," 26).
[345] Alonso quoted from *Classically Cuban*.
[346] Benson, "NOT BLACKS," 24.

Alonso's dream of a raceless ballet depended upon and celebrated the diversity of its dancers and their unique movement styles, yet universalized and totalized this diversity. Alonso herself even described the Cuban ballet technique as being one dependent on diversity of both physical appearance and movement quality: "This is a stamp of the Cuban school of ballet: the integration of races."[347] Under Castro's regime, all schools across the nation taught the same curriculum, which included ballet training. Ballet students were pulled from diverse backgrounds and evaluated by teachers based on natural talent, skill, and physique[348] before being moved to Cubanacán,[349] the national arts school, for further training. Students at Cubanacán took some vocational and dance history classes, but non-ballet education was limited.[350] Cubanacán served as an ideological apparatus to the nation-state because it enabled the government to dictate maturity and limit education to areas that the nation-state deemed nationally beneficial. It isolated individual dancing bodies to specific doctrines of aestheticism and elevated a normative body: light-skin, thin, beautiful, physically able.

Some Black dancers embarked on formal training at Cubanacán, before realizing that despite the law promoting equality, de facto segregation reigned supreme in the school and BNC community.[351] Alonso wrote of Cubanacán, "Our school was created in order to destroy the myth that blacks should not dance ballet. The Cuban National Ballet unites all races: African, Latino, Asian, Caucasian."[352] Contrary to her written musings expressing racial equality within the

[347] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 40.
[348] *Classically Cuban*.
[349] Cubanacán was the formal arts schooling compound outside of Havana where strict training in the high arts occurred. Students at Cubanacán studied one of the five artforms most valued by Castro: Plastic Arts, Music, Ballet, Drama, Modern and Folkloric Dancing (UNESCO, 2003).
[350] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet,* 53; The inadequate preparation of students for life outside the orbit of BNC helped to perpetuate inequality amongst races in Cuba. As significantly fewer dancers of color were selected for professional careers, they were left without jobs and with no real education to pursue other occupations. In this way, the cycle of Black laborers to the former plantation fields continued and inequity in Cuba persisted in the face of socialism.
[351] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 71.
[352] Alicia Alonso quoted from Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers," 2.

Cuban school of classical ballet, pervasive racism built into the culture of Cuba prevented BNC from becoming a space of true racelessness under Alonso's direction. Few Black dancers were selected to progress from Cubanacán and become company members at BNC. Those who succeeded faced discrimination in the forms of overtly racist comments or exclusion from aspects of company life and performance.

One of the first Black ballerinas at BNC was Caridad Martínez,[353] arriving in the company in the 1970s, almost two decades after the company was founded.[354] She was excluded from performing in some BNC repertory like *Giselle,* because of her skin color and hair texture.[355] Of this exclusion, Martínez said, "They told me that my features were too strong for *Giselle*, that I couldn't put on the fragility of a wili and that my hair was too wild for the madness scene. I was frustrated and humiliated. I had the technique to dance all of it, but my blackness meant they would never give me the role of Giselle."[356] Raceless ballet was dependent on the exclusion against which it positioned itself. Discrimination within BNC highlights the failed aspects of Castro's anti-racism movement – no matter the national policy regarding racelessness, racism was embedded in aestheticized social life.

Martínez was also innovative as her dancing style and strayed from the norms of Ballet Nacional, adding to the alienation she experienced as a Black dancer. In 1985, as an act of protest against the toxic company culture, Martínez deserted BNC and created her own company Ballet Teatro de La Habana that drew Rosario Suárez, a famed dancer, and Jorge Esquivel, male star and Alonso's muse, away from BNC.[357] Martínez's ability to pull stars from BNC reflects

[353] Other famous black Cuban dancers include Catherine Zuaznabar, Andres Williams Dihigo, and Carlos Acosta (Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, 11-12).
[354] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, 9.
[355] López, "'No Hice."
[356] Martínez quoted from López.
[357] López.

the changes in sentiment towards the socialist regime as time went on. As the fallacies of racelessness became apparent within the institution of ballet, so did the faults of Castro's socialist government, despite Alonso's prolific use of ballet choreography to install ideology into students, performers, and audiences.

In addition to racism and discrimination in the company and school, Alonso encouraged the appropriation of Black folk dance by white dancers. Alonso said, "When the Latin, or Cuban, qualities appeared, they just seemed to come out, as if the richness of the earth were just getting into my art. This was not calculated. This richness of heritage and home was always there."[358] Her ballet *Antes de Alba* included white upper- and middle- class Cubans pretending to be lower-class Black Cubans, with Alicia herself performing a variation on the Columbia[359] – an Afro-Cuban folk dance usually performed by men.[360] This blending of cultural performances helped differentiate the Cuban technique from other schools of ballet without distracting from the classical repertory, but in reality acted as a form of toxic appropriation.

Regardless of the publicly dispersed narrative of ballet as a bourgeois-coded *artform for all*, looking retrospectively ballet in Cuba was an example of "blackness curated for a white gaze."[361] BNC became a respected arts and culture institution responsible for the widespread distribution of aestheticized elitist sensibilities.[362] Alonso was predominantly in charge of the adherence to the white ideal of ballet, and BNC continually elevated white bodies despite access to a diverse set of trained dancers.[363] With Castro's endorsement of the ballet, anti-Black racism

[358] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet,* 34-35.
[359] Despite its indigenous origins, the "columbia" is actually very balletic in nature. For example, the tornillo is similar to the ballet pirouette (Schwall, *Dancing with*, 45).
[360] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 42.
[361] Schwall, 66.
[362] Schwall, 68.
[363] Schwall, 25.

inadvertently became solidified into a cultural expression of segregation within dance.[364] The cultural segregation of dance served as an explicit codification of racism in the popular understanding of the nation-state. Ballet as an artform's own participation in the colonial era hierarchy of cultures limited the success of racelessness in the Cuban school of ballet and perpetuated the development of cultural racism prominent in twentieth century Cuban socio-political interactions.[365]

Dance serves as an example of the codified simultaneous existence of racism and antiracism in Revolutionary Cuba. In addition, Castro's antiracism campaign could be described as inclusionary discrimination, the process of co-opting black culture into Cuban identity within the confines of white aspiration.[366] In Cuba, ballet pilfered Black culture for choreography to generate a style of ballet both uniquely Cuban and appreciable by the larger Europeanized eye.[367] The Revolution gave space for the development of many different artistic institutions and beneficiaries; yet, by reproducing the privilege of the white, European-rooted ones, race remained key in understanding the power dynamics apparent within ballet and determining opportunity and success.[368]

From 1959 to 1961, Revolutionary leaders were successful in widening the access of public spaces and providing more accessible and equitable government resources. However, there was little follow through to ensure personal discriminatory practices and social racism ended.[369] After Castro announced that race no longer existed and racism could therefore no longer be a problem in Cuba, the government effectively relinquished the responsibility to

[364] Schwall, 68.
[365] Garth, "'There Is No Race," 394.
[366] Garth, 390.
[367] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 25.
[368] Schwall, 70.
[369] Benson, "NOT BLACKS," 29.

prohibit personal racism and individual instances of discriminatory practices.[370] Castro succeeded in removing blame from himself without intervening on the true racist thoughts many of his followers touted and implored. Cultural racism infected the national landscape; throughout the socialist period, appreciation and understanding of elitist white European cultural activity remained a key factor in the determination of political and social status.[371] By ending the formal antiracism projects in 1961, Castro closed the conversation on race prematurely and did not fully address the social implications of race in Cuba,[372] leading to a still-standing silencing of the conversation surrounding race in Cuba.

The mythical tagline of "not blacks, not whites, but Cubans," encouraged people of color to believe that throwing away their personal and collective history was required for assimilation to whiteness and integration with the citizens of the Revolution.[373] In order to be included in the new Cuban identity, Black citizens had to release the traumatic histories of segregation and slavery.[374] Therefore, while from Castro's point of view antiracism prevented active discrimination, it manifested as a project to inhibit Black people from speaking up against the cultural and social racism still prevalent. The Revolution was built upon a reproduction of social stratification under the veil of socialist reform. Colonialism in Cuba knitted together class, race, and culture, making the racialization of power central to understanding all discriminatory

[370] Garth, "'There Is No Race," 390.
[371] Garth, 397.
[372] Benson, "NOT BLACKS," 29.
[373] Benson, 24; Although Cuba presents as "raceless" internationally and citizens are verbal about the lack of racism within the country, racism persists structurally and within the public historic mindset (Garth, "'There Is No Race," 388). Interestingly, anti-Black racism remains structurally engrained in Cuba today, meaning that race and antiracism is still not a conversation regularly had (Garth, 387). There is almost just a fear of using or avoidance of the term racism in general.
[374] There is a sentiment of indebtedness to the socialist Revolution that Black Cubans carry, where there is opposition to blaming the government for race-based discrimination and instead a subjugation of urban poverty and culture being to blame (Garth, 399). One example of this is the case of Santiago de Cuba when compared to Havana. Santiago de Cuba is regarded as the black cultural center of Cuba. It has been structurally underdeveloped due to the lack of government resources it receives and inescapable legacies of racism which privilege white culture and disregard Black culture (Garth, 390).

dynamics.[375] Under socialist rule, instead of race being solely associated with economic power, through the elevation of white culture, race became linked with socio-political power. By fiscally and politically supporting the prosperity of high-*cultura*, the racelessness that Castro's Revolution sought to achieve was one of a white aspiration preceded by the history of Cuba built as a colonial outpost.[376]

