The Strange Commodity of Cultural Exchange: Martha Graham and the State Department on Tour, 1955-1987

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The study of Martha Graham's State Department tours and her modern dance demonstrates that between 1955 and 1987 a series of Cold Wars required a steady product that could meet "informational" propaganda needs over time. After World War II, dance critics mitigated the prewar influence of the German and Japanese modernist artists to create a freed and humanist language because modern dance could only emerge from a nation that was free, and not from totalitarian regimes. Thus the modern dance became American, while at the same time it represented a universal man. During the Cold War, the aging of Martha Graham's dance, from innovative and daring to traditional and even old-fashioned, mirrored the nation's transition from a newcomer that advertised itself as the postwar home of freedom,
modernity, and Western civilization to an established power that attempted to set international standards of diplomacy. Graham and her works, read as texts alongside State Department country plans, United States Information Agency publicity, other documentary evidence, and oral histories, reveal a complex matrix of relationships between government agencies and the artists they supported, as well as foundations, private individuals, corporations, country governments, and representatives of business and culture. Because four elements of Graham’s modern dance created by her biography can be traced back to ideas of American identity, human universalism, Asian culture, and the Western canon of ancient Greek, European, and biblical texts, the State Department deployed her work throughout Europe and Asia to transmit ideas about America with choreography that could demonstrate cultural convergences, or the merging of American modernist techniques with host country elements. This targeted strategy of advertisement for international leaders, which translated host-country traditions with a universal language of the modern
dance, made in America, argued that the United States would and could partner with the nation states Graham visited in order to achieve foreign policy agendas.
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Acknowledgements

Ever insistent, never in doubt, full of duplicities, and with a diva demeanor formulated like a composite of Hollywood’s interwar finest, modern dancer Martha Graham famously quipped, “None of my work is political.” Like good children, in the 1970s we never questioned her when we learned the cartwheels, contractions to the floor and melted through spirals around the back to celebrate love in Diversion of Angels, which the company performed during every State Department-sponsored tour between 1955 and 1987. As a teenager in the New York townhouse’s Studio One, the dance felt just as it looked. We were joy. I was hooked. Age quickly overtook my body, but Martha Graham and her choreography stuck to me. As Robert Caro said, “I want to write history as exciting to read as it is to live.”

Ever the skeptic, however, when I got a call from the Dance Curator, Elizabeth Aldrich, that the Library of Congress Graham papers had finally been opened to scholars after years of scandal, I was not completely surprised to find Graham’s scrapbooks filled with government reports on her tours, invitations from ambassadors, and letters from presidents. Yes, Martha, none of your choreographic works were political, but you were. How Grahamian, as the United States Information Agency would brand her work in the 1970s. Yet the depth of her involvement with the government became a puzzle: invitations to conferences on United States-Soviet relations in Asia during the 1950s; a 1957 letter thanking Graham for her service to the nation from Eleanor Dulles, sister of the Secretary of State and Central Intelligence Agency. Despite, and even because of my passion as a teenage disciple, I have striven to remain objective as I unpacked Martha’s government suitcases as she toured over twenty-eight countries in thirty-one years to represent the nation internationally. What work did this woman do for the state, and what can it tell us about how the American and modern represented, or were thought to represent, American interests abroad?
A long list of mentors and professors at Columbia University, professors and professionals outside my home institution, colleagues, friends, and family have encouraged me and added significantly to what would have been a small study of a single series of performances in the 1950s. Professors Eric Foner and Lynn Garafola pressed me to expand the work to cover all the known tours and then encouraged me to explore later tours where little archival evidence could be found. They never doubted the power of my research tenacity. As an advisor at Columbia, Eric Foner provided advice and guidance that was invaluable and ever prescient. As a reader, he provided insights and suggestions down to the word choices. I have had the privilege of working with Lynn Garafola for the last decade. I began in her class at Barnard as merely a curious post-graduate student. Her rigor and the intellectual curiosity she inspired in her students gave me a new perspective on dance and the possibility that solid history could be written. For this I will always remain grateful, and strive to encourage this in my own students when I teach. I only hope that the dissertation captures a fraction of the quality that they have demanded of the process and the work. Up to the minute, they have challenged constructs and sentences, and for this I will be forever grateful.

The other members of my dissertation committee have been mentors well beyond the call of duty. Carol Gluck challenged me to push beyond the constructed borders I had put on my abilities. She unfailingly confronted me and demanded that I become a better historian and teacher than I thought possible. Just when the work seemed to be spiraling out of control, she could see the bones of it. Teaching next to her for two semesters has showed me the internal workings of a master. And, to boot, she has offered me her home and friendship in the hardest of times. In the face of challenges, she taught me to find the mantra, “The only thing you can
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I have had the honor of teaching foreign policy for Anders Stephanson for two semesters while at Columbia as a teaching assistant. He took me on as a TA although I had no background in foreign policy, and even less in teaching history to undergraduates. I have had the pleasure of working for him and with him on several conferences at Columbia. In all cases, he has generously volunteered his expertise and insightful commentary. At a joint Columbia University-West Point Military Academy conference, questions he directed at the keynote speaker, Col. Gian Gentile, led to an article in which the Colonel revised the thinking he had used to guide his own approach to history both in his own work, his teaching at West Point to cadets, and his interaction with those who worked for him when he acted as head of the History Department. Professor Stepahnson brings this same critical eye to my work, and for this I will be grateful as I rewrite and rethink the dissertation.

The Chair of my committee, Alice Kessler-Harris, was the second professor I met before I applied to the Ph.D. program in history at Columbia University. One of the early struggling drafts of the dissertation was written for Alice during a seminar on women and gender. As I grappled with the ideas and the archives, she remained tolerant of my ramblings and committed to the value of the work. She has helped me to sort through its meaning and to focus my thoughts. All the while, she provided wise council when I limped through a law school-history course on women and motherhood during which the personal met the professional. Her parting smile and Alice Kessler-Harris hug always mark our conversations.

Although she has been on leave, Victoria de Grazia has combined elements of all the official committee members. During her class on empires and imperialism, the Graham
archives opened, and I used the newly available material for a paper. As I struggled with the final draft, she said, “You can’t write it because it’s your dissertation.” I did not know it at the time, but she had, as always, nailed the issue. A formative part of my development took place during a conference at Aarhus University in Denmark. She took me as her student, and I was challenged both during the day at presentations and over dinner to refine and rethink arguments. She encouraged the development of a seminar series on soft power and cultural diplomacy, and it has been my honor to work for her as she challenged models and ideas. As a part of our future work together, I thank her for her institutional support at the Donald and Vera Blinken European Institute, which has already supported endeavors including the seminar series and a joint Columbia University-West Point conference on cultural diplomacy. With Professor de Grazia, my future seems bright.

The number of other professors who have influenced the work is an embarrassment of riches. They have included Americanists, Europeanists, and scholars of Asia and the Middle East. In this, I am sure to forget someone as I thank Volker Berghahn and Mark Mazower for their guidance in research, scholarship, and my development as a practitioner. Professor Berghahn has even extended his support to future projects. Rashid Khaledi tolerated and even welcomed my naive questions, suggested books and advice, and has kept his office door open to me. Working for Alan Brinkley has been an honor and a privilege, and his approach to historical problems has taught me much. I first got to know Matthew Connelly in Aarhus, and since then, I have always learned from our dialogue and his approach to archival material. Too numerous to mention are the professors who have offered formative insights into my work as I struggled to write articles and present at conferences. Mark Franko, Joellen Meglin, and Barbara Palfry have published my work, mentored me, and provided editorial support while they
tolerated my writing. Gregg Brazinsky at The George Washington University not only critiqued my work at two conferences, but his invitation to come to The George Washington University and speak also resulted in new thinking about Asia. His guidance in Germany made research possible because he found my eyes and ears, students who shared their language and research skills with me. In addition, Penny von Eschen, one of the mothers of us all in cultural diplomacy, has acted as commentator during panels at both the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations and the American Historical Association. Her insights both during the conferences and after have furthered the work, and I look forward to working with her in the future. After a conference on philanthropy and diplomacy at Columbia University, Olivier Zunz, University of Virginia, has graciously offered to read and tear apart future drafts.

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Because official documents have been lost or destroyed, in some cases at the wish of Martha Graham herself, members and former members of the Martha Graham Dance Company and Foundation have been invaluable guides to the woman, the work, and the tours through oral histories and through documents they pulled from underneath their beds and, in many cases, contributed to the Library of Congress. Janet Eilber, Artistic Director of the Graham company, allowed me to archive and photograph their documents and has always provided me with tapes of performances. Although I cannot name them all, I would like to specifically thank dancers Ethel Winter, Pearl Lang, and Mimi Cole who have passed away since we worked together. They remain lost friends, and yet I can hear their voices guiding and warning me as I work. Mary Hinkson, the iconic ‘Woman in White’ in Diversion of Angels, has provided insights and has become one of my closest friends. Miki Orihara always lent me wise council. Although she is not quoted herein, Linda Hodes’s oral history formed a core of the thinking about several tours and company dynamics. Terese Capucilli has the most important archive on Graham after 1974, and she opened her apartment door and allowed me to document her complete records of the 1979 and 1987 tours, neither of which can be found in any public repository. Oliver Tobin, Yuko Giannakis, and Jennifer Peterson, all retired, remain stalwart supporters through dialogue, and they make sure I get up every day and go to the computer to write. Tim O’Donnell practices contact improvisation, the polar opposite of Graham, and he makes sure that I remain at the desk and then can stand up and walk away for a bit. Nejila Yatkin demonstrates the power of dance and politics and has become a confidante and roommate. The many others who have offered stories, anecdotes, and color to the dissertation are listed in the interview section, and I only wish I could thank them one-by-one.
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For Elizabeth
And just to stop internal mayhem, we dispatched Martha Graham:
That’s what we call cultural exchange.
And if the world goes really wacky, we’ll get John to send out Jackie:
That’s what we call cultural exchange.
And if they feel that jazzy rhythm, they’ll know we’re really with ‘em:
That’s what we call cultural exchange.
No commodity is quite so strange as this thing called cultural exchange.

-Louis Armstrong performing “Cultural Exchange”
in The Real Ambassadors, lyrics Iola Brubeck
Introduction

In 1937, donning a pioneer woman’s dress and with her dark hair neatly pulled back, Martha Graham stood on a rickety platform in the State Dining Room before President Franklin D. Roosevelt, his first lady, and key cabinet members at the White House. As a horn called, she began to dance Frontier (1935) and became the first person to perform modern dance at the White House.1 Indeed, her avant-garde approach, which required bare feet, led to questions from the Office of Protocol.2 With her arms pressed against the top rung of a split-rail fence, she looked just above the president and his guests as though surveying the Western plains. As she rose with an inhale, the exhale brought her torso to the left, then to the right, and her arm scanned the terrain in a single, wide gesture. Side battements swept her skirt through arcs: “Her leg went so high, her foot almost touched the dining room chandelier.”3 Graham returned to the fence and arched her spine backward, supplicant to the sky. She recovered into side skips; tiny parallel steps then marked the straight lines of plowed fields. The dance ended as Graham placed her leg on the fence, standing in profile, again marking the land with her arm’s reach. As a woman,

1 Perspectives - Frontier, premiered 28 February 1935, choreography and costume by Martha Graham, music by Louis Horst, set by Isamu Noguchi. Note that unless otherwise stated, all dances described have been seen by the author during Martha Graham Dance Company New York seasons between 1976 and 2013, on Martha Graham Dance Company's Dance in America: Diversion of Angels / Lamentation / Frontier / Adorations / Cave of the Heart (Medea's Dance of Vengeance) / Appalachian Spring (1997), “Dance in America” (Public Broadcasting System series, 1997), or on Martha Graham: Dance on Film: A Dancer’s World, Appalachian Spring, Night Journey (Nathan Kroll: 1957).


3 Ibid., 131.
this pioneer attested to the power of every citizen to take part in building a nation and expressing its ideology. Invoking manifest destiny and American exceptionalism, Graham described the American West, “whose meaning was inexhaustible, whose purpose was infinite,” as her inspiration for Frontier. Four years later, as fascism expanded across Europe, Roosevelt became the first president to export American dance as cultural diplomacy.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Frontier traveled to Germany to celebrate the 750th birthday of Berlin, the city that had been divided by the “Iron Curtain” of cold war. Standing at the barbed-wire wall that divided East from West Berlin, he demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this Wall.” In Graham's final State Department-supported tour, she and her company crossed through Checkpoint Charlie to the East as an American delegation for cultural exchange. As the curtain rose in the Komische Oper, the soloist in this performance of Frontier looked out over the East German audience, bringing the American message with her sweeping arm over her imagined open land.

4 Martha Graham, Blood Memory (New York: Doubleday, 1989, 1991), 44. Note that the author’s own work challenges the accuracy of Graham’s quotes in Blood Memory. Transcripts of her testimony given for the book demonstrates that her words were edited by Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, Graham’s editor at Doubleday, as well as others. The author only quotes those passages in which a facsimile of the idea exists either in transcripts, on television, during radio interviews, or according to oral testimony given by dancers, because Graham’s sentences and syntax are often disjointed and difficult to grasp. Through 1945, the LOC database provides the most current evidence (Elizabeth Aldrich, “Martha Graham Timeline: 1894-1945,” http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200154832/). Graham scholars have misstated premiere dates because the MGC-LOC did not open until 2006. Premiere dates and information between 1945 and 1984 from Ernestine Stodelle, Deep Song: The Dance Story of Martha Graham (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 298-317. After 1984, information has been gathered from newspapers. The Martha Graham Dance Foundation has elected not to contribute their materials to LOC for scholars.
Graham recalled an audience member saying that in Germany, “When you reach the frontier, you've reached a barrier.” Graham responded, “I had the idea of Frontier in my mind as a frontier of exploration, a frontier of discovery, and not one of limitation.” Reflecting on the fall of the Wall two years after the performance, Graham echoed triumphalist narratives: “I wonder what this young woman would say to me today, now that the Berlin Wall has been brought down. It makes me feel triumphant to feel that nothing lasts but the spirit of man and the union of man.”⁵ In later years, Graham famously proclaimed that she was not political. Although she did not choreograph her works in response to a political movement, she did political work with the Department of State on tours when she worked as an active American Cold War freedom fighter.

Martha Graham’s engagement with the Executive Branch spanned exactly fifty years and is bounded by one dance: Frontier. Opening with her domestic performance for Roosevelt, her State Department tours began in 1955 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s administration deployed her to Japan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Ceylon, and Iran. Private foundation funding took her to Israel while the government provided publicity and embassy support. In 1957, Graham performed in West Berlin, and in 1962 the State Department under President John F. Kennedy sent her to Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Poland. Private support again landed her in Israel, followed by a brief series in performances in Portugal in 1967, under Lyndon B. Johnson. After a hiatus because of Graham’s personal and professional failures, Richard M. Nixon’s Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, oversaw the 1974 tour that repeated the 1955

⁵ Graham, Blood Memory, 219.
itinerary, dropping India, Pakistan and Iran and adding Hong Kong and Vietnam. President Gerald R. Ford had become the seated president by the time Graham departed. In 1979, the Graham company performed on the “Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour” to Jordan, Egypt, and Israel. Graham returned to Berlin in 1987, this time performing in the East, as a paired performance with Reagan. The start of the story with Roosevelt and its end with Reagan seem improbable as a pairing, too easy. Historians recognize Roosevelt as a liberal leader, from his New Deal policies to his pronouncement that is any citizen’s right to vote for the Communist Party in America, versus Reagan, who stated that he had a “rendezvous with destiny” as a leader of the conservative movement that called the Soviet Union “The Evil Empire.” Yet from Roosevelt through Reagan, every seated president—whether liberal or conservative, peacekeeper or warmonger, culturally sophisticated or homespun—received, honored, or exported Graham as cultural propaganda. Graham’s *Frontier* told the story of a pioneer woman marking her space in a new land full of promise; although the political implications of the dance seemed to shift from redemptive during the Depression to hokey during the “Frontiers of Freedom: and “Star Wars” era, the choreography remained poignant to government representatives as it transformed over time from avant-garde to “forever modern.”

Despite Martha Graham’s famous proclamations that she was not political, she remained inexorably connected to the White House and the Department of State as she toured and collected awards. In 1950, President Harry Truman named her Woman of the Year. In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford awarded Graham the Medal of Freedom and declared her a “national treasure.” In 1985, Reagan designated Graham one of the first recipients of the National Medal of Arts. Despite the ubiquitous description of her work as
modern, Martha Graham described her dance as “contemporary,” saying, “It is of its time.” Yet while deployed by the United States as a cultural ambassador, publicity and Graham herself framed the choreography as modern dance for international audiences. Graham represented “the modern dance,” a distinctly American invention. The 1943 Office of War Information (OWI) study of Graham’s works described them as “an entirely American product.” How did Graham “soothe internal mayhem” when the government “sent out Martha Graham” to convince elite international leaders to join the American government to enact its foreign policy objectives?

The chronology of Martha Graham’s State Department tours demonstrates that the years between 1955 and 1987 were a series of Cold Wars that required steady products that could meet “informational,” or propaganda needs. The aging of Martha Graham’s modern dance, from innovative and daring to traditional and even old-fashioned, mirrored the nation’s transition from a newcomer that advertised itself as the harbinger of the modern, free, and the postwar home of Western civilization, to an established power that attempted to set international standards of diplomacy. Because Graham’s modernism, her dance works and technique, aged over time alongside American internationalism, her oeuvre followed State Department publicity needs. When Graham’s works met with accolades, the modernism of the work, which made it difficult to understand without a thorough knowledge of the Western canon used in the dances, allied the host country intelligentsia with the Americans through a common understanding of modernist art and

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7 “Martha Graham: Biographical Data,” Office of War Information, Record Group (RG) 208.5.2, Records of the News and Features Bureau, NARA.
that could not be understood by an unsophisticated “other.” It became a metaphorical sense of elite, imagined community. Newly formed personal connections could take place based on understanding of allegiance.

Using Martha Graham and her choreography on tour as the site of analysis, the exploration of why the State Department deployed the Martha Graham Dance Company to specific locations when it did describes how this cultural product represented the United States internationally despite changes in both political parties and foreign policy ideology over time. Graham and her works, read as texts alongside State Department country plans, United States Information Agency (USIS) publicity, other documentary evidence, and oral histories, reveal a complex matrix of relationships between government agencies and the artists they supported, as well as foundations, private individuals, corporations, country governments, and representatives of business and culture.

For the State Department, modern dance became what I call a “technology of freedom” that remained useful throughout the Cold War because it had absorbed the liberal tradition during the interwar period, and then projected national ideals during the Cold Wars. Graham and her works became an ingrained part of cultural programming despite changes in administrations and foreign policy agendas. Crafted for elite audiences, her choreography — in technique, subject matter, and performance — represented the United States for both liberals and conservatives in the executive branch when they targeted decision-makers who could join the United States and enact its foreign policy agendas.
The dissertation requires the synthesis of a broad range of historiographies.\(^8\) It engages with books on Martha Graham, including biography, autobiography, and an analysis of her dance works in the context of her life.\(^9\) The history intervenes in these stories to foreground the importance of her government work that, in some instances, kept her company alive. In addition, biographies of her mentor and lover, Louis Horst, as well as her dancers, set designer Isamu Noguchi, and composers provide insights into her creative process.\(^10\) Dance history and performance studies provide the context for further study, yet they have not traditionally covered a dancer’s direct participation in the political support of American agendas.\(^11\) Because this work places

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\(^8\) See Appendix III for a précis of the essential, relevant books.


Graham in the context of American international political interests, the project also relies on new studies of dance and politics and new explorations of Graham as political in her personal life and creative process. The dissertation builds on these studies to foreground the chronology of the state. Historians of culture, politics, and gender have added to scholarship, and some have included Graham in their books. No author has engaged directly with the modern dance. The basis of this analysis must lie in the foundation of works on foreign policy, the Cold War, and host-country histories. These books support


general arguments about the shifting nature of the Cold War over time and across nations. Analyses of mechanisms for export have included works on the United States Information Agency (USIA/USIS) and Voice of America, which provide the background for the advertisement of Graham internationally.\textsuperscript{15} A new literature of cultural diplomacy has focused on abstract art and jazz, yet these studies have been generalized and do not examine the specifics of a single artist’s work.\textsuperscript{16} A volume on lays the historical narrative of numerous companies and genres.\textsuperscript{17} Recently, historians of foreign relations have moved into the realm of the body as political, yet they have not engaged with the implications of a specific physical technique that can train the body internationally.\textsuperscript{18} Theories of modernity and modernism have informed this study and acted as the bones of analysis.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{17} Naima Prevots, \textit{Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War} (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1999).


Modernization, power, and gender become vital to the story and again provide theoretical underpinnings. The dissertation both synthesizes and builds on a range of historiographies from traditional approaches to global events to culture and dance.

Graham is rewritten as a politically shrewd participant in the international pro-American stance of the State Department, and her choreography becomes a part of international diplomacy.

The anti-Soviet framework and the ideology of freedom have been presented as the grand narratives of the Cold War; country-by-country analysis using


Graham argues against singular readings. Martha Graham displays the intricacies of State Department and USIS projects on the ground. The use of both overt and covert funding for the Graham tours exhibit the comingling of public and private sectors in elite cultural projects. This also suggests that the State Department considered the Graham project more important than historians have previously assumed. Early publicity linked Graham’s work to a tenet of American nation building, a principle that America was defined by “the new.” Her technique challenged classical ballet’s corseted body with the action of contraction-and-release, in which the inversion and straightening of the torso motivates all subsequent movement. Like a laugh or sexual peak, the physicality shattered classical boundaries that moved the body from the outside and then inwards. From “City on a Hill” to the New Deal Reforms, bare feet and flexible torsos, they were founded on the mythology that the nation could consistently remake itself - within the boundaries of capitalism and the individual - to meet changing propaganda needs over time.

While on State Department-sponsored tours, Graham’s works argued for the potency of American foreign policy by wooing international elites with specific dances publicized in each region to fit government agendas. Graham and the propaganda arm associated with State Department, USIS, used the four ideological components of her works that had grown out of her biography and had been built into her codified technique during the interwar period. Publicity in Asia drew on her use of what publicity called “oriental” forms; Old Testament stories premiered in Israel. As a woman, Graham could become a conservative cold warrior who attended cocktail parties and embassy dinners, and then perform the Bride in Appalachian Spring or Medea in Cave of the Heart. Graham’s approach to ambassadorship was far from “soft”; she used symbolic power to demonstrate national mantras of freedom that
unfettered the “hearts and minds” of both men and women. In her trope of freedom, she used images that represented the United States and expressed the ideals of Western civilization. Because Graham attached her work to the modernist rubric, expressions of sexuality that infused her works became acceptable to sensors in Burma and cultural authorities in Singapore. Understanding Graham in the context of the State Department shows her genius in play politically.

The relationship between Graham, modern dance, and the state became mutually productive during the early Cold War because her interwar revolutionary art demonstrated American ideals of reform when the nation’s new dance, which included both ballet and modern techniques, displaced European artistic hegemony through the development of a distinctly American modernism. Recent studies published in the *American Historical Review* analyze paradigms of modernity and connect the rise of modernity with artistic modernism. Resting on the *AHR* authors to connect the slippery rise of modernity to modernism, and social movements connect to artistic impulses. The work of theorist Fredric Jameson forges into the historical progression of concepts of modernity, social ideals, and the use of artistic modernism. The idea of American exceptionalism defined by Frederick Jackson Turner by his claim that the conquest of the West by pioneers created an enduring American personality drove Graham to innovate and move beyond the stasis of Europe, and nationalism infused the artistic government-led export project accordingly. With the opening of Henry Luce’s “American Century” in 1941, modern art, and thus its dance, became a potent diplomatic actor because shifting

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American aims abroad demanded new methods of communication. As a global leader, the emerging power projected itself through culture as both culturally potent and sophisticated. USIS literature stated that exported cultural products should rewrite the tenets of what they called “Western Civilization” in American terms. A USIS report noted, “The US should replace European countries as a model civilization.”

Historians and critics equate Martha Graham with Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, James Joyce, and Frank Lloyd Wright. In Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity, Howard Gardner analyzes Graham in this context. Susan Ware cites Graham as one of the most influential women in twentieth-century culture and uses the title of Graham’s Letter to the World (1940) in the title of her own work Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Century. Anna Kisselgoff equated Graham’s work with Picasso and Joyce: “Like other modernists, Miss Graham rejected literal imagery in favor of abstraction. Form for form’s sake, however, held no interest for her. Instead she focused on abstraction in its strict sense, that of extracting the essence of a quality of emotion.” Graham’s obituary recounted that in 1988, Time magazine named her the “Dancer of the Century”; People magazine recognized her among the female

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24 Ware, Letter to the World; Letter to the World, premiered August 11, 1940, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Hunter Johnson, costumes by Edith Gilfond.


The paradox of gender created by the “New Woman” in the interwar years inspired Graham and her choreography; the seemingly contradictory images of Graham in costumes that some international audiences understood as refashioned cocktail dresses, while performing sexually explicit yet modernized dance, worked for the State Department during the Cold War. While Graham challenged and reformulated gendered norms on stage using modernism to challenge boundaries of sexuality on stage, she also presented herself as a female ambassador replete with pearls at cocktail parties and dinners. As a representative of a uniquely “freed” state, Graham could carry representational messages about gender and power. Under Roosevelt, Graham established herself as a reliable diplomat through connections to Eleanor Roosevelt, who arranged for Graham’s performance at the White House. Graham had grown as an artist under the influence of Willa Cather and Georgia O’Keeffe. She relied on female philanthropists including Mabel Dodge Luhan, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Katherine Cornell, Bethsabée de Rothschild, and Lila Acheson Wallace. She gained inspiration from American writers such as Emily Dickinson and read Constance Rourke. By shifting the dramatic center of Greek myths from male to female protagonists, Graham rewrote Greek myths, Old and New Testament stories, and European-inspired works. She demonstrated

\[26\] Ibid.


the power of the American female to be free and productive, both a leader of a new genre and a professional who managed a company of dancers. She was a working woman, but was neither forced to work, as the United States saw the Soviet system, nor enslaved by the kitchen, as the Soviet Union saw the United States.

On tours, Graham arrived in a city with the women in her company wearing pressed dresses and holding white gloves; once on stage, they performed deep pelvic contractions and releases, the sexually-based center of her technique. Publicity championed her work, proclaiming, “Woman’s soul is on stage.” The psychology of Graham’s dances portrayed the demons of man in a woman’s language. Through Graham’s inner struggles on stage in works such as Clytemnestra, during which Graham, as the Mycenaean Queen, murders her warrior husband because he has sacrificed their daughter, or Errand into the Maze, in which she slays the Minotaur, which she calls the Creature of Fear, she addressed the triumph of the human spirit despite the cruelty of human actions. With work that always centered on the female protagonist, she could use psychology to address the problems of mankind with a soft, representative voice that championed reform. This became particularly important in formerly fascist nations such as Japan and Germany; those that the State Department wished to “modernize” in the American image, particularly in Asia, and nations where the government sought alliances from Yugoslavia to the Middle East. However, Graham also served a much more straightforward purpose: she socialized at cocktail parties with men and a scattering of women. Like the wives of diplomats and business leaders abroad, Graham, at teas and in one-on-one meetings, could address the elite global leaders in a way that men could not.
In order to build and perform works, Graham formed bonds with female supporters and philanthropists. Eleanor Roosevelt saw Graham’s work at Neighborhood Playhouse, and then in 1937 Graham appeared at the White House in Frontier. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commissioned Appalachian Spring, which premiered at the Library of Congress in 1944. Bethsabée de Rothschild underwrote Graham’s first European tours in the 1950s, travelled with the company, and later supported Graham in Israel. In 1955, Virginia Innes-Brown, an independent and wealthy woman, oversaw the committee that exported dance for the State Department. In 1957, Eleanor Dulles, the sister of both the Secretary of State and the first Director of the Central Intelligence Agency under Eisenhower, brought Graham to Berlin in 1957 to perform Judith (1950). Lila Acheson Wallace bought Graham a building for her school and encouraged the commission of Frescoes for the celebrated opening of the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1978. Wallace and the Reader’s Digest Fund supported the museum’s collection of “Egyptia.” Jacquelyn Kennedy Onassis supported Graham at galas and edited Graham’s posthumously published biography. Forward-looking philanthropists and female political leaders, whether in the public or private sector, formed the backbone of Graham’s sustainability as an export. While bringing the soft power of cultural products in

29 Appalachian Spring, premiered December 30, 1944, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Aaron Copland, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Edith Gilfond.


31 Frescoes, premiered September 24, 1978, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Samuel Barber, costumes by Halston. Note that Stodelle has the opening in New York, 1980.
a female package, Graham also worked as an indomitable force with her powerful women on stage and as a forceful cold warrior during meetings and parties.

Graham also served as a counterpoint to Soviet claims of racism in the United States. Her dances—and Graham herself in speeches, writings, and radio shows, and particularly her choice of company members—made the woman and her choreography into “goodwill ambassadors.” When in India, where the United States received significant criticism for racism, promotional pictures taken specifically for the tour included black men partnering white women. In the Philippines, her Filipino dancer attracted the attention of newspaper articles, which spotlighted the two women with interviews encouraged by the USIS. Graham became useful not because she demonstrated integration while on tour, but rather because of the stand she had taken against racism throughout her career. She hired Jewish dancers who were subject to quotas at Denishawn during the interwar period in the United States, a previously interned Japanese dancer during World War II, and two female African American dancers well before seminal court debates and the official start of civil rights battles.  

Through her own intellectual freedom, she had arrived with the right message. In this sense, Graham embodied “information,” or the delivery of an already established fact, rather than propaganda, or a product made for consumption in order to sway opinion. Graham came prepackaged with the ideological goods to go.

The analysis of Martha Graham's involvement with State Department activities that used dance to promote the United States internationally requires a direct

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32 “Interview with Charles Weidman,” conducted by Agnes de Mills, June 25, 1974, JRDD-NYPL.
engagement with the term used to define her work: *modern dance*. Chapter One argues that although a modernist dance began in Germany just before the start of World War I and circulated in the United States in the mid- and late 1920s, with German-trained Japanese dancers as well, the story of “modern dance” became a victor’s history.\(^{33}\) Dance historians have wrestled with this slippery concept, which engages social modernity, artistic modernism, and Graham’s biography. In order to claim both democratic superiority and simultaneously champion free choice and cooperative diversity, exported culture had to promote cultural convergences, or the incorporation of host country cultural traces for the promotion of political alliances among the elite. Graham’s dance offered a vehicle for this agenda.

In Chapter Two, I argue that Graham used four principles that were embedded in her early dance experiences to formulate her dance modernism. Her biography brought her work infusions of universalism through her early relationship with her mother and father, concepts and stories of Western civilization as a young woman at school and growing up at the turn of the century, a dedication to the nation and ideas of American exceptionalism with her move from the east coast to the west, and orientalism during her dance training in California. These four influences promoted various aspects of the United States and its agenda when it needed to prove its worth to global elites.\(^{34}\) Graham’s position as a woman eased strains around the claims her work made about

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\(^{34}\) Munroe, *The Third Mind*. 
America. Maturing as a “New Woman,” Graham carried these messages internationally as a powerful yet seductive representative of the modern woman and nation.

Graham’s biography before the tours works to establish tenets embedded in her work. Graham’s personal history, as well as national and international events, inspired her choreography. Graham’s life was bounded by the 1893 proclamation of American exceptionalism by historian Frederic Jackson Turner and the end of the Cold War in 1991. Graham was born in 1894 in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh that included the original “Millionaire’s Row,” where industrial magnates lived. When Graham lived in the area, the city boasted that it contained 40% of the wealth in the United States. Her mother was a descendent of the Mayflower, while her father was of Irish Catholic descent. The year before Graham’s birth, Turner delivered his famous speech “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Turner claimed that because American culture spread westward from Europe and then the East Coast, the American character emerged from the frontier to mold an exceptional nation. In 1908, Graham and her family moved across the United States from the industrialized East to Santa Barbara, California. As Graham watched the terrain unfold, she saw fences and train tracks that demonstrated Turner’s thesis that the land frontier had closed; she realized in herself a frontier of the spirit just as Turner had asserted each American would. In California, manifest destiny had been realized yet brought new opportunities.


In a move from Asia to the American West, the Frontier thesis that showed how the European mind became American with travel and conquest influences across oceans permeated the nation’s people in the West as traders brought “oriental” influences to the American mind through ports in California with products, ideas, and art. In 1916, Graham began her dance training with Denishawn, a company that incorporated such Asian influences to create a new dance form based on “Orientalia” and exoticism coupled with expressive European systems of movement. After joining the company, Graham toured the United States on the vaudeville circuit with Ruth St. Denis’s orientalist dances and Ted Shawn’s works that drew on “primitive” Americana including Aztec and Native American movement and costumes. At Denishawn, she met musician Louis Horst, of German descent, who would become her musical director, mentor, and lover. Graham left Denishawn in 1923 and went to New York where she did not find quick artistic success. Graham made compromises to finance her experiments as she strove to develop her own art. She drew on the exemplary theatrical skills that she had developed at Denishawn and joined John Murray Anderson’s Greenwich Village Follies, where she performed on Broadway. After performing “exotica” on Denishawn tours and commercial versions of the genre on Broadway, with the encouragement of Horst, Graham realized that she needed to forge her own path. Because she did not gain access to performance venues, studios, and dancers in New York, when she was offered a position at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, she accepted it.

37 Monroe, *The Third Mind*.

Industrialist and philanthropist George Eastman, founder of the Eastman Kodak Company, established the Eastman School of Music in 1921 as the first professional school of the University of Rochester. Opening the school, he said, “The life of our communities in the future needs what our schools of music and of other fine arts can give them.” In 1924, Eastman hired Howard Hanson who, in turn, hired Robert Mamoulian; he invited Graham to create a dance department that would work as an integral part of the drama department. Graham also choreographed works for the newly constructed Eastman Theater. By 1926, Graham received top billing as the theater’s dance artist and worked with a company of both men and women. The school allowed Graham to experiment in a creative and dynamic environment committed to new music and a progressive approach to the arts. The institution also brought her into direct contact with the power of philanthropy. Both Allegheny and Rochester contributed to Graham’s appreciation of the elite as both audience members and patrons.

Successes in Rochester encouraged Graham to take her performances to New York City. Several of Graham’s students traveled with her to perform *Three Gopi Maidens* (1926). They had “lovely draped batik costumes,” and the film made at the Eastman School reveals a set and decor reminiscent of St. Denis's *Radha* (1906). In 1926, Graham premiered a series of works at the 48th Street Theater with these students;

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40 Ibid., 193.
the following month, she presented her work *The Flute of Krishna* (1926) in Rochester.\(^{41}\) Although determined to break out on her own, Graham continued to use her expertise in oriental forms to choreograph original works. Yet the vaudeville nature of these vignettes did not satisfy Graham, and she did not want to choreograph for interludes between movie showings in Rochester. Stories differ about why Graham left the Eastman School. Witnesses in Rochester claim that she and Hanson had a heated argument and that she threw a book at Hanson, hitting him in the forehead. According to lore, Graham claimed that it was a casual parting of the ways.\(^{42}\) However she departed, the experience at Rochester laid the ground for her experiments in dance, theater, and music. Among other things, Graham met musicians with whom she later collaborated, including William Schuman and Aaron Copland. Graham returned to New York full-time, began teaching at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and assembled a company of women whom she used as a backdrop for herself as she attempted to make her modernist dance. Graham continued to try to find her own voice by shunning orientalism and the miming theatrics of such an approach to dance.

Horst introduced Graham to the modern visual artists, whose work strongly affected Graham. In 1930, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) presented the exhibition “Paintings by 19 Living Americans.”\(^{43}\) Graham had connections to a number of people involved with the exhibit, including those who donated works—such as Alfred Stieglitz,


\(^{43}\) “Paintings by 19 Living Americans,” December 13, 1929 – January 12, 1930, MoMA, REG 3729, Exh. #2, MoMA-A.
and the Neighborhood Playhouse’s Lewisohns, Alice and Irene. Georgia O’Keeffe was a featured artist with works including “White Calla Lilies” (1928); her paintings inspired by sojourns to the Southwest - at the same time as Graham to see the Indian dances - also brought these women together. Both women alluded to the power of the woman in their work based on images of the Southwest, yet O’Keeffe became a heralded female artist when the Museum of Modern Art showed her work in 1929 before Graham premiered her Primitive Mysteries in 1931. In 1930, one day before Graham’s 36th birthday, MoMA opened “Forty-six Painters and Sculptors Under 35 Years of Age.” Her Frontier collaborator, Isamu Noguchi showed three sculptures.\textsuperscript{44} The ever-competitive Graham could not have been pleased. These two exhibits culminated in a third, “Paintings and Sculptures by Living Americans,” again supported by Stieglitz and the Lewisohns. It included a bust of Katharine Cornell, the famous stage actress and a supporter of Graham’s.\textsuperscript{45} In 1930, Graham premiered Lamentation, a work that abstracted the body with a tube-like costume and expunged narrative to express a single, universal, human emotion: grief. Critic Deborah Jowitt notices the influence of Ernst Barlach on Graham; she notes that even the critics in 1927 and 1928 “presuppose some influence of Germany on the major American modernists, if only as a catalyst.”\textsuperscript{46} In 1931, MoMA showed “German Paintings and Sculpture,” again supported by people known by Graham; it

\textsuperscript{44}“Forty-six Painters and Sculptors Under 35 Years of Age,” April 12-26, 1930, REG 2521, Exh. #5a, MoMA-A.

\textsuperscript{45}“Paintings and Sculptures by Living Americans,” December 2, 1930 – January 20, 1931, REG 9, Exh # 11, MoMA-A.

featured Barlach as well as other German sculptors whose work certainly influenced her choreography through flow, shape, and the abstract approach. Graham’s visits to museums and the effect of these works fused influences from the United States, Asia, and Germany when she explored modernism.

Graham also used the power of the pen to forge her place in modern dance. Here, her dedication to the United States as well as artistic modernism became manifest. In 1930, Graham concluded, “So the answer to the problem of the American dance is, ‘Know the land’—its exciting strange contrasts of barrenness and fertility—its great sweep of distances.” She announced the arrival of an exceptionalist American modern dance. In the same year, she performed on Broadway with the Dance Repertory Theatre, which included her works alongside those of Doris Humphrey, Helen Tamiris, and Charles Weidman. In 1931, the year Agnes de Mille joined the group, Graham premiered Primitive Mysteries, which describes the rites and rituals of the American Southwest. Allying again with the modern artists, Graham approached Georgia O’Keeffe to design a backdrop for the work. O’Keeffe declined. Both Graham’s writings and her approach to modern art allied her with a distinctly American approach.

47 “German Painting and Sculpture, March 13 – April 26, 1931, REG 11, Exh # 11, MoMA-A.


With the rise of fascism, Graham entered the public arena in 1936 to publically denounce the Nazi regime, make protest works, and raise money for medical relief for the Spanish Civil War; she did not, however, join others in the modern dance movement to make works that primarily criticized the United States government. In 1936, the Nazi Olympic Committee invited Graham to participate in the opening festival of the Olympic games. She declined in a powerful letter that received national attention in the press.\(^{50}\) She choreographed *Chronicle* (1936), a work that protested war and totalitarianism, and launched her political dance phase in which she sharply criticized the usurpation of democracy abroad.\(^{51}\) In 1937, artists turned their attention to the Spanish Civil War, where the elected left-wing government fought a fascist uprising. Although the United States government did not take a stand on the Spanish Civil War, Graham’s heralded works, including *Deep Song* (1937), protested fascism. The black and white costume designed for the work gestured towards Picasso’s *Guernica*.\(^{52}\) The body’s lines became graphic brush lines of black and white on the stage. With the choreography’s sharp gestures and defiant leg sweeps performed with a rectangular bench, Graham used abstraction and design for political purposes. She performed for medical relief fundraisers not as a communist “fellow traveler,” but as an anti-fascist. Along with *Deep Song*, which

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\(^{50}\) Martha Graham to Rudolf von Laban, Deutsche Tanzbuhne, March 14, 1936, scrapbooks, box 311, MGC-LOC.

\(^{51}\) *Chronicle*, premiered December 20, 1936, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Wallingford Riegger, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.

\(^{52}\) *Deep Song*, premiered December 19, 1937, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Henry Cowell, costume by Edith Gilfond.
could be understood as a criticism of the Roosevelt administration’s inaction regarding Spain to support democracy, she performed *Frontier*.

She did not join others in the modern dance movement who used the genre to make political statements that criticized the government’s response to the Depression. The stock market crashed in 1929, although the Midwestern farm belt had already begun to suffer from a financial crisis. In 1932, dancers in New York responded to the Depression with protest works; they organized themselves into the Workers Dance League and pronounced, “Dance is a Weapon.” Graham, however, did not participate in the performances by this collective. The year 1935 brought the rise of the Popular Front, known for the proclamation “Communism is twentieth-century Americanism.”

53 Ever the nationalist, Graham did not join the choreographers who represented the movement and created no significant works that opposed poverty, social injustice, or racism. Instead, she choreographed *Frontier*. Likewise, she did not participate in the left-leaning Works Progress Administration dance unit productions. Although dancers had to prove they needed economic “relief” to gain employment, for members of Graham’s cohort, including Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, the government waived these requirements to engage modernist choreographers for productions. If Graham had wanted to join the WPA, the government would likely have obliged.

Although Graham did not support communism or socialism, by 1938 she showed no hesitation about protesting homegrown injustices, and she celebrated the redemptive power of American idealism at work. *American Document* (1938) used both

dance and text to protest racial prejudice and the exclusion of minorities from the
democratic process.\textsuperscript{54} Graham called the working class a “universal class.”\textsuperscript{55} Although
critical of the United States in sections, she used the words of the nation’s finest minds to
stage the dance – presidents and authors including Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman,
whose “I see America Singing” had inspired Isadora Duncan and Ted Shawn’s writings.
In 1939, Graham participated in the World Fair’s official opening with \textit{Tribute to Peace}.
A photograph shows Graham and her all-female troupe performing wide, graphic
movements in sweeping white costumes with Roosevelt watching the production in the
background.\textsuperscript{56}

Government agencies did not send Graham on foreign tours before the start
of World War II, yet a 1943 Office of War Information report demonstrates that the
authorities had begun to watch Graham. The report framed Graham as “America’s Great
Dancer,” connected her to an elite group of American supporters and the intelligentsia,
and outlined her good pedigree and political commitment to democracy.\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Lamentation}
became recognized as “a landmark in the dance.” Yet the OWI noted that her work was
not accessible to the public at large, and thus she became a problematical export. Although
the report added that in 1940 her \textit{Letter to the World} meant that, “at last,” she could
become “understood” by a larger public familiar with the poet Emily Dickenson, Graham

\textsuperscript{54} Franko, “Myth, Nationalism and Embodiment in American Document,” in \textit{Martha Graham in Love and War}, 14-44.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.; Graff, \textit{Stepping Left}, 130.

\textsuperscript{56} Graff, \textit{Stepping Left}, 30.

\textsuperscript{57} “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”
had only just begun to build this type of repertory. While noting that “Miss Graham has been more discussed than any dancer of our time,” the report concluded that such discussions were in “scattered – and sometimes rare volumes.” Although the OWI did not believe Graham to be ready to serve as a cultural export, a nascent interest was clear.

In 1941, Henry Luce published his call to arms in the essay “The American Century.” His rhetoric expressed ideals that Graham had espoused during the prior decade when she spoke about dance. Luce concluded, “It is in this spirit that all of us are called, each to his own measure of capacity, and each in the widest horizon of his vision, to create the first great American Century.”

Graham wrote, “The answer to the problem of the American dance relied on the part of the individualists.” She concluded that from this force of American individuals “will come the great mass drama that is the American dance.” With the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War battle to make the “century American,” the rhetorical and choreographic underpinnings she established during the interwar years allowed Graham’s work to become an American product for export.

Chapter Three begins with the long history of cultural diplomacy and explores the 1955 tour under Eisenhower, who institutionalized early interwar experiments. The history of dance as cultural diplomacy began under Roosevelt in 1941. Overseen by Nelson Rockefeller’s government agency, known as the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in the Executive Office of the President (CIAA),


the government expanded propaganda efforts and began experimenting with dance as a form of cultural diplomacy, yet these efforts did not yet include modern dance. After World War II, Truman experimented with the export of dance in 1950 when Ballet Theatre performed in Berlin and Latin America. Eisenhower both expanded and institutionalized cultural programs. Initially establishing the infrastructure of the USIA as a publicity and polling arm, Eisenhower shaped deployment structures with recognizable tactics and an array of targets. Politics met performance: after Eisenhower explained the “domino theory,” Graham traveled to Asia and the Middle East between 1955 and 1956. Although some reviews showed resistance to an American message, particularly in the works of “Americana,” the Graham tour met with success in the field overall. This publicity garnered Graham press and awards in the domestic sphere, thus lending her greater credibility with the State Department in the future.

Subsequent chapters, Four through Six, offer analysis within the chronology of the tours. In 1957, the Dance Panel considered various performers for the opening of Kongresshalle, or Congress Hall, a new and modern building built to refurbish the West German landscape on the border of the division between West and East. Eleanor Dulles, the sister of both the secretary of state and the head of the CIA under Eisenhower, planned the construction of Congress Hall in West Berlin; she declared that it would be “a

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The Congress Hall planning committee circumvented conventional methods of export and arranged for Martha Graham to perform for the opening ceremonies, which included performances, speeches, and panel discussions overseen by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a cloak for the CIA. Graham brought the story of Judith, a Jewish heroine, with music by the Jewish composer William Schuman as a symbol of denazification. As the hall represented the promise of a future with Western liberal democracy, the performance represented a reminder of and perhaps even an expiation for past collective sins.

By 1962, Graham had become problematic for both professional and personal reasons. Her dance modernism had become institutionalized, no longer avant-garde, and “modern” in name only, particularly in Germany. Nevertheless, in 1962, President Kennedy’s administration oversaw Graham’s tours to Greece, Turkey, and Poland, and Ambassador George F. Kennan, the father of containment, received Graham in Yugoslavia, where he had opened an exhibit of American abstract art earlier that year. The tour once again included Germany, where she performed in Dusseldorf, Munich, and Cologne. Reviews in Germany remained mixed as critics struggled to explain the difference between the German and American “free” forms, and the message of a universal language of dance born America backfired because Germany had recovered its own past with the emergence of new choreographers.

As Graham’s personal life began to unravel, her usefulness as an ambassador waned. In 1955, pictures show her sitting with women and learning national

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dances in India and the Philippines, and menus demonstrate her willingness to eat local and exquisite meals even after performances. Radio shows and personal appearances charmed audiences and dignitaries. In 1957, the press photographed Graham arriving in Berlin in pearls, long black gloves, and a mink stole. Candid shots at Congress Hall parties show her sipping cocktails with men in black suits and thin ties. Her ability to socialize during cocktail hours and after performances became an asset as she worked with the diplomatic corps and even intelligence officers. By 1962, however, her drinking became problematic as she slurred her speech during presentations and even appeared drunk on stage, falling into the wings while performing *Clytemnestra*. In addition, Congress investigated the use of modern dance as a cultural export in the House Committee Hearings on the Use of Propaganda in the Cold War. Graham’s *Phaedra* (1962) gained national attention when newspapers reported on the hearings.  

Although the Graham company’s touring opportunities slowed because of her uncertain value as an ambassador, in 1967 the State Department supported her work with publicity and embassy parties during a two-week extended engagement in London. With only two locations where Graham would represent the State Department, the rigors of touring would not tax Graham, and interviews could be carefully planned. The repertory included several works that did not feature the aging Graham. The company’s European travels under the auspices of the government concluded with a series of performances in Portugal. A London review suggested that Graham continued to Lebanon in either late April or early May of 1967. Yet the late spring of 1967 would have thrown

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62 *Phaedra*, premiered March 5, 1962, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Robert Starer, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.
Graham directly into this region during the “internal mayhem” that culminated with the Six-Day War. The State Department cancelled the tour leg, but the planned use of Graham in Lebanon followed the logic of other State Department deployments to contested regions.

In 1969, Graham stopped performing and fell into an alcoholic depression. While Graham recovered in the early 1970s, the company fell into disrepair. At the same time, the government mechanisms for deployment shifted to the State Department and away from private sector experts. When she recovered and reappeared as a diva of American modern dance, the State Department control over exports served Graham well because she had a dedicated group of supporters. Graham’s company returned to Asia in 1974 and largely repeated her tour of the region in 1955, when President Richard M. Nixon had been vice president under Eisenhower. The tour reflected Nixon’s need to repair relations in Vietnam and celebrate the opening of China. Nixon resigned months before the company left on tour. President Gerald Ford, however, showed great interest in Graham because Secretary of State Henry Kissinger remained dedicated to the project and to Graham, who had trained the first lady while Mrs. Ford attended college. In order to “soothe internal mayhem,” following the Brubeck and Armstrong lyrics, Graham repeated stops under the auspices of the State Department in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Burma, and Vietnam; she did not return to India or Pakistan. To solidify the government’s attachment to China, she performed in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Graham expressed a desire to dance in Cambodia, but the government would not allow her

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to perform there, even with private funding; the State department responded to the covert bombing strategy enacted by Nixon in 1973.

Although Graham had recovered and seemed to be the ever-reliable, charming ambassador, the Graham company became unreliable. The company manager, Ron Protas, squabbled with the government. Letters indicate sloppy accounting and missing funds. Despite the growing instability of management, Graham remained an important icon and charmed the public on tour with her works and speeches. Remaining as secretary of state, Henry Kissinger suggested to President Ford that upon Graham’s return, he invite her to the White House to meet with Asian dignitaries. The company again returned to Washington, D.C., performed at the White House in 1974, and President Ford awarded her the Medal of Freedom, yet the Graham Company did not tour with the State Department with a tour initiated by the Ford administration. First Lady Betty Ford, however, consistently lent her name to Graham for publicity in both domestic and international markets.

With the 1974 tour and the Medal of Freedom under her belt, Graham began to attract the attention of the State Department again. The company had staged a comeback despite chronic financial instability, and Graham postured as a matriarch of her company while claiming to remain “contemporary.” She recognized that the modern had become dated. In 1978, Graham choreographed *Frescoes*, the story of Cleopatra, for the opening of the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum’s Sackler Wing in New York. With the New York premiere a success, officials took Graham back to Egypt to perform the American modernist story for the Egyptians themselves—and later the Jordanians and Israelis. Graham’s tour and the repertory showing cultural convergences in
Frescoes paralleled the aim of Carter’s State Department to reunite the region through common interests.

Through the last tour in 1987, Graham remained an international signal of American freedom for export with modernism as propaganda. When she arrived in Berlin in 1987, she had become “the old woman of modern dance” according to publicity. Graham and her company arrived in West Germany and crossed into the East, where they performed standard tour repertory. While Reagan mirrored Graham when he famously demanded that Germany reunite and tear down barriers, the communist press ignored both Frontier and the presidential performance. However, the East Berlin press celebrated Night Journey (1947) as a description of the alienation created by the capitalist society.\footnote{Night Journey, premiered May 3, 1947, choreography by Martha Graham, music by William Schuman, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.} Either lost in translation or translated with a purpose, the messages embedded in Graham’s work remained inspirational. Both Graham and Reagan spoke to the power of the frontier in Turnerian terms in order to express the tenets of the nation that would support American ideology and foreign policy abroad.

During Graham’s engagement with the U.S. government, her choreography, infused with nationalism, became a technology of freedom that carried messages through the end of the Cold War. Documentary evidence surrounding the 1987 tour, however, further complicates the narrative of American freedom. Graham's government records are difficult to locate and are sometimes marked by loss and destruction numbers; after government agencies claim that no records exist, they appear in
the mail. Destroyed pages become available at a private repository, the National Security Archive. Indeed entire files on particular tours are no longer available at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Series 500–800, which held cables relating to culture, have been destroyed because of a lack of shelf space. Papers that may pertain to the later tours await declassification in rooms filled with boxes. Although, according to archivists, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library contains documents about Graham, Reagan, and the tour, researchers must file a Freedom of Information Act request and wait for a minimum of eighteen months for possible declassification. The FOIA request at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library has not been fulfilled after three years of repeated queries. Yet with former Eastern bloc countries dedicated to transparency, papers resurface. At present, the only records of the Graham Company’s 1987 performances in Berlin remain in the former East German dance archives or with scholars who lived in the German Democratic Republic (GDR).\textsuperscript{65} The archives associated with Graham’s international political life portray the impossibility of singular, declarative, or triumphant narratives. Indeed, they point to paradoxes of freedom.

Graham’s interwar ideals, which included revolutionary artistic tactics that then became softened into a codifiable form, came to represent the United States. With the start of the Cold War, Graham’s commitment to the nation, combined with her earlier international political convictions, made her a particularly valuable cultural tool. Graham’s early liberalism promoted American freedom abroad and underscored a Cold War ethos of universalism through mechanisms of cultural representation. The dances

\textsuperscript{65} Jens Richard Giersdorf, University of California, Riverside, 2013.
addressed issues such as religion and racial and gender equality and helped to promote an image of tolerance and cultural familiarity central to the U.S. propaganda mission. Her modern art made claims to a humanist vision that symbolically linked the United States to a tradition of liberal democracy and cooperative internationalism as a counter to the Marxist definition of Enlightenment that Stalin had translated into totalitarianism.

Although Graham and her work initially embraced an American liberal idealism, in her later years, her works expressed a growing conservatism as the nationalism of her voice sounded stronger than the resonance of her technique as either innovative or modern.
Chapter One: How America Made the Modern Dance

Before World War I, the “free” and modernist dance began to develop as a groundbreaking, sophisticated art in Germany, which had also begun to attract aspiring Japanese artists. When performing in the United States in the 1920s, these German and Japanese artists, including Harald Kreutzberg and Michio Ito, influenced their American counterparts. As dance expression developed in the 1930s, choreographers in the United States and Europe infused their work with national ideals; American dancers strove to establish a modernist art that was distinct from the European. As World War II raged in the battlefields of Europe and Asia, the United States became a haven for international choreographers. In postwar dance historiography, influenced by the politically charged atmosphere of the Cold War, scholars wrote out the influences of Germany and Japan on modern dance, dismissing these countries because of the influence of fascism and totalitarian oppression on their apolitical and artistic output. Critics asserted that because modern dance relied on freedom of expression, only artists in the United States could have developed this genre because of the nation’s unique role in upholding freedom, democracy, and the power of the individual. They foregrounded the American choreographers’ use of national forms during the interwar period to bolster their argument. As modern dance became increasingly entwined with Americanism, even as its roots in modernism indicated the form’s apolitical origins, the dance became a useful tool for the State Department during its international propaganda efforts in the Cold War.

At the start of the twentieth century, European and then American choreographers followed trends of aesthetic modernism in the visual arts that had begun in Europe. They produced a body of work that stretched across “-isms,” including cubism, abstraction, expressionism, futurism, constructivism, and others. Early exhibitions by the visual artists considered “scandalous” included work by Pablo Picasso and Wassily Kandinsky. In 1903, the exhibition of artists organized in Germany by the Vereinigung bildender Kunstler Oesterreich included lectures on the historical origins of artistic modernism and established the legitimacy of the form. Exhibitions featuring European artists followed in 1905 and 1910 in London and 1912 in Cologne and then came to the United States with the Armory Show in New York in 1913. The artists included in this groundbreaking exhibition influenced choreographers who developed the new American dance. In the 1920s, under the direction of Louis Horst, the dancers who strove to create a new idiom scrutinized the European painters and sculptors in galleries and at the Museum of Modern Art. Using bodies like human paintbrushes, these choreographers attempted to create a language of dance.

Modernists abandoned the idea of linear development and relied upon “notions of a universal condition or a rhythm of eternal recurrence”; the form was “committed to ceaseless change, turmoil, recreation or redemption.”

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“became a virtue in itself.” The artists shattered dance conventions and joined the other arts because choreographers embraced “surprise, excitement, shock, terror, [and] affront.” Modernist methods the legitimacy of primitivism, psychology, philosophy, and reliance on Asian forms. In dance, primitivism not only allowed a return to the past for a pure form, “[i]t was the new man, the original man, and the last man.” Primitivism blended with psychology to create a concept of universalism, or the assertion that what they called mankind shared a mythic heritage included both men and women. As discomfort led to revelation, the art was “not what most people actually and consciously enjoyed.” Indeed, outright enjoyment led to suspicion regarding the status of the art. Dancers found inspiration in the psychoanalysis and theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung as well as the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche because of a shared search for a collective myth that, once experienced and expressed, would to redeem a world in decay. Jung demonstrated how man had “personified his instincts” in mythology. Nietzsche spoke directly about the importance of the dance: “Only in the dance do I know how to tell the parable of highest things.” Modernism became attached to high culture and the

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5 Ibid., 19.

6 Ibid., 181-182.


9 Genter, *Late Modernism*, 173.

elite arts: it relied on “the magnetism of vogue and elite artistic status” when it challenged audiences.\textsuperscript{11} Through modern dance, women could express themselves through a technology of the body, and the emancipated female became a representative of the collective body of the human race.\textsuperscript{12}

Dance historians cite Isadora Duncan as a forerunner of the innovative form, while Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes brought modernism to ballet. Born in 1877, Duncan began her career with Augustin Daly’s theater company in New York. She challenged traditional dance forms with her bare feet and a technique that relied on a flexible solar plexus. During her time in the United States, her work became appreciated in New York salons. In 1899, she moved to Europe and opened her first school in Germany. Her performances spanned London, Paris, Germany, and the Soviet Union. After European audiences had legitimized her form, Duncan returned to the United States and toured nationally. From a pedagogical standpoint, she established herself in Germany before moving to Paris. Her sister stayed to teach. According to Duncan, her reception was like “poetic dithyrambs.” In Germany, “the name ‘Isadora’ came to symbolize women’s freedom, beauty, and the birth of a new world of art.”\textsuperscript{13}

Diaghilev, who conceived his company in Russia, also sought professional refuge in Western Europe with his ballet-based troupe. The company challenged the

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\textsuperscript{11} Hobsbawm, \textit{Age of Extremes}, 182.

\textsuperscript{12} Alexandra Kolb, \textit{Performing Femininity: Dance and Literature in German Modernism} (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 158.

boundaries of traditional narrative ballets through its choreography, music, sets, costumes, and stage design. Ballets Russes became immersed in the tenets of modernism exemplified by *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which opened in Paris in 1913. The company’s choreographers and collaborators deployed modernist forms—from music by Igor Stravinsky to designs by Pablo Picasso. The Diaghilev choreographers experimented with bare feet and turned-in legs yet relied on ballet language to ground the works presented on stage. Although the company toured the United States, it was headquartered in Europe, where audiences, although initially shocked, soon flocked to performances.14

The choreographers who utilized this new dance before the start of World War I had often learned of challenges to canonical movement systems by the Swiss Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. In 1910, Jaques-Dalcroze moved to Germany and opened a school in Hellerau outside of Dresden, remaining there until the outbreak of World War I.15 Historians have linked Duncan to Dalcroze, and Diaghilev watched classes at in Hellerau and poached one of its teachers, Marie Rembart, to work with Vaslav Nijinsky, the choreographer of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.16 Jaques-Dalcroze influenced the choreographic compositions of signature European modernist pieces.17 In addition, Japanese modernist


Michio Ito, who influenced American modern dance, also studied under Dalcroze.\(^\text{18}\)
Watching Vaslav Nijinsky perform with the Ballets Russes in 1911 had inspired Ito; the following year, he began his study of eurhythmics at the Dalcroze Institute. In 1915, after the war broke out, Ito worked with the poet William Butler Yeats in London to create the work *At the Hawk's Well*, a Noh-inspired play that premiered in 1916.\(^\text{19}\) Yeats identified Ito as a part of the Symbolist movement.\(^\text{20}\) Under the Swiss Jaques-Dalcroze, Germany became a training ground for the developing modernist dance.

Historians associate the formal rise of the German *Ausdruckstanz* with Rudolf von Laban. In 1900, Laban saw Isadora Duncan perform in Paris. Although he reflected that her dance broke with tradition, he called her work “dance-expression.”\(^\text{21}\)
For Laban, “modern man” could only be rejuvenated only through rigorous rediscovery.\(^\text{22}\)
In 1912, he worked in Munich, where painter Wassily Kandinsky had become a central figure in the Munich Secession. Kandinsky’s work “Concerning the Spirituality of Art” became a central treatise for Laban and other dancers, and his influence later became


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 48.


vital to the definition of modern dance in the United States, particularly for Martha Graham. In her writings and speeches, Graham credited the moment of seeing a Kandinsky painting in a museum for her epiphany that she had to transform her art. Laban explored a movement system that was new, but also based in the German intellectual tradition, which was shaped by idealism and “insisted that the things of higher value, the truths by which humanity operated, were to be found at the level of culture or within the realm of the spirit.”  

Laban wrote a treatise Der moderne Ausdruckstanz in which “modern” meant new rather than structurally modern. In addition to forming a school for the new dance and writing treatises, Laban set out to notate movement. Like the modernist artists, he proposed an institutional structure to further new art, despite the individualist expression necessary to create innovative approaches to dance.

Laban’s student Mary Wigman and her progeny had the greatest effect on American dancers. Laban and his students had all seen and learned from American dancers, particularly Isadora Duncan and Graham’s mentor, Ruth St. Denis. The Germans, however, sought to create a distinctive dance informed by modernism and German culture. In 1913, Wigman joined Laban and premiered her iconic work, Witch Dance, in Munich. Critics called her “absolutely revolutionary.”

Like Isadora Duncan, Wigman became immersed in the written work of Nietzsche; Martha Graham soon

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followed. In 1917, Wigman performed “musical interludes” to Nietzsche’s composition at the opening of a “DaDa Evening” at the Galerie Corie. Like the visual artists, she aspired to externalize universalist tenets; the choreography took the human form and fractured it in order to realize “truth.” Wigman tore into the psychology of the mind and did not intend for her works to be to be either enjoyable or necessarily accessible. She experimented with “primitive” and “oriental” forms. In her early writings, “modern” meant “of the modern times”; she did not attempt to outline the tenets of a modernist genre. She developed a movement syllabus for students of Ausdruckstanz, as an “empathetic, expressionist strand.” She used the female body to demonstrate cutting-edge dance during this period of ferment in which the terms “absolute” or “new” became common along with the adjective “free.” In 1927, she referred to it as “the so-called modern dance.” Her student Harold Kreutzb erg traveled to the United States in 1926, performing solos and duets with his partner, Yvonne Gerogi. Their technique and choreography affected dancers in the United States looking for a revolutionary approach.

Because of the growing international recognition of what would come to be called modern dance in the United States, in 1927 the New York Times and The New York


26 Kolb, Performing Femininity, 106.


28 Kolb, Performing Femininity, 5, 237.

*Herald Tribune* hired dance critics who provided analysis of the new art through review articles on performances. The *New York Times*’s John Martin helped to establish the canon with his performance reviews, lectures, and books. In his early articles, he wrote about the “freedom” of the new “non-ballet type of dancing” brought by German performers, including Kreutzberg, and the German-trained Japanese Ito. Of the new dance he noted, “It is somewhat significant that it has never even acquired a standard name. Ecstatic, barefoot, interpretive, rhythmic - none of these has proved permanent, largely because there is nothing in most of it that is definite enough to bear a name.” In 1928, in “Over America the Dance Wave Sweeps,” he showed two almost identical pictures illustrating the “New German Influence in American Dancing.” Dance had certainly been framed as “new,” but not yet “modern.”

Martin then included Kreutzberg as a “disciple of Mary Wigman,” and Wigman became a part of “the modern dance.” Dancers in Germany pioneered the development of this new dance and were followed by Russia and “that Russian-Polish-French-Swiss aggregation known as the Diaghileff Ballet.” Martin had attended and written about dance congresses in Germany from the late 1920s; he became dedicated to the

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30 Although other critics had reviewed dance before John Martin began writing for the *New York Times*, they were not dance critics, per se, Lynne Connor, *Spreading the Gospel of Modern Dance: Newspaper Criticism in the United States, 1850-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).


excellent training of these dancers and the concept of congresses overall. The concept of dance modernism entered the vocabulary. Martin wrote in 1929, “[W]ith the promise of an alarmingly full season in all styles, but with the heaviest emphasis on modernism, it is perhaps timely to pause for a moment in order to consider the question of the modern dance. Is there actually such a thing among us, and if so, what is it? Where did it come from and who practices it?” After this period of ferment, Martin tentatively adopted the use of the term “modern dance.” In a subsequent review, he described the foreign practitioners as “the progressive modern dancers.” Modern dance could only be generated by those who “dedicated themselves to the attainment of the abstract.” Politics began to enter discussions. The choreographers reacted against ballet, yet, more importantly, their choreography protested the “stripping of humanity” during World War I and the subsequent “machine age.” Modern dance promised a return to the “heart and soul of human intercourse,” and “religion, philosophy, [and] ethics.” Although some performances in New York by Americans demonstrated “the modern spirit,” he asserted that the new dance was “more fully stabilized” and “highly perfected” in Germany.

The attention that the New York Times gave to the Germans irked Graham, but she watched them closely. When Kreutzberg came to the United States to perform, Graham


35 Martin, “The Dance is Attuned to the Machine.”
observed him rehearse in her own studio while her mentor and composer Louis Horst worked with him. Horst, who had German heritage, could speak to Kreutzberg in their native tongue and likely discussed the philosophy behind the new dance. In 1928, Martin credited the rise in a new movement to the Germans and attributed it to their “national background of musical genius and the national penchant for philosophical thinking,” which “furnished a fertile soil for the germination of a new art.” He noted that American dancers had studied the Germans “through diligent book study at home.” Martin referred to the dancers as “revolutionary” and saw them as “radical innovators.” He continued, “Thus far what we have felt in American of the new insurgency is more in the nature of a distinct rumble than of a present storm.”

Early in the twentieth century, the desire to institutionalize the modernist dance began in Germany with schools, texts, and notation systems; Ito brought this same impulse to the United States. Martin praised the German impulse, particularly that of Laban, and reprimanded the Americans for not devising a system for their dance. Martin also praised Ito’s impulse to give the new dance institutional structure. Ito had begun to think about a “theatre for the future” in Hellerau before World War I. When Ito’s plan proved promising because of his solicitation of funding from wealthy patrons in New York, Martin reported that it would help to bring “experimental dance” to fruition and praised Ito’s foresight and leadership. Like the innovative Germans, Ito also played a role in the institutionalization of the new dance through the development of a notation system.

36 Martin, “Over America the Dance Wave Sweeps.”

Ito produced choreography and full productions, and he also trained American dancers. In 1928, critics celebrated him for his work and the influence of his “strikingly individual method” on American dancers. He blended elements from Asia and the United States to form what historians have recognized as a vital part of the American dance, encompassing “The Third Mind” as defined by Munroe as the fusion of Japanese and American cultures to produce modernist art in the United States from the visual arts to sculpture and dances such as Graham’s Frontier. Between 1927 and 1928, Graham performed in Ito’s productions and shared concert programs with him at the McDowell Center, at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and in his Broadway spectacles. At the Neighborhood Playhouse, Ito played the title role in the Japanese Noh drama Tamura with masks brought from Japan. In other productions, such as his work with Yeats, Ito integrated Asian forms, antiquity, and theater, which allied him with modernists in the 1920s. He introduced Graham to other modernist artists, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi, who was struggling as a sculptor when the two met. He sculpted a bust of Graham, and its success

38 Caldwell, Michio Ito, 174.


brought him recognition in a gallery showing.\textsuperscript{42} She soon formed an enduring partnership with Noguchi, which began in 1935 with the stage set for \textit{Frontier}.

In 1928, Martin wrote that Graham’s concert was “said to be in the nature of a farewell to Miss Graham's familiar style of dancing [Denishawn], before she goes over whole-heartedly to the new German technique.”\textsuperscript{43} Graham remained tainted. The ever-competitive woman likely took offense when in 1929 Martin reviewed Kreutzberg and Graham in the same article. While Martin noted that Kreutzberg received repeated “bravos” and “encores,” he concluded on Graham, “When she misses, she misses completely.” The review spoke of Nietzsche’s inspiration for the dance and his understanding of the essential power of both Asian culture and the dance. Martin attributed this philosophical discovery to Wigman, and contrasting the two women, he described Graham as “a veritable chameleon in changing her style and method.”\textsuperscript{44} Ito also believed that the American form was inspired by Europe. He spoke about the dance as “mechanical” and said, “Until now, everything had just been borrowed or imported from Europe.” He added, “It has only been recently that America began to produce true art.”\textsuperscript{45}

With the opening of the Dance Repertory Theatre in 1930, the modern dance in the United States became solidified in practice and performance. The series of collaborative

\textsuperscript{42} Ashton, \textit{Noguchi East and West}, 121.


performances included programs by Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and others in the field, under the organizational leadership of Louis Horst.\textsuperscript{46} Martin celebrated the season as the first American example of “modern forms of the art, and placed Graham at the forefront of the choreographers. \textit{Lamentation} demonstrated what modern dance historians have come to see as the tenets of abstraction at work. Although in 1930 Martin dismissed the dance as “solemnly decorative,” he conceded in a later review that the “decorative costume was ingenious for the bulk of its line and mass.” Overall, Martin felt that Graham’s new choreography had put her at the top of the field and that her work challenged the European dancers who had already performed in the United States. Martin announced: “[T]he American dance has come of age.”\textsuperscript{47}

That same year, Oliver Sayler’s \textit{Revolt in the Arts} contributors emphasized the need for a national dance, be it modernist or balletic.\textsuperscript{48} In her contribution “Seeking an American Art of the Dance,” which Martin deemed “brilliant,” Graham struck back at her critics and lashed out against foreign influences.\textsuperscript{49} She insisted that “transplanting” the arts reduces them to “decadence” and explained, “German dance, nearest to us of all,  


\textsuperscript{48}Oliver Martin Sayler, ed., \textit{Revolt in the Arts: A Survey of the Creation, Distribution, and Appreciation of Art in America}, (New York: Brentano’s, 1930).

dangerously near, [is] the voice of a determined, tired, but forever mentally undefeated people.” Here, Graham alluded to the defeat of the Germans in World War I. For her, German nationalism was an unacceptable aesthetic force. She similarly critiqued “the Oriental dance” and “its hieratic symbolic gesture,” calling it “least comprehensible of all” and “impossible of assimilation because of its involved philosophy” Attempting to drive out jingoism and create the new dance outside of political alliances, she asserted, “It is not to establish something American that we are striving.” Although this statement seemed to contradict the title of her article, Graham asserted that if Americans dug into their soil for inspiration, the human element would become borderless and, thus, universal. Just as the Germans had explored the foundations of their intellectual traditions to create a revolutionary form, Graham delved into the American Southwest as a symbol of the frontier and the unique character of an American approach to solving problems and creating new art. Despite the confidence expressed by Graham, Martin remained unconvinced that the strides these choreographers had made would hold. The American dance had not yet established its presence as an international competitor.

Despite gains by the American moderns, Germany remained the center of experimental dance. Before Wigman’s first tour of the United States in 1930, Georgi, Kreutzberg’s partner, described Graham’s work in a letter: “There is a dancer who looked so much like Wigman, that she might be her twin.” Wigman’s tour received rave reviews

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51 Ibid., 250.

52 Ibid., 253.

from dance critics, and audiences celebrated her. Martin, highlighting Wigman’s success throughout Europe and the United States, gushed that Wigman deserved “[t]he lion’s share of the credit for the virtues of the modern movement.”54 Martin noted that although Wigman and Graham choreographed on different continents, “[t]heir dancing, too, has many qualities in common.”55 Wigman noticed the aesthetic kinship of the American modern dance with that of Germany, referring to the experimental dance art as “amerikanischen Ausdruckstanz.”56

The American moderns repeated a Dance Repertory Theatre season on Broadway in 1931. Graham’s premiere of *Primitive Mysteries* met with audience enthusiasm and accolades from Martin. The work celebrated the power of the American Southwest. Couching his review in the context of Graham’s “ups and downs,” he reported that after *Primitive Mysteries*, the audience did not merely shout “Bravo.” The applause became “[a]n expression of a mass of people whose emotional tension found spontaneous release.”57 After several performances he concluded, “Here is a composition which must be ranked among the choreographic masterpieces of the modern dance movement.”58 However, the American effort to institutionalize through a recurring collective season of dance collapsed after the

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55 Ibid.


1931 series; indeed, one performer remembered notices posted backstage warning all the other dancers not to speak to Graham or her ensemble.⁵⁹ Although short-lived, the Dance Repertory Theatre defined the American modern dance, with three of the choreographers who would become known as a part of “The Big Four” of modern dance, and a body of works that soon defined the canon; Graham took center stage.

In 1931, a series of lectures at the New School for Social Research in New York City provided institutional support for this group of American choreographers. The talks codified modernism through discussions and academic inquiry with presentations by key thinkers in art, literature, architecture, and the performing arts.⁶⁰ The program was varied. Alvin Johnson, the director of the New School, presented “Notes on the New School Murals” and also asked John Maynard Keynes to give lectures.⁶¹ These lectures exposed the public to the aesthetic of modern dance and to the choreographers at its vanguard. John Martin’s lectures created an informed constituency and, thus, an audience for modern dance.⁶² They also provided the basis for his first book, The Modern Dance. Remaining

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⁶² Rutcoff and Scott, New School, 79-80.
consistent with the movement’s tenets, he wrote that the chief aim of American choreographers was “the expression of an inner compulsion.”

Wigman’s influence on the modern dance in the United States continued with the opening of her New York school in 1931 and a second acclaimed tour. In 1932, Wigman wrote that during her tour of the United States, she believed that the term “The New German Dance” should be coined in order to advertise it to audiences as “contemporary.” Wigman used the term “contemporary” to redefine her work in the context of modern as “new,” yet she held steadfast to modernist principles of abstraction. She said in an interview in Paris, “In all its manifold, iridescent expressions, from the harshest to the most sublimated abstractions, is the theme of man fashioned in the dance.” Wigman called on both expressionism and abstraction to express universalisms, and she noted the importance of both ancient and primitive forms. She retained her dedication to the palate of the modernist movement. Critics in Paris and the United States continued to refer to her work as “modern.”

Although modern dance had gained structure and recognition in the United States, Germany remained a hub of innovation and institutionalization with its dance congresses. In 1932, Munich hosted the Third Dancers’ Congress, which became the first

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66 Ibid.
international Modern Dance Congress. The city welcomed 1,400 participants, including numerous guests from abroad and the Times’s Martin himself. Because of the rise of fascism, nationalism became a contested space in the definition of the “modern.” Adolf Hitler had begun his rise by 1920, and he had solidified a power base for the Nazi Party by 1932. After the Congress, Martin complained that it had been “steeped in politics” and reframed Kreutzberg and Wigman as “The Modern German Movement.” In another article he wrote that the American dancers had a “common cause” which he defined as “[t]he integration of modern dance in America.”

In 1935, Virginia Stewart and Merle Armitage published a series of articles as a collection they called The Modern Dance. The editors and book designers divided the book’s essays according to nationality, with the first half of the book titled “The Modern Dance in Germany” and the second, “The Modern Dance in America.” Stewart opened the book with an essay that planted dance modernism firmly at the center of geopolitics. Mirroring Martin’s earlier review, she described the devastation of troops in World War I by the Germans and the terrors of the machine age, which created mass destruction. She offered the German dancers the advantage of time as the founders of what had been named “modern dance.” Yet she wrote about a zeitgeist; the American moderns did not need to have studied with the Germans to become modern themselves. Kreutzberg was the only author in the series of essays who provided a clear and concise explanation of modern dance in his article “The Modern Dance.” He wrote, “The modern


dance is a definite stylistic phenomenon, analogous to the appearance of expression in painting. It has as its aim the loosening of certain technical laws in favor of more salient emotional and atmospheric communication.”

The essay in the collection that carried the most pronounced nationalist sentiment was not written by a German dancer, as one might expect; rather, Graham penned an article entitled “The American Dance.” She opened the essay with a battle cry: “To the American Dancer I say: 'Know our country.'” Graham believed that the United States rested on the ideals of freedom and innovation, which fueled the modern dance movement. If one dug into the American tradition specifically, the dance would impart “the sensation of living in an affirmation of life” and demonstrate universal truths. Practiced in this manner, the choreography had the potential to “energize the spectator into keener awareness of vigor, the mystery, the humor, the variety, and the wonder of life.” Graham began to use the term “modern” to define her own work. She wrote, “The modern American dance began here.” Like Martin, she stated that the function of the American modern dance was to find a human universal. Graham articulated the conflation of the “human” with the “American” from the start of her career as a dancer, choreographer, and critic.


70 Ibid., 53.


72 Ibid., 204.
As German nationalism became more pronounced under the Nazi regime, the division between German and American dance modernism grew sharper. In Wigman’s 1935 book, *Deutsche Tanzkunst*, she wrote about “the call of the blood” and “the question of true Germanness in regard to the arts.”\(^73\) In 1935, *Dance Observer* reported that Wigman and Laban were “under the direct control of Dr. Goebbels,” the Nazi Propaganda Minister. Nevertheless, Martin held fast to his universalistic definition. In his 1935 article “The Dance: Nationalism,” he argued that although national influences could shape choreographic subjects, these sentiments could not alter the first mandate of the modern dance – to find an “inner compulsion” that would drive technique and composition.\(^74\)

In 1936, Martin published *America Dancing: The Background and Personalities of the Modern Dance*, in which he wrote, “It is by contagion rather than logic that the word ‘modern’ has got itself attached to the particular type of dance which has come to life as a characteristic American expression.”\(^75\) Despite his reference to the potency of the United States, Martin stressed the a-political and humanistic dimensions of the new genre and placed it at the highest level of universality. Accordingly, he highlighted the diverse national origins. He asserted that Wigman should be a “subtitle


for modern dance” and that Ito had influenced almost every American modern dancer. He found this integral pursuit of the “human” and the “universal” in Graham’s work when she took her audiences to places “hitherto unknown” Martin had not reviewed Ito in his column since Ito left New York; even though the dancer had dropped out of the dance scene, his influence lingered through relationships he had established between Graham and Noguchi, and the training of dancers. Finding far more importance with the German, Martin nonetheless asserted that Graham had outpaced Wigman and Ito with her “magnificent physical medium for the transmission of a tremendous inner power,” which he insisted was independent of her national heritage. Even though he believed that modernism had to be apolitical in form, Martin did not object to the support of the American government. Indeed, during an article celebrating Graham’s artistry, Martin noted the importance of government backing for the arts. Martin quoted Hallie Flanagan of the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration: “It is impossible to think of the modern theatre without thinking of the dance.” While Martin sought to take national politics out of dance, he also welcomed the entrance of government institutions in the United States to support dance.

In 1936, during a lecture on dance modernism and her own approach to it, Graham continued to comingle modernist ideas with nationalism. The newspaper headline “An Oracle Speaks Simply” appeared with a picture of Graham as the pioneer woman in Frontier. While she spoke to the press about “universalisms,” she performed the story of the American spirit, as a universal, with a woman’s body. Graham explained that modern dancers were modern like painters, not united by technique or terminology:

76 Martin, American Dancing, 204, 205, 8.
“Each works from an individual motivation, employing a different vocabulary of movement, a vocabulary of words.” Her own technique represented an attempt to access truth about “mankind” through the movement of the female torso in contraction and release. The reporter noted “the quality of solidness” in Graham’s modernized body.\textsuperscript{77}

Later that year, the Nazi Olympic Committee invited Graham to participate in an opening festival the week before the Olympic games.\textsuperscript{78} The German Minister for the Olympic Committee and Rudolf von Laban signed the request on behalf of the Nazi Party. Although Graham had denied the formative influence of the German dance in her earlier writings, the performance would have marked Graham as an international leader in the country that had been the forerunner of the American form. She responded with a letter addressed only to Laban in which she stated, “I must decline your invitation to participate in the International Dance Festival in Berlin this summer.” She continued, “I would find it impossible to dance in Germany at the present time. So many artists whom I respect and admire have been persecuted, have been deprived of their right to work, and for such unsatisfactory and ridiculous reasons, that I should consider it impossible to identify myself, by accepting the invitation, with the regime that has made such things possible.” She continued by noting that many of her own dancers would not be welcomed.\textsuperscript{79} Numerous newspapers in the United States reported on Graham’s refusal to

\textsuperscript{77} Margaret Lloyd, “An Oracle Speaks Simply,” \textit{Boston C.S. Monitor}, March 17, 1936, 24, in box 311, MGC-LOC.