Ballet could not free itself from the power dynamics embedded in its history. Colonial legacies were reproduced in the racism that transferred despite the political overhaul of the Revolution. Similarly, the European heritage of ballet in Cuba and its status as an artform brought over during colonization and distributed by chattel slavery, reinforced colonial legacies of white supremacy and elitism through its choreography and repertory.[377] Alicia Alonso was made famous by *Giselle*, a ballet known for its second act ballet blanc. Alonso's power internationally as the figurehead of Cuban ballet thus directly depended on her whiteness and the maintenance of whiteness at BNC. Alonso's direct influence over BNC created a Cuban ballet built in a European image to preserve the internationally acknowledged classical aesthetic. The choreo-politics of the company did not push against the established norm but rather utilized the Cuban school of ballet to set up a new Cuban national identity in adherence with white Eurocentric ideals.[378]

Conclusion

Ballet was instrumental in building a new Cuban cultural export and internationally palatable national identity.[379] Ballet was Revolutionary in Cuba as early as 1959 and participated

[375] Garth, 404.
[376] Garth, 387-388, 396.
[377] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 4.
[378] Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban," 271.
[379] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet,* 52.

in the social upheaval leading up to Castro's reign. However, uniting ballet and socialism required a reinterpretation of ballet history and aesthetics to model Cuban understanding of ballet as nationalist, socialist, and raceless.[380] Acknowledging the real cultural benefits of Ballet Nacional de Cuba, BNC revitalized the dying elitist aesthetic of post-colonial Cuba[381] and reflected out-of-date norms. As individuals hoping to gain success at BNC became more vocal about their pro-socialist sentiment, the choreography and choice of ballets became a component of Revolutionary identity. By extension, due to Alonso's own reverence for Romantic era ballets, performance of classic European ballet repertory like *Giselle* became synonymous with performing Revolutionary spirit.[382]

In Revolutionary Cuba, a faulty binary existed between government and people. This chasm perpetuated the historical myth that socialism was a top-down governmental intervention organized and dominated by Castro's charisma.[383] Alicia Alonso serves as an example of the false nature of this binary myth. By 1980, Alonso had established herself and her Cuban technique of ballet as paramount to the Cuban definition of the New Man and the success of the socialist mission. The goals of the socialist movement were displayed through the goals of performance but also day-to-day life in the company, as Alonso encouraged dancers to "dance in a way that fits their character and their culture."[384] Alonso had her dancers teach class as well as take class, so that they would not become self-involved and could be stronger as a collective.[385] Alonso's emphasis on collectivism does not mean that the socialist government was entirely supported, justified, or correctly understood by Alonso and the dancers at BNC. Rather, it

[380] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 155.
[381] Schwall, 147.
[382] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 91.
[383] Lambe and Bustamante, "Cuba's Revolution," 18.
[384] Alonso quoted from Tomé, "Giselle in a Cuban," 270.
[385] *Classically Cuban*.

highlights that Castro was not the only political celebrity making tangible daily changes that worked towards the success of the socialist agenda.

Even if BNC successfully contributed to a rebuilding of nationality through the creation of cultural activity, appreciation, and exportation, it did so by privileging culture from historically white areas and people. BNC did not accurately represent the whole of Cuban society and the government's sole support of the ballet isolated dancers. Caridad Martínez remarks, "In Cuba, you were a member of the BNC, you were from Camaguey, or you didn't dance. I even thought about going to the Danza Nacional, a folklore company, but I didn't dare. I was born in the company. I had a technique specific to ballet. I would have had to start over."[386] Any attempts toward constructing nationality by founding alternative spaces for dance, music, and culture that lacked a non-Europeanized, normative lens were effectively shut down by Castro's regime, when the CNC failed to evenly distribute socialist funding outside of the ballet.

The prioritization of Romantic era thought and norms, as seen through the importance of Alonso and *Giselle* to the newly founded socialist nation, aided in perpetuating Castro's political ideologies regarding idealized labor and construction of racelessness. Problematic social constructions of identity that delineated discriminatorily upon lines of labor, class, and race trickled down from the government to the bodies of individuals through the choreography of ballet. The choreo-political power of Alonso's dictatorship over culture in Cuba cannot be ignored; in fact, as the ballet grew in power, balletic ideals of body and individual became synonymous with Cuban ideals.

[386] Martínez quoted from López, "'No Hice."

Chapter Four: Performing Celebrations of Collectivity: Uniting Ethnicity Within the Bodies of Youths Through Rhythmic Movement

"One country, one nation, one Sokol movement."

- Declaration of the Sokol Association of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes[387]

Introduction

Annually during the weeks leading up to May 25th, the people of Yugoslavia would run a relay from town to town, passing along a baton. When the baton reached Belgrade, Pioneers and youth groups would gather to celebrate in a mass games spectacle. This event, called a *slet*, was a performance of rhythmic gymnastics, sports, and other performance arts, designed to demonstrate health, physical agility, youth, and beauty in unison choreography. Accompanying the physical movement displays were elaborate costumes and props highlighting the newly created national folk aesthetic of the unified Yugoslav ethnicities and cultures. The final part of the celebration would be the last leg of the relay race, where one selected individual would run the baton to Tito (or a stand-in for him in the years following his death) and deliver him a birthday card. This annual celebration of Yugoslav vitality and prosperity demonstrated the power of utilizing social choreography to mobilize maturing generations and perform a united Yugoslav national body. Choreography became ideological in that the constructed national dance repertory displayed in slets, as dictated by those in charge of the performance, promoted socialist ideologies celebrated on the Day of Youth.[388]

[387] Quoted from Vukašinović et al., "Contribution of Dr. Laza," 978.
[388] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 98.

The slet[389], specifically the mass celebrations on the Day of Youth [Dan Mladosti] at the stadium of the Yugoslav People's Army,[390] was an annual performance of rhythmic movement, sports, and celebration for Josip Broz Tito's purported birthday on May 25th.[391] The event included competition, relays, performances of high-culture similar to ballet, and synchronized demonstrations of gymnastics, originating from the Slavic Sokol movement, which was practiced nationwide following its inception in the nineteenth century.

In the performances on the Day of Youth, the visual influence of ballet and rhythmic gymnastics is unmistakable, seen from the grace of the movement, to the reliance on ballet's codified five positions of the arms,[392] all the way down to the purposefully pointed feet. Additionally, as part of the slet dancers would often perform a ballet-influenced folk dance while singing a pledge to Tito.[393] On a broader scale, by encouraging integration of balletic movements, Sokol, and Soviet rhythmic gymnastics, Josip Broz Tito's government effectively *choreographed* the youth of Yugoslavia to reflect both Eastern and Western aesthetics.[394] Moreover, this performance correlated with Yugoslavia's political status as independent from both capitalist and communist spheres of influence, cementing a cultural aesthetic ideology that was neither East nor West.

[389] The term slet was derived from a Slavic noun representing the assembly and organized motion of a flock of birds (Vujanović, "Social Choreography"); In classical ballet training, the motion of the corps de ballet is often discussed similarly – as a flock of birds spiraling and moving as one collective body.
[390] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 36.
[391] Vujanović, "Social Choreography;" "May 25 was actually the day Tito survived a battle during World War II and not his real birthday, but was announced by Tito as his official date of birth and was upgraded to the level of a holiday for the whole country." (Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 417-418)
[392] First, second, third, fourth, and fifth positions as dictated by *Les Lettres Sur La Danse et Sur Les Ballets* by Jean Georges Noverre (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, September 2023).
[393] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.
[394] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 197.

Fig. 2 Stills from Day of Youth slets 1988 and 1989 (Vujanovic, "Social Choreography")

Because the body serves in multiple ways as a symbol of the nation-state, the collective body in motion during slets must be read under the tenets of body politics:

> "This politics of the body… retroactively enquires about the social (dys)functionality of the Day of Youth *slet*. Namely, the social function of the *slet* was to constitute, by performing and rehearsing socialist collectivism, the identity of the new social subject, able to preserve the legacy of the revolution and continue down the revolutionary path toward communism."[395]

With the inclusion of broader politics of the body, scholarly critiques of physical culture in Yugoslavia are often extrapolated out as a critique of the entire socialist regime. The body can then be understood as a representation of the negativity directed to communist ideology.[396] By recentering the body, this chapter will avoid the pitfalls and limitations of broader political critique and focus solely on constructed ideology.

The body under real socialism existed in constant conflict between the "emancipation of the individual [and the] training of the collective."[397] The ability to isolate the individual motivation for partisan movement from the prominent collectivism arose because of the focus on the use of the body under Titoism.[398] Physical culture functioned as a biopolitical intervention

[395] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[396] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 111-112.
[397] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 56-57.
[398] Kirn, "Was Dancing Possible."

site – slets were the epitome of the healthy and unified "socialist body" representing an idealized production of collectivism.[399] Because of the inherent inclusion of aesthetics in the political sphere, aesthetic socialism helped make national ideology visible and omnipresent. Thus, the Day of Youth functioned as presentation of the cultivated collective body,[400] veiled by the limitations on individual expression resulting in aesthetic socialism.

This physicalized aesthetics of the collective body of socialism reflects the growing disillusionment with the Yugoslav brand of socialism. Jakovljević says:

> "The 1950s [were] marked by departures from the Soviet model of the economy and of art, which resulted in a push toward a socialist market economy and integral self-management in the 1960s. The 1970s were marked by a definitive breach between ideological discourse and labor performance, and in the 1980s macroeconomic performance marginalized and 'deregulated' labor, which eventually led to obliteration of the worker as a political subject."[401]

The unraveling of the quality and sincerity of performances in slets over time highlights an erosion of the socialist myth. As time went on, socialism under Tito appeared to be failing, and ordinary citizens became disinterested in the regime's performative propaganda, like the slet.[402] However, the main focus of this chapter is on the early decades of socialist Yugoslavia from 1950 to 1970, when the socialist myth had support from citizens. The belief in the socialist myth meant that participation in physical culture was both voluntary and widely enjoyed.