\textsuperscript{78} Dr. Th. Lenald, Präsident des Organisations-Komitees für die XL Olympiade Berlin, 1936, and Rudolf von Laban to Martha Graham, February 29, 1936, box 311, MGC-LOC.

\textsuperscript{79} Martha Graham to Rudolf von Laban, March 14, 1936, box 311, MGC, LOC.
participate in the Festival and quoted her letter. As a leader in a new art, Graham’s words and actions carried weight for the national press.

As tensions in Europe mounted, the attempt to develop an all-encompassing American definition of the modern dance continued. In 1937, Merle Armitage published a volume on Martha Graham in which she defined “The Modern Dance of Martha Graham.” She explained, “Only a work of art can be Modern. And to be Modern means simply to be Structural.” She located the origins of modern dance after World War I. Because Germany and Japan were becoming fascist states, she ignored the seminal influence of either the Germans or Ito the pre-World War I era and placed the genre in the late interwar geopolitical context. She continued, “There has been swift transition in this present recurrence of the modern dance.”

In his 1939 work Introduction to the Dance, Martin reiterated his belief that movement must stem from the “inner compulsion,” which would create novel form, content, and style. He wrote, “Good art speaks directly from its creator’s emotions to one’s own.” Martin identified Wigman, Graham, and Humphrey - in that order - as the seminal modern dancers; in his idiosyncratic prose, he wrote that modernism brought abstraction that “renounces all obligations toward fullness of detail, fidelity of


proportions, and outward considerations of verisimilitude.” The choreographer achieved freedom with the creation of the work. Dance required a “freed” use of the body to achieve this end and should create freedom itself in those who watched modern choreography.

World War II solidified the concept that because dance modernism held “inner compulsions” and expressed “universalisms” and “the truth to our inner life.” Yet world events solidified the United States as the center of “freed” dance and its audiences. In 1936, when Wigman chose not to flee Germany and choreographed for the Berlin Olympics, the Wigman school came under pressure from dancers in New York. Wigman and her student Hanya Holm, who had opened the school in 1931, decided to drop “Wigman” and named the school for Holm instead. In turn, Holm became integrated into the literature of the American modern dance, but not as a German. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the government gave Ito the choice of living in an internment camp or returning to Japan despite his twenty years of performing in the United States. He returned to Japan from California. In 1944, Martha Graham choreographed Appalachian Spring, a group work about the frontier in the United States replete with archetypical characters: the Bride, her Husbandman, the Preacher and his Followers, and

83 Martin, The Modern Dance, 93.
84 Ibid., 94.
86 Caldwell, Michio Ito, 105.
the Pioneering Woman. The work premiered in Washington, DC, at the Library of Congress.

The end of World War II made the United States the locus of power for the modern dance. The war had devastated the landscape, people, and theaters of Europe. Although German dancers continued to work where they were able, they struggled against the conditions brought on by the war and could not travel abroad. In the United States, dancers expressed the joy of victory in theaters untouched by war. Within two years, renewed tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States began a cold war for “hearts and minds” of men; American critics defined the Soviets as politically and culturally repressed. The pre-World War I European roots of the new “free” dance became translated as a form that represented liberation. The United States became the leader in modern dance because its citizens reflected this. The beginnings of modern dance brought just what cold warriors needed: the idea of apolitical artistry combined with the political implications of its formation. John Martin’s universalistic tenets—manifest in his calls for the “heart and soul of human intercourse” in “religion, philosophy, ethics”—mirrored the language of the Cold War. Defined as a leader in the field, Martha Graham’s interwar language of what had become known in the post-war psychwar as “Americana,” bolstered the equation of Americanism with Universalism.

In her 1949 work *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*, critic Margaret Lloyd began the post-World War II historiographical trend of writing out international forms of modern dance from the history. Like her interwar predecessors, Lloyd defined modern dance in sweeping humanistic terms: “[Modern dance] is, specifically, the continuous
opening of new paths for the expression of the human spirit through the human body.”

Martha Graham became one of “The Three Creative Revolutionists”; her dance created “a graph of the heart.” Lloyd saw the choreographers identified with World War II fascist nations as artistically deceased. Wigman became the lone non-American “forerunner” of this modern dance. Lloyd did not mention Kreutzberg or Ito. She credited the influence of the German intellectual tradition for Wigman’s “contribution to the progress of the art,” and thus Lloyd segregated the “German modern dance.”

She wrote, “Because of the obscuration that befell her art during the Nazi reign of terror, because there is little hope, if some slight possibility, that she will return to the United States to dance for us again, it seems advisable here to refer to her career in the past tense - since what she has achieved is known.” She concluded, “[T]he American modern dance has shot way past the Central European.”

America became, by definition, the embodiment of modern dance. Although Lloyd admitted that the physical devastation of Europe partially explained the decline of its dance, she equated the spirit of modernism with American life. In a bow to Graham’s Frontier, Lloyd wrote, “We think of ‘frontier’ as an opening up, as a vista into something new. Mary Wigman, hearing the word for the first time, thought it meant a

87 Lloyd, Borzoi Book of Modern Dance, xvii.
88 Ibid.,37.
89 Ibid.,16.
90 Ibid.,11-2.
91 Ibid., 21.
Lloyd continued, “The very rhythm and tempo and psychological constitution of our countries are so unalike, she has said in effect, it would be impossible for us to think or dance alike.” She concluded, “More is [the modern dance] ascribable to the bright land of its birth - a land where freedom and democracy are ideals at least; where traditions of human decency (in spite of arrant violations), of good will if not always good manners, prevail; a land where all races (again with a promissory note) are learning to work out their destiny together; a land of great spaces and mighty projects that still leave room for the need of compensatory values in art.” Lloyd asserted that modern dance could only have taken hold— and could only move forward—in the American context of freedom.

Graham, as a leader, defined a universal community that did not include interwar contact with the German or Japanese dancers. Lloyd claimed that although Graham had read about Wigman in the 1930s, Wigman had made “no impression” on her. Lloyd framed Graham’s “addiction” to the work of Noguchi in the context of her mentor Ruth St. Denis and Denishawn, their “oriental” works, and the influence of the California “exotic”—overlooking Graham’s early performing career with Ito in New York City. She called the influence of the Japanese modern dancers in the United

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92 Ibid., 49.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 21.
95 Ibid., 23.
States, including Yeichi Nimura, only a “thin thread” of influence. Lloyd concluded that in 1926, the year before Martin began writing, “American modern dance began its entirely separate career.” Solidifying Graham’s claim to authentic Americanism, Lloyd traced Graham’s lineage back to Miles Standish, one of the Mayflower passengers who played a leading role in the administration and defense of Plymouth Colony.

In 1958, Doris Humphrey completed her posthumously published book, *The Art of Making Dances*, published posthumously the following year, to establish rules of composition for modern dance. Humphrey used diagrams of stage space to define center stage as the location of central power, evoking Graham’s famous quip, “Center stage is wherever I am.” Humphrey’s book established the boundaries of the genre itself, defining its aesthetics through those of the modernist visual artists. She quoted André Malraux: “Modern art is the annexation of forms by means of an inner pattern or scheme, which may or may not take the shape of objects, but of which, in any case, figures and objects are no more than expression.” Although alluding to the universality of modern dance, Humphrey framed it within the context of postwar American artistic power. In her conclusion, after noting the “obliteration” in Europe, Humphrey, without mentioning one name, stated, “In Germany modern-dance geniuses had abounded, but the war forced many into exile.” Humphrey proclaimed that in the postwar years America had become

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96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 18.


“the stronghold of the modern dance.” She described her own work as “an art concerned with human values” that was “composed as an expression of American life.” Continuing the conflation of Americanism with “truth,” she wrote, “This new dance of action comes inevitably from the people who had to subdue a continent, to make a thousand paths through forest and plain, to conquer mountains, and eventually to rise up towers of steel and glass.”

Humphrey concluded this essay, “Sic transit gloria mundi!,” or, “Thus passes the glory of the world!” Thus Humphrey joined with others in the field, including critics and dancers, to build the idea that the modern dance could only be American, and that from America came “the world” of modern dance.

Although Humphrey rooted modern dance firmly in the American dance tradition, Louis Horst, in his 1961 work Modern Dance Forms: In Relation to the Other Modern Arts, addressed the German roots of his history. With his deep knowledge of Germany, its language, its philosophers, and its prewar intellectual tradition, he understood the roots and power of its dance leaders. As a supporter of modernism, Horst wrote, “The movement is abstracted to express in aesthetic form the drives, desires, and reactions of alive human beings.” It expressed the drama of the human condition in a


101 Ibid., 169.

new language of the dance. Horst acknowledged that both Wigman and Graham had struggled in the 1930s, and although he noted that they solved their questions of how to make a modern dance using individual approaches, he did not privilege one over the other. He concluded, “There is an extraordinary similarity in the desired end and the development of a modern dance in the two separated centers of creative work, or Germany and America.”

Horst recognized Graham as a choreographer who used particularly American strategies that he saw as only a subsection of modern dance. Horst also became aware of the aging nature of the form, referring to the Dance Repertory Theatre seasons in 1930 and 1931 as “good old-fashioned modern.” For the purpose of composition, Horst established categories for choreographic studies, including not only “Medievalism” and “Primitivism” but also “Americana,” the clear home for Graham’s Frontier and Appalachian Spring. Unlike other authors, Horst did not conflate “Americana” with modern dance itself, noting that it was “not a universal.” Of the uniqueness of American art, he continued, “The expansive movement that can fill and reach beyond the stage is natural to the American dancer’s body. It is in every American’s blood. It is our


104 Horst and Russell, Modern Dance Forms in Relation to the Other Modern Arts, 18.

105 Louis Horst, Interview with Louis Horst, conducted by Jeanette S. Roosevelt, 8 sound cassettes, 13 hours, transcript 211 pp., 1959-1960, transcript, 106, JRDD-NYPL.
signature.” He wrote, “Martha Graham in this country felt her dance must move to America’s pulse.” In 1962, Graham toured Germany and Europe with the Department of State. Although dancers and students who had not been exposed to her technique hailed her innovative approach, her choreography wore thin with the German critics who saw through her Americanist approach in the repertory; they well understood the hypocrisy of “universals” set in national terms.

In the 1963 self-titled book *John Martin’s Book of the Dance*, John Martin claimed that modernism in dance had waned. In this coffee table book filled with both vibrant photography and critical insight, Martin organized the various forms of dance into categories, framing modern dance as “Dance as a Means of Communication.” Here, he complained that there was “nothing modern about modern dance” and reiterated that modern dance should “communicate emotional experiences.” Continuing his traditional embrace of the international origins of the form, he identified Mary Wigman as the driving force in its emergence: “Except for Isadora herself, no figure in the history of modern dance occupies a higher position than Mary Wigman.” He continued, “Her greatness can never be denied, and her three American tours in the early 1930s had a broadening and salutary effect on the American dance.” He relegated Graham to “[t]he artist who has come to be most generally the symbol of modern dance in the popular mind [emphasis added].” Although Martin had celebrated Graham’s work during the interwar years, and had used her choreography as a benchmark for her peers, he now concluded that Graham had become “stimulated by external objects, multifarious and

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106 Horst and Russell, *Modern Dance Forms in Relation to the Other Modern Arts*, 121, 126, 17.
unpredictable.” He chastised Graham for abandoning his ideal of the communication of the “inner compulsion” in favor of immersing herself in externals such as “the vast American landscape.” Whereas he once saw her as an artist of the inner spirit, he now portrayed her work as mere theatrics. A year later, Graham’s champion, Louis Horst, passed away. The two men who had supported her work as a modernist construct had left her.

The year 1967 brought an expanded and revised publication of The Dance Encyclopedia. The entry on modern dance contained a single paragraph by an unidentified author who described the use of the torso. The conclusion of this brief summary advised the reader: “See also American Modern Dance.” John Martin opened this six-page entry by praising Wigman as he had earlier. He adopted a more critical tone, reiterating that modern dance as an intellectual project had failed. Doris Humphrey’s book had contributed to the decline of the form as revolutionary or new. According to Martin, modern dance no longer reflected “the externalization of a single individual’s intensely personal vision.” He continued his lament: “Even the leaders themselves fell into the repeated use of their own clichés, and in time an upcoming generation, too young to have participated in the original mystery and too unadventurous to question established practice, arose to take these fossilized residues of somebody else’s long forgotten


108 Soares, Louis Horst, 234.
experience as the alphabet of all creation.” There can be no doubt that Martin implicated Graham as the “fossilized residue.”

The following year, Martin penned an obituary for modern dance in the reissue of *America Dancing*. He stated, “The modern dance has no doubt come to the end of an era, beyond any shadow of a doubt.” According to Martin, modern dance as a creative force formally died with Graham’s full-length work, *Clytemnestra* (1958). Despite these death knells, the literature of the field continued to follow Lloyd’s approach. Martin had left the *Times* in 1962; he had “defined the modern dance,” but he lost influence as a critic. New critics who had not watched Graham develop appreciated her work as she continued to choreograph controversial works such as *Phaedra* (1962), which captured media attention for its challenging use of sexuality to make the modern dance contemporary.

By the 1970s, the earlier generation of dance scholars and critics had retired, and the field began to explore new methods of analysis, and the professionalism of critics and scholars began. Yet critics did not acknowledge the seminal influence of Europeans. In his ambitiously titled 1976 work *The Complete Book of Modern Dance*, Don McDonagh asserted that new entrants did not always understand the innovative origins of the dance, which defined its modernism. He wrote, “There has always lurked about modern dance something of newness and a feeling of revolutionary activity. The


110 John Martin, foreword to *John Martin’s Book of the Dance*.

reputation is deserved but does not reflect the whole story.”112 Like Lloyd, he defined modern dance as an explicitly American phenomenon, including only Americans in his overview of the key figures of the movement. He included only passing references to Mary Wigman and Michio Ito and dismissed Europe and Asia for lacking the spiritual heritage to produce modern dance. McDonagh did not mention the ongoing crisis of authority in American society, reflected by events from the student rebellions of the 1960s to the Watergate scandal, in order to uphold the perceived stability of the frontier myth and the sense of freedom it embodied. In addition, in 1979, Marcia Siegel’s *Shapes of Change* portrayed modern dance as the product of parallel movements in Europe and the United States, ignoring possible cross-cultural influences that defined its early history.113

In the 1980s, a recovery of the modern dance as an international exchange began in the United States, but the post-WWII Cold War constructions remained stuck to the dance form for the most part. World War II’s combatant nations had long been denazified and reconstructed. In the visual arts, “German artists came to feel, after World War II, that abstraction expressed the political values of democracy” which they embraced.114 Wigman had choreographed *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1957 to critical acclaim; however, even she located the seed of modernism in the United States. When she wrote about the American dancers, she referred to “Der Modernen Tanz” and defined

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it with choreographers working in the United States: Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and even Wigman’s German student, Hanya Holm.\(^{115}\) Despite the fact that a distinct Japanese modern dance had developed with its own group of leaders, in Japan books on the history of modern dance found its origins in the United States with Martha Graham. Baku Ishi’s work has been linked to the late nineteenth-century modernization goals in Japan, and he studied Dalcroze, and later “Neue Tanz” in Germany. Yuriko calls his student, Konami Ishi, the second leader of modern dance in Japan. She studied with him as a child in the 1930s.\(^{116}\) Graham hired Yuriko after her release from an internment camp during World War II, and Yuriko brought her experience with Japanese modern dance leaders to Graham with what Yuriko calls “Martha’s Asian identity.”\(^{117}\) During the Cold War, a powerful group of Japanese dancers came to Graham who had been trained under masters in their home country.\(^{118}\) However, some American critics did feature the early and continuing influence of German and Japanese artists on the form. Jack Anderson wrote a new introduction to the reprint of Martin’s 1939 *Introduction to the Dance*.\(^{119}\) Anderson dated the start of what he continued to call “modern dance” with the New York debut of Martha Graham in 1926 –


\(^{116}\) Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 12, 15.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 59.


the same year that Lloyd had written that the dance form began. Although other authors and critics sought to uncover a modern dance that was not purely American, the argument held firm for many authors.

Modern dance had become institutionalized on college campuses with technique and composition classes, and this curriculum produced reliable and technically proficient dancers. Graham’s work had been produced for television in both black-and-white and color and aired during prime time for the mainstream intelligentsia. At the same time, Graham had never abandoned her pervasive nationalism, which lost its overtones of liberal universalism and began to echo a more conservative outlook. Although the universalism claimed by Graham’s to define her dance language seemed like a cold war rhetoric relic, it maintained currency in conservative circles.

Ever savvy, Graham disavowed the use of the term modern dance in the United States, where it had grown “old-fashioned” decades earlier; however, for the purposes of the international market, she allowed herself to become “Forever Modern” while on tours under the auspices of the State Department. In 1991, at the end of the Cold War, she pronounced, “I never use the term modern dance. It is so dated.”120 Dancers recall the same. Despite Graham's own claims and her dancers’ memories, she wrote about the modern dance, spoke about the modern dance, and allowed critics and the press to describe her as a modern dancer abroad. The metamorphosis of “the modern” from reformative and new to a part of a conservative approach to dance mirrors the shift of Graham’s allegiance to the liberalism of Roosevelt to the “hardline” political selling of

120 Martha Graham, 234.
modernity as a part of American democratic freedom with Reagan. It mirrored “a fundamental political discursive struggle.” Graham had an instinct for the problem of modernism, but she understood its benefits.

“The New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art,” and American cultural diplomats used abstract expressionism as a symbol of freedom and democracy abroad; the modern dance performed this same work for decades. In 1930, John Martin wrote in the *New York Times* that modern dance promised a return to the “heart and soul of human intercourse,” and “religion, philosophy, ethics.” Modern dance, like the visual arts, came to be defined as American, and worked as a pre-packaged propaganda message imbued with cold war rhetoric that had been established twenty-five years before the start of the Cold War. In 1955, Graham represented the nation as modern and the tour was largely successful. By 1957, although Germany continued to recover from the devastation of war, Wigman had begun to create works and new artists developed their craft. Graham’s performance became hollow as propaganda; this manifested itself in problematic reviews in 1962. In 1974, Graham as an American modernist became “traditional”; the State Department framed Graham as “forever modern” and an icon of American ingenuity. In 1979, Graham could take new works to countries that did not have their own traditions with choreography based on myths from their own culture: she brought the story of Cleopatra to the Middle East. In a circular story of geography, the

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Graham company performed on its last State Department in Germany. With the rhetoric of freedom, Graham joined President Ronald Reagan in Berlin, 1987, with the trope of the frontier.
Chapter Two:  
Martha Graham’s Biography Creates “Four Minds” of Modern Dance

Martha Graham’s upbringing and training as a dancer shaped her as a choreographer whose work aligned with State Department objectives for the export of propaganda that targeted the elite. As a mature artist, she produced works that encompassed what I will call her “Four Minds” of modern dance, all of which follow her biography. Graham admitted that she used “piracy” in her work and borrowed heavily from a variety of culture and texts from Emily Dickinson and other American poets and artists, Jungian and Hindu philosophies, to the Greek myths, the Bible, European modern artists and sculptors, Tibetan yoga, Japanese performers and sculptors, and even the color of Chinese red.1 Because these elements can be traced back to ideas of American identity, human universalism, Asian culture, and the Western canon of ancient Greek, European, and biblical texts, the State Department deployed her work throughout Europe and Asia to transmit ideas about America with choreography that could demonstrate cultural convergences, or the merging of American modernist techniques with host country elements. This targeted strategy of advertisement argued that the United States would and could partner with the nation states Graham visited, that repertoire encompassed international traditions and legacies and translated it with a universal language of the dance, made in America. The boundaries, however, were porous. Through the analysis of Graham’s biography in the context of the dances brought on the two tours in the 1950s, one to Asia and the other to Berlin, her deployment demonstrates how the State

Department used Graham to promote foreign policy agendas when it targeted elite audiences.

Traditional histories of artists and choreographers have concentrated on the position of the artist within his or her own discipline or examined artistic trends in isolation. Using tactics from cultural and intellectual history, this analysis of Graham challenges these models. Shifts in cultural and intellectual history open the discipline to biography, art, and dance history. In “Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art,” Wanda Corn concludes, “The artist and the art become inseparable from history.”2 In his article “The History of Ideas to History of Meaning,” William J. Bouwsma calls for the participation of the arts: “As intellectual history has been transformed, it has been turning to the arts. I expect this tendency to grow stronger and to expand from literary and visual art into music and dance.”3 Lynn Garafola insists on the use of cultural and intellectual history to shatter inward-looking tactics. Of the lack of historical context in dance studies, Garafola asserts, “Even more than new research, what is needed is fresh thinking. The old assumptions no longer serve, nor do the old hagiographies that once passed muster as history.”4 Embedding Graham into the cultural and intellectual discourse of the period dismantles insular methodologies. Indeed, Corn


proposes, “Background material now becomes part of the foreground; one could not have one without the other.”

Dance critics noted that Graham was a product of her family. In the *New York Herald Tribune*, Walter Terry described Graham as “an even mix of the two parents, a stern indomitable God-fearing Puritan pioneer on the one side, and on the other a tempestuous, moody, dream-obsessed and quick-to-anger creature of the Black-Irish persuasion.” Graham’s childhood embedded the tenets of American ideology and universalism in her work. Her mother traced her lineage to the Mayflower, and as Graham travelled west as a teenager, she became deeply influenced by the idea of the American frontier. Graham’s father’s work in psychiatry gave him an attachment to the universal through the analysis of manias and the unconscious. In addition, the juxtaposition between her first-generation Irish father and nanny’s Catholicism and her mother’s Protestantism encouraged her to search for commonalities in religion that would link diverse belief systems into a unifying essence, still within the Western tradition. The psychiatry-driven idea that an all-encompassing theory, technique, or approach could also explain “every man” connected her to the Western canon, including Freud. In addition, her father taught her the importance of Greek myths, and as a teenager in school, she studied key texts. Thus Graham’s mother and father, her early travel, and her schooling, brought Graham’s works the central tenants of the American tradition, universalism, and the Western tradition during the Cold War. The narrative of her biography demonstrates

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5 Corn, “Coming of Age,” 200.

the development of the four minds that became vital for the promotion of American foreign policy agendas with propaganda. Made for export without the interference of the government, Graham represented the power of the nation’s individuals when they lived in a free, democratic state.

Graham’s dance education and artistic biography continued to shape her four minds as she matured. During her early dance training in the 1920s, Graham performed in choreography that drew on what Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis called “oriental.”⁷ Ruth St. Denis constructed these works by comingling elements of dance and costumes from Asia, India, and the Middle East. As Graham developed her own technique in the late 1920s, she continued to perform these types of works; however, as she matured, Graham modeled her work on European modernist painters and musicians. Her mentor, the German-American Louis Horst, brought her into contact with the work of painters, philosophers, and dancers who developed their work in Europe during the early twentieth century.

As she matured into a woman, Graham’s four minds evolved along with contemporary social currents and influenced her approach to female characters. During Graham’s life, the position of women in the culture and politics of the United States changed rapidly. When Graham turned twenty-five, women gained the right to vote. During the interwar period, she epitomized the era’s “New Woman”: she forged her own intellectual path, travelled alone, and had a long-standing affair with a married man.

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Later, she kept the title “Miss Graham” while married and divorced. Her works placed women at the center of every choreographic drama. On State Department tours, Graham provided a specific message about gender in the United States. She demonstrated that while remaining publically steeped in Puritan protocol, wearing white gloves and pearls as she descended from airplanes on to red carpets. She could also show the power of female leadership as the director of her company and an articulate voice of America during press conferences and on radio. In her narrative works, she translated New Woman sexuality through the tenets of modernism; critics offered this same license to the European modernist painters. Thus Graham’s four minds, in addition to her particular attributes as an American modernist woman, made her and her work into an ideal candidate for State Department tours.

While the four influences on Graham are distinct, the boundaries are porous. Sharp lines of distinction blurred, which made the possibilities for propaganda even more enticing. The biography of Graham’s development demonstrates that the categories were often layered. For example, Graham’s early dance training became a foundational influence through her exposure to “exotica” and early dance training with Ruth St. Denis, yet her training under Ted Shawn continued her development of “Americana” inspired by her mother and her childhood trek across the nation by train. Ted Shawn strongly encouraged Graham.\(^8\) He created solos for himself and performed works that drew on distinctly American themes and Native American dance. Committed to the idea of the American land as exceptional, he attempted to translate common forms

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into concert dance works. Shawn wrote, “It is our concern that the dance of America shall express the richness of our national tradition…the vastness of our plains, the majesty of our mountains, the fertility of our soil.”\(^9\) When Graham wrote her call to arms that dancers must “know the land,” her words and Shawn’s writings seem indistinguishable. Her own works that became known as Americana demonstrate fusions with Asian-inspired modernism, exemplified by the set for *Appalachian Spring* by Isamu Noguchi. Graham had been introduced to Noguchi by Michio Ito, who had studied with the German “new dancers” in the 1920s and had seen Harald Kreutzberg perform. Graham watched Kreutzberg rehearse in her studio in the late 1920s during the same period she was performing with Ito. The European influence crossed with the American modern technique developed by Graham in *Diversion of Angels* and its references to Kandinsky, who had also been present in the early German conversations about modern artistic forms. In addition, the use of music also showed cross-border pollination, which became a potent source of publicity starting with the first tours. While the music in *Appalachian Spring* by composer Aaron Copland matched an American choreographer and theme with an American composer, *Night Journey* and *Judith*—inspired by Greek myth and biblical tales, respectively—combined music by a European-inspired composer, William Schuman, and sets by Noguchi.\(^{10}\) Indeed, cross-fertilization served Graham’s work and State Department needs. If categories had been neat and segregated, the idea of an American “melting pot” could not have taken hold, and any claims that modern dance

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originated in America but was not distinctly American would have rung hollow from the start.

The four components of her work, with the added complexities of gender, culminated in a dance that could serve as a veritable smorgasbord of ideas by which the Department of State could promote America during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{11} The examination of the first works Graham brought on tour in the context of her biography demonstrates how her choreography and identity served the publicity needs of the State Department. During World War II, a decade before the State Department selected Graham to go on tour to Asia, the OWI described her biography as “typically American,” leading to a body of works with the same characteristics.\textsuperscript{12} The 1943 Office of War Information (OWI) study of Graham’s works described her work as “an entirely American product.”\textsuperscript{13} During the Cold War the international research and advertising arm of the government initiated under Eisenhower, the United States Information Agency (USIA, or USIS in international markets), understood the usefulness of Graham’s personal history.

Graham was born to Jane Beers, a tenth-generation American descendent of Miles Standish. Both Graham and the aforementioned government report noted that Americans consider Standish iconic.\textsuperscript{14} Longfellow framed him as a potent warrior who

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\caption{Illustration of Graham's choreography.}
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\textsuperscript{12} “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} Rosie Miles, \textit{Victorian Poetry in Context} (New York: Continuum, 2013).
arrived on the Mayflower to defend Plymouth and a Puritan steeped in the education offered by the Western canon through the study of the Romans, Greeks, and the Old Testament. The OWI noted that Graham stock was “not from the mild Pilgrims,” but from the “fighting man.”\textsuperscript{15} Her maternal relatives instilled strict puritanical standards of behavior and etiquette. Graham felt that her family on the maternal side “was trying to make [her] a proper young lady” despite her own boredom at such an endeavor.\textsuperscript{16} In autobiographical sketches, Graham presented stories of a strict and even frightening maternal grandmother who demanded that the family bow their heads and recite prayers before meals.\textsuperscript{17} The American cultural tradition lived in Graham.

Graham’s idea of the frontier and how it created American exceptionalism emerged from the intellectual history of her youth when her family crossed from Pennsylvania to California by train. In her memoir, she discussed “the hold the frontier had always had on me as an American, a symbol of a journey into the unknown…I had the idea of frontier in my mind as a frontier of exploration, a frontier of discovery.”\textsuperscript{18} Graham was born a year after Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his famous lecture “Significance of the Frontier in American History” in 1893 to a special meeting of the American Historical Association at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”

\textsuperscript{16} Graham, \textit{Blood Memory}, 24.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 219.

Turner said, “The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development.” On the frontier, the personality of the “civilized” pioneer was forever altered: “It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and moccasin…The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.” He argued the frontier molded the country’s people and its institutions: understanding the dialogue between civilization and the indigenous American people, the East and the West, was crucial. Even after the closing of the territorial frontier, its existence had forever shaped American thinking. He said, “The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics.”

Graham echoed Turner in her own writings as a young adult. She spoke about her ancestors and concluded, “We don’t have land frontiers anymore. We do have the frontier inside.”

While Graham grew up, “Turner was in the air.” By 1910, Turner had a chair at Harvard University was president of the American Historical Association, and his theory had become the commanding view of the American past. Turner’s article was the seminal work in understanding the frontier ideology pervasive in American cultural

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21 Martha Graham, *Interview with Martha Graham: The Early Years*, conducted by Walter Terry, 2 sound cassettes, 55 min., 1973 (New York Public Library: Jerome Robbins Dance Division), cassette 2.


thinking. “His thesis rolled through the universities and through popular literature as a tidal wave.”\textsuperscript{24} Turner himself recognized the infusion of his ideas into society. In 1919, the year after Graham began her dance studies in earnest, Turner wrote in a letter: “I think the ideas underlying my ‘Significance of the Frontier’ would have been expressed in some form or other in any case. They were a part of the growing American consciousness of itself.”\textsuperscript{25} The issue of the frontier was a central theme among the population and the intelligentsia. In “Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner,” Mark Faragher writes, “The frontier thesis became the most familiar model of American history, the one learned in school, extolled by politicians, and screened each Saturday afternoon at the Bijou.”\textsuperscript{26} Although there is no direct proof that Graham read Turner’s work, she can be unequivocally tied to his thesis through her biography: Graham was an excellent student in high school and a voracious reader.\textsuperscript{27} She inundated herself in research, particularly historical works, while she was creating dances. A Graham dancer in the 1930s recalled,

Martha got up about 8 a.m. She would decide if she had to look up things. She was like a young scholar. There would be piles of books around. Martha would go to the library on the weekends if she wanted to research. There


\textsuperscript{25} Kerwin Lee Klein, \textit{Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 96.

\textsuperscript{26} Faragher, “A Nation Thrown Back Upon Itself,” 2.

\textsuperscript{27} McDonagh, \textit{Martha Graham}, 10.
she was with her glasses on like a little student with all these books around.\textsuperscript{28}

Graham’s research, which always included plowing through historical documents on the issues addressed by her dances, would have led her to Turner’s ideas as evidenced by her work \textit{Frontier}.

Graham’s understanding of the frontier as a trope was also augmented by other emerging cultural studies that had begun to define the American archetype. While working on research in the 1930s, Graham likely encountered the work of Constance Rourke because of her interest in the American character and the frontier. As a woman and scholar who revolutionized the study of American culture, her works would have appealed to Graham. Unlike Turner, Rourke did not limit her description of the American character to men. She incorporated the poet Emily Dickinson into her argument about the American character and wrote, “Like Poe and Hawthorne and Henry James, though with a simpler intensity than theirs, Emily Dickinson trenched upon those shaded subtleties toward which the American imagination had long turned.”\textsuperscript{29} Rourke celebrated Dickinson in 1931; Martha Graham centered her first dance-drama work, \textit{Letter to the World} (1940), on Dickinson and featured herself as The One Who Dances.\textsuperscript{30} Just as Rourke quotes Dickinson in her work, Graham initially had an orator speak Dickinson’s words on

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\textsuperscript{28} Martha Hill, \textit{Interview with Martha Hill}, conducted by Agnes de Mille, 2 sound cassettes, 100min., January 18, 1984, cassette 2 (45 min.), JRDD-NYPL.

\textsuperscript{29} Rourke, \textit{American Humor}, 210-211.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Letter to the World}, premiered August 11, 1940, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Hunter Johnson, set by Arch Lauterer, costumes by Edith Gilfond.
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stage.\textsuperscript{31} Both Rourke and Graham celebrated the author as a female American icon. Both women used examples of Americans to create archetypes that described the national character. In 1943, the OWI found Graham’s \textit{Letter to the World} to be the first sign that Graham was ready to be introduced to the international market with comprehensible and nationally representative works.\textsuperscript{32}

Graham’s works of what USIS called “Americana,” which spoke for and about Americans, were staples of both early and late State Department tours. The infusion of this into her works emerged from her biography - from her maternal heritage to her youth during which she traveled West and her study of American texts. The first tour in 1955 featured Graham’s \textit{Appalachian Spring}, choreographed in 1944 during World War II. Of the works taken on tour, \textit{Appalachian Spring} was choreographed the earliest in her career. \textit{Appalachian Spring} describes the settled land and the “fighting men,” as the OWI described Graham’s ancestors, the Husbandman and Preacher. The Pioneering Woman and the Bride joins the men as American archetypes who embody the spirit of the frontier and the struggle for freedom and democracy. The dance opens with stillness as composer Aaron Copland’s sparse notes accompany the lights rising on Isamu Noguchi’s abstracted Pennsylvania farmhouse. A planked wall, angled poles, and several steps indicate a home. A simple rocking chair rests inside the house, and a bench sits outside. Upstage, a preacher’s pulpit is a tipped, slatted-wood spherical platform. Downstage, an angled log fence encloses the space.

\textsuperscript{31} Franko, \textit{Martha Graham in Love and War}, 202.

\textsuperscript{32} “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”
The Preacher enters alone with a walk that Graham described as “a Sunday stroll.” The Pioneering Woman enters next, majestic and aloof, and sits in the rocking chair. As Copland and Graham worked on the ballet, the elegant and tall Pioneering Woman became “the protagonist of all that happens here. She possesses our thoughts.” The Husbandman, a new homeowner, walks to the house and strokes it in awe. Graham called him “The Citizen.” The Bride, wearing a long frilled dress, enters after the Husbandman. She embodies the contradictions of hope for her new life as a bride and fear of the unknown. The Revivalist invokes the freedom of religion, while the Citizen presents a model for people who are exploring their newly won rights in decolonized nations. Graham wrote that the Husbandman was “a power to be reckoned with, a man who brings reform.” In addition, she insisted, the dance spoke to “the nobility of labor.” The Bride demonstrated that women are complex figures who show joy, trepidation, and resolve. Women represented freedom, as demonstrated by the Pioneering Woman’s expansive movements. For the lighting, Graham wanted “[a] clear blue American sky – uncluttered, simple.” Of her work, she explained, “Appalachian Spring is essentially a dance of place. You choose a piece of land; part of the house goes up. You dedicate it. The questioning spirit is there and the sense of establishing roots.”

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33 “Appalachian Spring: Piano Rehearsal Copy No. 2,” box 10, MGC-LOC.

34 Martha Graham, “Dance Libretto,” box 35, MGC-LOC.

35 Ibid.

Ideas of the universality of the human mind in Graham’s choreography also follow her biography; they derived from Graham’s earliest childhood memories. Her father worked as an “alienist,” the rough equivalent of a psychoanalyst. After he received his degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Baltimore, he joined the Western Pennsylvania Hospital’s Insane Department in Dixmont, close to Allegheny. When diagnosing patients, he described improper behavior in terms of disease rather than sin or immorality, which would have been the norm in the early twentieth century. The year before Graham was born, he established his private practice. These sessions took place in his office within the Graham home, and the young girl would have seen her father’s patients entering and exiting the house. Dr. Graham valued the physical manifestation of fantasy through play and analyzed the movements of his patients while they spoke to him. Graham credits her father with the maxim that drove her choreography: “The body never lies.” He also told her to “keep an open soul.” Later, she combined both these lessons when she spoke about her works and asserted that movement “is a barometer telling the state of the soul’s weather to all who can read it.”

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37 “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”


39 Stodelle, Deep Song, 2.

40 Ibid.

41 Graham, Blood Memory, 10.

42 Ibid., 4.
His interest in myth as a sign of the universal would have led him to the work of both Sigmund Freud, who based his Oedipal theory on the story of Oedipus and Jocasta, and Carl Jung, who used myths to understand an architecture of man. Graham recalled that her father put her to bed and recited the stories of Greek myths, which she called “word paintings.”\(^\text{43}\) She wrote that he told her that with myths, “the legends of the soul’s journey are retold.”\(^\text{44}\) This guided her interest in the writings of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, who put forth the idea of universal human tenets through the study of myth and archetypes. In later years, she entered therapy with Frances Wickes, Jung’s lover. As a young choreographer, Graham experimented with myths in works such as *The Flute of Krishna* (1926). In 1947, she choreographed her seminal myth-based works, or “movement paintings,” including *Errand into the Maze*, which later formed the backbone of the State Department tours.

*Errand into the Maze* describes the myth of Ariadne and the conquering of fear.\(^\text{45}\) When Theseus arrives in Crete to fight the Minotaur, Ariadne helps him to escape a maze by giving him a string to show him how to return. In a psychological interpretation of the myth, the twine gives Theseus the courage to confront problems with self-confidence, instead of letting the mystery of the labyrinth paralyze him with terror. Because Graham’s father trained as a doctor, the scientific application of the term may also have inspired her. An Ariadne-thread described how a person could, by following

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 27.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 5.

\(^{45}\) *Errand into the Maze*, premiered February 28, 1947, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Gian Carlo Menotti, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.
various specific practices, solve a problem without resorting to “trial and error.” This process of creating a string could take the form of a mental record or a physical marking.\(^46\) Graham took on the combined role of Ariadne and Theseus as she battled the Minotaur on stage to dramatize how humans conquer their fears.

As the curtain rises, a series of contractions consume the dancer’s body as the manifestation of fear. Her arms cross her pelvis to show tension rather than revulsion. Movements show anguish or what Graham referred to as “[t]hat feeling, and errand into the maze…the constant fear of what might come.”\(^47\) As in *Lamentation*, the emotion is abstracted. The audience does not know the narrative circumstances of the woman’s fear; however, unlike in *Lamentation*, Graham used mythic characters to tell her story. She zigzags over a long, thick rope on the floor towards the Noguchi sculpture that looks like an open forked tree. Graham described it as “supplicant hands, like pelvic bones.”\(^48\) The Minotaur enters by leaping on stage, and the frenzied battle between the two begins. Falling to the floor, she rolls across the stage as he makes a spread-leg jump over her contracted body. As the scenes progress, they engage in hand-to-hand battle. After she triumphs, she seizes the rope and loops it around the sculpture, at first in frenzy and then finishing meticulously. As the curtain falls, the dancer stands on her supporting leg and sweeps the other across and then outwards from her body. She has conquered her fears.

One of Graham’s famous memories about *Errand into the Maze* stemmed from her State


\(^{48}\) Stodelle, *Deep Song*, 136.
Department tour. She spoke about a precarious flight from Abedon to Teheran in 1956 during which she performed the dance three times in her mind: “It meant to me the passage through the unknown into life.” She added, “And we did arrive safely in Teheran.”

The idea of “Western civilization” informed Graham’s study of myth with her father, and her interest in the Judeo-Christian tradition that encompasses a universal bond of mankind. An interest in the Bible infused Graham’s works because she attempted to reconcile her early family history. Both Graham and the OWI attributed her “quality of the Irish” to her father. Although the details of Beers’s introduction to Graham’s American and Irish Catholic father remain lost, there can be no doubt that Beers’s powerful puritanical mother could not have been overjoyed by her daughter's marriage into a family that had only recently arrived in the United States, perhaps a generation before her father was born, especially a Catholic one. Many Anglo-American Protestants held long-standing contempt for Irish Catholics. Graham, however, does not mention any conflict regarding the marriage. As a young girl, with her grandmother reciting prayers from the Protestant tradition over meals, Graham had to reconcile the influence of two religions, traditionally at odds with one another. Graham’s nanny, Elizabeth Prendergast, was also Catholic. During Dr. Graham’s tenure in Western Pennsylvania Hospital’s Insane Department, he treated Elizabeth, known as “Lizzy,” who became influential in Graham’s life as a caregiver. Graham joined Lizzy at church and wrote about how the

49 Graham, Blood Memory, 267.

50 “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”
rituals affected her understanding of a universal quality present in all religions. During a press conference in 1974, Graham discussed her attachment to religion. She announced that she did not attend church but added, “I believe in God. I don’t say what God is because I don’t know.” For her, religion did not include practice, but it still revealed mankind’s inner life.

In her early choreography, Graham explored religion; she choreographed *A Florentine Madonna* (1926) and *Figure of a Saint* (1929). Graham used the story of Joan of Arc in *Seraphic Dialogue*, which she choreographed in 1955 and took on the first State Department tour. *Judith* (1950), about a Jewish heroine from the Old Testament, became important for government representatives who deployed Graham as a soloist to Berlin in 1957. Because of Graham’s mixed religious heritage, the OWI advertised her as a figure that “speaks for Americans.” Freedom of religion became a key theme during Cold War battles with the atheist Soviets.

With *Judith*, Graham told the story of the titular Old Testament heroine. Unlike in *Night Journey*, Graham did not have to translate a story about men for her dramatic narrative about a woman. She did not have to combine the figure of a man and a woman as she did in *Errand into the Maze*. In the original biblical tale, Judith becomes outraged because her Jewish countrymen did not revolt against the invading Assyrians. She travels to the camp of the enemy general, Holofernes, and promises him information about the Israelites. Judith gains his trust and charms him with her beauty, and he invites

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53 “Martha Graham: Biographical Data.”
her into his tent. Judith falls in love with him, yet she remains faithful to her people instead of succumbing to her own emotions. One night, as Holofernes lies drunk, she decapitates him and takes his head back to the Jewish people. The Assyrians disperse, and Israel is saved. Graham described the character: “With Judith it was the gift of being a woman, an enticing female.” Graham continued, “But she never lost her purpose, which was that he must die. ‘In desire,’ she says, ‘I intend to kill you’.”54 Because the solo as a stand-alone work has been lost, pictures and Graham’s descriptions become central to understanding the dance.

In solos for the full-length group work, which she produced later in her career, Graham’s choreography for Judith in The Legend of Judith (1962) includes potent movements of seduction such as beseeching knee crawls to show her supplication as a temptress.55 Yet Yuriko, who saw the dance, recalled that Graham ultimately framed Judith as a heroine who used her seductive powers to save her people.56 A critic described the “percussive violence” of the work that turned lyric when Graham demonstrated her love for the General and concluded, “Judith is probably the most taxing solo dance ever conceived.”57 Graham received rave reviews for the 25-minute work.58

54 Graham, Blood Memory, 221.

55 The Legend of Judith, premiered 25 October 1962, choreography Martha Graham, music by Mordecai Seter, set by Dani Caravan, costumes by Martha Graham; author viewed a performance tape, c. 1978, courtesy of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance.

56 Tokunaga, Yuriko, 135.

Publicity shots from the 1950s show Graham wearing a large coil wrapped around her head and large metallic spheres sit on her neck as jewelry. During the dance, she dresses herself for the seduction scene. She wrote, “I was unprepared for the jewel necklace and headpiece that Isamu [Noguchi] brought to me with which to dress myself within the dance. They intensified and gave me a deeper image of myself as Judith, they in some way possessed the spirit of the Jewish heroine.” She added, “Downstage [Judith] puts on her garments: her necklace, her belt, her fine lace, and her great rings that go up her arm. This means to me, ‘I am ready to do battle, I will do it, whatever I have to do.’” The set included a Noguchi-sculpted tent with a royal sheath over it to signify Holofernes’s bedchambers. William Schuman, the composer of German-Jewish descent, described his score for Judith as “a musical poem.”

The geography of Graham’s early childhood demonstrated the European translation of Western civilization’s liberal and democratic social processes. The city of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, introduced Graham to modern European social practices and the liberal tradition. As opposed to the repressive factories of Pittsburgh, the Heinz Company dominated Allegheny with its German population and dedication to civic responsibility and cultural life. Henry Heinz advocated for progressive modern industry: he promoted the Pure Food and Drug Act and safe working conditions for his employees, many of whom were women. Heinz hoped to build an “industrial utopia” and


59 Ibid., 210.

commissioned artists to design stained glass windows and paint murals. In addition, the city’s leaders demonstrated a commitment to “modern man” with neatly organized streets, civic and artistic centers, and scientific projects with an investment of a state-of-the-art observatory.\textsuperscript{61} Heinz became the director of an Exposition Center that housed concerts, cultural events, and opera. He became famous for mottoes including, “To do a common thing uncommonly well brings success.”\textsuperscript{62} Unlike the old-fashioned and sooty steel factories of Pittsburgh, the Heinz manufacturing plant in Allegheny boasted both modern efficiency and humanity for workers.

Graham’s upbringing and the influence of her father again pushed her back to Europe. In Europe, ideas of the unconscious developed during Graham’s father’s career with the German book by Franz Brentano, \textit{Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte (Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint)}.\textsuperscript{63} Brentano tutored Freud and is credited with creating initial discussions of the unconscious. In early studies, Freud asked patients to stage “reproductions” of their analytic experiences. Freud’s practice in the 1890s would have attracted international attention, particularly by physicians such as Graham’s father who looked to myth and movement-based solutions to solve his patient’s problems. Although some historians state that Graham did not delve into psychoanalysis, per se, until the 1940s, Graham’s first attempts at psychological studies included \textit{Four}.

\textsuperscript{61} Stodelle, \textit{Deep Song}, 1; The OWI depicted Graham as living in “dark Pittsburgh” (2).


Works such as *Lamentation* and numerous others demonstrate her commitment to understanding psychological states in characters well before her psychoanalytic work.

Later in school, the classical curriculum revolved around the idea of “great books,” which centered on European interpretations of Western civilization. Graham’s early training in myth and curiosity about the universalism of Christianity would have been encouraged. Graham was strong student, and in high school she became the secretary of the *Quorum*, a debating society; she addressed national political issues and international relations. In addition, she was the editor of her school magazine, *Olive and Gold*; in ancient Athens, the public recognition of honor included olive and gold crowns. The academic understanding of the Western tradition traced through broadly defined historical periods including the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution with concepts such as the development of liberal democracy, political liberty, the value of the individual, and a rational, logical approach to problem-solving. Texts would include a European translation of intellectual philosophy and literature from antiquity.

Both her schooling and her father trained her

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66 Ibid., 35, 2; Robin Osborne, *Athens and Athenian Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.

in myths. Her interest in biblical works and European thinkers derived from the idea of
the Western canon. While choreographing works, she did primary research on the stories
she told, such as that of Joan of Arc.

Originally a solo work entitled *The Triumph of St. Joan* (1951), *Seraphic Dialogue* explores the three aspects of Joan of Arc—Maid, Warrior, and Martyr—with three separate dancers. Graham studied St. Joan using historical manuscripts to prepare
the work. The dance retells a story of religious persecution and draws on the idea of a
universal human narrative of the victimization of the righteous. Boundaries cross into the
influence of the European terrain and the Western canon with the tale of the French
 heroine. Displaying the idea of Joan as an everywoman despite the European historical
roots of the history, Graham said, “I had no grounds to go on except what I imagined
went on in her heart.” Graham demonstrates the character’s multi-faceted nature when
she hears the voices of St. Catherine, St. Michael, and St. Margaret, and her martyrdom.

Joan relives the three aspects of her personality without linear narrative.

Graham said the dance “is what one imagines might have passed through her mind.”

Unlike all of Graham’s other female protagonists, Joan is neither tortured nor overly

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*Columbia University, NYC, for further research on the Core Curriculum and ideas of “civilization” and the Western tradition.*

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*68 The Triumph of St. Joan*, premiered 5 December 1951, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Norman Dello Joio, set by Frederick Kiesler, costume by Martha Graham; *Seraphic Dialogue*, premiered 8 May 1955, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Norman Dello Joio, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.

*69 Hill, Interview with Martha Hill.*

*70 Stodelle, Deep Song, 173.*

*71 Ibid.*
psychologically complex: she becomes a lyrical figure despite the tragedy of martyrdom.\textsuperscript{72} Like Graham herself, Joan did not follow an orthodox path. Loner, leader, and revolutionary, Graham again demonstrated the power of the woman as warrior. The Noguchi set became an integral part of the work. Graham said, “It is a very active piece, made of metal, a cathedral without limitations, like no other cathedral in the world. The doors opened. It was magic.” As the dancers move the set, the colors and refractions of light transform the stage into a “radiant medieval setting.”\textsuperscript{73} Noguchi called it “his geometry of faith.”\textsuperscript{74}

When speaking about the dance, Graham said she explored “the expression of man, the landscape of his soul.”\textsuperscript{75} Here, Graham encompassed the religious fervor of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his sister Eleanor Dulles, head of the Berlin Desk when Graham performed the work there. They believed that God could be found in the United States but not in the atheistic, repressive Soviet Union that enslaved or executed citizens who exercised their religious beliefs. The figure of Joan legitimized Graham’s position as a cold warrior; she worked on behalf of the United States by presenting a fierce and righteous woman on stage; in addition, she became an American cultural ambassador in furs, pearls, and white gloves. While the paradox could seem like

\textsuperscript{72} Note that for the performance, and for the purposes of describing the dance, Graham altered the choreography to fit each dancer who took her role. Thus in the performance tape viewed by the author with Mary Hinkson, the original choreography was not presented.

\textsuperscript{73} Stodelle, \textit{Deep Song}, 173.

\textsuperscript{74} Graham, \textit{Blood Memory}, 220.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 4.
duplicity, the persona on stage allowed Graham to stake claims about the “soul of mankind” while communicating messages about American women who could fight next to men for the same ideals, while remaining demure in public.

When Graham met Louis Horst, he reinforced the European, and shattered the boundaries of the Western canon. He moved Graham forward to include modern German ideas. He gleaned new insights into dance from Germany’s musicians and translated an article “Musik fur Tanzer,” which described the interaction of music and dance that defined free counterpoint as the center of the modernist approach. Horst encouraged Graham to explore the writings of Frederick Nietzsche, which had strongly influenced the work of Freud, Isadora Duncan, and also Mary Wigman during the period in which she created her seminal work Witch Dance in 1914. Early in her career, Graham choreographed “Strong Free Joyous Acton”: Nietzsche (1929) and other German-inspired works such as Tanzstück (1927).

Following Horst’s lead and mirroring Wigman, Graham explored the writings of painter Wassily Kandinsky, who knew Wigman in Dresden. His work Concerning the Spiritual Art provided a theoretical foundation for abstractionism and connected European modernism to universalism. He wrote, “The purposes (and therefore, means) of nature and arts are essentially, organically and according to the laws of the

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76 Soares, Louis Horst, 73.

77 LaMothe, Nietzsche’s Dancers, 157.

78 Mary Anne Santos Newhall, Mary Wigman (New York: Routledge, 2009).
Universe are various - and equally great... and equally strong.”\textsuperscript{79} In addition, “Orientalist” aesthetics inspired his work; he wrote that influences from the East accessed “the inner spiritual side of nature.”\textsuperscript{80} Encouraged by Horst, Graham visited other museums that held the work of modern European painters including the museum in Chicago that held the Kandinsky work and the galleries of Alfred Stieglitz. In line with Kandinsky’s approach to abstraction, Graham attempted to find a choreographic form that would lead the viewer to particular emotions; she explained, “Out of emotion comes form.”\textsuperscript{81} Yet Kandinsky remained a core inspiration. In a story made famous through repetition, Graham remembered seeing her first Kandinsky painting in 1927: “I nearly fainted because at that moment I knew I was not mad, that others saw the world, saw art, the way I did. It was [a painting] by Wassily Kandinsky, and had a streak of red going from one end to the other. I said, ‘I will do that someday. I will make a dance like that.’”\textsuperscript{82} She added: “That shaft of intimacy.” The streaks of color, combined with Kandinsky’s writings on the meanings and use of color, inspired Graham’s \textit{Diversion of Angels} (1948), a centerpiece of every one of Graham’s State Department tours. The “Woman in Red’s” off-center tilts and “streak” across the stage with diagonal crosses mirrored Kandinsky’s. Graham wrote, “Dance followed modern painters.”\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} Munroe, \textit{The Third Mind}, 22.
\textsuperscript{81} Armitage, \textit{Martha Graham}, 97.
\textsuperscript{82} Marsha Graham, \textit{Blood Memory}, 98.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 99.
*Diversion of Angels* centered on the subject of love: like Graham’s abstraction of grief in *Lamentation* (1930), there is no narrative, plot, or use of characters. Unlike *Appalachian Spring*, with the wedding of the Bride and Husbandman which demonstrates their love through a state-sanctioned ceremony, in *Diversion of Angels* Graham removed the *who, why, when or where*. Only the distilled emotion remains. In *Diversion of Angels*, Graham assigned colors to each facet of love. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky wrote, “The starting point is the study of colour and its effect on men,” and outlined the meanings of various colors and their movement schemes in space through diagrams.\(^\text{84}\) With the Woman in Red, the Woman in White, and the Woman in Yellow, Graham depicted the three aspects of love: passion, serenity, and playful joy. The work begins with the Woman in White upstage center. With the first musical chords, her partner raises his hand, and his outstretched fingers form a halo over her head. The Woman in White dances as a serene and lyrical centerpiece with long extensions and perfectly arched feet. From the right wing, the Woman in Red crosses on a diagonal in a series of off-center tilts on one leg. She tilts and steps, tilts and steps, each tilt a perfect replication of the last. The Woman in Red’s signature moment takes her flying in a cross from upstage to downstage in a movement both entirely grounded in the legs and freed in the body that propels her into the wings. The final tilt finishes with a contraction, and she exits downstage. For the Woman in Yellow, a playful camaraderie with her partner includes jumps; the dancer leaps into a lift on her partner’s shoulder, and they spin off stage. The chorus of men and women race with leaps, jumps with arms like sparkles, and cartwheels; they melt into scooped positions that they hold with a powerful

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\(^\text{84}\) Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.*
technical finesse. They accent and elaborate on the three emotions represented by the women. The poet Ben Belitt wrote that the work was “[p]lay after the spirit’s labor: games, flights, fancies, configurations of the lover’s intention: the beloved Possibility, at once strenuous and tender.” He concluded, “Diversion of angels.”

Graham equated *Diversion of Angels* with Kandinsky, from whom she got “that shaft of intimacy.”

As a teenager, when Graham arrived in Santa Barbara after her trek across her “frontier,” she understood that her family had entered a new phase that was completely divorced from the Puritanical East Coast: California ports brought the United States into its first contact with the “exotica” of Asia. With a dramatic increase in trade activity in the 1860s, artifacts and commodities began to enter the United States; authors and artists who had long found inspiration in “exotica” used specific goods and artifacts to fuel their art. As Americans began to understand Asia through spices, foods, furniture, and cultural artifacts, artists reconstructed and transformed them; this influenced “the articulation of new visual and conceptual languages.” Frederick Jackson Turner had argued that the European influence made its way from East to West; the Asian aesthetic pushed through the nation across the Pacific from West to East. This helped to form the character of the new American artist and experiments in dance that followed.

85 Stodelle, 167.
87 Munroe, *The Third Mind*, 22.
88 Ibid., 21.
In 1911, Graham saw a poster announcing the performance in Los Angeles of Ruth St. Denis in *Rhada* (1906), the tale of the Hindu god of Krishna. After begging her father to take her to see St. Denis, Graham watched the performance and then decided that she wanted to dance. With lessons unavailable in Santa Barbara, Graham’s interest turned to local theater. In 1912, she appeared as a geisha in a production of *A Night in Japan.* After high school, Graham asked her parents to let her study dance. Her family compromised. Perhaps because her maternal side had survived the shock of having a Puritan daughter marry an Irishman and then move to California, the family allowed her to attend the Cumnock School, a junior college for the liberal arts. Two years later, Graham’s father died; with the family in disarray, Graham found independence. In 1916, she enrolled in a summer course with St. Denis and Ted Shawn. At her audition, Louis Horst played the piano for her. At the school, Graham learned East Indian and Japanese forms, as well as numerous others including yoga, ballet, and Spanish forms. On the professional stage, Graham performed the “exotic” dances such as *Serenata Morisca* (1921).

St. Denis mandated that her students study religions of the East and the “vital human ideas” they represented. Graham learned that the dance could become a great spiritual force. The idea of the Orient brought Graham back to the ideas of a universal humanism. Even after Graham left Denishawn, her intellectual curiosity about the East continued. Growing frustrated with the literalism that infused the Denishawn

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89 Stodelle, *Deep Song*, 12.

90 Ibid., 21.

91 Ibid., 19-24.
choreography, as well as the company’s touring on lowbrow vaudeville circuits, Graham left Denishawn for New York, where she supported herself financially with commercial work. In her own concerts, Graham continued to explore themes from Asia and the Middle East in dances; however, she attempted to divorce herself from the “replication” style of St. Denis. She remarked that she could not “duplicate the oriental dance” and further explained, “We can only duplicate—in our way—the feeling of that dance—its spirit, its shadow. The oriental dance is a ritual; it is the religious expression of a race flowing through the soul of the dancer. She is part of it; it is what she is and all that she believes.”

Despite Graham’s conviction that her work should capture the spirit and not the look of the “orient,” as late as 1928 the New York Times critic John Martin commented that her works “show a strong influence of the Denishawn tradition, such as Tangara, the Chinese and the East Indian dances.” Horst described the period of her work: “She did things like Denishawn, like Study in Lacquer which was posing around with a big, gold kimono, you know.”

In 1923, Graham met Michio Ito when she performed in his Garden of Kama on the commercial stage. He had studied Dalcroze and the new dance in Germany and worked with Yeats, and he introduced Graham to the possibilities of a new and modernist art that did not require her to relinquish her ties to Asia. In 1927, Graham

92 Frances McClernan Kemp, The Dance Magazine (1927), scrapbooks, box 308, MGC-LOC.


94 Horst, Interview, 111-112.
performed experimental works with Ito at the Neighborhood Playhouse called “orchestral dramas.”\(^\text{95}\) They shared the stage at the MacDowell Club in a program titled “The Dance, its Place in Art and Life.”\(^\text{96}\) Critics celebrated Ito as a force in the new dance, yet they did not embraced Graham’s work because they felt that she had not yet realized a distinctive voice.\(^\text{97}\) With *Lamentation*, Graham established her voice, and critics have found similarities to Ito’s work and their shared use of “abstraction of the dramatic element and its integration in the choreography of the work as a whole.”\(^\text{98}\) Graham gravitated to Ito, Noguchi and his family because of her fascination with and respect for Japanese people and forms. As stated earlier, Ito introduced Graham to Noguchi, whose sister danced with the company and his mother sewed costumes. Ito left New York for California and Hollywood, and Graham forged her new path with Noguchi.\(^\text{99}\)

Graham had learned about both the Noh and Kabuki theater, yet she was not forthcoming about the direct effect it had on her choreography. In transcripts made


\(^\text{96}\) Concert Program, January 7, 1928, MacDowell Club, box 211, folder 7, MGC-LOC.


\(^\text{98}\) Cowell and Shimazaki, “East and West in the Work of Michio Ito,” 18.

for her autobiography, she does not discuss any specific influences of either genre.\textsuperscript{100} In *Blood Memory*, she recalls hearing about Kabuki from her sister, Ted Shawn, and Doris Humphrey after they returned from a Denishawn tour to Asia in 1928. Graham did not go on the tour. Critics and Kabuki dancers saw a similarity between her dance and theirs during the 1955 tour, but Graham remained silent. Her *Notebooks* show that she used “the mysteries of the ‘Great Within’ of Asian sages,” and she speaks about the use of Tibetan Yoga and Chinese red.\textsuperscript{101} Scholars note that Graham had integrated Kabuki and Noh into her work, but none offer specifics of her contact with the forms. Despite this, Graham dancer Yuriko, whom Graham hired out of an Internment Camp during World War II, spoke of “Martha’s Asian identity.”\textsuperscript{102} Tapping into the desire to express cultural convergences, every work on the 1955 tour to Asia included a Noguchi set.

Gender and the transformation of the position of women during Graham’s twenties bound the four elements of her work into a cohesive whole with her focus solely on the female character. Thus she embraced the American tradition with both her archetypes and her shattering of traditional boundaries with a new approach to problems, which made the female body universal. Graham drew on the Western tradition for her characters yet overturned European languages of expression with the American and foregrounded women in the existing tales. Using the influence of Asian culture, she

\textsuperscript{100} Taped transcripts for an autobiography project prior to 1972 in box 240, folders 6 and 7, Lucy Kroll Collection, MD-LOC; Box 227, folders 5-8, MGC-LOC for interviews with Graham after 1972.

\textsuperscript{101} Graham, *The Notebooks of Martha Graham*, ix, 275, 190.

\textsuperscript{102} Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 59.
approached the construction of her modernist theater that showcased her choreography and informed her technique. After women achieved suffrage when Graham was twenty-four, disputes and tensions emerged within the feminist movement; many women took hold of their independence as individuals and shunned the collective.\textsuperscript{103} Graham displayed the characteristics of this “paradox of feminism.”\textsuperscript{104} The feminist movement attempted to bring together women who hesitated to say “we” and who believed that they could unite under the banner of individuality.\textsuperscript{105} When Graham moved to New York City three years after gaining the right to vote, the city hosted a cultural renaissance. For Graham, as for other independent artists and intellectuals, the status of New Woman did not include ties to a social movement.\textsuperscript{106} Women disagreed about the definition of “women’s rights,” and they battled among themselves to choose who should and should not be involved in pursuing the movement’s various and disparate goals.\textsuperscript{107} Graham equated feminism with female infighting. “I have never felt competition,” she wrote in response to people calling her a “liberationist.” Graham understood herself to be a part of a “universal” called woman, which could not be related to group movements. She said, “Every woman has the quality of being a virgin, of being the temptress-prostitute, of

\textsuperscript{103} Nancy Cott, \textit{The Grounding of Modern Feminism} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).


\textsuperscript{105} Cott, \textit{The Grounding of Modern Feminism}.

\textsuperscript{106} Graham, \textit{Blood Memory}, 25.

being the mother. I feel that these, more than anything, are the common life of all women. Not politics."\(^{108}\)

The New Woman believed in legal and sexual equality and often remained single because of the difficulty of combining equality with marriage. Graham observed that St. Denis lived in stark contrast to the sexually puritanical matrons in her family. In St. Denis, Graham found a kindred spirit as both dancer and thinker. St. Denis believed that “[t]o be an artist meant to be a thinking dancer.”\(^{109}\) Graham became an adulterer as she began an affair with the married Horst. She wrote, “I always got whatever I wanted from men without asking.”\(^{110}\) Travelling alone implied sexual freedom and became a marker of racy self-determination. While Graham and her sister Geordie ventured across the country together, Graham remembered that they were nearly arrested for being “gypsies,” a code word for prostitute. Graham told the story as an anecdote that she found empowering and not a slur against herself or her sister.\(^{111}\)

Graham’s use of modernism allowed her to delve into the physical manifestation of female sexual instincts on the stage. In her early career, she celebrated the potential of the female gypsy with *Gypsy Portrait* (1926). The choreography had premiered as *Portrait – After Federico Beltrán-Masses* to honor the painter Federico Beltrán-Masses, an internationally renowned painter known for his paintings of nude and


\(^{111}\) Tape 1, reel 2, box 240, folder 6, Lucy Kroll Collection, MD-LOC.
“exotic” women. He brought a culturally sophisticated eye to the sexual woman. In Night Journey, as Oedipus lies over Jocasta as she writhes in contraction and release, Graham’s audiences watched her protagonists engage in mimed sexual acts. As a New Woman, Graham used the painter’s brush to bring the explicit and erotic scenes legitimacy in performance. She used modernist art to frame sexuality and sexual acts on stage to promote the cutting-edge essence of her work. The modernist dance language, the Asian-influenced modernism of the sets, the use of antiquity’s stories to describe an everywoman, and the narrative centrality of the woman, all allowed Graham to describe mythic works in American terms using charged sexuality that obtained legitimacy because the State Department defined Graham and her work as modernist.

Night Journey demonstrates the idea of a myth-based universal humanity fused with Asian influences to tell the story of Jocasta, the mother of Oedipus, the Greek king who fulfilled a prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Graham follows the version presented by Sophocles, which includes the blind seer Tiresias. However, Graham focuses on the myth’s basic premise: that the son wishes to marry his mother, which Sigmund Freud likewise used in naming a basic human sexual instinct shared by all men; in Graham’s work, the mother also desires her son. Graham told the story from Jocasta’s eyes through flashbacks, while retaining her dedication to the story. Graham described her role as Jocasta in Night Journey: “All things I do are in every woman. Every woman is a Jocasta.”

Graham, Blood Memory, 26.
bed in particular: “It is the representation of a man and a woman—nothing like a bed at all. He brought me to the image of the bed stripped to its bones, to its very spirit.”

The work begins and ends with a rope wrapped around Jocasta. Graham narrates her struggles through flashbacks. Graham called the rope the umbilical cord that connected the mother to her son. At the start of the work, she pulls its two ends across her body, as though strangling her torso. Tiresias enters, thrusting his staff to the ground; its sound resonates like a body hitting the ground. He uses the thick wooden staff to weave the rope from her hands. As Jocasta pitches forward with her head sweeping and grazing the floor and her leg rounding through the air, Oedipus enters. As they begin making love, the chorus enters, warning of impending doom. The chorus moves through knee crawls to standing lunges while, in unison, the women’s clawed hands move across their eyes, throat, and pelvis to signify the character as she rips out her eyes, throat, and womb. Standing in contraction, the women fall backwards and hit the floor with a single staccato sound. With rippling contractions and muscular legs, the lovers grab hold of one another. Graham spoke about “the cry of her lover as he subjects her to his wishes” and continued, “She does not hear that cry; it enters from her soul.” They descend onto the Noguchi bed. At the conclusion of the work, the rope holds them both in a diagonal, each one holding one end. Tiresias approaches them by climbing on top of the bed and weaves his staff through the rope. When the rope can no longer support them, they fall to the floor. The choreography forces the characters into movement conversations with one another, with a chorus, and with the set.

113 Ibid., 218.

114 Ibid., 215.
The development of Graham’s four minds roughly follows the chronology of her life – her relationship with her mother and father, mentor, and teachers who prepared her for her performing career. Graham’s mother and the influence of United States intellectuals inspired Graham’s development of American tropes in her work. She studied the land and its characters. Her relationship with her father, an alienist or psychiatrist, infused her works with universalism, which encompassed myth-based works, and European influences in the writing of the Western canon. In addition, her early work with her lover and mentor Louis Horst as a student at Denishawn tied her to modernist European artists and German dancers. Social influences of the start of trade with Asia and Graham’s first training as a dancer inspired orientalism, or the influence of Asian forms on her work. During her lifetime, all the categories became contextualized by the changing social position of women. The genesis of her works provided the State Department with material for export particularly because, as sensibilities, the boundaries were porous and thus could be molded as propaganda for export.
Chapter Three:
“Delightful Americana”: How Martha Graham Became a Cultural Ambassador

Martha Graham’s tours under the auspices of the United States government followed a long history of the use of dance as cultural diplomacy. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration developed the institutional structure that enabled American cultural projects as propaganda to travel abroad.\(^1\) Federal support for dance began at the domestic level; with the 1935 Works Project Administration (WPA) relief program “Federal Number One,” the theater unit, or the Dance Unit that grew out of it, Roosevelt Administration supported dance performances, whether as a part of musicals or on their own. That same year, Roosevelt created a private-public entity to support the arts, including works for export, when he signed the congressional charter that created the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA).\(^2\) Although ANTA’s first mandate was to create a national theater program, it also had close ties to the State Department.\(^3\) Although Graham did not participate in Roosevelt’s relief program or early ANTA efforts, she established connections to the administration that allowed her to perform at the White House in 1937 and the World’s Fair in New York in 1938. With the creation of

\(^1\) The word, “propaganda” is used because this is the term used by officials when they referred to projects. In the 1950s, the word fell out of favor and was replaced by the word “informational” to refer to cultural exports.


\(^3\) “The American National Theatre and Academy: Chartered by the Congress,” July 1936, box 34, folder 3, RBTC.
ANTA, Roosevelt provided the foundational structure that allowed Graham to tour internationally.

In order to facilitate international exchange, in 1938 the Roosevelt administration created the Division of Cultural Relations at the State Department; the department drew on leaders outside of government to consider a range of projects. Roosevelt divided South America from the rest of the international arena and named Nelson A. Rockefeller the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) under the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), which oversaw projects in Latin America. The Office of the Coordinator of Information, headed by Bill Donovan, assumed responsibility for other nations. In both cases, the offices oversaw propaganda efforts, particularly in the fight against fascism. Donovan became known as “Wild Bill Donovan” when he ran the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which served as the model for the post-World War II Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Rockefeller used the term “TOTAL WAR” to describe propaganda efforts before WWII. This term would later be used to describe the Cold War.

Under Roosevelt, modernism became a part of the propaganda arsenal. In 1939, he articulated his direct support of modern art when he delivered a nationally

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5 Ibid., 13.


7 “First Phase – Axis Penetration,” NARPP, Washington DC, CIAA, Outlines for Meetings, 19941-1950, III, 40, box 7, folder 59, 5, RAC.
broadcast speech at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Abby Rockefeller, Nelson’s mother, had initiated plans for MoMA, and Nelson became its president in 1939.

Roosevelt opened his remarks with a celebration of the museum as a testament to “peace and the pursuit of peace.” Referring to his government-sponsored WPA project, he noted that the artists “have no compulsion to be limited in method or manner of expression.” After equating modern art with civilization, he connected artistic freedom with political freedom: “What we call freedom in politics results in freedom in the arts.” For Roosevelt, experimentation and new government-sponsored American projects in the modern arts signaled political freedom and an attachment of the United States to the idea of Western civilization. This idea carried through the dance exports overseen by his administration, and later during the Cold War.

Expanding on early projects inspired and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Nelson Rockefeller and Roosevelt created a government propaganda project to demonstrate the “Good Neighbor Policy” and encourage economic exchange. Before his appointment as CIAA, Rockefeller had initiated his own international cultural projects

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8 “Address delivered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a nation-wide broadcast which marked the opening of the Museum’s new building on May 8, 1939,” NARPF, Washington DC, RG CIAA, series, Roosevelt, Correspondence 1939-1945, III 40, box 9, folder 76, 1-2, RAC.

9 Ibid., 1.

10 Ibid., 2.

and exported books to Latin America that included the best of contemporary American fiction. Under the government watch, it mixed materials for military ends into the list of products for exchange: coal, copper, iron, Chrysler tanks, and even money changed hands. In addition, the foundation distributed radios to allow communication and thus local cultural exchange to take place. The list of these exports became wide-ranging: movies depicting Western hemisphere bird migration, tennis teams, and radio shows featuring music and advice on the sheep breeding problem in Peru. Walt Disney films became particularly important. Amid this array of products, dance became one cultural export engineered to sway opinion towards the United States.

Rockefeller applied the “Good Neighbor” approach: “Cultural relations means simply that you are interested in what your neighbor is thinking and doing and you hope that he is similarly interested in you.” Because a common language had to be shared, non-verbal arts became vital. While in Iran in 1956, Martha Graham noted that the language of dance required no translator. She expressed the same idea in a radio speech: “Of course it is only a theory,” she began, “but I believe [dance] should be one of the most perfect mediums of cultural exchange.” Rockefeller’s group exported musical

12 Nelson A. Rockefeller to Dr. Carl H. Milam, American Library Association, Rockefeller Foundation Papers, January 30, 1940, RG 1.1 Project Series 200, sub series Latin American Cooperation, box 207, folder 2468, RAC.

13 “Profile of Nelson A. Rockefeller,” NARPF, RG 4, Washington DC files, propaganda, 1942-44, III, 4, 0, box 9, folder 72, 3, RAC.

14 “Department of State, For the Press, 537,” November 7, 1941, NARPP, Washington DC files, subseries CIAA, press releases, III, 4, 0, box 9, folder 70, 1, RAC.

15 “Martha Graham – Radio Speech, Iran 6 Feb 1956,” uncatalogued box, folder Abadan, JRDD-NYPL.
selections that targeted the “highbrow” and demonstrated the best of modern American work. In addition, the CIAA sent symphonic pieces that would appeal to the European sensibilities of the local elites. Engaging the idea of cultural convergences, the CIAA brought works that demonstrated American interest in South American music through new compositions that reinterpreted local folk tunes.¹⁶

For sophisticated audiences, Rockefeller exported American Ballet Caravan with a new dance repertory with the help of his friend Lincoln Kirstein. They intended to counteract German fascist influences. Kirstein and Rockefeller became friends in their youth and then worked together at MoMA. Kirstein became dedicated to making a new and American ballet form, and brought George Balanchine to the United States in 1933.¹⁷ In April 1941, Kirstein signed a contract with the CIAA to send thirty-five dancers, two pianists, two singers, a conductor, and a technical staff to Latin America.¹⁸ In order to promote the idea of unity through people-to-people exchange and to overcome what Kirstein, who spoke Spanish, referred to as the “language barrier,” the company hired “three Mexicans and a Cuban.”¹⁹


¹⁸ “General Report to the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics, RE: Contract No. NDCar-50, Effective March 17, 1941,” NRPF, RG 4, Special Projects, sub-series F966, Lincoln Kirstein, III 101, box 4L101, folder 966, RAC.

¹⁹ “General Report to the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics, Re: Contract No. NDCar-50, Effective March 17, 1941,” to Mr. Rockefeller, 2, RAC.
Kirstein had overseen two ballet companies that a diverse selection of choreographers to present distinctly modernist, as well as American-themed ballets. The dance could offer the elite in South America “visual aspects” of American music, which had already been heard by the audiences. Tour repertory included choreography that conveyed messages that underlay future tours: Americanism, the association of the United States with culturally sophisticated arts, and the comingling of local forms with American dance. In 1941, American Ballet Caravan presented *Billy the Kid* (1938), a work that showed the frontier, with music by Aaron Copland. *Filling Station*, with music by Virgil Thompson, told the story of a day at a gas station. In addition, the repertory demonstrated the United States’ commitment to the rich European traditions of ballet through its vocabulary with *Les Sylphides* (1909) to music by Frederic Chopin. The idea of promoting cultural convergences through exchange inspired the choreography of two works that brought both “highbrow” and “lowbrow” to the viewer. First, Balanchine’s *Concerto Barocco* (1941) used a daring and innovative approach to the classical ballet vocabulary to present a work that offered a modernist spin on the design of the region’s classical Baroque architecture. *Pastorela* (1941), choreographed while on tour, included scenes from a Mexican town; it drew on images of common people and local folk.\(^20\) The tour succeeded on most levels, in both expected and unexpected ways. While in some locations, the “opening went over very big,” in other instances Kirstein reported that

people were “snobs.”21 With a mixed bill of works, American Ballet Caravan brought and built ballets for the tour that communicated the themes, which came to define the long history of dance as diplomacy.

While the success of Rockefeller’s initiatives led Roosevelt to increase the program budget from $3.5 million to $38 million over two years, the president created additional agencies to promote the United States through propaganda after the war began. In 1942, the Office of War Information (OWI) coordinated efforts of agencies and directed “white” propaganda, which the government recognized as a part of its programming. These organizations included Voice of America (VOA), which billed its programming as factual and “true.” Roosevelt’s OSS initiated “black” or covert propaganda that spread “falsehoods” and attempted to undermine the activities of the fascists. Warfare created new offices and forced branches of government to coordinate efforts. The military developed what they called “psychological warfare”; in 1942 General Dwight D. Eisenhower created a Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), which worked directly with the OWI and OSS, along with civilian recruits in foreign nations.22 These mechanisms developed by Roosevelt and Eisenhower became the foundation for future expansion of dance as cultural propaganda.

With the start of the American involvement in World War II, ballet companies stopped touring under the State Department, although cultural propaganda projects continued in Latin America under the auspices of Rockefeller and MoMA

21 “General Report to the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics.”

22 Osgood, Total Cold War, 29-30.
through art and films. Rockefeller compared war to an iceberg. Three-tenths of the iceberg above the water represented the military fight; the other invisible seven-tenths meant that battles needed “psychological phases of total war.”23 In his pamphlet, “New philosophy [of] U.S. Foreign Policy,” Rockefeller promoted relationships among people, understanding, and friendship as keys to guide the wartime efforts.24 Rockefeller and Donovan continued to vie for power over the region. The increasing vehemence of the correspondence regarding the division of power underscored the important role they expected propaganda to continue to play after the war’s conclusion.25

Graham remained on the government’s cultural radar screen during the war.26 The OWI had already thoroughly researched Graham and her works by 1943.27 The OWI concluded that while Graham showed tremendous promise as an American icon, the works in the repertory did not encompass a full range of offerings. Her most accessible dances described the American poet Emily Dickinson. The government feared that other works in the repertory would not be recognized in foreign markets. While the wartime agency documented Graham’s choreography with reports and promotional pictures, it took no action when confronted by an untested modernist form only known to

23 “The Americas in Four Years of War,” NARPF, RG 4, Washington DC, CIAA, Outlines for Meetings, 1941-50, III, 40, box 7, folder 59, 2, RAC.

24 Ibid., 5

25 To Mr. Rockefeller, From William Donovan, Rockefeller Family Archives, RG 3, 2E, cultural interests, MoMA, Office Building, 1942-1947, box 23, folder 241, 1, RAC.


27 “Martha Graham, Photographs of Notable Personalities, compiled 1942-1945.”
elite and knowledgeable American audiences. In addition, the Graham company’s financial stability seemed rocky. Graham did not have a reliable donor who could pull her company out of trouble unlike the financial support offered by Lincoln Kirstein to his companies, or Lucia Chase with her funding of Ballet Theatre. Although in 1944 Graham’s Appalachian Spring made its debut at the Library of Congress, the Graham group had not yet proved itself artistically with a range of works for export, and finances could threaten its future.

In 1946, a year after the war ended, George Kennan wrote the “Long Telegram,” which identified him as the architect of cold-war containment. The document also demonstrated his sensitivity to culture. He drew some of his conclusions about the Soviet threat from reading its authors. He took culture into account and noted the importance of organizations such as women’s groups that spread cultural norms.

Kennan also appreciated both ballet and the possibilities of modern dance. While writing the “Long Telegram,” Kennan saw performances of both the Soviet ballet and Duncan’s “expressive” dance. In Moscow, Kennan attended a performance of the Bolshoi’s Cinderella that had been arranged for foreign ministers, including Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, alongside members of the Soviet government. Kennan described the

28 Ibid.


Soviet ballet as “first rate.” While on a jaunt, he also saw what he recognized as Isadora Duncan’s “expressive” dance; probably trained by Duncan’s sister or her students, he said that when they performed on a bandstand in Novosibirsk, “they were terrible.” Kennan would become a conduit for Graham because he understood psychological warfare and the arts as propaganda. He said, “We must accept propaganda as a major weapon policy, tactical as well as strategic, and begin to conduct it on modern terms.” Kennan understood the power of good art; the development and export of American arts had the potential to be more effective than overt propaganda. The combination of Kennan’s belief in the value of culture and importance of women helped Graham get sent to Yugoslavia where Kennan became ambassador.

In 1946, Graham demonstrated that she recognized the potential for her work to represent the nation. Copland became one of the first composers whose music was played for the Soviet people by Voice of America (VOA) in 1946; *Appalachian Spring* became a popular choice at VOA. In addition, Graham had watched the prewar export of Kirstein’s company. The ever-opportunistic Graham recognized that the government could be interested in exporting dance after the war as well. She wrote to a potential donor, “[The company] no longer belongs to me alone but has assumed the

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32 Ibid., 273.