The recordings of Day of Youth celebrations between 1957 and 1979[403] demonstrate how collective movement imagined and performed the construction of a common Yugoslav national identity. With a heavy reliance on ballet's historical influence on rhythmic gymnastics and Sokol,[404] I present how the socialist Yugoslav identity used physical culture to appropriate

[399] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 57.
[400] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 106.
[401] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 31.
[402] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 221-222.
[403] "DAN MADOSTI 1972," video; "DAN MLADOSTI 1979," video; "Prvi DAN MLADOSTI," video.
[404] Hamza, Ahmed, and Wahed, "The History," 6607.

aspects of European standards, projecing modernity and Westernization. This fostered international acceptance of real socialism and aided in distinguishing the Yugoslav region from the Soviet sphere of influence.[405] The Day of Youth in particular provided a stage for Tito's regime to present Yugoslav culture not as it naturally existed but as the socialist movement desired it to manifest within the public sphere. The physical act of engaging in slets was a form of social choreography – where carefully selected moves and gestures entered the social subconscious to create a new vocabulary of Yugoslav identity.[406] Slets took the diversity in ethnicity and religion of individuals across Yugoslavia and melded them to physicalize a new vision of collective Yugoslav unity.[407] Focusing specifically on the impact of social choreography, the collective movement required of Yugoslav youth during slets encouraged citizens to embody and enlighten themselves with an aestheticized socialist ideal.

Bureaucratic Socialism: Between East and West

Understanding Titoist physical culture requires historical background on the creation of Yugoslavia, specifically highlighting the existing discourse of the Balkan imagination[408] from a trans-national outlook.[409] The Balkans represent a diverse set of identities and peoples, creating levels of cultural plurality and variable social history.[410] It is necessary to hold this diversity in mind when approaching the conglomerate Yugoslav cultural history; diversity continued to affect the rising Yugoslav socialist nation-state, limiting the result of encouraged unity and nationalism, and contributing to its future, violent demise.

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[405] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[406] Vujanović.
[407] Vujanović.
[408] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 8.
[409] Drapac, 1.
[410] Djeparoska, "Macedonian Cultural," 6; The Balkan Peninsula, though geographically defined, is fluid in its global cultural meaning because of superimposed assumptions from an outside point of view (Djeparoska, "Macedonian Cultural," 1).

One of the first nation-states in the Balkan region, following the collapse of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, was the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War I, the Serbs proved dominant over the Balkan region and claimed control of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1921 (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929), based on ideals of racial coalescence and ethnic cooperation.[411] During World War II, the socialist state of Yugoslavia was founded to push against ethno-religious fascism emerging across the nation that made the fight against the Axis fascists especially difficult for the Partisan movement.[412] The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was officially declared by Josip Broz Tito in December 1945 with the intention of formalizing a cohesive, socialist Yugoslavia.[413]

Despite his proclamations of unity, even after Tito's rise to power, there were still divisions within Yugoslavia, as well as constant attempts at its discrediting in the diaspora, largely because there was no real understanding of, nor belief in, Yugoslav identity.[414] Thus, different cultural mechanisms for engineering national identity were necessary to encourage ethnic blending and diminish broader resistance to the conglomerate nation-state. Manifestations of identity in physical culture like the slet and Sokol were strong exhibitions of the regime's proclamations and alleged achievements in the field of national unity.

According to Vesna Drapac, Titoism and belief in the socialist myth helped construct a Yugoslav national identity to reflect socialist principles of "self-management, federalism, and non-alignment. Features of the new socialism, as espoused by the Yugoslavs, included a strong emphasis on decentralization, some degree of workers' autonomy in decision-making in local

[411] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 96-97.
[412] Drapac, 152; this reflects the cyclical nature of international political history.
[413] Drapac, 197; Lees, *Keeping Tito*, 1-3.
[414] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 191.

enterprises and accommodations with elements of the market economy."[415] Adoration of Tito's cult of personality constituted the ideology behind the new Yugoslav body. In the early Yugoslav years, Tito physicalized his motto of "*bratstvo i jedinstvo*" (brotherhood and unity) and reflected the body of the new nation-state:[416] a united nation of Yugoslavs functioning as one family under *father* Tito. National unity was presented as a familial trait, and the physical unison movements on the Day of Youth further solidified the outward image of Yugoslavia as one kinship-group. Along with the principles of self-management, national unity, and fraternity, socialism brought in a new manner of organizing society instead of class, race, or ethnicity: bureaucracy. Class in socialist Yugoslavia was defined by bureaucracy, according to contemporary thinker Constantin Castoriadis. This "bureaucratic socialism" created hierarchy in a supposedly classless society, fostered by the increasing selfishness of political leaders over time.[417]

Part of the quest for national identity required pushing against the East-West dichotomy of global politics in the mid-twentieth century.[418] The genuine, non-constructed nature of the socialist uprising in Yugoslavia provided the government with the communal strength needed to push back against increasing Kremlin[419] governance.[420] During the early years of Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia was a part of the Communist Information Bureau, known widely as the Cominform, founded in 1947 and made up of communist parties across Europe.[421] The Cominform was founded by the Soviets to combat the Marshall Plan and unify communist parties under their control.[422] Yugoslavs viewed the Cominform as Stalin's way of implementing increased control

[415] Drapac, 212.
[416] Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 423.
[417] Jakovljević, "Human Resources," 43.
[418] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 197.
[419] The Kremlin in the city fortress in Moscow which houses the Russian government, and is colloquially used to reference the Russian government of a specific time period (French, Murrell, and Ioffe, "The Kremlin").
[420] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 198.
[421] Lees, *Keeping Tito*, 39.
[422] Lees, 39.

and diminishing international political power of other Marxist-Leninist nations.[423] The dissent between Yugoslavia and the Cominform led to the removal of Yugoslavia from the Cominform by Soviet leaders in June of 1948.[424] The distanced relationship between socialist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union strengthens the argument for the existence of real socialism – a reform on communism – in the early decades of Yugoslavia.

Likely part of the government's rationale behind distancing Yugoslavia from the Kremlin post-expulsion was to cater to the United States and gain government aid. With their expulsion from the Cominform, Yugoslavia began to broaden their international reach politically and culturally, because the capitalist Western world generally accepted Titoism over Stalinism.[425] The United States thus became encouraging of Yugoslav nationalism, because it represented a force against the Kremlin.[426] According to Lorraine Lees, "Yugoslavia, because of Tito's willingness to resist Stalin and to adopt a less belligerent posture toward the West, secured the economic aid and international support it needed to withstand the pressure exerted by the Cominform."[427]

By pronouncing Yugoslavia as independent from the Soviet Bloc and accepting aid from the United States, Tito's government succeeded in creating space within which Yugoslavia could exist as a unique political system internationally.[428] Internal anti-capitalist sentiment aside, "American money sustained communist Yugoslavia. The government was not always ready to admit to this dependence on the capitalist West."[429] In a display of reluctance to accept aid,

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[423] Lees, 39.
[424] Lees, 43.
[425] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 207.
[426] Lees, *Keeping Tito*, xv-xvi; Yugoslavia was the most successful implementation of the "wedge" strategy, a system of foreign policies under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations designed to ideologically isolate communist countries from the Soviet Union (Lees, xiii).
[427] Lees, 81.
[428] Lees, 210.
[429] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 201.

Yugoslavia only accepted humanitarian aid in the form of food and money, not weaponry or soldiers.[430] Despite Tito's aversions to Anglo-American interventions, governmental organizations responded to the desire for aid by adapting the culture to be more appealing to the West. I argue that some of this adaptation included the absorption of Western dance and movement traditions into physical culture. With the political shift away from acceptance of the Soviet communist influence, Yugoslavia increasingly welcomed Western aesthetics. The prevalent dance aesthetic became more balletic, with dancers even going so far as to alter their physical appearance to mimic the European dancers and standards.[431]

Aid from the US to Yugoslavia was suspended in 1955 due to changes in US policy,[432] but the cultural echoes of that political relationship remained visible throughout the era of real socialism. The trade of aid between the United States and Yugoslavia opened a line of communication upon which art and culture could spread internationally. The US government was politically motivated to increase communication with countries formerly under the Soviet sphere of influence and promote separation from the Kremlin. Because of Tito's rule and Yugoslavia's existence as a non-Soviet Eastern-bloc state, Yugoslavia was well positioned to receive US aid in promoting and preserving independence.[433] In this way, the United States' funding directly helped to financially bolster the construction of a Yugoslav national identity and the socialist aesthetic.

[430] Lees, *Keeping Tito*, 97.
[431] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 108.
[432] Lees, *Keeping Tito*, 201.
[433] Lenart, "Dancing Art and Politics," 202-203.

The Rise of Physical Culture: Sokol and the Performance of Identity

Starting with youth participants, gymnastics was an instrument of the construction of the new Yugoslav nationality.[434] Sokol, an offspring of rhythmic gymnastics, was created in central Europe in 1862 and spread rapidly across the Habsburg Empire, notably amongst Slavic nationalists who brought it to the Balkan region.[435] Originally thought to be a unifying force of a more powerful Serbia,[436] Sokol was key to consolidating culture within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its subsequent socialist iteration.[437] Dr. Laza Popović, a former general physician, founded the Belgrade Soko Gymnastics Association in 1892[438] with national-political and ideological motivations. Sokol was initially seen as a part of the "struggle against Germanisation and Hungariansation, strengthening and preserving of the national awareness as well as efforts seeking for a better statutory position [for the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.]"[439] Similar to ballet, Sokol was thought by its proponents to increase sociability, valorize freedom, and foster ideals of brotherhood and unity on an interpersonal level.[440] According to a liberal newspaper in 1929, "Physical education in schools and among the nation was to be organized uniformly, in the spirit and by the principles of the Sokol gymnastics, and to bring the Sokol movement in close connection with the action of the state."[441] The goal of creating a Yugoslav identity steeped in the ideal of equity across ethnicity, religion, and gender spurred the construction of national physical culture. Sokol thus manifested as an overall prioritization of physical-culture in socialist Yugoslavia.[442]

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[434] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 102.
[435] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 156-157.
[436] Vukašinović et al., "Contribution of Dr. Laza," 977.
[437] Vukašinović et al., 979.
[438] Vukašinović et al., 976.
[439] Pavlin and Čustonja, "Sokol: Between," 262.
[440] Vukašinović et al.,"Contribution of Dr. Laza," 977.
[441] Quoted from liberal newspaper Jutro, December 1929 in Pavlin and Čustonja, "Sokol: Between," 265.
[442] Pavlin and Čustonja, 263.

The establishment of Sokol served as an instance of government control extending beyond the normalized structure that isolated the government from citizens.[443] The systematic organization of the movement made physical education of citizens inherently accessible to all, and thus the government had a more direct and impactful reach nationally.[444] Sokol in Yugoslavia preceded the administrative organization of the Youth Pioneer movement, built to structure physical culture and general youth activity under Josip Broz Tito.[445] In socialist Yugoslavia, Sokol and slets[446] were monitored by the government organization *Savez za fizičku kulturu Jugoslavije*, the Association for Physical Culture of Yugoslavia (SFKJ),[447] founded on May 7th and 8th in 1945 in Belgrade.[448] The main founding goal of SFKJ was to promote the benefits of physical education to the body and spirit of youths nationwide. SFKJ served as an ideological apparatus of the Yugoslav socialist nation-state responsible for the discipline of bodies in adherence with constructed norms and social expectations.

Akin to ballet training, Sokol practice required isolation of body parts for specific movements and a newly expansive understanding of what aestheticized movement could look like. The aspects of physical culture that made it unique to socialist and communist states, like the partisan aesthetic, were precisely what made it successful for re-presenting individuality as national collectivism. The physical confines of Sokol, guaranteed by the hosting schools and presence of singular authoritative voices, created the void of exceptionality needed for Sokol to become a functioning ideological apparatus of the nation-state.

[443] Pavlin and Čustonja, 260.
[444] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 99.
[445] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 156.
[446] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 56.
[447] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 96.
[448] Petrov, 98.

At the beginning of Tito's rule, Sokol was closely aligned with pro-Soviet physical culture, but later became isolated and reimagined under the Yugoslav "*Partizan*" aesthetic.[449] The primary association with the Soviet region allowed for the integration of balletic movement into Sokol as inspired by the contemporarily popular and prolific Soviet rhythmic gymnastics. Partisan art had a participatory physical role in the *emancipation* of the nations of Yugoslavia and construction of the large-scale identity ascribed to "brotherhood and unity." Partisan art utilized aesthetics to reinvent existing aspects of culture under a socialist veil. Physical culture built upon the partisan identity to choreograph youth in allegiance with the new national identity curated by Titoism.

The national schemes of exercise orchestrated by the Sokol movement shaped the bodies of youths to be displayed publicly in large-scale performances.[450] Slets, the organized performance of Sokol,[451] served as a demonstration of the collective physical power of Yugoslavia's youth, fostered by the regular physical activity required by Sokol practice. Tito's socialist government created slets to celebrate the vitality of the newly-founded nation.[452] Slets were separated from the monotony of daily life by their ceremonious and celebratory nature, glamorizing ideologies of labor, vitality, and unity.[453] Slets likewise demonstrated people's productivity in labor, under the guise of celebration.[454] The adherence to the new national norms was monitored and maintained by regular Sokol practice.[455] In slets, individual bodies that physically adhered to the ideological norms of collectivity and harmony represented the national

[449] Pavlin and Čustonja, "Sokol: Between," 267.
[450] Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 418.
[451] As a Western analogy to help explain the relationship further, Sokol could be akin to gymnastics practice whereas slets are more similar to a gymnastics meet.
[452] Vujanović, "Social Choreography.".
[453] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects."
[454] Žmak.
[455] Vujanović, "Social Choreography;" This itself is similar to the social functioning of a dance classroom. Certain bodies are regarded as deserving of training and refinement while others are not.

body. Therefore, even as the individual body may have been at odds with the body of collective movement, communal exercise of the laboring body continuously strengthened the national body.[456] In this way, the physical body was aestheticized to promote the social choreography of youth, labor, and, most importantly, unified ethnicity.

Vitality and Prosperity: The Bodies of Youths Constructed to Physicalize Socialism

Youthful vitality was a core component of Yugoslav national identity, constructed largely by mandatory participation in physical culture starting at a young age. Youth were seen as valuable intervention sites for the socialist movement because their age made them more susceptible to outside influence, and they would carry ideology with them through maturity.[457] The ideology of youthfulness was central to Titoism, where an impressionable nation was an efficient and viable one.[458] The Yugoslav regime insisted on the cult of youth, and this became one of the main sites of ideological intervention. Because youths were especially susceptible for biopolitical intervention, physical culture could permeate their subconscious and reconstruct identity in reflection of new nationhood. The annual display of collaborative and aesthetic accomplishment during the Day of Youth revealed this constructed cult of youths to the nation.[459] The carefully cultivated youths and the productions of their practice and labor were presented as a birthday present to Tito, indicative of the success of Tito's administration.[460] On the Day of Youth, political prosperity was reflected as physical strength and vitality, allowing Tito to symbolically take partial possession of the vitality of the country as his production or *offspring*.[461] The Day of Youth memorialized the connection between youths and the socialist

[456] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 157-158.
[457] Mervart, "Shaping 'Real," 207.
[458] "Body Name," video.
[459] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 110.
[460] Petrov, 109.
[461] Petrov, 110.

mission. Thus, the annual performances celebrating President Tito's birthday on the ground of the JNA Stadium in Belgrade were the basis of a cyclic renewal of a forever youthful nation, based on Titoist concepts of brotherhood and unity.[462]

The rebuilding of the body of the new nation of socialist Yugoslavs depended on the physical agility, appearance, and dedication of youths across ethnicities. This national body was further curated by the Youth and Pioneer Associations, as well as by various student, professional, or political organizations; across ideological apparatuses, the national body was rebuilt both physically and mentally in accordance with socialist aesthetics. The SFKJ shaped the Yugoslav normative body through interventions on both "working people" and the "socialist youth of Yugoslavia."[463] Similar to how ballet was used in early history to foster good manners and proper social engagement, SFKJ actively constructed physical culture as a precursor to more complex and politicized displays of collectivity.

Physical movement was thought by Sokol movement leaders to bolster socialist activity and thought.[464] Viktor Murnik, a Slovenian gymnast, argued for mandatory participation in Sokol for Yugoslav youth nationally, seeing a direct connection between a lack of exercise and increased sentiments of "capitalist greed" within the contemporary body.[465] Therefore, construction of a body of youth inscribed with Yugoslav ideology was central to the construction of a socialist future.

Besides presenting the bodies of socialism, the dances and sports competitions of the Day of Youth included motifs evocative of the history of socialism in Yugoslavia. The baton relay at the heart of the Day of Youth serves as a resonant example of political history being written into

[462] "Body Name," video.
[463] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 98.
[464] Petrov, 98.
[465] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 169.

the body of youths. The relay's starting point changed every year, commemorating pivotal moments during the socialist revolution; thus, youths annually re-performed history, as they ran from the revolution to the current celebration of Yugoslavia as a nation-state.[466] By integrating history into the relay, Tito's government could simultaneously display the bodies themselves and highlight how the bodies collectively represented the morals of socialist ideology.[467]

The selection of Tito's birthday as the annual Day of Youth connected sports and collective movement with the *hero* of socialist Yugoslavia.[468] Heroism and glory were core tenets of the aesthetic and idealized socialist body, implemented into the nation through physical culture.[469] For Tito, glory for the nation came by way of glory for himself, and the elaborate annual celebration of his birthday solidified that glory. On the Day of Youth, youths were able to share and bask in Tito's political glory. The final member of the drawn out relay was pre-selected by slet organizers based on their commitment to practice and skill demonstrated in SFKJ meetings. This individual would receive the greatest glory as they heroically delivered Tito his birthday card. Glory extended beyond participation in the slet and into of the advertising in the leadup to the Day of Youth. Posters often featured a young, strong man or woman running towards the viewer carrying the baton.[470] Because the posters often situated a nameless youth as the focal point and not Tito, they reinforced the ritual embodiment, as well as annual renewal of Tito's glory by the youth athletes.

In addition to tracking the history of the socialist nation-state's rise to glory with the relay, youth participants in the slet took on pieces of Tito's identity as a means of uniting the

[466] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 37.
[467] Žmak "Ritual Aspects."
[468] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 109.
[469] Petrov, 109.
[470] *Poster*.

body of the ruler with that of the collective. On the Day of Youth, bodies were organized to write out Tito's name, visible from a bird's-eye-view. By writing Tito's name with bodies from across the nation, collectivism was inscribed into the new identity of the developing nation-state.

Fig. 3 Bodies spelling Tito's name ("Body Name," video)

Even while Tito himself was relegated to the role of a viewer during the event, he metaphorically joined the participants as they wrote out his name.[471] By embodying Tio's signature, the youths at large became physical manifestations of his overall vision of nationality, and the individual body lost priority when compared with the collective nation.[472] While performing Tito's signature, the individual body absorbed his ideology and identity; the body signed itself as both Tito and themselves.[473] In the ritualized ceremony of the Day of Youth, Tito was seen as both a proper noun and a collective noun – the bodies who physically became T-I-T-O, also became a youthful memorial of Tito himself.[474] The Day of Youth cast a permanent aura of vitality on Tito, eternalizing him in the bodies of youths and implementing their bodies as orators of his socialist truth nationally.[475] The bodies of youths wrote the body of the nation, and as the new nation was constructed, Tito's mythological idealization was solidified.