33 Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 38.

34 Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, 123.

demands of public property. It has entered a field where greater and more meaningful things are expected of it.”

Between 1946 and 1948, the Fulbright Act and the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act funded cultural diplomacy. Graham and Copland, with their celebration of what the government referred to as “Americana,” offered promising material for export.

With Kennan’s “Long Telegram” and the “X Article” that followed, the escalation of the Cold War demanded innovative tactics to manage propaganda funding and output. Kennan’s work included NSC 10/2, “the original charter for American covert operations that fundamentally altered postwar thinking about psychological warfare.” The phrase “overseas information” began to replace “propaganda” in memos and public documents to create the aura of “truth.” Congressional oversight, however, plagued these projects, no matter how effective they seemed. Congress did not allow cultural experts the same latitude as they had during the start of wartime tensions. Yet the monied individuals in charge of cultural propaganda understood the urgency of continuing and expanding this type of psychological warfare. During the Second World War, both the Nazis and the Soviets had demonstrated their expertise; after the war the well-tuned Soviet apparatus launched propaganda against the United States. Congress, however, did not easily approve expenditures, particularly for modern art. Indeed, when agencies

36 Dear Gladys, signed Martha, from Santa Barbara, Calif., August 23, 1946, typewritten, box 1, folder 1945, Correspondence, Erick Hawkins Collection, LOC.

37 Prevots, Dance for Export, 19.

38 Osgood, Total Cold War, 39; “Report for Mr. Jamison by Nelson Rockefeller,” NARPF, RG 4, Washington DC files, general, Jan. 1947-May 1947, box 2, folder 9, 1, RAC.
requested money, elite projects did not appear as line items in budget proposals for Congress, although radio, motion picture, and people-to-people exchanges received direct appropriations.  

Supporters among the elite continued to argue for the importance of funding elite projects. In a letter to congressmen, William Benton, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, noted that the Russians put propaganda expenditures at the top of their appropriations lists; he continued, “One of the manifestations of our adolescence [as a nation] is that we neglect the power of ideas, and the importance of symbols in international relations.”  

Complaining that the United States relied too heavily on military and economic spending, the Benton letter asserted that even military officers understood the need for cultural propaganda because they had been in the field during the war: “The truth is that the Generals [Eisenhower and Nimitz] are quicker to see these issues.” Indeed, at the end of the war, Eisenhower wrote, “Without doubt, psychological warfare has proved its right to a place of dignity in our military arsenal.”

To circumvent Congress, individuals who worked in the private and public sector, State Department and Army, and who oversaw philanthropic institutions, became key participants in the

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39 “OIC Budget for FY 1948 and Analysis of $25 million Increase,” addressed to Francis Jamison, Rockefeller Foundation, from Oliver McKee, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, March 24, 1947, NARPF, Washington DC files, CIAA, RG 4, general, Jan 1947-May 1947, box 2, folder 9, Western Union telegram attached to Rockefeller, 2, RAC.

40 “Excerpts from a Letter Written by Mr. Benton to an Associate,” March 19, 1947, NARPF, Washington DC, CIAA, RG 4, General Jan 1947-May 19477, box 2, folder 9, 1, RAC.

41 Ibid.

formulation of plans to launch elite art as a weapon. Rockefeller noted that cultural diplomacy should pair government support with foundations, industry, and universities. Indeed, institutional comingling had several benefits. Government reports noted the power of “unattributed output,” or exports that were not overtly connected to the United States government.

The complex institutional matrix that enabled exports could lead to indecision and bumbled results. In February 1947, the summer Youth Festival in Prague was announced and Graham became directly involved with early and tenuous experiments with dance as pro-American propaganda. The State Department initially believed that the arts could be used to showcase American cultural power at the festival. Through ANTA, it searched for American artists for export. Again, the choice of ANTA was logical: in March 1947, ANTA described its link to the reconstruction of Germany and State Department efforts to send American cultural products abroad as “a force for democratization.” Organizers immediately identified Ballet Theatre, headed by Lucia Chase, for export to the Youth Festival because the company would already be in Europe.

43 “Organization of the Study and Recommendations” NARPP, RG 4, Washington DC Files, Special Assistant to the President, Cultural Activities, III, 40, box 80, f 616, 2-3, RAC.


46 “Statement of Representative Jacob J. Javits (R- N.Y.),” March 4, 1949, box 3, folder 34, 2, RBTC.
At home, the Dance Committee was formed to select artists. Early members included leading choreographers Doris Humphrey and José Limón, as well as Jerome Robbins, the creator of *Fancy Free* (1944), a crowd-pleasing ballet about soldiers on shore leave during World War II. In addition, the leftist dancers who had merged social protest with a celebration of the nation during the Popular Front joined the effort. The Dance Committee’s letterhead included Sophie Maslow, Pearl Primus, and Jane Dudley of the left-wing New Dance Group. As plans progressed, the Dance Committee became the American Dance Committee, adding new members such as Lincoln Kirstein. Critics John Martin of the *New York Times* and Walter Terry of the *New York Herald Tribune* entered the ranks, as did Martha Graham. They joined together under the banner of the nation.

Showing early Cold War indecision, and responding to congressional suspicion of programming, the State Department reversed its support for the Prague delegation in the late spring of 1947, not wanting to join a festival that they began to suspect was a Soviet-sponsored propaganda event to reinforce communist ideology. With the exception of the New Dance Group, all American Dance Committee representatives, including Graham, withdrew from festival participation. Having had ties to the radical left, some New Dance Group members remained undeterred by the potential ramifications of being connected to projects supported by the Soviet Union. They sent untrained students who rehearsed homemade folk choreography in the bowels of the ship


48 “Walter Terry, Chairman, to Morton Baum,” on the Letterhead of the Continuations Committee of the American Dance Committee of the Youth Festival, December 15, 1947, folder 266, Morton Baum Papers, 1938-1968, JRDD-NYPL.
en route to Prague. In Prague, crowds were reported to include as many as 81,000 people from seventy-one nations. A leftist report published in New York by the “World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship” noted that audiences were “astonished” at the “high standards” of the dance sent by countries other than the United States. The Soviets sent their ballet stars along with “an entire corps de ballet.” The American delegation showed a “sad lack of official support and professional talent.”

The New York Times reported, “It was admitted unofficially by adherents of both sides that Soviet Russia had ‘stolen the show,’” and blamed the State Department for the failure of the American delegation. Although the festivals were denounced within the United States as “Red Fetes,” the poor American showing in Prague elicited government concern.

Despite the Prague Festival failure, funding on the domestic side for exports did not materialize. President Harry Truman did not support these more esoteric projects, particularly those that used modern art as propaganda. According to the newspapers, Truman saw “eye-to-eye” with the “Dondero” Republicans in Congress. Representative George A. Dondero addressed the second session of the 82nd Congress

49 “World Youth Festival” in The Bright Face of Peace (New York: World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, 1947), file folder, “Publications relating to World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship,” Elmer Holms Bobst Library, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, NY; Board Minutes (1947), Board of Directors—Business Papers, Board Minutes (1947), Minutes and Correspondence, box 16, folder 7 (1947), New Dance Group Collection, LOC.

50 “World Youth Festival,” 17, 19.

and declared that Soviet Russia had used “art as a weapon in the powerlust drive of international communism.” Modern art became firmly equated with being “red.” Benton had written a memo to support these cultural efforts, and Truman shot back a letter that was published in The Mirror’s column, “Washington Merry-Go-Round.” He called modern art “merely the vaporings of half-baked lazy people.” The reporter added that Truman did, however, support cultural projects such as radio and “exchange of persons” programs.

A State Department traveling exposition of modern art works became the center of controversy; the exhibit ended prematurely despite good reviews in host nations. With the increasing rancor in the press, some reporters accused modern art of being “communistic.” The State Department sold the art it had purchased for export. Wealthy and well-educated individuals remained undeterred. In a memo to Rockefeller, the Director of MoMA likened the government withdrawal of the art exhibit to Hitler’s régime, which had classified modern art as “degenerate,” and the Soviet leaders who called it “ideologically reprehensible.” The New York Times agreed: if modernist art


54 John Hay Whitney to George C. Marshall, May 9, 1947, NARPF, RG 4, 4L, box 154, folder 1540, RAC.

55 Alfred H. Barr to Nelson A. Rockefeller, May 3, 19477, NARPF, RG 3, 4L, box 145, folder 1540, 2, RAC.
was communist, and not merely unintelligible or ugly, then Picasso should be denounced. Criticizing Congress, the reporter pointed out that Picasso had also been so charged in Moscow and fascist Italy.\textsuperscript{56} Museums that owned modernist paintings and sculptures and were directed by elites continued to provide both intellectual support and works for export.

Given the backlash against modernist art, the State Department's Operation Coordination Board (OCB) recommended ballet as an export of choice. Working with ANTA, in 1950 Ballet Theatre made its debut as American National Ballet Theatre (ANBT) in West Germany and Latin America for a five-month tour.\textsuperscript{57} Like the 1941 American Ballet Caravan tour, the performances targeted the elite with Americana and messages of American cultural power and the mastery of classical European forms with \textit{Rodeo} and an excerpt from \textit{Giselle}. In Germany, the divided nation wrestled with reconstruction and reconciliation with war atrocities.\textsuperscript{58} Reports noted the importance of exporting propaganda to Germany in order to “de-Nazify” the people and its leaders recruited by the American government, particularly in espionage.\textsuperscript{59} USIS also wrote about the “trickle down” theory of cultural diplomacy: if the elites could be persuaded,


\textsuperscript{57} Box 2, folder 1, and box 4, folder 2, for plans and reactions sent to the Department of State by Schnitzer regarding American National Ballet Theatre, RSTC; USIA Report, RG 306, vol. 1, O-25, NARA.

\textsuperscript{58} Belmonte, \textit{Selling the American Way}, 138.

\textsuperscript{59} USIS Report, volume 2, O-110.
the rest would follow.\textsuperscript{60} The company spent its first month playing in German cities for
“civilian” audiences and also had special engagements for American troops stationed
there.\textsuperscript{61} In the theater, Americans and Germans sat next to one another as the
programming unfolded.

Agnes de Mille’s \textit{Rodeo}, the story of a cowgirl in the West with music by
Copland, made its American National Ballet Theatre debut in Germany. It told the story
of a young woman who began the narrative wanting to ride like a man in jodhpurs, but
then she fell in love and donned a pioneer dress to attract the cowboy. Because gender
imbalances inundated Germany after the war, \textit{Rodeo} carried a redemptive message for
men and women. The narrative provided audiences with affirmation that a powerful
woman could be normalized, which became important to propose to the German people
who had lost men to the war.\textsuperscript{62} In addition, to show American prowess on the European
and traditional front, ANBT presented excerpts of Giselle, the classical ballet, and \textit{The
Dying Swan} (1905), a “new ballet response” that Michel Fokine composed for Anna
Pavlova and the Ballets Russes.\textsuperscript{63} In addition, Lucia Chase ran the company and provided

\textsuperscript{60} USIS Report, P-43.

\textsuperscript{61} “European Tours Announced by American Dance Groups,” \textit{Musical America},
cittings service, April 1950, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.

\textsuperscript{62} Frank Biess, \textit{Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in
Moeller, \textit{Protecting Motherhood: Women and Family in the Politics of Postwar Germany}

\textsuperscript{63} Tim Scholl, \textit{From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the
Modernization of Ballet} (New York: Routledge, 1994), 46; “Memorandum: Blevins
Davis to Thomas K. Finletter 6/15/50 re: ANBT”; “Memorandum: Geneva to Department
of State, 10/2/50 re: ANBT”; “Letter, Chapin to Secretary of State, 11/04/50”; “Letter,
Tyler to Department of State, 04/10/50,” accessed October 8, 2009,
the government publicity apparatus with the example of a woman, as Graham would become, who could take charge of a significant touring operation while also maintaining a feminine demeanor. The tour addressed two aspects of cultural diplomacy that would become important to future projects: what USIS called Americana, and proof to the international elites that American artists could compete globally in the cultural arena.

As the Cold War progressed, the Graham Company’s potential as a cultural export seemed dim. Graham’s 1950 European tour, sponsored by Bethsabée de Rothschild, placed her work before the international financial, artistic, and political intelligentsia. In Paris, the first stop, *Le Monde* offered disparaging comments on the ballets and their “strange interpretations,” “extravagant gestures,” and dancers who “move and grimace without apparent reason.” The review closed by noting that the works also made the reviewer want to laugh because of their absurdity.⁶⁴ *Le Parisien Libéré* presented a more balanced review noting, for instance, that Mrs. Roosevelt liked the dance, yet it ultimately described the performance as “bizarre.”⁶⁵ American reports presented a different picture. The Dayton, Ohio, *News Week* reported that both Eleanor Roosevelt and the United States Ambassador were in the audience, and American expatriate youths screamed “bravo” from the balcony and gallery.⁶⁶ Nevertheless,

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⁶⁴ “Martha Graham and Her Company,” *Le Monde*, June 29, 1950, in translation, scrapbook 326, MGC-LOC.

⁶⁵ “From Martha Graham’s Ballets to Those of the Opera,” *Le Parisien Libéré*, June 30, 1950, in translation, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.

⁶⁶ “The Dance,” *Dayton Ohio News Week*, July 10, 1950, clippings service, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.
unspecified ANTA reports on “Martha Graham’s failures” traveled back to the State Department. After a knee injury in Paris, Graham cancelled the London season. Although Graham returned devastated and retreated from the public with Rothschild, papers in the United States remained supportive and noted that the American modern work was “too advanced” for the French.

Despite the disaster of the 1950 tour, the year also held some promise. An article Graham saved about her own European performances featured the five-month Ballet Theatre government tour. Pencil markings underlined Ballet Theatre’s one-month stay in Germany followed by the Edinburgh Festival and London. In the same year, Truman presented Graham as one of the “Six Outstanding American Women” at the Women’s National Press Club; he noted her contribution as a national female leader who created a “new language” of dance. He did not, however, recognize her work as a part of the modernist movement. With the ANBT export and the subsequent recognition of her own work by the president, Graham mused, “I only wanted to go [abroad] if there could

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67 Robert Schnitzer to Robert Breen and Blevins Davis, November 22, 1950, box 2, folder 1, RSTC.

68 “Paris Dazed by Graham; Dance Too Advanced,” Variety, clippings service, July 12, 1950, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.

69 “European Tours Announced by American Dance Groups,” Musical America, clippings service, April 15, 1950, scrapbook box 326, MGC-LOC.

be some good accrue from it as far as relations are concerned.”\(^{71}\) While European audiences did not seem ready for Graham’s art, and the 1950 tour was a public relations as well as a personal disaster for Graham, for the government she still could carry weight and promise as a female leader who had created an innovative American art.

When General Dwight D. Eisenhower ran for president in 1952, based on his wartime experience and the creation of the PWB during the war, he chastised the previous administration for not understanding the power of propaganda when fighting the communists. Using military rhetoric, he said, “While we have been dozing at the gate, the psychological strategists of communism have crept into our citadel.”\(^{72}\) Once elected, he used the power of propaganda and the use of culture as a weapon. His administration refined and expanded on the established, if makeshift, organizational structures that Roosevelt had put into place. In comparison, Eisenhower’s functioned like a finely calibrated machine. He immediately reviewed overseas information activities and again relied on Nelson Rockefeller who had successfully exported dance under Roosevelt.\(^{73}\) Rockefeller and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles became two champions of the creation of USIS, which became an independent organization.\(^{74}\) Rockefeller advocated for a stand-alone agency to enact cultural projects with less oversight, and Dulles wanted to free the State Department of potential attacks of Donderoism. Senator Joseph

\(^{71}\) Martha Graham to Eric Hawkins, handwritten and undated, box 3 of 3, folder 1939-1940; Martha Graham to Eric Hawkins, typewritten, August 1946, EHC-LOC.


\(^{73}\) Ibid., 81.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 82.
McCarthy’s hearings included accusations against Voice of America and the USIA, or USIS in the international arena.\(^7^5\) Yet Dulles continued to fund cultural projects through the State Department, and seemingly unattached agencies worked in the field together, if not always in harmony. While the launch into cultural diplomacy certainly can be understood as a part of Eisenhower’s overall strategy, Dulles’s participation seems less clear-cut. Yet with his anti-containment beliefs, cultural diplomacy fit the bill. However soft the power, cultural diplomacy worked as active propaganda to drive back the Soviets from areas of strategic concern.

Eisenhower and Dulles created a strategic infrastructure to coordinate propaganda activities. The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) synchronized “departmental execution of national security policies” and created a Working Group for Cultural Activities, which became the Cultural Presentations Committee (CPC).\(^7^6\) The OCB meeting minutes describing the organization of the CPC stated that because “projects in the cultural and artistic fields affect the country and area responsibility of other working groups,” the OCB would have oversight over CPC activities.\(^7^7\) “The Department [of State] and the Operations Coordination Board Cultural Presentation Committee must approve all projects,” reiterated a memo.\(^7^8\) A designee of the State

\(^7^5\) Ibid.

\(^7^6\) Hixson, \textit{Parting the Curtain}, 25.

\(^7^7\) “Terms of Reference for Working Group on Cultural Activities,” October 8, 1954, DDRS; “Fifth Quarterly Report, 1 July 1955 – 30 Sept 1955,” NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 1, RAC.

\(^7^8\) “Summary of progress report on activities of the Operations Coordinating Board Cultural Presentation Committee covering period 1/1-
Department chaired the CPC, taking its charge from the OCB. In addition, the CPC included representatives from USIS, Department of Defense, CIA, and National Security Council. It reported that USIS would become “responsible for exploiting and publicizing” cultural events “in order to increase the psychological impact on the host country.”

In 1954, when Eisenhower created the Emergency Fund to support international cultural diplomacy, dance remained on the export roster. He appointed Rockefeller Special Assistant to the President, and Rockefeller assumed responsibility for new projects in “increased understanding and cooperation.” As such, Rockefeller sat on the OCB. Lincoln Kirstein wrote Rockefeller, “After all, it was you who started this whole scheme of waging peace by the exportation of art as far back as 1941; I know what foresight, what courage it took.” In addition, the success of American Ballet Caravan and American National Ballet Theatre had not been forgotten. Indeed, Eisenhower personally wrote to Lucia Chase that the company could be known as American Ballet

6/30/55,” July 13, 1955; “Memorandum for Members of the OCB Cultural Presentations Committee,” September 21, 1955, all DDRS.

79 “Progress Report on Activities of the OCB Trade Fair Committee,” February 28, 1956, DDRS.

80 Belmonte, Selling the American Way, 65.


82 Lincoln Kirsten to Nelson A. Rockefeller, June 17, 1955, NARPF, Washington DC, Special Assistant to the President, III 4 O, box 80, folder 615, RAC.
Theatre in both the domestic and international markets. The individuals responsible for the pre-war cultural allocations remained at the helm after the war.

Support for dance as an export increased 1954, and the OCB’s Working Group for Cultural Activities found collaborative projects that included government and non-governmental players the most compelling. As a member of the OCB, Rockefeller participated in the exploration of new projects. Private sector individuals, including Virginia Inness-Brown who would chair the Dance Panel, lobbied individuals for financial support. Early reports featured memos about co-sponsorship success with Lincoln Kirstein’s New York City Ballet’s (NYCB) performances in the “Salute to France,” festival in June, 1954.83 Again, the diffusion of government involvement both projects shielded these exports from congressional oversight. In addition, opaque government involvement suggested to international consumers that artists were “free” in the United States unlike the Soviet Union, where artists were directed by a totalitarian state. In a play on the twists of cultural convergences, the fact that the NYCB’s Artistic Director and choreographer George Balanchine was a Russian émigré did not hurt the propaganda goals. His choreographic innovations could only be realized in a free country. NYCB demonstrated the success of exports fueled by private funding and company revenue augmented by government funding, particularly when the group presented dance during a festival that brought together a large variety of cultural projects from other nations. The United States could demonstrate both its technical prowess and innovative approach to the culture.

83 “Fourth Quarterly Report, 1 April 1955 – 20 June 1955,” NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 3, RAC.
The Eisenhower administration’s Emergency Fund’s ANTA-managed Dance Panel of private sector experts was charged with considering future exports. The OCB, however, did not wait for the creation of the Dance Panel. After the success of NYCB during the festival, later in 1954 the OCB sent out the José Limón Dance Company as a stand-alone export. Modern ballet had triumphed, and modern dance promised to display an American genre built on the idea of an individual choreographer who had created his own technique, which continually evolved. While cultural activities typically required six months of planning, the government put Limón in the field quickly. A report noted “very cordial” reactions to Limón and his work in Latin America and “equally enthusiastic” embassy comments. The quarterly review that followed described the “roaring success” of the performances, and USIS noted that the company received favorable press, even in leftist newspapers. Limón’s works underscored the unique character of American modern dance while also demonstrating his attachment to the cultural sophistication and the Western canon with works such as The Moor’s Pavane (1949), inspired by the story of Shakespeare's Othello. As a Mexican-born American who professed allegiance to the United States, Limón became an effective cultural ambassador in Latin America. Although he did not present USIS “Americana,” Limón adeptly demonstrated the power of modernism in the United States, its attachment to the ideals of Western civilization, and the cultural convergences that stemmed from a shared heritage.

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84 “Memorandum for the Operations Coordination Board,” March 8, 1955, NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 6, RAC.
85 Ibid., 6.
86 Prevots, Dance for Export, 24.
In 1954, the Graham company again traveled overseas, and she wrote that she was aware of State Department interest. This time, the United States embassy in London sent dispatches back to the State Department that described Graham’s choreography as “an instrument of all human emotions” and noted some critical success during the season. USIS published a review of its operations and the project goals, and Graham met many of the objectives. USIS molded publicity for cultural presentations for “specific target” groups. The agency identified different techniques “for adaption to the elite audience.” Graham’s presentations targeted the elite with abstract works such as *Diversion of Angels* and choreography based on myths, which included *Night Journey* and *Cave of the Heart*. Embassy memos noted that Graham’s choreography required “a thoughtful approach and repeated viewing” and was not for “casual spectators.” Reports back to the State Department quoted reviewers who reflected on the “intellectual and literary elements and the hidden symbolism” of her works, adding, “It is almost an almost superhuman and spasmodic effort of a great intellect.”

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87 Martha Graham to Frances Wickes, [nd], FWC-LOC-MD.

88 USIA to Department of State, despatch no. 6, unsigned, received October 1, 2008, reference #NWCT2R-CB-08-10292 from Connie Beach, Archives II Section, Textual Reference Division, NARA, courtesy of Victoria Thoms.


91 “To the State Department, From USIA.”
members of the State Department did not understand Graham or her work, others did and made specific requests for her even before the start of the official export program.  

Relying on USIS and embassy reports, the State Department recognized Graham’s position as a leader in American modern dance and thus a viable “informational” tool abroad. A report by a dancer on the 1954 tour stated that USIS and the diplomats were “dedicated to their work, intelligent for their work, people who realize the importance of their work” as they promoted and hosted Graham’s dance. Graham provided Americana, and her dance proved that the United States had both adopted and then reconfigured an approach to stories from antiquity, all of which would have been easily recognizable to a highly educated audience in London. However, with Graham’s assertion of a shared European heritage, American modernism as the international standard came under attack. Reviewers reported, “The core of Martha Graham’s art is to be found in the school of Mary Wigman.” The author concluded that Graham’s choreography “is both admirable and tragic because it rests on misconception and misunderstanding.” From 1954 onward, advance publicity for Graham included disclaimers about the direct influence of Wigman and the prewar German dance on Graham. Despite the fact that the Rothschild Foundation sponsored Graham, she received USIS support, and her relationship with the government system began.

92 “Need for American Professional Performers to Supplement USIS Program,” Foreign Service Despatch 511.91, May 15, 1952, RG 59, box 26, NARA.

93 Helen McGehee, “Our Recent Dance Tour,” [nd], 3, box 10, folder 10, Helen McGehee and Umaña Collection of Dance Materials, LOC.

94 USIS Summary of reviews, April 3, 1954, box 218, MGC-LOC.
In 1954, a USIS study that evaluated its own effectiveness in the field outlined the reasons that targeting educated audiences had become increasingly important. The report claimed that success could be measured. With the organization under attack by Senator McCarthy, the problem of evaluating effectiveness plagued administrators. With elitist projects, reports and embassy chatter could justify exports of the modernist arts. Project managers quickly realized that the range or volume of output did not necessarily create effective propaganda. While a myriad of projects could be monitored – the number of leaflets charted, the number of visitors counted at exhibitions, and the hours of broadcasting or performances – “propaganda administrators [lacked] scientifically valid criteria for determining effectiveness.” After a leaflet-dropping project in Korea during the war, prisoners were interrogated about effectiveness. Research showed success. However interrogators discovered that responses were skewed because their subjects were all POWs. In 1951, Columbia University trained “native interviewers” in Jordan to conduct 325 interviews using 50 questions in two to three hour-long sessions. As might be expected, those who studied these reports noted that the outcomes “overrepresented” a particular population, notably the more “sophisticated.” The “Bourgeoisie” and the “Elite” represented 81% of those sampled. This study revealed that the outcome of elitist exports could be evaluated; projects that targeted the

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96 Ibid., 682.

97 Ibid., 717.
“politicians and the decadent part of mankind” became important.\textsuperscript{98} Dance followed logically as a potential psychwar “weapon.” Through reviews and responses, some effectiveness could be measured because Graham targeted the “bourgeoisie” and “elite” audiences.

Although USIS could demonstrate project effectiveness with artistic projects for a select group, congressional oversight committees did not embrace culture for export, preferring trade fairs and other events that furthered economic aims. The Department of Commerce became an “action agent” for economic projects, with the State Department an “action agent” for culture.\textsuperscript{99} While the Department of Commerce boasted over thirty-four people working in its division, including an allocation of part-time employees, the Department of State had “two and a half people” working on cultural exports in 1954.\textsuperscript{100} By necessity, its “staff unit” worked with ANTA “and other organizations” on cultural exports because the group had little manpower. The Inter-Agency Committee then financially reviewed the recommended projects and then determined the likelihood of “effectiveness.”\textsuperscript{101} Because the agency felt that projects should be bundled, an opera star and “The All Girl’s Swimming Team” followed American Ballet Theatre.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 722.

\textsuperscript{99} Report USIA, “Planning Coordination Group, 21 Oct. 1955,” NARPF, Special Assistant to the President, RG 4, PCG History, III 40, box 61, folder 515, RAC.

\textsuperscript{100} “Memorandum for the Operations Coordination Board.”

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} “Fourth Quarterly Report, 1 April 1955 – 20 June 1955,” NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 8, RAC.
Particular regions identified as vital to national interests did not automatically receive approval. In 1954, the Near and Far Eastern booking office reported back on poor theater conditions and pointed out a myriad of factors that they would not be able to predict. In order to assess the region, the State Department dispatched ANTA, defined as a “contract agency,” to explore theater spaces, reception for artists, and potential local sponsorship. The report concluded that “a number of major projects” would be sent out within the year to test the region.103 With the decision made before ANTA’s panel met, the government approved Martha Graham’s tour. *Porgy and Bess* garnered the most funding of any cultural project, yet Graham received twice the amount offered to American Ballet Theatre and three times the amount that had funded Limón. Within months, the amount allocated to the Graham tour had increased by over fifty percent.104 *Porgy and Bess* garnered just over $400,000 from the government, and by the time Graham returned to the United States with added tour legs and increased funding, the government had given her over $300,000. Decision makers viewed Graham as a significant cultural ambassador who could manage the rigors of untested territories of national interest.

Despite early moves into the cultural project, the OCB and CPC understood that their board members were not equipped to choose artists or handle bookings. Cooperating with the State Department, ANTA became more than a “contract

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103 “Third Quarterly Report, 1 Jan 1955- 31 March 1955,” NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 3, RAC.

104 “Fifth Quarterly Report, 1 July 1955 – 30 Sept 1955,” NARPF, RG 4, Special Assistant to the President, cultural activities, box 80, folder 618, 8, RAC.
agency”; it worked with the State Department to coordinate private-sector experts on advisory panels in music, dance, and theater. A 1950 memo describing ANTA noted that it “has demonstrated to the Government how the theatre can serve the Nation in peacetime on international levels.” In characteristically cryptic form, the memo continued, “Too long to enumerate here are [ANTA’s] daily services to the State Department and other government agencies.” In early meeting minutes of the Dance Panel, between 1954 and 1956, official State Department officials do not appear.

The Dance Panel membership changed often, even from month to month, yet particular members from the private sector remained consistent. Lincoln Kirstein maintained his position of prominence, which he had garnered as an innovator in 1941 under Rockefeller and Roosevelt with American Ballet Caravan, and his success as the leader of NYCB. Lucia Chase also had early experience as a company director who understood foreign markets and dance as propaganda. Critic Walter Terry and educator Martha Hill, founder of the Juilliard Dance Department, remained constant. ANTA’s Robert Schnitzer and the International Exchange Panel’s Mrs. H. Alwin Inness-Brown, Vice-Chairman, became responsible for communications to and from what they called “Washington.” The necessity of following dictates from Washington infused Dance

105 Prevots, Dance for Export, 37.

105 “A Brief on the Work of the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA),” March 1950, box 1, folder 36, 4, RBTC.

106 Ibid.

107 “Special State Department-Joint Panel Meeting,” January 17, 1963, DP/IEP, UAK.

108 DP/IEP, April 7, 1955, 1, UAK.
Panel minutes. Inness-Brown opened the initial Dance Panel meeting in 1954 stating that the Panel would be consulted “whenever possible,” but that “in cases where the State Department, for its own reasons,” decided on a particular export, the membership would have to defer. ¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Limón had already been hired by the State Department and his company was performing abroad. Graham had already been approved, although the Dance Panel did not know that even the locations of Graham’s tour had largely been decided. State Department working groups pre-approved touring and funding. ¹¹⁰

The selection of the tour locations demonstrates Graham’s political savvy. A dancer who took part in this tour wrote in his unpublished biography of Graham that for her, “[e]verything is totally calculated.” ¹¹¹ Although it was reported that in December 1954 Graham “said she would like to go to the Orient,” and indeed the OCB had already funded her stops there, by the following month she balked and demanded a strictly European tour in front of the Dance Panel. After South America, which Limón had already visited following OCB wishes, the greatest areas of concern to the Dance Panel were “the Near East and the Far East.” ¹¹² Some members of the Panel did not understand that mandates may have come from high levels of government, and yet they encouraged Graham to take the offer to tour Asia. She insisted on a better financial package, and the

¹⁰⁹ DP/IEP, October 21, 1954, 1-2, UAK.
¹¹⁰ DP/IEP, November 15, 1956, UAK.
¹¹¹ Bertram Ross, “Martha (Draft)” [nd], box 10, folder 10, BRC.
¹¹² DP/IEP, October 21, 1954, 2, UAK.
State Department’s CPC sweetened the deal. Starting in Tokyo, she travelled to the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, India, Ceylon, and Iran. Graham continued to Israel with funding from wealthy and influential private citizens who worked alongside foundations. Financial negotiations took place even in the field; at times, the company manager sent letters and telegrams back to the United States threatening that the tour would disband without more money. In addition, Graham used the tours as leverage for future private bookings. A year after her heralded performances in Iran, she wrote a series of warm notes thanking oil company executives for their sponsorship: “I shall never forget the welcome you gave us and the kindness and hospitality you showed us during our stay.” In the end, Graham got “the government’s money worth” for her own company: she benefitted from introductions to potential sponsors, added performances, income for the dancers, international and domestic publicity, and future work abroad.

Oversight of exports radiated from the highest levels of the executive branch because soft power, including rhetoric and diplomatic signals, became vital in a war that could not depend on traditional coercion. Dulles’s nuclear grandstanding demanded rhetorical gestures that counteracted the United States’ image as an imperial military power. In the same USIS circular that analyzed Graham’s tour, Dulles proclaimed in a typical manner, “As against the possibility of full-scale attack by the Soviet Union itself, there is only one effective defense, for us and for others. That is the

113 “Correspondence – Tour Operations,” box 10, folder 10, RBTC.

114 Martha Graham to Mansur Froozan, February 4, 1957, uncatalogued box, folder Abadan, JRDD-NYPL.
capacity to counter-attack.” Eisenhower, on the other hand, took the high road; USIS presented the President “as calm, sober, reflective, devoid of snarling.”

Dance Panel minutes reveal the direct connection between the White House and programming. After meeting with Eisenhower, Inness-Brown reported back to the Dance Panel that the president had “taken a personal interest in the Program and is proud and pleased with it.” In his State of the Union speech in January 1955, Eisenhower argued, “In the advancement of the various activities which will make our civilization endure and flourish, the Federal Government should do more to give official recognition to the importance of the arts and other cultural activities.” His “total cold war” promoted American interests under the lofty rubrics of “American solutions” or the projection of the nation through American themes and ideas of “universalism” and “civilization.” Eisenhower spoke about the “universal desires” of men.

115 “USIS Report, Djkarta/Medan/Surabaya,” December 9, 1955, box 11, folder 4, BRC.

116 “Circular USIA – Confidential,” February 10, 1955, RG 59, CDF, box 2070, folder 1-75, NARA.

117 “President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 5 April 1955, Washington appointments with D. Anderson (off the record); J. M. Dodge; R. Dowling, H. A. Inness-Brown, T. C. Streibert, and R. McIlvaine; J. E. Jacobs; R. Keyes. Hosts luncheon for members of John Marshall Bicentennial Commission. To Burning Tree Country Club for golf with E. N. Eisenhower and J. Westland. Special thanks to Valoise Armstrong, Archivist, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS. No meeting minutes have been located,

118 DP/IEP, April 7, 1955, 1, UAK.

119 “Statement by NAR on H.R. 5756, 6 July 1955,” NARPF, III 4LL, box 266, folder 2671, RAC.

120 Osgood, Total Cold War, 84.
promotion of “civilization” took hold as an appeal to the elites to maintain order in a new global order. With the threat of nuclear annihilation, “war should be fought for civilization.”

The works Graham brought on tour offered a visual representation of these tenets.

The character traits of the company leaders affected export choices. The national origins of the dancers chosen by the Dance Panel reflected the promotional agendas of the Department of State and USIS; Martha Graham’s attachment to the Mayflower and Miles Standish was only one example. Dance Panel members often worried about the national origins of dancers if their artistry could be traced back to the Soviet Union, and at other times the ancestry of an artist could be exploited for gain. Regarding the ballerina Mia Slavenska, the Panel wondered, “Should we send a Yugoslav back to Yugoslavia?”

The English choreographer Anthony Tudor became problematic because he had not established himself as American; he remained British in the eyes of those who wanted to export Americans. Cultural convergences, like those that connected Limón to Latin America, drove export choices. One panel member suggested that since Robert Joffrey was half Afghani, his group would do well on an “Oriental tour, with an appearance in Afghanistan.”

While Graham’s father’s connection to Ireland

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121 Ibid., 61.
122 Ibid., 18, 27.
123 DP/IEP, April 7, 1955, UAK.
124 DP/IEP, May 5, 1955, UAK.
125 DP/IEP, March 21, 1957, UAK.
did not appear in promotional materials, Isamu Noguchi was advertised as specifically Japanese and American.\textsuperscript{126}

Depending on the particular location, publicity accented different facets of Graham’s heritage and performance career to tailor her for particular markets and frame the United States as unique and a nation that could join with others. USIS noted that women-to-women interactions provided particularly congenial opportunities to meet with female leaders and influential wives.\textsuperscript{127} Along with performing on stage, Graham made personal appearances, did lecture demonstrations and radio interviews, and socialized with key members of the “target group,” or elite wives at women’s luncheons. In addition, Graham addressed the changing position of women in society, a particularly important topic abroad. According to USIS research, the question of female leadership carried “world wide appeal.”\textsuperscript{128}

Graham translated the arts of Western civilization into the American dance language and used female characters to transmit these ideas. Graham could express passion and emotion while concurrently displacing traditional European forms, such as ballet, with a culturally sophisticated dance. Unlike those of the ballet, her characters were not fantastical or naïve. She demonstrated the power of central characters with cultural weight as a part of a narrative of civilization, translated from European to American artistic languages of dance, music, and set designs. Graham’s female heroines demonstrated the force of human passions advertised by both Graham and USIS as

\textsuperscript{126} Publicity poster, scrapbooks, box 336, MGC-LOC.


\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
universal. USIS questioned how the use of “emotion in output” would lead to either a loss or a gain in credibility for the United States. Graham could corral “humanity” into art using a method that was distinct to women and their physicality. Graham’s works, which showed the heights of human drama in the stories of Medea and Jocasta, allowed the American modern dance to demonstrate the nation’s ability to describe “timeless” emotions through the new cultured form which displaced Europe’s staid body with the highly trained yet riveting pelvis of the modern woman. Graham could fluidly describe emotion as she corralled it under the rubric of “civilization.” Here, the work of Graham as a female cultural broker in foreign policy became far from “invisible or inconsequential.” 129 USIS publicity for Graham in the field matched overall agency objectives: “Events should be planned and ‘planted’ to implement propaganda themes.” 130

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On October 27, 1955, Martha Graham and her company attended a “welcome party” in Japan for the start of the State Department tour of Asia and the Far East that would conclude on February 12, 1956, in Teheran, Iran. 131 As per USIS


131 Scrapbooks, box 331, MGC-LOC; The names of countries are used based on 1955 geography as listed in “Project Title: Martha Graham Dance Troupe; Description: (Completed),” National Security Council Staff Papers, Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) Central File Series, Cultural Presentations Staff: Papers, 1948-1961, President's Fund Program [FY1955], box 14, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Abilene, KS; Prevots, Dance for Export, 8.
recommendations that propaganda should not be associated with the State Department, but rather that groups should appear to be sponsored by host country institutions, the Japanese celebration took place under the auspices of the Japan Art Dance Association (Nihon Geijutsu Buyo Kyokai). Three hundred people attended and watched Japanese dance as a part of a cultural exchange program. Four days before Graham’s opening night in Japan, the company presented a lecture-demonstration “to show fundamental technique of modern dance for the Japanese dancers.”\textsuperscript{132} The newspaper Ongaku Shim bun reported on the enthusiasm of young dancers. Graham’s understanding of Japan’s forms could be seen in her technique.\textsuperscript{133} With Graham as the medium of exchange, the United States could show interest in other cultural traditions while also demonstrating how American artists could reinterpret these forms to create a new art. Eisenhower stated that he wanted his administration to achieve “more bang for the buck,” and the Dance Panel deployments were constructed “in order for the government to get its money’s worth.”\textsuperscript{134} USIS asserted, “Entertainment which does not also carry a political message should be reduced to a minimum.”\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{132} “Martha Graham to Appear,” Ongaku Shim bun, February 10, 1955, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{133} DP/IEP, May 5, 1955, 2, UAK.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{135} “A Study of USIA Operating Assumptions,” UM-5.
Because Graham’s work demonstrated her knowledge of Asian forms, particularly works taken on tour that had Noguchi sets that included all dances except *Diversion of Angels*, she became a particularly well-suited choice for export to the region. Japan and Germany had been the first targets of postwar psychological warfare operations; Asia became the focal point of Cold War strains. Proclaiming that China had triumphed over “United States imperialism,” in 1949 Mao Zedong established the People’s Republic of China; the Korean War ended in 1953 as a stalemate. Yet other countries also became areas of concern. In 1954, the OCB approved Graham’s funding and set forth a schedule of countries for her tour. At that point, Graham’s tour would start in Japan and move to Korea, Formosa, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Ceylon, Burma, India, Pakistan, Egypt, and Lebanon. She would continue on to other areas where the government feared Soviet influence would take hold: Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia. By 1954, strategic concerns had narrowed. Eisenhower articulated his Domino Theory: if Indochina fell to the Vietminh, then Malaya, Burma, India, and Iran could topple. Graham’s 1955 tour mirrored these locations. Between 1954 and 1956, the largest USIS operations took place in India, and

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137 Memorandum for the Operations Coordination Board,” 1.

work in Pakistan increased by 80%.\(^{139}\) She returned to these locations twice during the tour. Although Graham wanted to go to Egypt, the newly formed Dance Panel would not let her perform there. Strains regarding the funding of the Aswan Dam and other skirmishes with the Soviets likely heightened Dulles’s reaction to the communists. The trip to Korea was cancelled at the last minute. Graham returned to all the other “hot spot” countries initially listed by the OCB - Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Egypt - between 1955 and 1979. Although she could not travel to Lebanon with her company, in 1979 the State Department brokered a deal for its dance leaders to cross borders to learn from Graham. In 1955, the Graham company’s itinerary followed foreign policy agendas that specifically targeted the Near, Far, and Middle East.