[471] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.
[472] "Body Name," video.
[473] "Body Name," video.
[474] "Body Name," video.
[475] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.

While the habitual practice of movement was intended to solidify Yugoslav identity and the presentation of movement helped memorialize Tito with an aura of vitality, agency, and dynamism, the actual repetitive nature of the movement counteracted the government's goals. The repetition of movement created a ghostly echo during annual slets, evoking a sense of temporal stasis.[476] The paternal image of Tito was an appealing symbol because of the way it reflected the morals of socialism as well as evoked the Greco-Roman sacrifice of youth for the success of the nation. Despite his efforts to eternalize himself positively in the minds and bodies of youths, Tito failed to symbolically remain an omnipresent *god* after his death. In the years following his death, the Day of Youth deteriorated from socialist myth to a boring spectacle and site of rebellion, ending in an act of subversion in 1987.[477] Following Tito's death, the myth of socialism continued to give way to the socialist reality, and Tito became viewed as more autocratic and less forward thinking.

Working Towards the Future: The Laboring Body and the Socialist Myth

The Day of Youth was both a celebration of the physical beauty and longevity of Yugoslavia and a demonstration of the power and efficiency of the maturing Yugoslav voluntary youth workforce.[478] The voluntary collective labor in Yugoslavia, helped to alienate the individual from agency and encourage the reproduction of novel ideological norms. Slets and Sokol aligned with the greater national drive towards production as a component of the ideology of collectivism because it encouraged efficiency.[479] Seeking to optimize the product of youths' bodies, politicians bolstered claims of increasing national efficiency by mandating exercise and

[476] "Body Name," video.
[477] Further details regarding the poster scandal that resulted in the end of the Day of Youth are later in this chapter.
[478] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 81.
[479] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 167.

elevating more visibly capable bodies.[480] Because of the rise of labor as a means of constructing a socialist ideology, self-management became central to interpreting performance.[481] "Unlike scientific and performance management, self-management was not only a concrete set of organizational principles of industrial and nonindustrial labor, but also a vehicle for the political, ideological, and even aesthetic representation of labor."[482] Just as young socialist bodies built physical culture and national identity, they also built the industry of the new nation-state. By presenting a choreographed version of their labor through the performance of slets, Titoism embedded the ideology of work into the aesthetic of socialism.

The cult of labor central to Yugoslav ideology relied on the productive management of leisure.[483] Disciplining the body with regimes of physical culture created a generation of youths primed to labor towards the greater good of the developing nation-state.[484] The efforts to construct a uniform physical culture in Yugoslavia rested heavily on influencing youths and generating the popular myth of glorified free time.[485] Monitorization of free time prevented youths from accessing the practices of freedom necessary for them to be entirely independent from collective thought. Because labor was aestheticized, voluntary work sites and free time organizations became microcosms of exception that disassociated youths from the production of their labor, during free time or volunteer work.

In addition to shaping a physical body of Yugoslav youths, SFKJ constructed norms of behavior that associated free time with labor.[486] Ana Petrov argues that preparation for the Day of Youth, the annual movement of the collective Yugoslav body, structured free time for youths

[480] Balikić and Pojar, 167.
[481] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 27.
[482] Jakovljević, 28.
[483] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 103.
[484] Martin and Aronowitz, *Performance as Political*, 58.
[485] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 105.
[486] Petrov, 101.

and encouraged physical movement.[487] The government saw controlling free time as a necessary aspect of physical culture – a goal of the determination of free time usage was an overall acceptance of regulation.[488] Practicing Sokol during free time helped to propagate the joy of work that was core to the socialist movement ideology.[489] Lucija Balikić and Vojtěch Pojar connect Sokol to the politics of both socialism and capitalism, arguing that the government encouraged engagement of Yugoslav youth across the nation in Sokol to counteract the innate desire for agency and capitalist greed of the modern body.[490] When free time was willingly elected for labor, as encouraged by SFKJ, free time became a facade and a predisposed lack of freedom and agency was normalized.

Beyond mandatory participation in physical culture, labor, and work actions were popular among both adolescents and adults as the new nation worked towards creating modern, efficient industry.[491] The industry-fostering efforts in Yugoslavia can be classified into three sections:

> "(1) ideological: the socialist government was in a position to manage the entire country like a vast industrial enterprise; (2) economic: starting from the early 1950s Yugoslavia was granted hefty credits from the West; and (3) popular: a considerable part of the work was performed by unpaid labor in the form of Voluntary Youth Working Brigades."[492]

The voluntary youth workforce (popular labor) was instrumental in the physical construction of the industry of Yugoslavia.[493] "According to some estimates, during the First Five-Year Plan, one million Yugoslav youths worked on some seventy construction sites, contributing approximately 60 million workdays of free labor."[494] The same youths building the nation were

[487] Petrov, 106.
[488] Petrov, 101.
[489] Petrov, 103.
[490] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 169.
[491] Petrov, "c 101-102.
[492] Jakovljević, "Human Resources," 40.
[493] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 42.
[494] Jakovljević, 42.

displayed and celebrated on the Day of Youth, linking their voluntary labor to the celebration of the youthfulness and novelty of the nation itself.

Voluntary labor under real socialism alienated the individual from ownership of the productions of their social labor. "Social ownership implies a profound democracy – one in which people function as subjects, both as producers and as members of society, in determining the use of the results of our social labor."[495] Branislav Jakovljević highlights the political, economic, and social consequences of socialist aestheticism and self-regulation. For Jakovljević, slets themselves required labor be for the goal of a singular person's vision, Tito, with little agency on the individual to determine the use of their labor. "By joining self-management and market socialism, volunteer labor in Yugoslavia also entered the sphere of socialist aestheticism."[496] The Day of Youth displayed the socialist aesthetic of labor created by the isolation of individuals from the production of their work.

Combined with the efforts of physical culture to normalize mass voluntary labor movements, slets and the Day of Youth provided an almost religious ritualization of industrial prosperity, theorized in part by Jasna Jasna Žmak.[497] In an effort to replace the traditional, capitalist rituals surrounding agriculture and harvest, the Day of Youth was a new ritual to valorize the collective labor power of the nation. Both the historic precedent of agricultural ritual and the Day of Youth ritualize the collective, but the political undertone shifted to embrace socialist ideology instead of personal capitalist gain. The Day of Youth is an example of a

[495] Lebowitz, *The Contradictions*, 19.
[496] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 38.
[497] Žmak, "Ritual Aspects."

positive partisan ritual[498] developed to counteract earlier myths specific to regio-ethnic groups existing prior to unification, and re-cast them as national production.[499]

The body of "brotherhood and unity" was a progressive and youthful physicality, cultivated by manual labor and fanatic allegiance to the developing nation.[500] Demonstrations and performances of collectivity wrote the body of youth to be one willing to labor and self-manage,[501] contributing to the aestheticization of voluntary labor. With voluntary labor, bodies were gathered and choreographed to build the country in a specific order.[502] The Day of Youth reproduced the aesthetic of labor onto bodies of youths to allow for the socialist motivations of self-management to be perpetuated and extended generationally.

Ethnicity and Understated Eugenics: International Influences on Sokol

Because Yugoslavia was a nation constructed in part by the external imaginary,[503] the politics of identity that valorized physical culture were historically dependent on earlier iterations that created problematic racial and ethnic stereotypes. A regeneration of identity and ethnicity with the unification of South Slavic states was necessary to create Yugoslavia. While the new nation helped foster identity internally, external politics demanded another construction of identity: nationality from an international point of view. The ideology of identity utilized existing regional tropes and generated a conglomerate of constructed, falsified nationality. Sokol as an institution tracked the repression and resulting revolution of ethnicity because different Sokol societies across the nation came together to create a singular national body of movement.[504] As

[498] Both ritualistic in nature, the Olympic games (early root of gymnastics) differ from slets in that they are based on competition, not collaborative performance (Žmak).
[499] Žmak.
[500] Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 23.
[501] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 38.
[502] *Yugoslavia: How Ideology*.
[503] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 2.
[504] Petrov, "Telesni projekti," 97.

the collective body was presenting its performances annually, aestheticized ethnic sanitation was introduced into the physical culture. Joy of movement created an aesthetic body unrepresentative of the general society, specifically because of the way it sterilized ethnic and regional differences from youth culture.[505] In the early days of Titoism, ethno-religious regionalism was repressed to allegedly heal the wounds of the war crimes and massacres committed inter-ethnically during WWII.[506] By the 1960s, Tito's government saw the historic regio-ethnicities that made up Yugoslavia as sites of rebellion against the socialist mission.[507]

Slets were influenced by various historical physical culture movements that depended on a physical embodiment of mission and ideology, like in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The Yugoslav Pioneer program, for example, was heavily inspired by the preceding Pioneer movement in the Soviet Union: children were designated as pioneers and participated in events where they dressed in the uniforms of the "brotherhood."[508] Similarities to early Nazi youth movements can be seen in:

> "the idea of a physically and spiritually cultivated and strong man as the bodily carrier of social change, epitomized in the young bodies of gymnasts and *fiskulturniks* (physical culturalists); the ideas of collectivism and egalitarianism, embodied in mass, participatory performances; and an awareness of the aesthetic aspect of ideology, epitomized in public performances of sports, the arts, and the rhetoric of a specific socio-political agenda."[509]

As the constructed Yugoslav ideology became rhetoric and influenced by xenophobic tropes, the slet spectacle devolved into a meaningless event whose cessation was long overdue. Moreover, the Yugoslav propagation of physical culture and bodily health increasingly became discussed in relation with both Nazi and Soviet totalitarian practices. One poster developed in

[505] Petrov, 107.
[506] Bertsch, "Ethnicity and Politics," 89.
[507] Bertsch, 90.
[508] Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 420-421.
[509] Vujanović, "Social Choreography.".

1987 in Yugoslavia was deliberately copied by artists from an earlier Nazi poster.[510] The artists entered the poster to win a competition, resulting in scandal when retired General Grujic pointed to the original. This poster, dedicated to protesting against the cult of Titoism, built on imagery from early Day of Youth propaganda and featured a naked man running towards the viewer. The main differences found between the two posters are the symbols of nation-state that the man is holding: "the German eagle with the dove (a symbol of peace), a Nazi flag with a swastika replaced by a Yugoslav flag featuring a star, and a Nazi emblem with the Day of Youth emblem."[511]

Fig. 4 Dan Mladosti Poster
(Čufer, "Behind the Poster")

"Grujic's disclosure caused a huge public and political turmoil leading to the abolition of this performance, announcing the beginning of the end of socialist Yugoslavia, which officially fell apart in 1991."[512] Despite the advertising agency's intent to use the poster as a form of protest against the government produced by advertising agencies, it reflected a broader association of the Day of Youth with physical culture in Nazi Germany existent in the contemporary public imagination.

[510] Čufer, "Behind the Poster."
[511] Čufer.
[512] Čufer.

Because the poster scandal is considered a moment that brought public awareness to some similarities between the imperative of bodily health and beauty in Nazi Germany and Yugoslav physical culture, physical culture can be discussed as a form of eugenics. The mandated physical exercise shaped a desirable body while isolating those who did not physically adhere.[513] Balikić and Pojar outline the pattern of thought that led to the association of physical culture with eugenics. In Yugoslavia, Sokol was used to inhibit the diversification of bodies that would reflect the real diversity of the nation-state. Consistent with Mendelian theories of eugenics, the traits acquired with Sokol were thought to be inheritable.[514] The impetus for prioritizing physical culture was supposedly for "inclusionary national purity," but physical culture regularly excluded non-normative bodies.[515] Because the changes made to the individual body through movement were believed to be passed down generationally,[516] nationwide beauty and strength were expected to increase over time.[517] Balikić and Pojar conclude that only the most able-bodied youths were selected to perform in slets, promoting the notion that these were the only bodies deserving of attention, admiration, and glorification.[518]

While physical bodies were shaped by the eugenicist efforts backing sokol, so was the ethnic makeup of the burgeoning nation-state. Tito's efforts to construct a new national identity were focused on the nationwide South Slavic roots.[519] Displaying ethno-cultural nationalism was discouraged, justified by the trauma caused by nationalist groups during WWII.[520] However, the roots of the Sokol movement were unavoidably ethno-centric. According to Popović, "[Serbian

[513] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 157.
[514] Balikić and Pojar, 165.
[515] Balikić and Pojar, 173.
[516] Balikić and Pojar, 173.
[517] Balikić and Pojar, 165.
[518] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[519] Bertsch, "Ethnicity and Politics," 89.
[520] Bertsch, 93.

national] thought will emerge as a storm and carry us all with its sudden irresistible force. This thought of the Serbian folk, the content of which are unification, liberation and progress of the whole Serbian nation, will become the natural leader of all our thoughts, and will lead us to victory."[521] Popović's proclamations regarding the proliferation of Serbian thought affected the socialist use of Sokol, resulting in a discriminatory link between Yugoslav nationalism and Serbian nationalism. In a nation where multiple ethnicities and religions were forced to ascribe to a singular ideological doctrine, Sokol constructed government sanctioned spaces where ethnophobia and xenophobia could thrive.

Choreographers of the slets themselves utilized heritage choreography, a method of altering historical perspectives on dance to sanitize and promote an alternate, preferred cultural history. Heritage choreography was defined by Filip Petkovski, who elaborates that "[b]y exhibiting heritage as the product of ideology, performances of heritage express cultural nationalism through the creation of canons aligned with the national, local, and traditional qualities simultaneously."[522] Dance in the Balkan region historically consisted of a body of movements rooted in European codified dance forms, but that were strictly non-technical in their manifestation.[523] Prior to performance in slets, folk dances underwent a process of "modernization" called *stilizacija* (stylization),[524] so that the constructed Yugoslav unified identity would appear more applicable to the Yugoslav public. The blending of folk and classical dance retained aspects of traditional ethno-religious culture but broadened them, establishing the constructed nationality as new while still being recognizable across ethnicities and internationally.

[521] Popović quoted from Vukašinović et al., "Contribution of Dr. Laza," 977.
[522] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 99, 114.
[523] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 56.
[524] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 107.

Although not publicly discussed or acknowledged at the time, the process of *stilizacija* also made new Yugoslav folk dance more reflective of Western dance norms. Ballet was seen by the public and the government as a foreign and elitist form of dance and therefore contradictory to the socialist mission. Instead of simply embracing European classical dance, folk dance was reworked to resemble more elitely-refined dance and utilized to contribute to national culture, without explicitly involving ballet.[525] The modernized folk dances blended with classical dance to create a unified national dance aesthetic that replicated Western ideals.[526]

Because Tito was motivated by international approval after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform,[527] altering folk dance to be more balletic was a method of performing the rapprochement with the West as a prospective ally. The blend of folk dance and ballet in Yugoslavia was positioned to eradicate any perceived Russian influence from rhythmic gymnastics, while maintaining the core Soviet components of physical culture. Physical culture "not only organized the diverse cultural and ethnic spaces of Yugoslavia into one homogenous body, but also symbolically inscribed history in its geographical space, and pointed the direction toward the future."[528] In this way, the Yugoslav government could differentiate themselves sociopolitically and maintain their political standing of neither East nor West, while still linking themselves with their more desired capitalist allies: Western Europe and the United States.

Through physical culture and heritage choreography, pan-Yugoslavism classified the body as an idealized physical representation of the nation-state: healthy, thriving, and strong.[529] To discourage anti-socialist thought, the Yugoslav state was repressive of ethnic differences but

[525] Petkovski, 106.
[526] Petkovski, 99.
[527] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 210.
[528] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 37.
[529] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 56-57.

disregarded the fact that ethnicity cannot actually be erased from a socio-historic landscape.[530] "In the heterogeneous Yugoslav setting, the Titoist regime hoped the forces of ideological and social change would mold a new political culture and a more integrated socialist community."[531] With the social interest in national prosperity and relegation of the individual as secondary, new norms of physical presentation were codified to reflect a homogenous Yugoslavia that was, in the long-term, nonfunctional and nonexistent.

Conclusion

The Day of Youth discursively constructed the ideal Yugoslav body by dictating a normative, youthful appearance, surveilling the children of the nation, and governing everyday life while preparing for the event. It was simultaneously a celebration of the "everyday" and a construction of average people in a novel way.[532] "In Tito's Yugoslavia the government's main challenge was containing the difference between the rhetoric of the state's *raison d'etre* and the Yugoslav ideal, and the reality of the people's lived experience."[533] The recreation of a more glamorous everyday socialist reality was revolutionized by slets. Physical culture was used as a way of uniting the country through an embodied collaborative experience,[534] and bridged the gap between state rhetoric and lived reality.

Sokol succeeded in associating Yugoslavia with the economic and social success of Europe's past, suggesting the benefits of sharing information and social practices that aided the distribution of constructed national identity.[535] The Day of Youth could be comparable to a reimagination of a Romantic era secular festival in Western Europe under the veil of socialist

[530] Bertsch, "Ethnicity and Politics," 99.
[531] Bertsch, 94.
[532] Petrov, "'Rock and Roll," 420.
[533] Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, 195.
[534] Djeparoska, "Macedonian Cultural," 1.
[535] Balikić and Pojar, "'Politics of Plastic," 160.

aestheticism. “The sources of large-scale secular rituals in continental Europe nation-states are often traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s notion of the festival and the subsequent adoption of this idea by the Romantic movements across Europe.”[536] Under Baroque thought, the state becomes a ruler capable of dictating the body of the individual.[537] Performance in Yugoslavia, specifically mass spectacles like the Day of Youth, propagate this power dynamic:

> “Performances of large magnitude that emerged from nineteenth-century romanticism were always closely bound with larger political movements. With their specific goals, mass emotional appeal, and rhetoric of uphill political battle, these festivals clearly exhibited all of the strong characteristics of liminality in performance. The disruptive power of mass political movements was capable of sweeping into their current performances that were neither addressing the masses nor explicitly propagandistic in nature.”[538]

Ritual, while in a different form in Yugoslavia, was central to ensuring the effectiveness of instilling new national culture through slets. Žmak elaborates, “This deeply baroque society celebrated itself by using the techniques of romanticism, or, for that matter, of Western pop culture, or any other cultural style that could convey the impression of novelty without endangering what society had designated as its ‘permanent nucleus of identity.’”[539] While visibly the Day of Youth seems disconnected from the Western European histories of ballet and rhythmic gymnastics, the introduction of ritual introduced familiarity and similarities between Romanticism, the birth of ballet, and socialist aestheticism, the foundations for the Day of Youth.