Graham’s company fulfilled State Department wishes to counter unflattering stereotypes disseminated by the Soviets. According to a foreign-service digest, the Indonesian press reported,

> We have had too little opportunity to convince ourselves that besides its cheap films, the domineering attitude of Americans as regards political, military and commercial matters and the like, America has also another aspect. In day-to-day activities we are fed up with the waves of ‘Americanism’ so that the coming here of Martha Graham is a relief, since her creations have convinced us that America . . . too is in the possession of much that should deserve our attention.\(^{140}\)

\(^{139}\) Osgood, Total Cold War, 136.

\(^{140}\) “Foreign Service Digest.”
According to a “Progress Report on the Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentation Committee,” Graham performances swayed audiences towards the United States, although USIS did not define the specific political ramifications.\(^{141}\)

Graham brought the image of cultural prestige to the American political project, which was particularly important in the early Cold War as United States diplomats attempted to forge revised postwar relationships. The 1954 United States government study “Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy” reported that cultural events enabled meetings among leaders to promote United States political interests.\(^{142}\) Responding to an OCB “Outline Plan of Operations for United States Ideological Program,” American embassies in Asia supported this plan.\(^{143}\) In Iran, as some theaters had as few as 500 seats, leaders of industry, government, industry and culture could both be seated strategically and mingle with one another at the end of the performance.\(^{144}\) Indeed, a foreign service dispatch referred to American ballet and classical music concerts as “the cocktail circuit” of diplomacy.\(^{145}\) American analysts

\(^{141}\) “Progress Report on the Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentation Committee,” October 4, 1956, DDRS.

\(^{142}\) “Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy, Panel Report, Secret, 21,” RG 59, CDF, box 2071, folder 1-235, NARA.

\(^{143}\) “Comments on Outline Plan of Operations for United States Ideological Program” RG 59, CDF, box 2073, folder 7-155, NARA.

\(^{144}\) “Report on Teheran,” January 29, 1956, uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, JRDD-NYPL.

\(^{145}\) “To: State Department, From Amcongen, Damascus,” RG 59, CDF, box 1047, NARA.
concluded that cultural exports had “forced a reconsideration” by host countries “in the field of political policy,” and they cited Graham’s reviews as evidence.146

In 1955, USIS lists of sponsors and guests invited to Graham performances included leaders in government, industry, education, and the cultural intelligentsia. Yet it did not forget the United States military. Although the performance in Korea never took place, the officer in charge of the Army stationed there requested that personnel be included.147 American diplomats as well as military officials were expected to mingle. In India, the Finance Minister was head of the welcoming committee, which included the Chief Justice. Graham and her company attended teas and performances of local dance groups. Wives of business leaders sponsored post-performance suppers.148 The Graham company manager reported that at some events, “nothing was accomplished except socializing,” and remarked, “The Ambassador announced that as far as he is concerned if the theatre burned down and Martha never performed, a tremendous thing had been accomplished.”149 The areas in Asia targeted by the State Department in 1955

146 “Progress Report on Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentations Committee,” July 13, 1956, 5, DDRS.

147 Beverly Gaillard to Robert Schnitzer, July 1, 1955, Martha Graham Uncatalogued Box, folder Kuala Lumpur 1955, JRDD-NYPL.

148 Scrapbooks, box 334 and 338, MGC-LOC.

149 Leroy Leatherman to Frances G. Wickes,” [nd], box 2, FWC-LOC-MD.
were wrestling with postwar decolonization, and the Graham tours specifically addressed the elites who were making decisions about the structure of the state.\footnote{“A Study of USIA Operating Assumptions,” December 1954, “Records of the United States Information Agency (USIA), Office of Research, Special Reports, 1953-63,” RG 306, box 7, NARA.}

The first Graham tour directly confronted the Soviet Union and its world-renowned classical ballet during its first stop, Japan. Because the Japanese public had never seen Graham’s modern dance, the Soviets began with the upper hand when newspapers announced, “The Russian Ballerina Ulanova” would perform on the same nights as Graham.\footnote{“U.S. and Soviet Competition in Dancing,” \textit{Jiji Shimpo}, September 17, 1955, translated, scrapbook 336, MGC-LOC.} The population had been exposed to the brilliance of Galina Ulanova through films, and audiences would be eager to see the star perform live. The Japanese announced that they would “witness to a literal war of dance between the United States and the Soviet Union.”\footnote{“Martha Graham to Visit Japan,” \textit{Sankei Evening}, September 5, 1955, translation, scrapbooks 333, MGC-LOC.} Advance USIS publicity had established Graham as the “Picasso” of dance. She brought the modern. Newspapers reported that Graham was the “New Classic.”\footnote{“To ‘New Classic’: Miss Graham Interviewed,” \textit{Asahi Shimbun, Evening Edition}, October 18, 1955, translation, scrapbook 336, MGC-LOC.} Advance press also helped Graham gain sure footing regarding performance details. She would arrive “with up to 28 dancers with a variety of works never before seen.” The details of the Ulanova season had not been announced, including the size of the troupe that would accompany her or the repertory. All in all, the
press reported it would be “a dance competition” between “living national treasures.” Upon arrival, Graham declared, “My dance tries to supplement the classic dance with the requirements of the modern age so that it will develop into a new classic.” The government apparatus worked with Graham to show that innovation lay with the United States.

By the end of the Graham performances, newspapers announced that the Graham troupe had won. Graham established the validity of a dance system freed from the “yokes” of tradition, which allowed her to express humanity through her narratives, rather than through old-fashioned, if technically demanding, tales of swans or princesses. Following American Cold War rhetoric, Japanese newspapers wrote that Graham showed “the movement of the heart,” which “gives shape to the heart as it feels.” Even the social aspects of the tour became an American success. Government officials wrote back to the Department of State that at one reception, “even the Russians turned out.”

Appalachian Spring closed the season in Japan, and Graham received bouquets, gifts from traditional Japanese dancers, and “a storm of multicolored serpentines and confetti

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154 “U.S. and Soviet Competition in Dancing.”


157 “Pure Art of Dancing Heart,” *Sankei Jiji*, November 2, 1955, translation, scrapbook 336, MGC-LOC.

158 Martha Graham to Frances G. Wickes, [nd], FWC-LOC-MD.
broke out and raged throughout the theatre.” One critic remarked that “the patriotic placing of American national interest at the end with *Appalachian Spring* served “to underscore the diplomatic nature of this cultural mission.”

The Graham company’s unidentifiable attachment to state-based activities in 1955 publicity presented a contrast to the Soviet Union’s reputation for sponsoring its artists. In most nations, USIS advertised Graham as independent of the state. Indeed, she became an ambassador for business and foundation exchanges. In Graham’s tour programs, American corporate sponsors met cultural sponsorship by host-nation organizations and government side-by-side. One front inside cover program stated, “Martha Graham is a star of the American Modern Dance and Chevrolet is the Star of General Motors.” Advertisements for other products, which faced opposite the descriptions of the Graham choreographic works in programs, boasted the modern efficiency of American products such as General Electric refrigerators and high-end airline carriers. The State Department expected private support in Korea, Israel, and Iran from the Korean-American, Israel-American, or Iran-American foundations.

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159 “Brilliant Finale: Martha Graham Troupe Most Successful.”

160 [untitled clipping], *Manila Times*, November 19, 1955, Scrapbooks, MGC-LOC.

161 “Martha Graham and Dance Company,” box 3, folder 7 (Iran), Helen McGehee and Umaña Collection of Dance Materials, Music Division, LOC.

162 “Report – Teheran (continued),” uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, JRDD-NYPL.
Politics met business. In Abadan, Iran, Graham “performed under the sponsorship” of the Iranian Oil Refining Company.\textsuperscript{163}

Graham’s tour repertory included \textit{Appalachian Spring}, which brought American archetypes, and the myth-based works, \textit{Cave of the Heart} and \textit{Night Journey}, which reflected the rhetoric of universalism of the early Cold War. These works reinterpreted host-nation classical forms with an American spin. \textit{Seraphic Dialogue}, the story of Joan of Arc, demonstrated how European civilization had been both interpreted and rewritten by a new American dance language. \textit{Diversion of Angels} established Graham as a modernist whose dance had become a global language that contained abstracted “truths” applicable to all “mankind.” Because the Department of State sought both to repair relations after the war and to create alliances in Asia to promote American political interests, Graham’s work was particularly useful: Graham’s dance modernism fused Asian aesthetics with the distinctive characteristics of the American landscape.

The State Department, the USIA, and the Dance Panel wanted tours to bring what they called “Americana.” The term had become widely used in cultural export circles, yet the idea had not always been clear-cut. In 1952, USIS was faced with evaluation reports that demanded more “Americana,” but a cable from India to the Department of State stated, “Little is known as to what is really meant by the word.” In order to clarify the term, an Indian and an American social scientist conducted a series of studies.\textsuperscript{164} Although the study never offered a clear definition of Americana, it outlined

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{163} “Report – Abadan,” uncatalogued box, folder Abadan, JRDD-NYPL.
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the subjects that should put forth the best possible characteristics of the nation. *Appalachian Spring* included many of these topics in its narrative and casting. African American Matt Turney played the Pioneer Woman in *Appalachian Spring*, which reflected the integrated approach to casting and the diversity of company members as well. Other subjects covered in the work included the role of women in America. The demure yet central figure of the Bride offset Graham’s position as a company leader. In the United States, women could be professional leaders while maintaining traditional values associated with being a woman in the 1950s. The Preacher embodied freedom of religion and speech through his antics and followers, and through his performance of the marriage ceremony between the Bride and Husbandman, religion tamed the frontier land by creating social structures for the community. The work referred to the triumph of the common man with the characters’ “Sunday Best” clothes. Indeed, Graham said the work was about the “Dignity of Labor.”

Graham explained that “[t]hrough new art forms,” the repertory captured, “the mood, the life, and the dream of America.”

After the company closed in Calcutta, a reviewer commended *Appalachian Spring* as “a delightful piece of Americana.” By 1955, USIS-driven publicity emphasized that Americana expressed the promise of all nations to be free.

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165 Ibid., 3.

166 “Martha Graham,” *The Sunday Times* [Philippines], November 13, 1955, scrapbook 335, MGC-LOC.

Graham’s use of Eastern forms served State Department needs in Asia by affirming the existence of common values and shared cultural legacy. In a private meeting with Indian Ambassador G.L. Mehta in 1953, Secretary of State Dulles, taking a subdued approach, said he wished to show that “there were no real divergences of interests between the United States and India.”168 At a meeting at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1954, Walt W. Rostow articulated this need to “convince Asians of our common interests.”169 The Dance Panel stated that the Graham company should be sent out “because we want to create a feeling of respect and good will, and comply with the psychology of the people where we are sending the artists.”170 USIS promoted Graham as a choreographer whose work spoke to cultural commonalities. USIS suggested in press releases and bulletins that “[t]he Martha Graham style has adopted much from the Orient.”171 Program covers shifted from location to location to meet perceived local tastes. If a work on tour incorporated a set design, it was one by Japanese American Isamu Noguchi, and USIS accentuated photographs of the sets. In a memo from a Graham representative back to the United States, the author noted the importance of keeping Noguchi in the foreground “because of the idea of the [Noguchi] set.”172


170 DP/IEP, May 5, 1954, UAK.


172 “Report on Indonesia,” Uncatalogued Box, folder: Kuala Lumpur, 1955, JRDD-NYPL.
moving set for *Seraphic Dialogue* was Noguchi’s most spectacular work. In a discussion of programming changes that replaced *Seraphic Dialogue* with *Appalachian Spring* the Graham representative wrote to USIS, “You will still have plenty of Noguchi – all very striking and elegant – so don’t worry.”

As Graham toured throughout Asia, USIS materials drew parallels between her forms and host-country techniques. These ideas appeared in regional articles with titles such as “Dancing in the East and West.”

Local reports declared that Graham’s works “showed the influence of Eastern dances.” A reviewer stated, “Martha Graham, through her art, is helping to bring people together.”

Graham herself mirrored these sentiments in speeches, at cocktail parties, and on radio broadcasts, saying that the purpose of the dance was the “interchange of ideas.”

To further the perception of shared interests, a USIA study recommended the promotion of America’s British colonial past as a way “to establish a basis of understanding and sympathy with subject peoples.” The report continued, “USIA can

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173 “Programs, Kuala Lumpur,” Martha Graham, Uncatalogued Box, folder: Kuala Lumpur, 1955, JRDD-NYPL.

174 [na], “Dancing in the East and West,” January 3, 1956, scrapbooks, box 334, MGC-LOC.

175 “Foreign Service Digest.”

175 “Progress Report on the Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentation Committee,” October 4, 1956, DDRS.

176 [na], “Dancing in the East and West,” January 3, 1956, Scrapbooks, box 334, MGC-LOC.


win sympathies by showing America’s revolutionary tradition and its aid to the cause of independence.” Responding to the persistence of colonialism, President Eisenhower stated, “The whole of our history is anti-colonial.” A newspaper reported on Graham’s Standish lineage: “Three hundred and thirty-five years ago, a group of Puritans was dissatisfied with the British church arrived in America on the Mayflower.”

*Appalachian Spring*’s frontier tale told the history of a nation that had achieved freedom and prosperity after the defeat of the British Empire. One souvenir booklet introduced *Appalachian Spring* with a three-page spread: a line drawing of a statue of George Washington, hand on his sword as he looked out over the horizon, faced the program notes. The story of Graham’s ballet provided a readable blueprint for newly forming governments as they struggled to assert self-reliance in some nations and attain independence in others. *Appalachian Spring* offered decolonizing countries a blueprint with the post-independence success of a vast former British colony, the United States itself.

Graham and her company performed works derived from myths that identified the American modern state as the inheritor of a civilization dating from the

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182 Programs, Ethel Winter and Charles Hyman Collection, uncatalogued, LOC.
Greeks. Graham stated, “The classic is where our roots and our strength lie.” In *Cave of the Heart*, Graham delved into the “heart of Medea’s being.” The USIS bulletin *Stars and Stripes* reprinted reviews that Graham “immediately expressed interest in the ancient.” The international retelling of these stories in modernist terms also portrayed the United States as a champion of universal ideals, a notion vital to Cold War propaganda. Graham herself believed that although she did not speak the languages of Asia, she would have “no difficulties in the Orient” with her works because “the dance is the language that needs no words.” Embracing evangelical rhetoric, Eisenhower had claimed that the greatest weapon against communism was the “ultimate appeal to the soul.” In a radio speech broadcast in Iran in 1956, Graham likewise said, “The language of dance is the universal language of the world. It is the language of gesture proceeds from men’s hearts…of the soul.” Reviews of *Night Journey* demonstrated the audience’s connection to the ancient story: “So revealing is the action, that we can suffer with the chorus of women in the foreknowledge of Jocasta’s doom, while we are shouting

\[\text{References}\]

183 “Graham’s Dances ‘Pruned Down’ Classics.”


185 “Graham’s Dances ‘Pruned Down’ Classics.”

186 Ibid.


188 “Martha Graham – Radio Speech – Iran, 6 Feb. 1956,” uncatalogued box, folder Abadan, JRDD-NYPL.
in our hearts.”\textsuperscript{189} Program notes declared, “Woman’s soul is on stage.”\textsuperscript{190} Yet Graham often deflected questions about the central role women played in her narratives. She preferred to note the “universality” of the emotions she portrayed from the “anguish,” to the “terror” felt by “man.”\textsuperscript{191} Classical mythology juxtaposed with themes of the American pioneer spirit created a message consistent with Eisenhower’s universalist humanism; they promoted Americanism as an enduring and civilizing force that was common to all “men” and brought by a woman.

Graham gave ancient Greek stories a modern twist that became a cultural symbol of American innovation. She followed the directives of the State Department that asked ANTA and its panels to provide “subject matter which is a part of the stream of civilization.”\textsuperscript{192} Like Noguchi’s “stripped down” bed in \textit{Night Journey}, Graham dismantles narrative and characters to their core. Reviewers responded as if on cue: “Her classical work is rather a ‘pruned down’ version of classical art with new thinking added to it.”\textsuperscript{193} Here, USIS achieved its objective of translating classical traditions into the American and thus fresh presentation. Graham’s dance language fulfilled such a mandate through a non-verbal art that both the elites and the theater-going public could interpret:

\textsuperscript{189} “Dancer Graham Impresses in Opening,” \textit{Mainichi Shimbun}, November 3, 1955, box 37, folder 4, BRC.

\textsuperscript{190} Le Roy Leat herman, “On Martha Graham’s Symbolism,” Programs, box 4, W/H-LOC.

\textsuperscript{191} “Martha Graham – Radio Program – Iran, 6 Feb. 1956.”

\textsuperscript{192} “Proposed Policy Statement Regarding ANTA Sponsorship of Foreign attractions,” RG 306, box 34, NARA.

\textsuperscript{193} “Graham’s Dances ‘Pruned Down’ Classics.”
“The Martha Graham style was unique, modern.” Her work supported a vision of the United States as a nation that derived its roots from classical civilization and combined this lineage with innovation, displacing prewar European leaders in art.

Although state-sponsored advertising and press releases billed Graham’s attachment to Americana, universality, and “the orient,” Graham’s “Fourth Mind,” or her connection to and transcendence of European dance, and thus an artists who could reframe the Western tradition of European cultural hegemony, became important to the American project not through repertory, but through the revision of Europe’s history of dance. This revisionism then reflected back on the development of a Japanese modern dance. According to USIS, the American expression should replace the European: American modernism was “man’s” language. Preparing the Japanese audiences for Graham’s arrival, the Sankei Evening reported that Graham’s visit would be the first postwar performance of modern dance. USIS-led publicity announced that Kreutzberg, Wigman’s student, had been the first prewar “modern dancer” to appear in Japan, and that he had disappointed the Japanese, despite reviews to the contrary. Graham’s work became an “unrepeatable feat” of modern art. Without mentioning the German beginnings of a new dance, The Manila Times reported that Graham had created a completely new form of dance that transcended national boundaries. Just as Margaret

194 Ibid.

195 Yuriko recalled having seen Kreutzberg in Japan and that the performer thrilled the dance students. Tokunaga, Yuriko, 16.


197 The Manila Times, November 14, 1955, scrapbooks 335, MGC-LOC.
Lloyd had erased Wigman from the modern dance, one reporter concluded of Graham, “She has established modernism in dance.” This also undermined the modern Japanese dance because its leader, Baku Ishii, had trained in Germany. Similarities between the German expressionist and Japanese modern dance were noted in pictures. Before the war, dance students recall the tours of German dancers and not Americans. Not only did Graham’s work triumph over the Soviet ballet, it also displaced the early European artists and thus undermined the idea of an independent Japanese modern dance.

Although Graham’s graphic use of sexuality in her works would become a problem for congressional oversight committees in the 1960s, for audiences abroad as early as the 1950s, Graham successfully used sexuality as an expression of modernism. In Israel, Graham’s ability to portray explicit acts with “great tact” became a testament to her “inventiveness.” Leaders in Iran, who boasted important collections of modern art, engaged in heated conversations about her works and their use of the body. Graham gained respect for her technique based on contraction and release. After the company performed in Manila, a review noted that Graham’s use of the “human body” seemed “a little unsettling” because she “delivers a shock not unlike that of an initial confrontation

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198 “U.S. and Soviet Competition in Dancing.”

199 Tokunaga, Yuriko, 12, 15-16.

200 Haim Ganzu, “The Choreographic Art of Martha Graham,” Haaretz, February 24, 1956, 2, scrapbooks, box 337, MGC-LOC.

201 “Report – Tehran,” [nd], uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, JRDD-NYPL.
of modern painting.”  

However, sexual passages could present problems. In India, a critic wrote that Night Journey “was [a] wrong conception to show the love-making between mother and son on stage.”  

In Iran, Martha described applause as “a nervous kind of response”; nevertheless, her performances sold out, and sponsors clamored for more dates.  

Graham’s depiction of love and eroticism became advertised as human commonalities that, abstracted, connected her to the modernist form and thus defined her as a great artist.

Because America had constructed a borderless modern dance, the leaders of host nations embraced and celebrated Graham’s repertory because it attached their countries to an international modernist dance and demonstrated their sophistication. While recalling ovation after ovation in Asia, one dancer said that in the United States, “We’d never had that kind of acceptance before.”  

However, USIS advertised that in the United States, Graham had the support of the intelligentsia, which received Diversion of Angels with fanaticism as an example of “pure art.”  

Host nations received the USIS message. A cartoon in Israel showed a couple in front of the theater with the American and Israeli flags behind them. The man, an Israeli diplomat in a trench coat, escorted a

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202 “Extracts from press clippings on the Martha Graham dance troupe”; Vicente Rivera, Jr., “Martha Graham’s Art,” The Evening News, November 17, 1955, scrapbooks, box 337, MGC-LOC.

203 The Statesman, January 21, 1956, scrapbooks, box 337, MGC-LOC.

204 “Martha Graham – Radio Speech – Iran, 6 Feb. 1956.”


206 “Martha Graham to Visit Japan,” Sankei Evening, September 5, 1955, scrapbooks 333, MGC-LOC.
woman in evening attire out of the theater. The woman said to the man, “In dancing I don’t understand too much, but the important thing is that everybody saw me there.”

A review in Japan noted that members of the Japanese Imperial family followed the United States Ambassador and “distinguished guests” as the group “rose to its feet and cheered.” When host countries did not fulfill their touring obligations to the company, Graham’s tour managers threatened to publicize the unwillingness of the nation to host the artist. As plans began to crumble in Korea, Graham company officials warned the Koreans, “Martha Graham is a great world name and your irresponsibility in dropping her will make every international news service in the world.”

Hosting Graham validated a nation as a sophisticated participant in a global postwar movement. Lack of participation could thus be billed as an embarrassment. For previously colonized nations, sponsorship became a symbol of independence as well. A memo noted that in Indonesia, only the Dutch had imported classical art and had reserved it for “limited and private audiences,” excluding the public and Indonesians themselves. The report concluded, “It is the first time an Indonesian has ever had a chance to bring anything to Indonesia.” Since modern dance was not American but universal, it offered host nations an opportunity to establish and embrace their own connection to the future of the arts in the postwar era.

207 Haaretz, [nd], scrapbooks, box 337, MGC-LOC.

208 “Graham Grips Audience,” Nippon Times, November 4, 1955, scrapbooks, box 337, MGC-LOC.

209 [na], [nd], memo, uncatalogued box, folder Kuala Lumpur, 1955, JRDD-NYPL.

210 “Report on Djakarta,” November 11, 1955, uncatalogued box, folder Djakarta, JRDD-NYPL.
Graham’s 1955 tour became an international success. Newspapers reported, “Repeated outbursts of spontaneous applause showed that Martha Graham had succeeded.”\textsuperscript{211} The international and domestic press, USIS, embassy reports, and historians have all documented the impact of Graham’s work.\textsuperscript{212} In Japan, the \textit{Nippon Times} reported, “Without a doubt, [Graham’s performance] will go down in theatrical history here as a landmark” because it “represented the most perfect union of all aspects of the theater.”\textsuperscript{213} In several locations, the host nations requested an extra day of performances because of audience demand and sold-out houses.\textsuperscript{214} The overseas reviews became proof of success for people in the United States who questioned the money spent on the tours or their effectiveness. The \textit{Daily Mirror}’s “Washington Merry-Go-Round,” which had quoted Truman disparaging modern art in 1950, reported on the tours of Graham and Dizzy Gillespie. Complaining that congressional critics “prefer hillbilly music,” the column’s by-line announced jazz and Graham’s modern dance as “this country’s best propaganda to date.”\textsuperscript{215}

\textsuperscript{211} “Martha Graham Show Wins Plaudits in City,” scrapbooks, box 334, MGC-LOC.


\textsuperscript{213} “Graham Grips Audience,” \textit{Nippon Times}, November 4, 1955, scrapbook 337, MGC-LOC.

\textsuperscript{214} Craig Barton to Barrett, February 1, 1956, uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, folder Israel 1955-56, part II, JRDD-NYPL.

Graham’s intellect and social grace established her enduring value to the State Department as a cultural ambassador. When Graham arrived in each nation, publicity pictures showed her on a carpeted runway tarmac with the plane just behind her company of dancers, the equivalent of showing a celebrity on today’s “red carpet.” Diplomats and cultural leaders greeted her at the airport with showers of affection and flowers. Graham required all female dancers to wear white gloves. A company member on the 1955 tour wrote in a report that Martha Graham was “the perfect person to send on such a mission” because of her “extreme charm.” Remarking that Graham had to answer “difficult questions,” the author concluded, “Never could one find a better diplomat.”

Pictures of Graham appeared in newspapers and her scrapbooks as she spoke with women and posed with male leaders showing signs of solidarity. Upon Graham’s return from all tours, the CIA vetted her. She demonstrated her value to the United States, which would make future tours possible; because the 1955 tour established her diplomatic genius, some took place well past her prime as a performer or when she lapsed as a reliable ambassador. Government representatives had long memories for success. An embassy official who had overseen events for Graham’s 1950 European performances sponsored by Rothschild became influential during her State Department tour to Iran in 1956; he had moved from London to Tehran in the interim.

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216 Helen McGehee, “Our Recent Dance Tour,” [nd], 1, box 10, folder 10, Helen McGehee and Umaña Collection of Dance Materials, LOC.

217 Francis Mason, interview with the author, August 15, 2008.

218 “Report – Teheran (continued),” Uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, NYL-DD.
officials attached to the executive branch became invaluable to Graham’s government support through 1987.

The 1955 tour publicity targeted elites but also sought to influence young dancers who could be receptive to a new and modernist technique that they could then use to develop their own choreography. Although Graham was billed as the “high priestess” of dance that was “worshipped,” the company members brought fresh and physically beautiful individuals to the stage. In Singapore, audiences expressed “delight” at seeing the troupe of young dancers perform the technique in lecture-demonstrations. They commented on “the freshness and youth of the dancers and their simple, unpretentious charm.”\(^\text{219}\) In Japan, newspapers quoted a young dancer who aspired to train in the Graham technique. In Israel, Graham wrote that she was pleased that her appearances had inspired the local dance academy in Jerusalem to consider adopting her technique for its students.\(^\text{220}\) In Iran, a local radio broadcast asked Graham to describe what she wished to impart to the youth of the nations she visited. Although the CIA had installed the Shah in 1953, she emphasized that students had to act as democratically empowered individuals: “My advice would be – have a dream, keep to that dream and make that dream come into manifestation.”\(^\text{221}\) Although the tour became a triumph, logistical problems and issues with local reception demonstrate that the success was neither automatic nor unmitigated. The company managers were consistently negotiating


\(^{220}\) Martha Graham to Manka and Alex, March 4, 1957, uncatalogued box, folder Israel 1955-56, part II, JRDD-NYPL.

\(^{221}\) “Martha Graham, Radio Speech, Iran 6/2/1956.”
and renegotiating contracts and managing currency exchange rates in order to get paid. Sets were misplaced in transit or held at customs. A letter in a State Department pouch from Iran to Israel, which provided crucial information about the theater, arrived in Israel after the company had begun its performances. While many of the issues that confronted the Graham company are typical of any touring group, others were particular to the unstable nature of the State Department’s relationship to the tours, the political situation, or Martha Graham herself.

In order to keep the State Department free of responsibility, ANTA had been hired by USIS to act as the “contract agency” tasked with exploring the region. The two-man team did not always report back accurately to USIS and the OCB about conditions. Graham was often sent to “unusable theatres,” which created “irritation and anger” for the Graham tour managers. Karachi and Iran were duly noted as the worst examples; one booking was merely an auditorium in a girl’s high school. Indeed, in order to rectify the situation, the company representatives had to renegotiate contracts and performance locations that charged “whopping sums” as opposed to the theaters booked by ANTA, which they received for free. They then had to go back to the government and request additional funds to cover the new performance location. In one case, the stage manager built a stage from local teak wood for a performance for Buddhist monks.

222 “Report on Teheran.”
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Winter.
Since Graham and her company were sent to countries in which the government “sensed internal mayhem,” dancers came in direct contact with local political movements. In 1955, company members left Bombay two days early; they were snuck out of the hotel under guard at 5 a.m. because of rioting. In addition, while Graham became an ideal cultural ambassador, she was also beginning to show wear-and-tear, even on the first tour. Two months after the company left Israel, Graham turned sixty. Midway through the tour, a cable read, “Martha can’t sustain present grind.” In addition, reports noted her “exhaustion,” which later became a code word for her excessive drinking.

Although diplomats, critics, and audiences received Graham as a cultural leader, reception of the new dance was not always clear-cut. From Japan to Jakarta, local audiences misinterpreted fences, preachers, and frontiers in Appalachian Spring and, in some cases, found difficulties with the myth–based works because “civilization” had been defined in terms of Western stories and myths. In Japan, one reviewer interpreted the frontier narrative as the Fall of Man. As opposed to an American official who appreciated the “pantomime” in Appalachian Spring, a reporter from India wrote, “There must be something wrong with a gesture language that escapes one’s grasp so totally. [Appalachian Spring] was like listening to an actor whose words cannot be heard in the

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226 To Barrett, From [unsigned], January 28, 1956, uncatalogued box, folder Teheran, JRDD-NYPL.

227 Lee Leatherman to American Consulate Calcutta, uncatalogued box, folder Abadan, JRDD-NYPL.

228 Uncatalogued box, folder marked “Exhaustion,” JRDD-NYPL.
One Indian critic added that *Cave of the Heart* was a “jungle of movements that ought to be shunned”—a scathing blow to any idea that Graham’s work epitomized classical Greek civilization through a groundbreaking and sophisticated cultural product.\(^{230}\)

The United States promoted itself as a nation “of the people,” and the Eisenhower administration relied on advertising campaigns that accentuated this feature of the American heritage. Graham targeted the elites and provided the folk motifs that USIS thought it needed, particularly in India.\(^{231}\) Program notes introduced *Appalachian Spring* as “a folk tale.”\(^{232}\) Graham abstracted folk elements, motifs, and forms, demonstrating a new approach to expressions of national identity. Upon Graham’s return, the dance panel leaders complained that “poorer people” could not see modern dance and that “giving low price engagements for the masses could balance the situation.”\(^{233}\) The minutes stated that “one post” had reservations about Graham’s company’s reception by “the natives” and that future performers should be “less esoteric.” An International Exchange Panel representative announced, “We are investigating the possibilities of a


\(^{230}\) Ibid.


\(^{232}\) Programs, Ethel Winter and Charles Hyman Collection, uncatalogued, LOC.

\(^{233}\) DP/IEP, November 17, 1955, UAK.
Wild West Show for the Far East with rodeo events, stage coach hold-ups, trick riding, etc. “

USIS stated that India had become an area of great concern, yet resistance against Graham’s modernist folk became pronounced. The propaganda of Appalachian Spring and its “folk” seemed transparent to some. Mirroring the artistic nationalism that had developed in America, and elsewhere in the early twentieth century, Indian choreographers were experimenting with modernism and folk forms to express an emerging nationalism. Uday Shankar had adapted modern theatrical techniques to Indian dance and demonstrated an “immaculate professional approach,” but his Almora Centre had closed in 1944. Shanti Bardhan, a junior colleague of Shankar’s, became a part of a new generation of choreographers inspired by socialist themes under the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA). Bardhan used untrained dancers alongside those trained by Shankar, and folk themes to create dances that spoke to people “from the bottom up.”

The IPTA subscribed to “the indigenous folk model of theatre, music and dance for inspiration and expression” having “its roots deep down in the cultural awakening of the masses of India.” In Appalachian Spring, Graham made a sharp distinction between her modernist treatment of folk material and the approach of other American choreographers. Leftist dancers in the United States also explored folk themes to make dance accessible to the masses under the umbrella of organizations such as the New

234 DP/IEP, March 1, 1956, 3; January 19, 1956, 2, UAK.


236 Ibid., 141.
Dance Group. Although the dedication of these choreographers to protest made them unacceptable for export, the State Department included them in early Cold War projects; they explored everyday people from factory workers to small farmers using the folk music of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. Although clearly responding to her own competitive spirit, after seeing New Dance Group member Sophie Maslow’s *Folksay* (1942), Graham commented, “Oh Sophie, you’re so agricultural.”

*Appalachian Spring* argued that the folk material that created nationalism “from the bottom up” could be modernized and transformed into a theatrical modern form. Public perception in India would have equated Graham with Shankar through their dedication to elite forms. Graham’s highly trained dancers countered the use of untrained dancing associated with socialistic projects that had emanated from Shankar’s student Bardhan. Although USIS showed Shankar at the airport greeting Graham upon her arrival and reported that he stood during performances shouting “Brava! Brava!,” demonstrating a cultural union, the story became complex as national cultures clashed. An Indian reviewer admonished, “[Graham’s] hosts are to be castigated,” because they booked her on the same evening as a performance of Indian dance.

Promoting cultural connections to encourage diplomatic relations, the dissemination of myth-based narratives could seem to ally the dance forms of the United States with those of India. For example, Graham’s American works and Bardhan’s Indian works both reinterpreted mythological stories through the lens of modernist

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238 Lalita Uberoi, “Martha Graham Good Showmanship, but…,” *Woman’s Viewpoint*, Scrapbooks, box 334, MGC-LOC.
choreography. Graham’s choreographic subjects would not have been lost on the elites in India, who had been trained under a British educational system. Yet Graham’s myths were not Indian myths. 239 Some Indians understood the story of Medea in Cave of the Heart as “the blind rage of an elephant and the destruction that is the path of it.” 240 The elephant in Indian mythology has many meanings, some of which might even have backfired. Bhagavata Purana, for instance, warns against the temptations of the material world. 241 This interpretation would reinforce the negative perceptions of capitalism that the U.S. government was trying to counter. Although imagined as a part of a civilized universalism, Graham’s narratives were different from Indian stories that formed a historically embedded base for the recovery and reformulation of Indian nationalism. American modernism based on Greek myth could seem far from universal to other audiences.

Graham moved to Israel without official State Department participation, although the embassy and USIS offered support. Unexpectedly, critics in Israel wrote mixed reviews. As would be expected, Seraphic Dialogue received critical acclaim. Israelis who had fought for nationhood with mandatory military service could find meaning in the work. Yet the continuation of Asian publicity approaches by USIS backfired. Graham’s audience found dances “too Japanese in appearance.” The myth-

239 Purkayastha, “Bodies Beyond Borders,” 166.

240 Martha Graham to Frances G. Wickes, [nd], FWC-LOC-MD.

based works did not carry resonance. Cave of the Heart seemed merely “acrobatic”; Jocasta in the story of Oedipus became a “dancer-mime.” Oedipus fared worse: the character became “like the Tarzan of the movies.” As a nation founded on the tenets of the Old Testament, the works based on Greek mythology looked like old-fashioned cinema with an Asian twist. Yet because Graham had a wide variety of works in her repertory, her seasons could boast triumph in each location when officials filtered information sent back to the United States. Failures were easily buried by rave reviews.

While some tour locations had been planned by the pre-Dance Panel organizers and then reaffirmed by the Eisenhower administration’s deployment apparatus for strategic purposes, political and economic realities also created insuperable problems. USIS and ANTA research showed that Graham would be going into uncharted territory, and failures demonstrate that while theater conditions became important, local sponsorship and economics carried greater weight. Graham’s “Advance Man,” Craig Barton, reported, “Karachi a dead end. Hope no one notices.” In a letter to the stage manager, Barton wrote that when he arrived to plan the tour in Korea, “Nobody knew we were coming.” Barton complained that he was “stranded at that primitive little airport” when he waited for the anticipated local sponsors to pick him up. He then waited for three days to meet with the Koreans, and the American embassy provided no assistance because they were “short handed” and “swamped.” Money for the tour from the Korean side never materialized, and promises that the Asia Foundation would support the tour

242 Haim Ganzu, “The Choreographic Art of Martha Graham,” Haarets, February 24, 1956, 2, scrapbooks, box 326, MGC-LOC.

243 Uncatalogued Box, Folder Japan, 1956, JRDD-NYPL.
came as a surprise to the foundation itself. Because Barton understood that the
International Exchange Panel “thought it was important enough to play [in Korea] under
any circumstances,” he continued to negotiate. Indeed, the location appeared on all tour
itineraries. At the last minute, Korean government froze all dollar assets except for
economic revitalization, and the location was cancelled the day before the dancers were
to perform there. Barton wrote that he wondered, “how much more uncoordinated
Washington could get with its own projects.” Despite the early OCB planning and the
insistence of the IEP, with a lack of economic support and sponsorship, as well as a
modicum of embassy support, tours could not take place.244

Although some tours had to be cancelled, touring additions funded by
foundations allowed the government to add politically desirable countries that would
have caused international difficulties if the tour had been purely government-sponsored.
After closing in Iran with the financing offered by the United States government,
Bethsabée de Rothschild underwrote expenses for the two-week extension in Israel.
Gertrude Macy, a Broadway theatrical producer who later ran ANTA’s work with
cultural exchange, brokered the details of the deal between Rothschild and Graham’s
business manager.245 Once the company had left on the tour, Macy continued to work for
Graham out of the offices of Katharine Cornell. The American Fund for Israel Institutions
donated funds and also circumvented any currency problems that could hinder
performance opportunities as they had in Korea. Representatives at the American Fund

244 Uncatalogued box, folder Kuala Lumpur, 1955, JRDD-NYPL.

had close contacts at the American embassy, including the Ambassador and Cultural Attaché, and they received Graham and her company as through it had been hired by the State Department. The foundation made the connection between Graham and the embassy opaque. Because USIS did not have a direct connection to the State Department, it continued to support Graham with publicity. The only sticking point seemed to be the fact that the State Department would not allow Graham to have access to reports on her work. Macy wrote, “It’s a pity for Martha not to know what’s in them.” She continued, “Everything is so Classified.” With Macy as the conduit, Graham’s advance man could expect Graham’s season to be seamless despite the withdrawal of ANTA and the State Department’s International Exchange Panel.

When Graham returned to the United States in 1956, she received the Dance Magazine Annual Award alongside Agnes de Mille. Although international touring publicity had accented Graham’s ties to the United States through her ancestry and did not indicate any involvement by the state, Graham became recognized in the United States for her international work on behalf of the government. The award was dedicated to “Martha Graham, who created a bond with the Orient through the medium of dance” because she spoke with a “universal language” and “communicated the oneness of human experience.” Not only did her work comply with the rhetoric and specific aims of the Eisenhower administration, Graham also did not have to make any changes or alterations to remain useful and celebrated. She spoke in the terms of “the soul of

246 Gertrude Macy to Craig Barton, January 25, 1956, uncatalogued box, folder Israel 1955&56, JRDD-NYPL.

247 Craig Barton to Gertrude Macy, January 30, 1956, JRDD-NYPL.
“mankind” that she had used consistently and that drove her choreography. Graham’s success abroad became a national story with a resonance that would take her on future tours through the life of the company. Graham and the State Department emerged from the tour as reliable partners who could, together, create goodwill and sway elite opinion in the United States’ favor while maintaining the appearance of a timeless universalism befitting the image of an idealized America. This rhetoric fell in lock step with Cold War hyperbole – America had made the modern dance.
With Graham’s *Dance Magazine* award and newspaper reports about her value as a cultural ambassador, the international performances gained widespread recognition as an integral part of State Department efforts. By 1957, the State Department had embraced the use of the arts as diplomacy, viewing dance as second only to music in its potency, and thus the government began to take greater control over export activities, usurping the power of the Dance Panel. Because Graham had proven that she could advance the government’s agenda as a cultural representative abroad, the Department of State, alongside private foundations and individuals, directly supported her next two tours in Europe in 1957 and 1962. The Dance Panel acted merely as a rubber stamp. Graham’s Asian and Middle Eastern tour had proven successful because the surrounding publicity highlighted the Asian influences in her dance aesthetic; when the State Department targeted Europe in 1957 and 1962, USIS again foregrounded Graham’s attachment to host country forms and thus indicated that she could reinterpret the stories of Western civilization, and particularly those from Christianity and the Old Testament, through a universalized American modern dance. In nations that had once claimed the ability to express the ideals of Western civilization and had their own dance histories, such as Germany, these tactics backfired. The hegemony of American modernism grew worn as Europe recovered from the war, and Martha Graham’s cultural effectiveness followed suit. At sixty-six, she had lost her performing abilities and had begun to drink excessively, disabling her on both levels of diplomacy.
When Graham returned from her first tour in 1956, the Dance Panel officially oversaw the selection of dance exports, yet the erosion of its autonomy had become evident. A Cultural Presentations Committee memo noted that the CIA, headed by Allen Dulles (the Secretary of State's brother) would take on a larger role in order “to evaluate the cultural program's contribution to the accomplishment of national objectives.”

Retaining the appearance of Dance Panel independence, however, remained important as a part of the larger anti-Soviet project. To contrast the clear state control of the arts in the Soviet Union, American dance exports had to appear independent of state influence or manipulation. In early 1957, Dance Panel members stressed that “politics plays no part in this important undertaking.” Participants at a public conference emphasized the “free expression” of Dance Panel members and the “absolute authority” of the Panel in making artistic judgments.

Nevertheless, in April, a State Department official attended the Dance Panel meeting and laid groundwork for the government’s usurpation of power. Supporting the Department of State, ANTA’s Robert Schnitzer explained, “This program was started for propaganda reasons. We must serve the diplomats.” By the summer, he announced that the State Department alone would determine “the cities and countries to be played.” Lincoln Kirstein noted his displeasure, yet even he, a participant in the first dance export in 1941, carried little, if any, weight.

1 “Progress Report on Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentation Committee,” October 4, 1956; “Progress Report on Activities of the OCB Cultural Presentation Committee,” April 16, 1957, all DDRS.

2 DP/IEP, January 17, 1957, 2, UAK.

3 DP/IEP, April 25, 1957, 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, UAK.

4 DP/IEP, June 20, 1957, 2, UAK.
In the fall of 1957, State Department representatives intervened directly in artistic choices. The notes from the September meeting reflected a concern that American Ballet Theatre was not “strong enough” to go to Russia; consequently, the State Department would be in charge of all decisions regarding these performances, including the suggestion of prospective performers. Panel members followed suit and requested that Lucia Chase adopt several star dancers from other companies for the tour because “bringing ballet to Russia is like bringing a report card.” In response, she declared, “If you want to choose a Company, start your own.” Despite such protests, the next meeting began with the announcement of which groups the OCB had already approved without the Panel’s input, including Graham’s company. Because Graham had proven herself in the field, the Department of State chose locations for her and assisted with the choice of repertory to suit local or political needs.

Because Berlin had become a stark symbol of American-Soviet tensions, Graham’s next politically sponsored performance took place in West Berlin at the opening of Congress Hall in 1957. Eleanor Dulles—the sister of both John Foster, Secretary of State, and Allen, head of the CIA—arrived in Berlin in 1952 and masterminded the construction of Congress Hall as Special Assistant to the Director of German Affairs. In 1952, the Western zone remained a barren, debris-strewn city with buildings that formed a skeletal landscape. The once lavish Tiergarten was barren. The world-renowned zoo had only one elephant left, and the trees had been used as firewood. As an outpost of the West, Berlin had become a propaganda eyesore. In the same year, the East Germans began to build Stalinallee. The

5 DP/IEP, October 17, 1957, UAK.

project became the flagship of reconstruction: it contained reportedly “luxurious” apartments for “plain workers,” as well as shops, restaurants, cafés, a tourist hotel, and a cinema. Architects designed the eight-story apartment buildings in adherence to the Stalinist architectural style, or “socialist classicism.” Nevertheless, 1953 brought a year of hope for the Americans: Stalinallee became the focus of an uprising credited to Dulles. Builders and construction workers demonstrated against the communist government, and the revolt spread through East Germany until Soviet tanks and troops ended the rebellion.

In 1955, West Germany joined NATO and confirmed its solidarity with the United States and its allies; in response, the German Democratic Republic joined the Warsaw Pact as one of the nations that would buffer the Soviet Union from European nations allied with the United States. In theory, the East German government reported to Moscow. Despite the West German Wirtschaftswunder, or economic miracle of the 1950s, Berlin remained an isolated outpost, which required both economic and propaganda support from the United States. In 1955, Dulles began a concerted and relentless effort to get Congress Hall erected by September 1957 so that it could house the INTERBRAU project, an international architectural exhibition. With borders between East and West that allowed

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easy crossovers, East Berlin officials would be visiting the exhibition. West Germany had to demonstrate the strength of America and its allies.

The construction of Congress Hall and the political export of Graham demonstrated the connection between public and private entities, particularly when projects seemed urgent. In order to circumvent Congress to get funding, a group in Berlin established the Benjamin Franklin Foundation (BFF). It received funds from the Department of State, Irving Bank, several private foundations, the CIA, and the German government. The BFF took both American and German officers, and although the 50-50 split theoretically insured cooperation, American representatives controlled the decision-making process. Ralph Walker, the architect who had designed the Irving Trust building, became the Chair, and meetings were held at Irving Trust. Dulles and Walker chose the Congress Hall architect Hugh Stubbins, who had worked for the German modernist Walter Gropius at Harvard. When Walker was not available to represent BFF, Dance Panel Chair Virginia Inness-Brown stood in his place. The Department of State recognized that she would offer private funding and would fund-raise among the wealthy, particularly women, for government-sanctioned

History, Collapse, Reconstruction (Berlin: Senat Department for Building and Housing, 1987), 73.

11 “Memorandum of Understanding Between the United States of America Acting Through the Department of State of the United States of America and the Benjamin Franklin Foundation,” B Rep. 166-02, Nr., 1, LA.

12 “Minutes of the Meeting of the German Members of the Board of Directors of the Benjamin Franklin Stiftung, October 2, 1956,” B Rep 166-02, Nr., 12, LA.

13 Ibid.

14 Leon Chamberlin to Ralph Walker, October 9, 1958, B Rep. 166-02, Nr., 1, LA.
projects. Along with Irving Trust, companies such as Kodak should give money, according to the American representatives, “without making any business propaganda.” In addition, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were approached to finance new cultural projects to open the Hall. The swirl of private-public partnerships included the exercise of power and finances.

In a flurry of activity, the foundation work began in 1956. In anticipation of the opening, Eleanor Dulles announced that the building’s luminous, curved roof would be a “shining beacon beaming towards the East.” The Hall’s reflecting pool, wide bowed staircase, and glass-walled exterior transformed the war-ravaged park grounds. Western newspapers reported that Congress Hall was “A Symbol of the Free World.” Congress Hall planners used American modern architecture as a symbol of American political and cultural life, with glass walls demonstrating the transparency of democracy, open spaces that allowed for free discussion, and conference rooms with round tables for interchange. The 1,200-seat

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15 To: The Secretary, Fr: CU, RE: Virginia Inness Brown Award, on Department of State letterhead, November 9, 1967, “Award Programs, Virginia Inness-Brown” Box 49, Folder 24, MC468, UAK.

16 “Minutes of the Meeting of the German Members of the Board of Directors of the Benjamin Franklin Stiftung, October 2, 1956.”

17 Ibid.

18 Dulles, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, 256.

19 Editorial Board, “Ein Symbol der freien Welt,” Telegraf, September 20, 1957, LA: B.Rep.166-02, nr. 219/12, 2; also Scrapbooks 1, 35, HAS.

theater boasted fine acoustics and a modern stage. Dulles and the BFF planned the architecture and opening ceremony performances to communicate the ideas that Dulles wanted to convey to the West and East Germans.\textsuperscript{21} In early 1957, newspapers in both the United States and Germany announced that Congress Hall would be a gift to West Germany from the United States in the name of freedom: Dulles defined Berlin as the “outpost of freedom.”\textsuperscript{22}

The opening ceremony events became a key part of the planning of Congress Hall, and Martha Graham was a specific choice.\textsuperscript{23} The Dance Panel meeting over which Inness-Brown presided stated that Graham’s American and modern dance was “dedicated to freedom” and that Graham would be chosen by the BFF committee to perform at Congress Hall’s opening ceremonies.\textsuperscript{24} Melvin Lasky, a founder of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, joined the Inness-Brown team to make cultural choices. Just after the war, Lasky wrote to the Army from Berlin, “The time-honored U.S. formula of 'shed light and the people will find their own way' exaggerated the possibilities in Germany (and in Europe) for an easy conversion.”\textsuperscript{25} Lasky then became the editor of Der Monat, which utilized the works of

\textsuperscript{21} “Minutes of the Meeting of the German Members of the Board of Directors of the Benjamin Franklin Stiftung, October 2, 1956.”

\textsuperscript{22} Dulles, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, 257.

\textsuperscript{23} “Minutes of the Meeting of the Benjamin Franklin Foundation, January 26, 1956,” Rep 166-02, Nr. 11, L.A.

\textsuperscript{24} DP/IEP, Oct. 1956, UAK.

intellectuals for elite German consumption. Its first publication appeared several months after the start of the Berlin Blockade with CIA and Ford Foundation funding. In preliminary meetings in which the group discussed programming, the foundation Chair announced that the Congress for Cultural Freedom would run presentations and, “This congress is financed by special funds.”

For the Congress Hall opening, the Lasky committee chose Graham alongside luminaries such as Thornton Wilder, Agnes de Mille, and the African American Ethel Waters. Originally, the program was to be split 50-50 between Germans and Americans, but Walker explained that the Americans would be taking control of the ceremony. Claire Booth Luce spoke at the opening ceremonies. She had worked as an editor at Vanity Fair before becoming a playwright, winning a Republican seat in the House of Representatives, and serving as ambassador to Italy. She was also the wife of Henry Luce, whose magazine Architectural Forum positively reviewed the use of modernist architecture to represent national ideals abroad. Graham’s modern art harmonized with the building. Indeed, she wrote, “They say that the two primary arts were dance and architecture.” With the building, modern dance, and the American artists and politicians, the committee chose projects that

26 Program announcement, B Rep. 166-02, Nr. 30, PAA; Dulles, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, 261.

27 “Minutes of the Meeting of the German Members of the Benjamin Franklin Stiftung, May 6, 1957,” B Rep 166-02, Nr.: 14, LA.

28 Program announcement; “Meeting Minutes,” December 12, 1955, Enclosure 3 to Despatch 989, B Rep 166-02, Nr., 11, LA; Dulles, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, 261.

29 Graham, Blood Memory, 7; Bird, Bird’s Eye View, 73.
could become universalized: modern American genres would rewrite prewar European approaches.

Like the building project and opening ceremony luminaries, Graham’s export was a product of the State Department’s agenda. During a Dance Panel meeting, a government representative announced, “The requirements which we now have are that any group will go where and when the Department requires.”

In March, five months before the opening, Inness-Brown announced the need to find a representative for the Congress Hall opening ceremony. The committee suggested a Native American group and a “Negro ballerina,” alongside José Limón and Martha Graham. The following month, private sector members made other suggestions but received no comment according to meeting minutes. Inness-Brown reported that since Limón would be on tour, the “Congress Hall committee,” or Inness-Brown and Lasky, suggested Martha Graham in her solo Judith. The Dance Panel again offered other ideas in May; discussions, however, ended promptly, and silence ensued in June, July, August, and September. In October, Inness-Brown reported back to the Dance Panel on the opening at which only Graham’s Judith represented American dance. Despite the fact that the decision to use Graham had come from the government-led committee in Berlin, the New York Times reported that ANTA had chosen all the exports. By 1957, Graham had become linked directly to the state and thus required no approvals by the seemingly independent panel of experts.

30 DP/IEP, January 16, 1958, UAK.

31 DP/IEP, May 1957, UAK.

The expressed aims of the Congress Hall architecture and its history illuminate the intentions of Graham as a modern dance exports because the projects served similar goals in cultural diplomacy. The Office of Foreign Building Operations (FBO) was told about the Congress Hall Project as a fait accompli, just as the Dance Panel had been told about the Graham performances. In both cases, the State Department made the decisions. First, the implementation of the two projects had analogous institutional structures. The Eisenhower administration established both the Architectural Advisory Committee and the Dance Panel to make artistic design decisions in the field. Both Panels included representatives from the State Department and the private sector, and planning reflected policy decisions made by the Operations Coordination Board with direction from the National Security Council. Second, both the building and dance programs initially focused on the two World War II combatant nations, Japan and Germany. The FBO began its first projects in Japan and Germany to house reconstruction officials. Martha Graham was the first dance company officially

33 “Minutes of the Meeting of the Benjamin Franklin Foundation, January 25, 1956.”

34 “Summary of progress report on activities of the Operations Coordinating Board Cultural Presentation Committee covering period 1/1-6/30/55,” July 13, 1955; “Memorandum for Members of the OCB Cultural Presentations Committee,” September 21, 1955, all DDRS.


“deployed” by the Dance Panel, and she went to Japan in 1955 and Germany in 1957. USIS coordinated publicity for architectural and dance projects.\(^{37}\)

The three central objectives of cultural diplomacy specifically defined by the FBO parallel the aims of what government memos called “Modern Dance.”\(^{38}\) FBO documents noted the mandate to demonstrate American ideals internationally through modernism, and the agency created a panel to hire the American architects who were the leading proponents of the modern movement. The FBO linked modernism to the ideal of “freedom.”\(^{39}\) For elites, modernism asserted American cultural sophistication. A headline in Luce’s *Architectural Forum* read, “Modern Design at Its Best Now Represents This Country in Foreign Lands.”\(^{40}\) Although Roosevelt and Truman exported ballet, a later government memo noted the value of “Modern Dance,” in capital letters as “the one art uniquely American.”\(^{41}\) Cold War government documents rarely state the purpose of using the performing arts for export. The use of passive tense in meeting minutes makes the identification of political actors difficult, yet the government’s FBO clearly articulated the aims of its building projects. Architects were not reticent about acknowledging their role in


\(^{38}\) “Project Consideration for the Advisory Commission on the Arts,” [nd], 1, Group II, Series 4, Box 94, folder 11, UAK; American National Ballet Theatre,” to Connelly, Hasset, Webb, from Blevins Davis, attachment to letter to The President of the United States, June 13, 1950.


\(^{40}\) “Modern Design at Its Best Now Represents This Country in Foreign Lands,” *Architectural Forum* 98 (March 1950): 101.

\(^{41}\) “Project Consideration for the Advisory Commission on the Arts.”
creating what they called “propaganda.””\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, the architect of Congress Hall called it “essentially a propaganda building.”\textsuperscript{43}

The architecture of Congress Hall, like Graham’s work, articulated the desire to establish what I have called “cultural convergences,” with projects aimed at fostering positive diplomatic relations by highlighting common aesthetics and values. Dance decisions mirrored the Architectural Board instructions to integrate local customs, history, and materials into United States projects. Officials believed the fusion would frame the United States as a political partner rather than as a hegemon.\textsuperscript{44} In Japan, the FBO directed the architect to “draw up plans that would reflect an artistic combination of Eastern and Western motifs.” This strategy would “display a knowledge of indigenous customs” while becoming “an explicit demonstration of how a modern nation could apply local elements to progressive needs.”\textsuperscript{45} During Graham’s first tour, publicity and choreography echoed this idea that the products on display should demonstrate to the host population that the United States had integrated local forms into its projects. In Berlin, John Foster Dulles argued for cultural convergences and proclaimed that the Hall demonstrated “the exchange of ideas.”\textsuperscript{46}

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\textsuperscript{42} de Rudder, “A Building as Propaganda,” 29.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{44} Loeffler, \textit{The Architecture of Diplomacy}, 10-11.
\textsuperscript{46} “Program: Congress Hall,” Berlin B Rep. 166-02, Nr. 30, PAA.
\end{flushright}
Newspapers noted the architect’s work under Gropius, the German founder of the Bauhaus school who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s, “a gesture of goodwill towards the Germans.”

Publicity for Graham demonstrates how the United States government used selective information and shaded truths to promote its artists for international gain. The 75-word biography of Graham printed in German demonstrates the opacity of State Department projects. As one might expect, the short biography began by reminding readers of her status in the United States and cited her choreography for Appalachian Spring. However, the biography also made unexpected statements. The program claimed that Graham had toured Europe, the “Orient,” and Israel for the State Department. Indeed, Graham toured the “Orient” in 1955, but the State Department project concluded in Iran. Bethsabée de Rothschild underwrote the leg to Israel. Less than a year after returning from her tour, politics had changed, and Graham, as an artist celebrated in Israel, gained a peculiar and undeniable postwar German currency as she presented her work in Berlin, the seat of power of the former Nazi regime. In addition, the claim that Graham was sponsored by the State Department in Europe also speaks to the murkiness of State Department activities. Graham had only performed in Europe in 1950 and 1954, both with funding from Rothschild. Graham’s Congress Hall biography insinuated that under the auspices of the State Department during the Cold War, Graham had triumphed in important new and established postwar centers of culture before her debut in Germany.


48 “Program: Congress Hall.”
Graham’s dance highlighted cultural convergences in Berlin for elites, however politically problematic because of the Nazi past. While the Nazis had banned the composer William Schuman’s music, like Gropius’s work, the composer also exemplified the prewar power of the German intellectual and cultural heritage.\textsuperscript{49} Although in the United States, Graham had consistently denied that Wigman had influenced her work, in Germany she expressed respect for Wigman’s innovations and admitted that American and German dance shared common elements. As an international form of art, Graham stated that the German form, like its American counterpart, expressed “love, fear and other movements of the soul.”\textsuperscript{50} But USIS publicity and one German newspaper called Graham “[t]he master of the expressionist dance.”\textsuperscript{51} Despite this, reporters celebrated the reunification between Graham and Wigman with pictures of the women embracing. Members of combatant nations reunited through cultural friendship with the United States retraining the Germans through modern and American cultural products that rewrote the history of German art. Here, Wigman and Graham shared the “expressionist” rubric, yet Graham took the international lead in the postwar dance community.

The Congress Hall committee specifically named the solo they wanted Graham to present to the Germans: the story of Judith. As cold war propaganda, it demonstrated American technical prowess and challenged Soviet atheism, but more importantly, the work


\textsuperscript{50} “Bekenntnis zum deutschen Tanz Zum ersten Mal in Deutschland: Martha Graham,” \textit{Berliner Morgenpost}, September 20, 1957, LA.

\textsuperscript{51} [nt], \textit{Berliner Morgenpost}, September 19, 1957, USIS translation, scrapbooks, 340, MGC-LOC.
addressed German transgressions against the Jewish population during World War II.

Graham’s elliptical cultural declarations mirrored political rhetoric of individual and religious freedom. Just as American Cold Warriors relied on proclamations that the United States held “the soul of mankind,” Graham announced that she explored “the inner landscape, which is the soul of man.” Graham had used religious stories to choreograph some of her most renowned works, and the building also accessed the specific idea of “freedom of religion.” Although not known as a religious man, with Dulles reminding him to say prayers before cabinet meetings, Eisenhower advocated the addition of the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance and “in God we Trust” to American currency. John Foster Dulles, the son of a minister and Eleanor’s brother, felt that religion could become the Soviet “Achilles heel.” When speaking about Congress Hall, Eleanor Dulles deliberately alluded to the “City Upon a Hill” metaphor, based on the Biblical line from Matthew 5:16, when she instructed that the building inscription should read, “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works.” She saw Berlin as a “spiritual center” and tapped into an appreciation for this aspect of expression in the arts. The Benjamin Franklin quote that the designers displayed in the Congress Hall foyer read, “God grant that not only the love of

52 Graham, Blood Memory, 4.


54 Melvyn P. Leffler, For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 353.


56 “Theologie, Geschichte und Literatur,” Die Neue Zeit, September 3, 1957, LA.
liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth.”⁵⁷ Judith would have seemed to be an ideal dance as propaganda: Graham performed the Old Testament story of a Jewish woman who saved her nation because she demanded freedom from oppression.⁵⁸

The committee purposefully chose Judith by May, 1957 along with other performers and speakers who would represent the nation.⁵⁹ Inness-Brown and Lasky led the project by presenting Graham’s dance as a type of ballet that embodied the modern impulse.⁶⁰ In addition, the work continued the denazification process in West Berlin through lessons about genocide and reminders of Graham’s long-term repudiation of the Nazi Party. She carried political weight in postwar memories of the Nazi state. As noted earlier, in 1936 Graham received an invitation from Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Propaganda, and Rudolf von Laban, Wigman’s teacher, to perform as a part of the summer Olympic Games in Berlin. After the war, the German intelligentsia remembered the incident well.⁶¹ In Germany as well as the United States, Graham’s stance towards the Nazi regime had received widespread publicity and had not been forgotten. In addition, when Graham considered the performance in Berlin, she remembered the 1936 incident in a letter to William Schuman, the

⁵⁷ HSA, Scrapbook 1; ELD/DDE, Box 13; “Minutes of the Meeting of the German Members of the Board of Directors of the Benjamin Franklin Stiftung, October 2, 1956.”


⁶⁰ “Protokoll der Aufsichtsratsitzung der Benjamin Franklin Stiftung.”

composer of Judith. For the production in Berlin, Graham changed the color of the General’s tent from royal purple to mustard yellow, evoking the color used by the Nazis to mark the Jewish people. She arrived as a strong symbol of denazification. As the hall represented the promise of a future with Western liberal democracy, the performance became a reminder of and perhaps even expiation for past collective sins.

Congress Hall opened with great fanfare, and a newspaper headline announced, “Berlin – ein Symbol des Westerns.” Articles about Stubbins, the architecture, and the arrival of performers, dignitaries, and officials saturated West German newspapers. A 3DM “Kongresshalle” stamp featured an elegant rendering of the building that transmitted its image from Berlin throughout Germany. Opening events included cocktail parties and dinners, and the women wore pearls. Although reports on the negative East German response to the building appeared in 1960, newspapers in 1957 ignored the event. Those who could not attend the ceremonies, limited by the 1,200-seat auditorium, could visit the exhibition “A Nation of Many Nations,” or “Volk Aus Vielen Volkern.” All exhibition panels and programs were printed in both English and German. Symposia mirrored the intent


63 HSA, Scrapbook 1, 36.

64 B Rep. 166-02, Nr. 1, PAA.

65 HSA/U for USIS pictures of the ceremonies also in Berliner Morgenpost, Der Kurier, Telegraf, and Der Tagesspiegel, Sept.-Oct, 1957, LA.

66 A search at Landesarchive in Berlin of Der Morgen, National-Zeitung, Die Wahrheit, Die Tribüne, and Neues Deutschland showed no response to Congress Hall.
of the building, written in capital letters on programs: “THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW or DIE ALTE UND DIE NEUE WELT, and EUROPE AND AMERICA: THE STRENGTH OF THE UNFETTERED MIND.”

Roundtable discussants included Noguchi, who designed the set for Judith, and choreographer Agnes de Mille, whose Rodeo had premiered in Germany with American Ballet Theatre. African American performances in opera demonstrated the ability for all people in the United States to participate in the high arts. Performances included works by Tennessee Williams, Eugene O’Neill, and Thornton Wilder and music played by the Juilliard String Quartet and the Berlin Orchestra, conducted by Virgil Thompson. The Berlin orchestra played music by Igor Stravinsky, an émigré who had been celebrated by Gropius, the architect’s mentor, and the German Paul Hindemith, presented in publicity as a refugee from the Nazis whose music had been banned. In addition, representatives of politics, the sciences, and social sciences, together with intellectuals associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, joined in working groups. Martha Graham was included in one roundtable. Later, the Congress for Cultural Freedom provided support to a number of artists, including Graham.

At the conclusion of the opening, Eleanor Dulles deemed the Congress Hall project a success. In cables back to her brother at the State Department, she boasted that 95%

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67 Program announcement, Berlin B Rep. 166-02, Nr. 30, PAA.

of the publicity was positive. The targeted elites arrived in full form: articles reviewed the building and noted the “select” audience. Newspaper headlines embraced the intended theme of cultural convergences; “Berlin’s New Landmark: A Lasting Symbol of German-American Cooperation,” read one German daily. However unlikely, Inness-Brown remarked that the ceremonies were considered a propaganda success because “from 25%-50% of the audience came from the Eastern sector to attend.” Initial arguments between the Americans and West Germans about the building design were wiped clean, as Stubbins’s connection to German Bauhaus architecture became a noted point of success. Keeping with the tone of American arguments about freedom of religion, the editorial board of Berlin's Telegraf called the building “a monument to the spirit.” The audience reaction to Graham’s dance and the reviews it received, however, demonstrated the start of her decline as a valuable cultural commodity.

The response to Judith was largely negative. As protectors of the American presentations, Dulles did not specifically mention which performances did not end well, and Agnes de Mille even waxed poetic. In her biography of Graham, she wrote, “Martha took

69 ELD/DDE, box 32.

70 “Die Weihe der Kongreßhalle,” Telegraf, Sept 21, 1957, 23, LA.

71 “Berlins neues Wahrzeichen – Ein bleibendes Symbol deutsch-amerikanischer Zusammenarbeit” Telegraf, September 22, 1957, 32, LA.

72 DP/IEP, October 5, 1957.

Judith to Berlin in September 1957 and danced it at the opening ceremony of the Congress Hall. The critical reaction was tremendous. I personally saw Mary Wigman weeping, with her star dancer, Dore Hoyer, half fainting against her and close to collapsing from the emotional onslaught of what they had witnessed.”

However, even before Graham began to dance, audiences were startled by the use of banned music. After Graham finished her performance of *Judith*, the audience greeted her with silence, an anathema to any performer. Only when Mary Wigman joined her on stage did the audience cheer.

When Inness-Brown reported on the performance to the Dance Panel, after describing Graham’s performance as “moving,” she added, “The reviews were controversial.”

While the Berlin newspapers were largely negative, those translated by USIS for Graham and the Department of State were all positive. USIS reported that a reviewer stated, “Her strong pantomimic style shows great mastery, in the flow of motion, yet remains very controlled – speaking in dance vocabulary. Her physical energy has to be admired.”

A review not translated by USIS, however, likened *Judith* to an “archaic ceremony.” The seduction of Holofernes was described as “swinging and dragging steps” with “beseeching

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74 de Mille, *Martha*, 304.

75 Sieglinde Tuschy, Program Director, and audience responses to the presentation of the chapter as a paper at Haus der Kulturen der Welt by author, September 2011.


77 DP/IEP, October 5, 1957, UAK.

[arm] gestures."⁷⁹ The importance of the presentation as a part of an American argument about its cultural sophistication also fell flat. A German reviewer noted that it was “surprising and alienating” to see a dancing style, “which is perceived in Germany as simple and immediate.” The American idea that the art should target the elite backfired when the critic complained that the performance ceremony and Graham pushed the evening into the “sphere of glamour.”⁸⁰ The intended cultural convergences failed to resonate as reviewers described Graham as “strange and foreign.”⁸¹ Another article concluded that the United States did not show “real originality.”⁸² While USIS reports drew attention away from the negative reviews, the New York Times reported that the critics were “surprised and not altogether favorable.”⁸³ Other than by representing the American dance, no evidence indicates that Graham served as a cultural ambassador as she had in the past. She sat at panel discussions at long tables that did not foreground her. Photographs documenting the event show her with other dancers from the United States and Germany. Graham’s declaration that “center stage is wherever I am” had been called into question by the Congress Hall event. For Graham herself, the experience remained with her after her return to the United States. A


⁸¹ “Amerikanische Musik.”


principal dancer recalled, “Martha had to go to Germany to perform in Berlin with Ben Franklin Theater or whatever. I asked her if she took Judith purposely. At any rate she went to Germany...I think a lot of it was unpleasant.” He noted that she was, “changed when she came back.” Graham had great difficulty choreographing Clytemnestra when she returned. Despite trepidation, and with support from the powerful improvisational support of her dancers, she completed the work in 1958.\textsuperscript{84}

Despite her failure, Graham embodied the ideology that drove Congress Hall's design: the idea that the United States, as the modern home of freedom, would be a cooperative international partner rather than a hegemon. Although “freedom” encompassed a myriad of ever-shifting and politically convenient ideologies, Congress Hall promoted “freedom of expression” and “freedom of religion” as central tenets of the American rubric that Germans could share if they allied with the United States. However, unlike Congress Hall, a symbol of American and German reunification, Graham’s performance reminded the audience of German war atrocities. While the trappings of femininity and even sexuality would seem to mitigate her effectiveness as a political actor, indeed, Graham, Inness-Brown, and Dulles became modern warriors who solidified and amplified early Cold War rhetoric. Despite Graham’s largely negative reviews, a letter from Dulles to Graham demonstrates that Graham, in the end, accomplished her mission for the government. Dulles thanked Graham for performing and said that the Congress Hall committee was “fortunate to find such a reputable modern American dancer.”\textsuperscript{85} No matter how critics received Judith in Berlin, the

\textsuperscript{84} Ross, “Draft Biography, Clytemnestra,” BRC.

\textsuperscript{85} Eleanor Lansing Dulles to Martha Graham, September 27, 1957, scrapbooks, box 340, MGC-LOC.
diplomat viewed Graham as an asset because of her ability to represent the nation with a genre that had become internationally reputable, if not always critically acclaimed. Congress Hall became a magnet for government, private sector, and philanthropic women who fought postwar battles. Graham remained a wounded yet still potent ambassador in the eyes of the State Department.

As a woman, Graham joined others in support of the government’s agenda in Berlin. Although she was not the featured guest as she had been in 1955 and would be on future tours, she worked like a member of the State Department at cocktail parties, and she stood by as Dulles, Inness-Brown, and Claire Booth-Luce spoke at the opening ceremony. Despite the “old-boy” network that permeated American national politics in the postwar years, from closed meetings to infamous parties given by Dulles’s brother Allen, Eisenhower noted, “I have turned for counsel to women.”  

Eisenhower sought to garner support for his programs through women’s organizations as Kennan had suggested. In Europe, and particularly Berlin, women played a prominent role in the cultural fight against the Soviet Union. In 1949, an American official in Berlin noted that the Soviets had drawn upon the power of women's groups and iconic female leaders. In response, the official recommended that “[women] may be developed as a democratic force or used as an effective instrument of propaganda.”

Elite women became representatives of American ideals while the United States courted European intellectuals in the ideological battles of the Cold War. As opposed


87 Ibid., 84.
to hot and cold battles that relied on men in positions of authority, the heightened propaganda agendas in Berlin demonstrate that Cold War victories also demanded alliances with emancipated women.

*Clytemnestra* established Graham as preeminent among modernists because the four-act, evening-length work broke the one-act mold that had come to define the modern genre. Typically, company leaders programmed three discrete works in an evening’s performance, divided by several intermissions. Choreographers composed the works as mini dance-dramas. With *Clytemnestra*, Graham challenged the traditional mixed-bill evening with a full-length ballet. With the multi-act narrative, critics could compare her rendition of the ancient story to those of Greek playwrights from antiquity. Thus, Graham remained on the government’s radar screen as both an artist with potentially new and groundbreaking choreography for export and as a valued ambassador. In early 1958, the trend toward direct government intervention continued – to Graham’s benefit. “Washington” became wary of sending troupes to repeated locations, citing concerns that the United States would appear to have little programming depth. Schnitzer addressed programming for 1959 and announced that no touring decisions could be made “until the negotiators in Washington get through with their diplomatic discussions.” Itineraries would be based on State Department recommendations. At the same meeting, he reported on the first meeting of the State Department’s new Advisory Commission, which would oversee Dance Panel decisions.

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88 DP/IEP, January 16, 1958, UAK.

89 Ibid.
Graham had become attached to the inner workings of the State Department export mechanisms.

In 1958, the White House invited Graham to a conference on “The Foreign Aspects of United States National Security” that addressed the Soviet threat and international economic policy, particularly in Asia. Graham accepted the invitation and spent several days in Washington with political luminaries, including former President Truman, Vice-President Richard M. Nixon, and the Dulles brothers. The conference included sessions such as “The Free World and Mutual Security,” “The Soviet Economic and Trade Offensive,” and “The Moral Foundations of U.S. Foreign Assistance.” A pamphlet outlined the first problem of American policy: “How can the United States wage peace effectively?” As a cultural ambassador, Graham’s work “waged peace” through person-to-person exchanges, and her dance claimed alliances through cultural convergences. While in Washington, Graham gave a “town talk” about the importance of cultural exchange. During the interview, Graham remained politically savvy. When the journalist asked about her greatest experience abroad, she gave a glowing report of shouting Japanese audiences and firecrackers, but she was quick to add that her recent closing in London and New York were equally as thrilling.

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90 Eric Johnson to Martha Graham, February 4, 1958, scrapbooks, box 343, MGC-LOC.

Clytemnestra premiered on Broadway on April 1, 1958. It defined Graham as the leading creator of modern dance as theater. The work opens in Hades, where the titular protagonist attempted to discover why she had been dishonored and damned; the work became a reflection on guilt, anger, jealousy, and love. After Helen of Troy appears, Clytemnestra imagines the rape of Troy. She relives the sacrifice of her daughter, Iphigenia, which had allowed Agamemnon to sail to war. She then envisions Orestes and Electra plotting her death. When Cassandra enters, foretelling the coming of doom, Clytemnestra becomes possessed by the desire for vengeance. In Parts II and III, Graham shows Clytemnestra with her lover, her reaction to the fall of Troy, and the return of her husband. Upon Agamemnon’s return, Clytemnestra and her lover murder him, became drunk, and lie together in their bed. Clytemnestra dreams that her son will murder her. In Act IV, Graham returns the audience to Hades, where Clytemnestra finds emotional freedom. The choreography uses the architecture of dance and theater: sets, lighting, and costumes were much a part of the drama as the movement. As Clytemnestra, 62-year-old Graham sat through much of the work and watched the scenes unfold. Her theatrical scenes, however, showed her power as a performer and actress.

Graham’s choreography remained poignant although she reused familiar tropes. When Clytemnestra and her lover sit at the front of the stage planning the murder of Agamemnon, the lover gestures across the landscape in much the same way as the

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92 The author saw a revised three-act version with subtitles in New York and Washington, DC, in 2009. Accounts of the full ballet have been described using Siegel’s Shapes of Change and Stodelle’s Deep Song, as well as informal discussions with dancers who saw the original production.

Husbandman surveyed the frontier for the Bride in *Appalachian Spring*. The protagonist’s arm sweeps across the terrain, showing the couple looking towards the future, yet in *Clytemnesta* the gesture is transformed from hope of renewal to the realization of murder. During the “drunken scene” after Clytemnesta murders her husband, the choreography mimics her movements as a queen. As she writhes, shivers, and contracts during the drunken stupor just before she is murdered, Graham demonstrated her power over her torso. Although her part remained choreographically muted, she used simple movements to convey meaning and unearth the conflicts of the human psyche.94

At the Broadway premiere, American critics raved. John Martin wrote in the *Times* that *Clytemnesta* was “a work of giant stature” and marveled at the “extraordinary skill with which the whole essence of the Oresteia has been manipulated.”95 The *New York Herald Tribune*’s Walter Terry equated the dance with the canonical works such as “the great Oresteia,” Strauss’s *Elektra*, and *Death of a Salesman*.96 A government report prepared by USIS for the consideration of Graham for future tours used quotes from both Martin and Terry as evidence of Graham’s representative power.97 In 1958, Graham took *Clytemnesta* on the road. Although the tour did not officially receive State Department funding, Graham

94 This paragraph is based on the author’s viewing of the dance.


and her company spent a month in Israel “under the patronage” of the United States Ambassador.\textsuperscript{98}

Graham had a close relationship to Israel through Bethsabée de Rothschild.

Graham had left Israel in the winter of 1956 on the private leg of her government tour, and the Sinai campaign began that fall, putting the region in the midst of conflict. In the summer, Egypt’s president Gamal Abdel Nassar nationalized the Suez Canal after the British and Americans withdrew their offer to fund the construction of the Aswan dam, a project that would become important as context to the 1979 tour Graham later took under Jimmy Carter. Soviet funding for the building of the dam reinforced alliances. The Suez Crisis followed with Egypt in direct confrontation with Israel, France, and Britain. After a military operation led by the three nations against Egypt, Israeli forces remained in the region through 1957, heightening tensions. After protests from the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Nations Emergency Force patrolled the border between Israel and Egypt to control warfare and quell hostilities. In addition to the tension between Egypt and Israel, 1958 brought Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens in February, April, and May. Graham’s arrival in Israel for a residency for the month of August 1958, demonstrated the United States government’s commitment to the Israel, however tenuous and covert her funding from the State Department.

\textit{Clytemnestra} became the focus of reviews as the company toured; it demonstrated Graham’s ability to bring elites together in the theater. The focus of the

\textsuperscript{98} “Martha Graham’s Intn’l Troupe to Dance for Habimah,” \textit{The Jerusalem Post}, August 18, 1958, scrapbooks, box 342 MGC-LOC.
performance publicity and reviews drew less on cultural convergences, which had backfired in Israel in 1958, but rather targeted the elite with myths from the Western tradition. Pre-performance press announced that the work “evades the immediate grasp of the public.”99 While Clytemnestra told a familiar story, without an in-depth and solid knowledge of the myth, the work Graham had come to call her “ballet” became impossible to parse as the reflection of an internal drama. Only those who knew the story of the fall of Troy could appreciate the semi-abstract narrative, viewed through the lens of memory as flashbacks by the protagonist. To make the drama even more confusing, the same dancer portrayed Agamemnon, Clytemnestra’s husband and Helen’s lover, and Orestes, her son. While a reviewer noted that the work demonstrated the “artist searching through the archaic mind for the remote psychological roots of human savagery and its conquest,” the viewer had to know the story well enough in order to understand the psychological import of the sequence of the scenes.100 Another reviewer noted that “knowledge of modern literature and modern poetry can only help in understanding this theatre” and concluded that the work had to be “transferred through the intellect.”101 Nevertheless, the targeted population received it favorably. A reviewer wrote that the work “caused even the highbrows to be emotionally moved.”102 Graham continued the tour in Greece and France, where she also received critical


100 Goth, “The New York Music Season.”

101 Ezra Sussman, “Martha Graham in ‘Clytemnestra,’” Davar, September 5, 1958, scrapbooks 341, MGC-LOC.

102 Yriv Ezrachi, “Clytemnestra,” Haboker, September 5, 1958, box 342, MGC-LOC.
acclaim. In Athens, the newspapers reported that Graham took “the tragedy of heroic proportions,” told it through the eyes of a heroine, sustained audience attention, and showed “a masterful, communicative and overpowering work.” Retelling Greek myths to Greeks in Athens, or using cultural convergences, alongside the complexities of modernism allowed host country elites to join with their American counterparts.

However, Graham’s value as a cultural ambassador to the elite through her dance also continued to show limitations. Even those who claimed to be a part of the “highly educated class” complained that the “binding link” in Clytemnestra seemed to be missing; a reviewer concluded that “even Martha Graham has not succeeded yet” in the modern dance-drama. The work fell flat when “inner participation” became impossible because people did not know the story well enough to understand the non-narrative development of character. The symbolism seemed too unreadable to those who felt that the dance held “within it the danger of withering into lifeless décor and intellectualism.” Vocal criticism of Graham’s works demonstrated that while the evening-length form and fractured use of narrative to show a psychological state brought innovation to the stage, the intellectualism embedded in the modern form limited the genre’s ability to communicate.