Slets altered the national point of view and ritually inscribed unity and brotherhood into the bodies of individuals.[540] With the Day of Youth, the “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did not just display some more or less successfully conceived allegories of state

[536] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 65.
[537] Jakovljević, 74.
[538] Jakovljević, 69.
[539] Jakovljević, 75.
[540] Žmak, “Ritual Aspects.”

ideology, but first and foremost exhibited how flawlessly and impeccably it functioned."[541] The Day of Youth wrote identity and organized bodies to internally and externally display the power of the new socialist nation-state. With the simultaneous codification of bodily norms and development of labor power, Tito's government celebrated exclusionary practices that elevated certain youths above others, bringing them glory and increasing their reproduced adherence to the socialist myth.

[541] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 81.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Returning to So What?

Michel Foucault defines the soul within the body by stating that: "the soul is the prison of the body."[542] In this thesis I have addressed the overarching question: when an individual's soul is expressed in dance, how is this an expression of power, and whose power is displayed?

Growing up training in a pre-professional Cuban ballet school, I have found much of my personal identity and soul to be reflective of my years of ballet, even after formally ending my training four years ago. I carry aspects of ballet around daily, on a small scale as good posture and comportment, and more largely, in the form of time management and an appreciation of the Romantic aesthetic. While I love ballet and am grateful for the opportunity I had to develop as an individual in the dance world, I cannot help but feel like an aspect of my soul was prescribed by my ballet teachers and cultivated to thrive within the confines of dance culture. Even in a liberal, Democratic city like New York City, the politics of ballet succeeded in intervening on my body and creating an inner voice reflective of the Romantic ideals that dominate classical ballet.

I have spent the past couple of years grappling with this inner voice which praises perfection of body and artistry, both pushing and limiting me as a non-dancing adult. One of the main reasons I chose to explore this topic in my thesis was to look for proof – that it was not I who was *too* affected by my ballet training experience, but rather that some aspect of ballet is designed to encourage behavioral tropes, and, to put it in Foucauldian terms, imprison the soul to a normative aesthetic body. The case studies in Cuba and Yugoslavia explored in this thesis are extreme examples of cultivating identity through ballet and classical-ballet-inspired movement. When viewed on a macro level, these cases expose how new socialist governments utilized

[542] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30.

physical movement and training to indoctrinate identity physically and mentally. Applying this argument to the dance classroom, I can conclude that the systematic breaking down and rebuilding of the body under the control of an individual dance teacher isolates the dancer from the physical productions of their labor and soul, promoting a culture in which ideological reproduction is passed from teacher to dancer to audience member.

Summary

Choreo-politics and social choreography highlight how dance has been shaped by politics and how dance impacts the sociopolitical world.[543] Ballet first rose to public popularity during the Romantic era, embedding the process of training and performance with Romantic era ideals:

> "Romanticism declared that the becoming-sensible of all thought and the becoming-thought of all sensible materiality was the very goal of the activity of thought in general. In this way, art once again became a symbol of work. It anticipates the end – the elimination of oppositions – that work is not yet in a position to attain by and for itself."[544]

Dance serves as a site for external power figures to practice commanding and controlling an individual body.[545] Ballet in particular carries Romantic era ideals across time and space to new socio-political contexts, exploiting the domain and sensibility of Romanticism to evoke sensations of freedom without actually providing it. By examining ballet under regimes of real socialism, where exceptionality was encouraged and normal rules of governance did not always apply, the domain of aesthetic Romanticism that guides ballet became illuminated on a greater scale. Socialist and Romantic aesthetics blend seamlessly in physical movement because the aesthetics of real socialism are reliant on the preceding bourgeois construction of art. Under Baroque thought, the nation-state becomes a ruler capable of dictating the body of the

[543] Hewitt, "Social Choreography," introduction, 2.
[544] Rancière, "The Distribution," 41.
[545] Beausoleil, "'Only They," 118.

individual.[546] In both cases examined in this thesis, the Baroque era history of ballet allowed physical movement to be a site of government intervention on the individual body.

Because ballet is an artform, it is not inherently political.[547] Rather, dance becomes politicized by the dialogue surrounding it, specifically the conversation choreographers and directors broker with their prescribed movement. Typically when dancing, a shift occurs, from "the purposeful 'useful' laboring body to that of the representing body."[548] Performance art blends use and representation – especially in socialist states like Cuba and Yugoslavia, where labor is so central to national identity. The use of physical movement, where performances aestheticized the laboring body – to create cultures of voluntary labor and encourage national development was central to success in socialist Cuba and Yugoslavia. With the failure of the socialist myth, the limitations of choreo-politics and social choreography in successfully dictating and changing national identity and ideology emerged.

In Cuba, Alicia Alonso collaborated with the socialist government to integrate ballet into the ideology of the "New Man," creating an environment under which ordinarily opposing concepts of diverse individualism and collectivism could thrive. Artistic democracy was a Revolutionary idea that emerged as an interpretation of ballet and concert dance, affirming the role of mass entertainment in national indoctrination.[549] Alonso curated norms of body, labor, and race to promote allegiance to Castro and reflect his visions for the political regime. In performances nationally and internationally, ballet became a core cultural export of Cuba, uniting socialism with Romanticism and broadening the reach of the small island nation.

[546] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 74.
[547] Franko, "Dance and the Political," 5.
[548] Thomas, *The Body*, 51.
[549] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 128.

In Yugoslavia, the body was a central site of political intervention. The pan-Yugoslav identity was bolstered by the collective ideology behind the large-scale performance of Sokol.[550] Performance in Yugoslavia, specifically mass spectacles like the Day of Youth, propagated a power balance between classical and folk. The ideological definition of the body as a project of Yugoslav physical culture had lasting effects on the social community and makeup,[551] as the socialist slet aesthetic delicately balanced bourgeois classism and partisan accessibility,[552] appealing to both East and West.

The main aspect of ballet culture claimed and exploited in Yugoslavia, besides the quality of movement, was the use of large groups. Elevation of the individual in dance would have been perceived as ineffective bourgeois activity under Titoist socialism. Collectivism of both thought and movement was required for effective socio-political anonymity.[553] Because of this, unlike in ballet performances where there are stars, slets primarily highlighted the power of collective, unison choreography. In Cuba, collectivism was less deliberate. While dance was used similarly to Yugoslavia, the elevation of Alicia Alonso helped to create the norms the ballet distributed through performance. The existing power structures within ballet companies and the isolation of the principal star above the *corps de ballet* highlighted the social powers that first fostered ballet's rise to power.[554] In Cuba, the existence of ballet directly cuts against the motivations of equality core to the socialist myth. Alicia was the star – there was a transfer of power from Castro to her, a pre-selected body and orator of his truth. In Yugoslavia, there was no real

[550] Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 66.
[551] Petrov, "Telesni projekti."
[552] Vujanović, "Social Choreography."
[553] Vujanović, "Not Quite," 63.
[554] Thomas, *The Body*, 109.

individual besides Tito – he was the *principal dancer* and star, as displayed by his everlasting presence on the Day of Youth.

Constructions of Gender: Teaching Youths Heteronormativity and Homophobia at BNC

> "The campaign to make ballet, and concert dance more broadly, into a mass entertainment derived from revolutionary ideals about artistic democracy, as well as revolutionary patriarchy with its affiliated homophobia."[555]

Gender throughout this project remained of interest because of the way it sculpts identity politics. Specifically in the case of Cuba, where the "New Man" was the image of Revolutionary sentiments, the socialist government both built and supported normative gender. While this topic did not explicitly connect with my core discussion of body and labor in dance, especially because gender was not a component of the comparative case in Yugoslavia, it is an area I would have researched further if the scope of this project was wider. Below, I have written a small compilation of my early research and exploration of gender in Cuba.

While socialism in Cuba revolutionized norms of economic interaction and governmental intervention, gender roles became more specific and dated than ever, partially due to the choreo-political interactions between the ballet and the nation-state. Ballet became an institution that policed gender and sexuality in schools and across stages.[556] Alicia Alonso was viewed as "the epitome of feminine discipline and militancy."[557] With Alonso's rise to socio-political influence, female gendered norms came to include an aspect of strength and power, but with the sole purpose of reproducing male production. By recruiting students nationally at a young age, Alonso was able to instill the Revolutionary ideals of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality into her dancers and their technique, saying:

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[555] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 128.
[556] Schwall, 120.
[557] Schwall, 90.

> "I expect from the magnificent youth that we have today in the dance [industry] in our country, the best results, the greatest responsibility, and the most profound sense of the art. We know that the experience that they might lack, will be acquired with strength, enthusiasm, and audacity. Because, the glory of the dance is the glory of your country."[558]

Alicia Alonso "carefully policed gender and sexuality within balletic ranks to corroborate heteronormative standards of Cuban society."[559] Alonso explicitly perpetuated traditional gender expectations for women while attempting to expand the notion of masculinity in ballet; she combined bourgeois intention with Revolutionary ethos[560] to build a male ballet star that was able to participate in New Man ideology. In Cuba, despite socialism preaching equity, the socialist government was explicitly homophobic in policy and ideology; homosexuality was seen as a decadence of capitalist culture.[561] Despite propagandist efforts from BNC, ballet fell victim to the vapid heteronormativity and cultural marginalization of homosexuality rampant in Cuba at the time.[562]

Ballet's status quo expanded the notion of masculinity in Revolutionary Cuba.[563] The dominating presence of Alberto and Fernando Alonsobrought prestige to the ballet, in the face of ingrained national misgivings about ballet being emasculating.[564] Ballet has often fallen into a trap of emasculation; historically, the elevation of the female prima ballerina has come at the cost of limiting male dominance in the artform.[565] Homophobia from the government was slightly less restrictive on BNC than other dance organizations because of respect for the Alonsos and the company's overwhelming whiteness.[566] That being said, male dancers, and particularly Black

[558] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 76.
[559] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 120.
[560] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 157.
[561] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 104.
[562] Schwall, "Between Espíritu," 159.
[563] Schwall, 155.
[564] Terry, *Alicia and Her Ballet,* 5
[565] Daly, "Classical Ballet," 115.
[566] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 107.

ones, were consistently targeted by the government for supposed anti-social, criminal practices.[567]

Aware of the prejudices against the LGBTQ+ individuals in Cuba, the Cuban *school* of ballet built heteronormativity into the technique, promoting performances of gender difference in an attempt to "convince homophobic officials and audiences that male ballet dancers were athletic, muscular men who upheld revolutionary gender norms."[568] Notably, this attempt to rebuild the male ballet dancer's image as one of strength, skill, and control, occurred even while a woman maintained sole power over the company.

From Alicia Alonso's point of view, promoting male youth engagement with ballet was vital to the longevity and success of the Cuban socialist project.[569] However, despite Alonso's efforts to make being a male ballet dancer desirable within the company and beyond, there was still a large degree of prejudice amongst dancers Cubanacán. Students were expelled for being out as homosexual or behaving "untowardly;" former student Caridad Martínez recalls peers crying in the hallways of the National School of Art. For ten-year-old Martínez, this was the first time she was exposed to the bubbling problems within the socialist populace, and Alonso's own desire to maintain her fame at any cost.[570]

One example of the success of the Cuban ballet in promoting male engagement and fostering male talent is internationally renowned dancer Carlos Acosta. Born in 1973 from a working-class family, Carlos Acosta was trained at Cubanacán and performed with BNCC before leaving the island to further pursue his dance career. He is often regarded as being one of the main male stars of the 2000's ballet world and was a principal dancer at the English National

[567] Schwall, 104.
[568] Schwall, 118.
[569] Alonso, *Diálogos Con La Danza*, 76.
[570] López, "'No Hice."

Ballet, the Royal Ballet, and American Ballet Theater.[571] Undoubtedly, part of Acosta's allure and intrigue as a dancer is his Cuban technique and the gravitas with which he commands the stage. When Acosta is dancing, even when star ballerinas are present, he continues received unprecedented audience attention.

Acosta is a success story of constructed Cuban masculinity presented to an international stage.

> "Although the dancer pushed back against this objectification and insisted that he be judged solely on his artistic achievements (Patterson 2009), many interviews and reviews rampantly fetishized him. Coverage of Acosta frequently dubbed him the 'Cuban sex missile' (Warren 2002, Patterson 2009), and it was even suggested, to detriment of his professional merits, that he owed his success to the fantasies he inspired on ballet's mostly female audiences."[572]

Carlos Acosta, while extremely talented physically and artistically, benefited from his heterosexuality[573] and stylized performances of dominant masculinity.

Even with engaged male youths in the ballet school and highly talented male stars like Acosta, BNC could not control audiences' perception of ballet.[574] Within a Western conception of theatrical dance, the audience's place of power in observing the dancer is masculinely coded. "The possessive gaze is 'male,' while the passive object of the gaze is 'female'— regardless of the dancer's or spectator's sex."[575] This definition of perception along gendered lines gives the audience social power to interpret the movement as they see fit. Even if the purpose of ballet in

[571] Nikiforova, Vasileva, Sakamoto, "Black Dancers" 12.
[572] Tomé, "Black Star," 15.
[573] Tomé, 15.
[574] Schwall, *Dancing with*, 118.
[575] Ann Daly quoted in Schwall, 147.

Cuba was partially to elevate the strength of the male ballet dancer, audience members carried preconceived homophobic notions that affected their interpretation of ballet. As one example of the Cuban public's response to male dancers, disruptive military members in the audience at a 1969 performance in Havana shouted obscenities and prevented dancing.[576] Although under the Cuban school male dancers were expected to perform with a level of strength and perceived masculinity, the audience had the power to determine how the ballet was understood or, in this case, misunderstood. Therefore, Cuban ideology continued to reject notions of ballet fitting into heteronormative society.[577] In this way, choreo-politics failed in the case of gender; the vast Cuban public could not be made to believe that ballet was not linked with homosexuality and effeminate men, as it stereotypically has been viewed. While this line of inquiry has not been fully explored in my thesis, it is certainly an area of research I would be interested in pursuing further.

Further Points of Interest: Yugoslavia

Beyond the research I did looking at masculinity and homophobia in Cuba, two other areas of focus stuck out to me as potential areas of future research: the presence, or lack thereof, of ballet in Yugoslavia, and the influence of touring companies from capitalist countries to socialist Yugoslavia.

Although ballet was not a prominent cultural force, it certainly existed within Yugoslavia prior to the socialist revolution. Early codified dance in Yugoslavia took the form of Plastic Ballet (Modern dance), popularized by Magdalena-Maga Magazinovic in the 1910s and preceding the establishment of classical ballet in Serbia.[578] Classical ballet in the Kingdom of

[576] Schwall, 147.
[577] Schwall, 147.
[578] Milin, "The Russian."

Yugoslavia was performed mainly by a community of Russian immigrants who brought the artform from the Soviet Union. The Russian October Revolution in 1917 and resulting civil war led to large swaths of Russians immigrating to Yugoslavia to avoid violence and persecution. After a dissipation of originally 2 millions Russian emigrants, 40,000 remained in Yugoslavia.[579] With the influx of immigrants fleeing Russia, Yugoslavia became a "Russia outside its borders:" a space where Russians had autonomy and cultural expression outside their home country. Both the Croatian National Theatre and the Belgrade National Theatre benefited from the introduction of classical Russian ballet masters, and after the introduction of classical ballet in Belgrade, "Plastic Ballet" fell out of fashion.[580]

> "The first Russian name [encountered] on the programmes of the National Theatre in Belgrade in the season 1919/20 was that of Maria Bologovska. Ballet numbers were first danced in opera performances, later in ballet divertissements. Already in 1920 ballet courses in the National Theatre were organized with Russian ballet dancers as teachers. Those efforts bore fruit very soon: In 1922 there already existed a nucleus of a ballet ensemble with one ballet stage director and 6 ballet dancers."[581]

The other Russian ballet dancers present and performing in Serbia at the time were Yelena Poliakova, Aleksandar Fortunato, Nina Kirsanova, and Anatoli Zhukovski.[582] Beyond being dancers and choreographers, Fortunato and Zhukovski conducted research on folk dance in the South Slavic region.[583] Their research built a framework for understanding folk dance that contributed to the historiography of social choreography, where choreography served as an anthropological effort to preserve historical dances and maintain authenticity.[584]

Following the initial rise in ballet production after increased Russian immigration, a native community of ballet dancers and choreographers began to grow in the Balkans. The first

[579] Milin.
[580] Milin.
[581] Milin.
[582] Milin.
[583] Milin.
[584] Petkovski, "Choreography as Ideology," 100.

explicitly Macedonian national ballet, titled *Teshkoto*, was produced by Gligor Smokvarski. It highlighted the cultural plurality and distinct features in combined Yugoslav thought and practice.[585] *Teshkoto* is an example of what is referred to as "Balkan dance:" the blending of dance practices and traditions from Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.[586] Demonstrating the manifestation of ballet as a means of constructing national identity to reflect Western ideals, in the mid to late twentieth century, Zagreb Opera Ballet dancers Vesna Butorac and Norio Yoshida were applauded for the Western quality of their pas de deux from Don Quixote.[587]

As illustrated by the history of immigrants bringing ballet to Yugoslavia, traveling individuals and companies had a large impact on the importation of international cultural activities. In the mid to late twentieth century, unlikely amounts of American dance companies embarked on tours of the Soviet sphere, backed by funding from the US State Department. Tours like that of the New York City Ballet's 1962 tour of the Soviet Union demonstrate the historical links between politics, national identity, and performance art.[588] While international touring of ballet companies was somewhat limited, modern dance companies experienced almost unprecedented freedom in the regions they could visit.

Modern dance companies' international tours extended to Yugoslavia; modern dance was thought to be easier to dissipate and less aesthetically isolating than classical ballet. Martha Graham's[589] technique of contract and release was particularly exportable because of the universality of the movement style.[590] The tour was a landmark because of its modernity – Graham was one of the first modern companies to tour Eastern Europe; prior, the tours in

[585] Djeparoska, "Macedonian Cultural," 12.
[586] Djeparoska, 11.
[587] Our Dance Critic, "Yugoslav Ballet."
[588] Croft, "Ballet Nations," 421.
[589] Graham is often regarded as one of the founders of American Modern Dance (RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, November 2023).
[590] RCHUMS 260/DANCE 241 001 FA 2023, Professor Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, November 2023.

socialist countries were mainly ballet based, due to its European history.[591] Jose Limon's company also embarked on a state sponsored national tour of *Porgy and Bess* that included stops in both Zagreb and Belgrade, where they spread capitalist perspectives to socialist audiences through dance.[592] I believe that the impact of touring companies would have increased the Westernized ideals of dance in socialist Yugoslavia, furthering my argument that national identity was created to reflect the aesthetics of the capitalist West.

Final Remarks

Writing this thesis has been a valuable exercise in uniting personal passions with my academic endeavors and exploring an area under-researched and rich with visual history. Through my deep research, I have gained a greater appreciation for the power of dance and implications of physical movement on political agendas. I see choreography everywhere – from explicit dance performances to the implicit social choreography depicted in the accepted organization people walk in on the street. It is my hope that this thesis has expanded the implications of choreo-politics and social choreography to encourage conversation about how we as a community engage with our bodies and understand the ways they reflect collective nationality.

[591] Lenart, "Dancing Art and Politics," 201; Martha Graham was also sent by ANTA to Southeast Asia in 1954. Despite her unique choreography she was able to make strides and build a following amongst anti-American groups (Prevots, *Dance for Export*, 45).
[592] Prevots, *Dance for Export*, 28.

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