103 [na], “Danse et Rhythme,” [nd], 1958, scrapbooks, box 341, MGC-LOC.
105 Ezrachi, “Clytemnestra.”
107 Asher Nahor, “Martha Graham and Her Way in Art,” Yedioth Aharonoth, September 5, 1958, scrapbooks, box 342, MGC-LOC.
American, Asian, and European-influenced works receded into the background with *Appalachian Spring*, *Night Journey*, and *Seraphic Dialogue*; *Clytemnestra* stressed ideas of universalism, and Graham succeeded in displacing European aesthetics while rewriting myths with her modernist approach. The project carried the promise of redemption; pre-performance press accentuated that the work used “human symbolism.”

*Clytemnestra* “reach[ed] the roots of man’s evil passions and revealed the secret of overcoming them.” Some critics believed that Graham found the “universal experience” and created a “union with the creation and the creator.” Echoing Cold War rhetoric and aims to bond people across nations, a reviewer stated that Graham strived to “make [the audience] a partner to the inner expression of man’s soul.”

Graham’s work brought the old-fashioned nature of classical ballet into high relief. Ballet became reframed as an “ancient relic with a far-away romantic period that has no longer any connection with modern man’s reality.” Graham’s work created “a catharsis which Aristotle considered as the foremost purpose of tragedy.” Accessing the universal through Western civilization’s ancient myths required the use of a new technology of the body to rewrite the narratives in modern humanist terms.

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109 Ibid.

110 Sussman, “Martha Graham in ‘Clytemnestra.’”

111 A. Ben Meir, “Martha Graham’s Visit,” *Herut*, September 5, 1958, scrapbooks, box 342, MGC-LOC.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.
Modernism allowed Graham’s presentation of sexual content and presentation to seem sophisticated rather than immoral. *Clytemnestra* was “modern in its modes of expression, inclusive, uncompromising, faithful to higher meaning.” One paper added that the work was “modern in the richest meaning of the word, as in the arts of poetry and of painting.” In *Clytemnestra*, a reviewer noted that gesture could symbolize that Agamemnon was “touching [Clytemnestra] with his male member.” He insisted that “[t]he spectator must be an experienced viewer of the plastic, expressionist and cubist arts” in order to assimilate the use of symbolism in her work. The program notes for *Phaedra* used the word “lust” three times in a single sentence to describe the dance, yet reviewers did not complain about its sexuality. As with what the reviewer called “the cubists,” the sexuality of Graham’s work both shielded her from criticism and demonstrated her attachment to high modern arts.

By the time Graham returned from Israel, Greece, and France, the State Department had announced the creation of its Arts Advisory Board to oversee Dance Panel decision-making. The OCB had received ultimate veto power, and government representatives insisted that the Panel respond to the demands of the particular “posts,” or

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114 Sussman, “Martha Graham in ‘Clytemnestra.’”
115 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 “Martha Graham and Dance Company,” USIS Report, [nd], scrapbooks, box 357, MGC-LOC.
embassies. The Department had “final confirmation for a new philosophy.” Although the representatives claimed that the Department did not “dabble in artistic judgments,” they added that for the “immediate future” the Panel would be required to follow the mandates of representatives in the field. The representative stated, “Any group will go when and where the Department requires,” particularly when the areas were of strategic concern. Graham’s early covert funding by the OCB in 1954, masked by the apparent autonomy of the Panel negotiations, became standard practice by 1958. Because Graham had direct ties to the government, her tours remained controlled by its approach, one that had become increasingly strong and transparent. Whereas in 1955 the Dance Panel had seemingly been responsible for convincing Graham to go to “the Orient” although the trip had already been funded, by the late 1950s the Panel merely gave her their stamp of approval as “the best.”

With the acknowledgement that culture worked as a weapon, the mechanisms for export not only became more complex but also grew more institutionalized as power shifted more heavily to state-controlled decisions through the start of 1959. The new mechanisms also provided cover for the executive branch during investigations by Congress. While the State Department seemed to be assuming greater control, the conflicts between the arms of government provided a buffer against total control of cultural offerings by the executive branch. By the end of 1958, the Dance Panel heard reports on a UNESCO Resolution on Cultural Exchange that called for a Bureau of Fine Arts “to bring together the various activities of the State Department and other departments of the Government under an

\[119\] DP/IEP, September 25, 1958, UAK.

\[120\] Ibid.
Assistant Secretary of State.” With the addition of the arts panel, when Congress began inquiries about the export of modern dance, complaints could be deflected. Representative John Rooney (D-NY) singled out Jose Limón in 1958. He had taken two tours, and a committee raked through his finances and questioned why he had been offered these tours while others had not been included. Graham, who had been on several tours, not all of which had direct funding, was not included in the study. Eleanor Roosevelt criticized Rooney’s inquiries into State Department activities in her syndicated column “My Day.” The Dance Panel provided much-needed cover to the executive branch when Congress examined exports, yet the State Department only expected members to provide material that would fit the mandates of government bureaus through the filter of ANTA.

In addition to shifts in the mechanisms of export toward state control, the propaganda methods used to fight the Soviets began to shift from an elite focus to a popular one. In 1955, the American agenda centered on the desire to prove that the United States had high culture and was not a “bastion of greed.” Although the State Department ignored early suggestions that dance exports should appeal to “the masses,” it embraced such a push by 1958. From the start of the export war, the Soviets had already established their expertise in culturally sophisticated art, especially ballet; thus, they could begin to advertise themselves

121 DP/IEP, November 30, 1958, UAK.
122 DP/IEP, October 2, 1958, UAK.
124 DP/IEP, December 18, 1958, UAK.
to a wide international audience through entertainment geared for the “masses.” In December 1958, the State Department reported to the Dance Panel that a Russian “entertainment troupe” had proven highly effective in Asia, a prime area of concern in foreign relations. “Urgent pleas” for “the popular kind of thing” came from the embassies. Successful exports by the Soviets included a juggler, a clown, and a female assistant for a magician. In Panel meetings, the State Department representative acknowledged the importance of “culture with a capital C,” but noted that it only hit a “thin layer of people” who were already oriented toward Western culture. In order to “defend the United States culturally,” the representative offered the idea of using Ed Sullivan to provide entertainment that would both fulfill the need to provide culture “‘with a small c’” while also maintaining the quality of exports. While Kirstein argued that “a Martha Graham is remembered longer than a juggling act, and that the residual effect of a serious project remains long after it leaves the area,” the Department began the official discussion of exports by suggesting Tex Ritter and the American Cowboy Caravan.\footnote{DP/IEP, February 19, 1959, UAK.} The State Department members assigned Walter Terry to work with a popular artist to “improve the production.”\footnote{Ibid.} They noted that the Music Panel had approved the “All-star Western Show”; the Dance Panel did not override the Music Panel decision. The Department of State looked to the Dance Panel only for a rubber stamp on the “small c” export projects; it could offer suggestions about the “capital C” projects that garnered less and less funding as time passed.\footnote{DP/IEP, December 18, 1958, UAK.}
Nevertheless, State retained control over the high-culture exports that it found most successful, such as Martha Graham. At the meeting that focused on culture with a “capital C,” members discussed Graham’s recent tour, particularly her success in Greece with *Clytemnestra*. The State Department representative noted that that Graham did not need to apply for touring assignments formally. Graham’s asset as a staunch defender of democratic ideals became clear with domestic honors. In her column “My Day,” Eleanor Roosevelt had written about Graham in 1936, reviewed her performance at the White House in 1937, reported on her European performances in 1950, and celebrated Graham’s State Department tour in 1957. Graham attended concerts with Roosevelt in New York, and these ties continued to bear fruit for the dancer. During the 1959 symposium, “The Liberal Spirit in American Life,” directly supported by Eleanor Roosevelt and Edward Murrow, Graham was a key guest of honor.\(^{128}\) In November and December of 1962, Graham and her company performed under the auspices of the State Department.

The executive branch continued to support Graham’s tours, even as administrations changed. In 1961, John F. Kennedy took office, and Dean Rusk assumed the position of Secretary of State. Rusk, who had worked at the Rockefeller Foundation, surely understood the importance of culture to diplomacy. Kennedy and the First Lady, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, marked a new generation of leaders: young, charismatic, and cultured. In the summer of 1961, Kennedy held a ceremony to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Fulbright legislation and the funding mechanisms that had enabled cultural diplomacy under Eisenhower. Kennedy noted that the program was the preeminent example “in recent history

\(^{128}\) “The Liberal Spirit in American Life,” Program, May 21, 1959, scrapbooks, box 343, MGC-LOC.
of beating swords into plowshares, of having some benefit come to humanity out of the destruction of war.”\textsuperscript{129} He not only retained a commitment to the program but also looked to Fulbright and members of the foreign relations committee to improve and strengthen it.\textsuperscript{130} In September, he signed the Mutual Educational and Cultural Act of 1961, the new Fulbright-Hays Act. According to Rusk’s office, the new act “lifts educational and cultural affairs to a new position of potential influence in our foreign relations.”\textsuperscript{131} In addition, the First Lady’s power as a cultural ambassador was recognized both in the press and even in satires of the export program. While Dave and Iola Brubeck, along with Louis Armstrong, noted that Graham was sent “in response to mayhem,” they added, “When the world gets whacky /We tell John to send out Jackie/ That’s what we call cultural exchange.” Indeed, “Jackie” Kennedy championed Graham with a vocal and visible force on behalf of the company.

In 1961, President Kennedy pledged that the United States would “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.”\textsuperscript{132} He coined the idea of “The New Frontier” in both domestic and foreign affairs. Like Graham’s \textit{Frontier} and \textit{Appalachian Spring}, Kennedy spoke of “hope” and “dreams.” Kennedy’s frontier, however, included not just the spirit of

\textsuperscript{129} “Office of the White House Press Secretary: Remarks of the President at the Ceremonies in the Rose Garden in Connection with the 15\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the Fulbright Act,” August 1, 1961, box 312, folder 1, UAK.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} “Department of State: For the Press,” No. 653, September 21, 1961, box 312, folder 1, UAK.

man but also, even more importantly, modern technology and science. While his “liberal internationalism” strove for peace under the leadership of democratic states, his actions, supported by Dulles’s CIA, brought the Soviets and the United States to the brink of nuclear war. After the Cuban Missile Crisis ended in October, the United States dismantled weapons in Turkey, which along with Greece continued to receive aid, and soon got a visit from Graham. In 1962, Graham performed in countries that seemed either unstable or malleable from a foreign policy perspective. Touring mechanisms again included private foundations, government, business, and host country support.  

Yugoslavia’s president, Josip Tito, continued to play both sides and kept the Secretary of State guessing about his alliances through financial and cultural moves. Politicians complained that while the United States had given Yugoslavia over three billion dollars since the war, Tito worked to undermine U.S. interests. Graham also stopped in Belgrade. The erection of the Berlin Wall heightened tensions in the region and created a need for more and better propaganda; Graham landed in Germany and then Poland.

Germany and Poland presented particularly delicate foreign policy issues. Berlin came to define the East-West conflict in Germany for many Americans. The Berlin Crisis began a year after Graham had left the city and Congress Hall opened. In 1958, Nikita Khrushchev gave the Western allies six months to withdraw from Berlin. Both the French

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133 USIS Report, “Martha Graham: Analysis and Selection,” [nd], scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

and the Americans asserted their right to remain in the city. While a compromise seemed possible under Eisenhower, the Soviet downing of a U-2 American spy flight in 1960 ended negotiations. Under Kennedy, tensions again ignited. The Berlin Crisis hit its peak in 1961 when the East German President convinced the Soviets to allow him to build a wall. In August 1961, the Berlin Wall went up, largely sealing West Germans from East Germans. In October, Soviet and American tanks formed a standoff at the border. Although the tanks pulled back one-by-one, Germany remained hotly contested. The erection of the Berlin Wall brought détente in Polish-East German relations. U.S.-Poland relations had withered after an initial boost in 1956 when Gomulka came into power. While Poland had been taken into the Soviet sphere after the war, the waxing and waning of U.S.-Poland relations allowed for hope among politicians.

The example of Graham’s tour to Yugoslavia demonstrates how the career history of cultured diplomats and politicians affected touring decisions. While writing the Long Telegram, Kennan attended a performance of the Bolshoi’s Cinderella. He understood the power of dance as propaganda. Kennan recalled that while the “orchestra were all in their places waiting to strike up the national anthems.” In addition, he understood that the Soviets did not have modernist dance or visual arts. The year before Graham arrived, he hosted an exhibition of modern art in Belgrade. Francis Mason, who had been a champion of Graham’s while at VOA and later became the Chair of her

135 Harrison, Driving the Soviets Up the Wall.


137 Kennan, Memoirs, 289-290.
Board, had just left the post as cultural attaché and had a key role in arranging for the exhibition to travel to Belgrade.\textsuperscript{138} Dance moved with diplomats.

While Kennan used modern art to demonstrate facets of the United States, he also understood that popular audiences might not know what to do with a Jackson Pollock or Martha Graham. His speech at the opening of the exhibition began, “This is not, as I think you all understand, a representative cross-section of contemporary American art. It is a small collection of the works of a number of American painters whose position might properly be described as avant-garde.” Graham also represented only one aspect of a cross-section of cultural products. Kennan continued, “It is, I think, characteristic of exhibits of this sort of painting that they meet with every sort of reaction running from intense interest to complete incomprehension and even ridicule.” As a diplomat, he allowed the Yugoslavian consumers to remain perplexed by the work. He concluded, “Lest I be suspected of hypocrisy, I must confess myself to be among that portion of mankind to which a considerable portion of abstract art does not reveal its meaning.” In a bow to the artistic elite, he said, “Nevertheless, I am well aware that this meaning is visible to people whose acquaintance with art is far deeper than my own and for this reason I am wholly prepared to believe that it exists.”\textsuperscript{139} In 1962, Graham received good, if muted, reviews in Belgrade. Kennan invited Graham to the embassy to meet him and his wife. Unfortunately for Graham, Kennan missed her performances, and


\textsuperscript{139} George F. Kennan Papers (MC 076), box 302, folder 23, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Public Policy Papers, Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.
she was not able to meet him because he had the flu.\textsuperscript{140} Graham, however, returned to Yugoslavia on several other State Department-supported tours because, although guided by the Ambassadors, the prompting of invitations often lay with the career post officers, or others in the host country.

The Graham repertory toured through these countries included both old and new choreography. Graham continued to perform her own roles in \textit{Night Journey} and \textit{Clytemnestra}. \textit{Seraphic Dialogue} and \textit{Diversion of Angels} also continued to tour with the company, along with new pieces including \textit{Embattled Garden} (1958), \textit{Acrobats of God} (1960), and \textit{Secular Games} (1962). With the \textit{Legend of Judith} (1962), Graham reworked the solo that she had performed at the opening of Congress Hall. \textit{Phaedra} (1962) premiered under the auspices of the State Department. Although Graham’s creative power waxed and waned over the following years, her heightened use of sexuality in both \textit{Secular Games} and \textit{Phaedra} demonstrated her determination to continue to innovate despite her age. In order to keep pace with the sexual revolution and broader cultural changes, she needed to heighten the eroticism of her work in order to seem edgy and new.

Graham set \textit{Embattled Garden} in the Garden of Eden and used a multi-leveled, complex set by Noguchi.\textsuperscript{141} While \textit{Clytemnestra} dug into the psyche of the titular protagonist for those who could keep up with the narrative, \textit{Embattled Garden} was largely playful and accessible. The adventures between the characters—Adam, Eve, Lilith (Adam’s first wife),

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{140} George F. Kennan Papers (MC 076), Diaries, 1962, subseries 4C, box 235, folder 1.
\item\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Embattled Garden}, premiered April 3, 1958, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Carlos Surinach, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and the serpent—seemed less driven by the drama and angst of the Old Testament story than some of Graham’s other biblical works. Graham retained the seductive core of the story, yet with the stark pink, black, and red costumes, along with highly styled sexual movements, she created a satiric, playful tone. Graham’s version of the story of the Fall foregrounded mischief with risqué movements rather than a tragic Fall of Man that demanded repentance and explored “the soul of mankind,” as had her other early Cold War works.

Graham choreographed *Acrobats of God* in 1960 along with *Alcestis*; neither drew on the psychology of memory or the idea of the Western tradition and myth. *Acrobats of God*, in particular, spoofed ballet and the process of a master training her childish dancers. The work played on the fact that teachers referred to students, whether in a professional or beginner class, not as men and women, but as boys and girls. Graham parodied herself as the indecisive and overworked choreographer while her students attempted to execute balletic steps with multiple turns and complex lifts. The work allowed her to revisit the comic medium that she had used earlier in her career in *Every Soul is a Circus* (1939) and *El Penitente* (1940). In tour programming, *Acrobats of God* offset the

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143 *Every Soul is a Circus*, premiered December 27, 19399, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Louis Horst, set by Philip Stapp, costumes by Edith Gilfond; *El Penitente*, premiered August 11, 1940, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Louis Horst, set by Arch Lauterer, redesigned and set seen on tour by Isamu Noguchi, costumes Edith Gilfond. The author has not seen *Every Soul is a Circus*, and descriptions of its humor come from Stodelle, *Deep Song*, 120, 217, and Siegel, *Shapes of Change*, 145, 184, 316.
dramatic, psychological tragedies – the meat of Graham’s dance-dramas. Graham, however, did not perform in these lighter, youthful works.

*Secular Games* also gave the younger members of the company the opportunity to take center stage with more demanding choreography. Graham had built a group of highly proficient young dancers. She often repeated the refrain that it took her ten years to make a dancer, and she had built a generation of stars, including Yuriko, Mary Hinkson, Ethel Winter, and Helen McGee. With the bodies of Bertram Ross and Paul Taylor at her disposal, Graham had clad her male dancers in small costumes to display their physique. In the past, Graham’s choreography featured women, and the roles that demanded technical expertise also required an emotional or spiritual journey. In *Secular Games*, the men offered an arresting background for the playful female dancers. As the women entered and exited the stage as a group, the men played with a ball that passed from hand to hand. Like *Acrobats of God*, the work allowed Graham to show a refreshingly light and accessible side of her choreographic talents that became a welcomed addition to programming choices. In addition, the ballet reformulated her work as a technique rather than a style or approach based on a singular body or perspective. These works codified a modernist technique with a distinct vocabulary that others could use to train and create their own choreography. These works met Department of State’s need to make programming more accessible and diverse in order to engage the elites along with a new and more youthful audience.
*Legend of Judith*, the remake of the solo *Judith* for an ensemble, premiered in Tel Aviv under the auspices of Bethsabée de Rothschild in 1962.\(^{144}\) It continued to tour during the State Department “pick up” tour. Graham did not use a set by Noguchi or the score by Schuman, opting instead for music by Mordecai Seter and a set designed by Dani Karavan, an artist who was also designing sculptures for the Court of Justice in Tel Aviv in 1962.\(^{145}\) The use of Israeli artists drew upon cultural convergences to redesign the ballet. In the first version of the tale of Judith’s complex relationship with Holofernes, Graham played the young and seductive Judith who fell in love with the General and then murdered him to save the Jewish people. In the *Legend of Judith*, Graham played the aged Judith. Unlike Clytemnestra, Judith did not judge herself at the conclusion of the work. She became introspective while she reconsidered the Jewish celebration of her actions as a young and seductive woman. As in *Clytemnestra*, Graham could use her age as an integral and necessary part of the narrative. Although her role contained more acting than dancing, the movement drew attention to her young, virtuosic dancers. With Bertram Ross’s grounded roll off stage as the symbol of the decapitation of Holofernes to Graham’s command of the audiences with her theatricality, the work became dance-drama. From the sets to the costumes and music, the work demonstrated Graham’s command of the stage and its

\(^{144}\) *Legend of Judith*, premiered October 25, 1962, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Mordecai Seter, set by Dani Karavan, costumes by Martha Graham. The author viewed this work danced in 1978 at the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance.

\(^{145}\) Dani Karavan, *Dani Karavan: Dialogue with the Environment, Resonance with the Earth* (Tokyo, Japan: Asahi Shimbun, 1997). Further work on the influence of Japanese art on the sculptor must be conducted.
elements; a basic presentation of the narrative allowed the audience to understand the story behind Judith’s emotional state.

With Phaedra, Graham returned to the Greek myths for inspiration. While digging into the psychology of the mythic woman with a set by Noguchi, Graham pushed beyond the limits of sexuality in Night Journey. She also used a plot-driven narrative instead of using flashbacks to reveal the protagonist’s state of mind through the ordering of memories. Graham based the work on the Greek legend of the Cretan princess Phaedra, the wife of the aging Theseus. As in Night Journey, Graham used the theme of incestual passions to fuel the work as the protagonist sought the rejuvenating sexual powers of a younger man. When he rejects her, she resorts to deceit and revenge. Phaedra crosses through the story of Clytemnestra and the sacrifice of Iphigenia, as well as the abduction of Helen. As a result of Clytemnestra’s death, Aphrodite poisons Phaedra’s heart with insatiable desire. She marries, yet remains faithful to Theseus. Theseus has a stepson, Hippolytus, who comes to maturity when Phaedra reaches the prime of her sexuality. Phaedra lusts after her stepson but feels guilt doing so. Aphrodite imbues Phaedra with hatred when Hippolytus rejects her, and she lies to her husband about Hippolytus. The son dies because of the father’s desire for revenge.

As before, Graham based the work on a Euripides play but took the narrative deeper into the psychological realm using the body of the female narrator. At the end of Graham’s work, the old queen’s black veil falls on the shoulders of the young Phaedra; this later becomes her shroud when she commits suicide. The eroticism of the Noguchi set matched dance movements that included Aphrodite spreading her legs open to the audience while holding on to a womb-like set piece. Contractions and releases took on added significance as they overtly suggested the sexual act and its culmination. In Night Journey,
Oedipus and Jocasta had sex on the Noguchi modernist bed placed behind the Chorus when it danced. *Phaedra* did not shield the audience, and the act led to its heightened conclusion. Sexualized contractions challenged conventional boundaries of the technique. Although the narrative became a tale of morality that warned audiences about the dangers of uncontrollable passion, Graham used extremes of movement to teach this lesson.

Graham’s 1962 State Department tour again demonstrated the public-private initiative that took Graham and her company into the field. Rothschild flew the company to Israel and paid all expenses for the season in order to premiere *Legend of Judith*. The Tel Aviv Chamber Music Association co-sponsored the event to celebrate the Israeli’s score, and Graham received embassy and USIS support. She could bring the biblically-themed work about a woman who had saved the Jewish people, yet the State Department did not have to show direct support for the work and its ties to the Israeli state, which could be seen as taking a pro-Israel stance. *The Herald Tribune* reported on the “hefty savings” for the taxpayer because the International Cultural Exchange Service and the State Department, a combination that displaced ANTA, had then acted quickly to get Graham to Europe. In Turkey, as in most countries, the State Department found both local and private American

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foundations such as the Turkish American Association to finance the performances. The government got an asset into the field at a discount.

The tour again targeted and attracted members of the elite, however old-fashioned that seemed to those who believed in the export of culture with a “c.” The purpose of the tour remained the continuance of people-to-people dialogue at the upper echelons of society. Newspapers in most countries noted the presence of national leaders and prominent members of society in the audience. In Poland, cables back to the State Department described the audience in Warsaw. The embassy seemed pleased that Graham had drawn in the Minister of Culture and Art and “representatives of cultural and artistic circles.” The cable added, “Numerous representatives of diplomatic missions were present.” In Turkey, the Daily News “Social Corner” reported that the audience was “full of beautifully dressed women in mink and jewels.” The paper noted the presence of the Prime Minister and a host of political, cultural, and business personalities. German critics, however, balked at the elitism of Graham’s presentations overall. In Munich, a reviewer wrote, “The decor and the costumes are described as distinctively American, the latter could as well be found on Fifth Avenue.” In the final evaluation by the United States, however, reports on attendance


149 “American Ballet in Warsaw,” Cable, November 23, 1962, scrapbooks, box 352, MGC-LOC.


151 “Getanzte Psychoanalyse,” Stuttgarter Zeitung, December 7, 1962, scrapbooks, box 350, MGC-LOC.
celebrated the theaters filled with “the standard urban type including intellectuals from students to elite” and individuals “from the world of business, commerce, politics, and officialdom.” The report added that unfortunately the social strivers attended, or “others who pretended to belong to one or the other of these groups.”

Graham drew the expected audience into the theaters, and her reputation had even pulled in those who did not quite belong to the elite or intelligentsia.

In Europe, USIS publicity spoke little about the American and Asian themes that influenced Graham’s works. Neither Appalachian Spring nor Frontier travelled with the company. Because publicity did not educate the public about the American or Asian influences, one reviewer identified Graham’s “oriental dance” with “Mexican Aztec culture.”

Unlike the 1955 tour, descriptions of the Noguchi sets merely offered the artist’s name and identified him as a sculptor without noting his dual nationality, as they had in the past.

In 1962, the symbolic power of the individual trumped the universalist Cold War tropes. One review found Graham’s desire to expose the soul and the psychology of an archetypical mankind no more than “pseudo-psychological musings.”

Contrary to reviews from the 1955 tour and the rhetoric of the “soul of mankind” from Congress Hall in 1957, the 1962 reviews only addressed religion directly with the story of Judith in The Legend of

152 “Martha Graham: Evaluation,” scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.


154 Ibid.
Judith or Joan of Arc in *Seraphic Dialogue*. Early Cold War rhetoric, particularly under Eisenhower and Kennedy, had emphasized commonalities among men who strove for freedom and democracy. The social climate, however, had turned towards the appreciation of the individual. Graham represented “our perpetual struggle with ourselves.” Critics admitted that her works had “visionary power” but no longer had the ability to explain a universal man in the Jungian sense. The Department of State could no longer rely on the narrative that asserted that modern dance allowed people to transcend national barriers and create imagined communities.

Graham’s attachment to Mary Wigman’s work and German dance forms took a new twist on the 1962 tour, particularly when the company performed in Germany. In 1957, the press featured Graham and Wigman together in pictures and framed the dancers in the context of “expressionist” dance, however different their approach. By 1962, critics drew sharp distinctions between Graham and Wigman and foregrounded Wigman’s work. As opposed to Wigman’s choreography, “Graham’s first performances appeared clumsy.” Offered as a compliment, despite the fact that Graham would not see it as one, a critic noted that Graham gained a reputation as “The American Mary Wigman” because her work resembled that of Laban, Wigman, Kreutzberg, and Yvonne Georgie. While in Germany,

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155 “Translated Excerpts of Press Reviews on Netherlands Tour of Martha Graham Dance Company, 13-16 Dec. 1962”; “Martha Graham and her Dance Company,” scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

156 *Uusi Suomi* (Helsinki), December 12, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

157 [na] [nt] *Amsterdammer*, December 2, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

158 Carolus Heibe, “Hohepriesterin des modernen Tanzes, 1962,” Martha Graham, clippings file, DTK.
such comments stemmed from a growing rededication to the German dance, particularly through the work of Kurt Jooss, who became known as “Papa Jooss” to young students in Germany who studied his technique and aspired to become choreographers.\textsuperscript{159}

Reviews brought the tension between the European and American dance over cultural hegemony into direct conflict. With the 1950s German economic miracle, the new potency of German independence from the United States, and the recovery of its own dance in the post-war years, the history put forth by Margaret Lloyd and embedded in the 1962 tour publicity alienated critics and audiences. One article commented that USIS fed the paper information which it chose to ignore. The Germans differentiated between origins of their dance tradition and the work of Martha Graham. One critic wrote that “European emotional dance (\textit{Ausdrucktanz}) emphasized every dramatic event with \textit{zuchtvoller Deutlichkeit},” or “disciplined clarity.” He did not identify Graham as the leader of a global dance; rather, he wrote that Graham resembled Gret Palucca, who created “The German dance” in the present day.\textsuperscript{160} Two separate articles commented on the old-fashioned modernism brought by Graham. In addition, critics modified Graham’s form of \textit{Ausdruckstanz} with the words “American” and “modern.”\textsuperscript{161} Another reviewer wrote that Graham’s dance had its meaning and its use, but that at present it was merely peripheral.\textsuperscript{162} Another article argued that

\textsuperscript{159} von Bartlebaum.

\textsuperscript{160} Carolus Heibe, “Hohepriesterin des modernen Tanzes, 1962.”

\textsuperscript{161} “Sprache tänzerischer Bewegung,” \textit{Abendzeitung} (Munich), November 27, 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.

\textsuperscript{162} “Die Statthalterin des freien Tanzes,” \textit{Der Mittag} (Düsseldorf), December 3, 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.
“[m]odern dance (moderner Tanz) is still alive in the United States while its relevance is diminishing in Germany with every passing year.”

German critics pushed back against Graham’s technique and choreography, and other European nations followed; they appreciated Graham’s work as codified but not modern in the sense of either new or avant-garde. Newspapers quoted Wigman as the expert on expressionism; her practice incorporated improvisation and emphasized the search for new movement. Responding to the codification of Graham technique, Wigman asserted that Graham’s “classification system” used “ballet as the foundation of practice [that] is firm and established in [Graham’s] dance.” In the Netherlands, critics noted that her technique was “[j]ust as disciplined as that within the classical ballet.” Critics described grand jetés, cabrioles, arabesques, and legs in attitude: all steps from the ballet vocabulary. In Finland and Norway, as well, reviewers compared Graham both to George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. Indeed, they often found Robbins’s company, Ballets U.S.A., more accessible in its approach to modernism in dance, although they used the ballet vocabulary and pointe shoes when they performed. While Graham presented “American modernism,” critics deemed


164 “Martha Graham and her Dance Company,” Uusi Suomi, December 12, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

165 Hufvudstadsbladet (Helsinki), 11 Dec. 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.
Robbins “so much richer.”  

Graham had lost her modern edge over critics and audiences who had seen how ballet itself demonstrated technical and choreographic novelty.

Press reception varied from city to city and from dance work to dance work. Often, critics and audiences in countries new to Graham found a greater appreciation of her work because it seemed new. In Poland, where Graham had never yet toured, reviewers described her work as “emancipated” and appreciated her mastery of the choreographic art. Critics singled out *Secular Games* because of its “particular brilliance.” Finnish audiences had also never seen Graham perform, and reviews praised Graham’s innovations, however rigid. They called her “an unusually and powerfully creative artist.” These critics responded with passion to *Seraphic Dialogue:* “It is baffling, it is beautiful.”

If audiences found an imagined community through cultural convergences in Graham’s choreography, they appreciated the works. In Israel, *Legend of Judith* met with rave reviews because it told the story of Jewish uprising; Greek audiences adored *Clytemnestra* and the other works based on Greek myths, deeply appreciating how Graham

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166 “Martha Graham Baffles and Fascinates,” *Nya Pressen*, December 11, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.


168 “The Stage: The Martha Graham Ballet.”

169 “Martha Graham’s Dance Theater,” *Ilta-Sanomat*, December 11, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

170 “Martha Graham Baffles and Fascinates.”

had rewritten their own stories from antiquity. In Yugoslavia, the company was greeted with “[f]ervent applause as an expression of her merits in developing the art of dancing.” Critic often accepted the idea put forth by USIS and the dance itself that Graham’s movement technique had become a globalized system, noting that “[t]he principles of the school seem to have become a law.” Indeed, the technique made from “the laws of human nature” provided inspiration to choreographers and students of dance.

To greater or lesser degree, critics in most countries complained that the work seemed dated and pretentious. As expected, the starkest negative publicity emerged from Germany, where many reviewers equated Graham with a hollow version of pre-WWI and interwar achievements of German art. A critic called Graham’s work “dancing psychoanalysis,” tänzerische Psychoanalyse, and noted that the results were “consternating for a European audience and the stylistic expression too American.” The costumes, scenery, images, and movements seemed old-fashioned and reminiscent of former glory and fame. Another author asked, “[Can] Graham’s company be anything else but a museum of

172 “Martha Graham: Evaluation.”

173 “Martha Graham’s Dance Theater.”

174 “Martha Graham Evening,” Suomen Sosialidemokraatti, December 13, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

175 “Getanzte Psychoanalyse,” Stuttgarter Zeitung, December 7, 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.

176 Ulrich Dibelius, “Altern und Überdauern des Ausdruckstanzes,” Handelsblatt (Düsseldorf), December 29, 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.
Graham’s earlier successes?”  One author noted that in Munich the theater was half-empty. In Poland, critics pointed to the repetitiousness of Graham’s choreography because she used the same technical vocabulary in all dances. In Finland, reviews targeted particular dances; they considered *Seraphic Dialogue* a disappointment. Reviews noted that without a thorough knowledge of the myths or the Old Testament, audiences had to read program notes carefully to comprehend Graham’s interpretations. The critically heralded *Diversion of Angels* did not arouse the Finnish audiences. Although for some the work carried the evening, another reviewer took the women in Red, White, and Yellow as “[w]omen in evening dress who fall flat on the ground.” Overall, the Finnish audiences felt that Graham’s works were overly obscure and carried an “intellectual element” that threatened to “paralyze her genius.” In Amsterdam, *Legend of Judith*, although revered in Israel, was seen merely as “theater tricks.” Another Dutch review called the choreography

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177 Gerhard Schön, “Mit der Seele suchend,” *Rheinische Post* (Düsseldorf), December 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.

178 “Getanzte Psychoanalyse,” *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, December 7, 1962, clippings file, Martha Graham, DTK.

179 “The Stage: The Martha Graham Ballet.”

180 No title given [USIS translation], Hufvudstadsbladet, December 11, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

181 “Martha Graham Evening.”

182 *Hufvudstadsbladet*.

183 Ibid.

“entirely alien” and thus “doomed to be forgotten soon and completely.”¹⁸⁵ Even the American government admitted defeat. A summary sent back to the State Department that encapsulated comments from the embassy posts cited critics who wrote that the works showed a “pretense to modernity” and “were not really that modern.” Another unnamed source noted, “We have experienced a rather withered modernity of the 30’s.”¹⁸⁶

On the 1962 tour, the sexuality of Graham’s works came under greater scrutiny than they had either in Europe in 1950 and 1954 under private sponsorship or in Asia and Berlin during the State Department-sponsored tours. In 1962, reviewers noted that Night Journey’s was “sexually attractive.” In the same review, the Finnish critic complained that the artistic intelligentsia in the audience “prefer to deal with higher things than erotic games.”¹⁸⁷ Another review took a lighter view of the works, describing them as “spiced with healthy young erotics.”¹⁸⁸ While in Germany in 1957, no review addressed the explicit passages of Judith during which the heroine seduces the General, critics in 1962 noted the explicit nature of Judith’s seduction scene: “Wonderful was, for example, the orgy scene,” raved a reviewer. Another applauded the work of “erotic dreams.”¹⁸⁹ *Embattled Garden*


¹⁸⁶ “Critical Comments on Martha Graham Performances from Posts,” January 9, 1963, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

¹⁸⁷ *Hufvudstadsbladet*.

¹⁸⁸ “Martha Graham Evening.”

became celebrated for its “[s]ensualism and passion.” Reviewers remained more highly attuned to the sexuality of the works than in the past, yet this did not diminish the importance of the works. *Phaedra* received critical attention that did not negate the positive aspects of the choreography. The work’s “Hetero-erotic and heterosexual symbolism” worked well as a part of a “highly stylized” depiction of sexual relations. For the first time on a State Department tour, critics directly addressed the sexuality of Graham’s works.

In 1962, despite poor post reviews, the press reviews summarized by USIS and kept by Graham remained overwhelmingly positive. *The New York Herald Tribune*, Paris edition, celebrated Graham as an ambassador for Americans in the international market. The article focused on the success of the *Legend of Judith* and noted that when the Israeli workmen built the set for Graham, “they wept at the sight of it.” In *Dance and Dancers* magazine, the British critic Clive Barnes wrote a full-page spread on the Graham tour. In the United States, John Chamberlin pitted the Bolshoi against Graham’s company and reported on the “propaganda” value of dance. The “battle for men’s minds” included entrechats versus contraction-and–release. While he said the terms of the competition as politically potent “may seem a little silly” to some, he argued that the subtleties of the battle counted. While the Soviets only proved technical finesse and made laughable proletariat-

190 Ibid.


192 Blume, “Martha Graham Completes Another Triumphant Journey.”

193 Clive Barnes, “Martha in Europe,” *Dance and Dancers*, January 1963, 18, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.
themed dances, Balanchine and Graham proved that the United States could pioneer a new approach to movement that demonstrated both creativity and finesse. Following USIS, he singled out Graham because she had “taken to certain countries of the Old World a number of remarkable modern interpretations of their oldest legends.” He cited the unprecedented success of cultural exchange when she brought *Clytemnestra* to Athens and *Legend of Judith* to Israel. In the field, the articles saved, translated, and excerpted for reports back to the State Department overemphasized the positive. In an article excerpted by USIS titled “Renewal of The Dance and its Limitations” (emphasis added), the only two translated sentences were positive. They spoke of her “great influence” and the company’s “technical perfection.”

Despite the framing of Graham for American public consumption, Graham had descended from modern to “old.” The government began to question her effectiveness as the representative of a modernized America. Although USIS promoted the company of dancers as full of youth and vigor, Graham as a 66-year old performer drew critical press. Early reports foregrounded successes and did not report failures. After the tour ended in January, USIS sent a memo back to the State Department that described both her accomplishments and setbacks. Her work as a cultural icon and a representative of the new, youthful American state promoted by the young President Kennedy could only be represented by her youthful company members. In Europe, Graham had become “The Old Lady of Modern Dance.”

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195 “Translated Excerpts of Press Reviews,” from *Algemaan Handelsblad*, December 14, 1962, scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

196 “Martha Graham: Evaluation.”
Reviewers from almost every country felt that Graham should not be dancing anymore. While in Athens she spoke eloquently for reporters, “her performance was not quite up to its usual standards.” In Finland, a reporter concluded, “It is bitter to see a God fall from his pedestal. But also Gods do not remain young forever.” USIS clearly outlined Graham’s shortcomings despite couching them in a polite approach: “Some sympathetic hints that Miss Graham should now be content to rest on her ‘laurels’ and retire from active performances were evident.” Graham’s diminishing value as both a performer and an ambassador severely undermined the company’s success and prospects for future government work.

Graham had been selected for export because her company and her role as a female ambassador offered ‘the appeal of American ways”; but her value as an ambassador was severely compromised in 1962. Graham’s drinking problem clearly affected performances as well as lecture demonstrations. Her “exhaustion” reported by USIS in particular locations matched dancers’ personal observations. One dancer reported, “Martha was so drunk in Clytemnestra in Munich that she fell into the wings, completely disappeared & then fell back on the stage—She was still drunk the next day.” USIS clearly defined other goals, however: the dance and technique could “demonstrate that American

197 “Critical Comments on Martha Graham Performances from Posts.”


199 “Critical Comments on Martha Graham Performances from Posts.”

200 Helen McGhee to Umaña, Letter, November 30, 1962, box 9, folder 21, Helen McGehee and Umaña Collection of Dance Materials, LOC.
inventiveness can achieve superior results.”201 A USIS report overviewed each location by separating snippets of press reviews into positive and “critical,” concluding with the recommendation that future tours should be minimized “[b]ecause Miss Graham is getting older and the time approaches when her personal performances would detract considerably from the quality of the show.”202 Host countries questioned the modernity being sold by the United States as a cultural commodity: “Perhaps it was due to our anticipating a very modern dance, whereas what we have experienced is a rather withered modernity of the thirties.”203 Her work seemed to be a throwback to the novel technique of the interwar period, which had run its course. The modern dance no longer represented American inventiveness; rather, it served as a reminder that the promise of an innovative art rang hollow. Indeed, one report concluded that only a few in the audience “saw fit at the end to boo her.”204

In February 1963, the crippled Dance Panel reviewed Graham’s work in the field. While Graham excelled when she did lecture-demonstrations, her performances could no longer be considered an asset. Referring to her age, one government official remarked, “She may be too tired to tour again.”205 Words such as “exhaustion” began to surround Graham more frequently after she had been noticeably drunk on the 1962 tour. Graham had

201 “Martha Graham: Evaluation,” scrapbooks, box 354, MGC-LOC.

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid.

204 Ibid.

205 DP/IEP, March 25, 1963, UAK.
“saturated” Europe. Still, she carried international currency as the “High Priestess” of modern dance, and the State Department supported her performances at the Edinburgh Festival that took place that August. Starting with New York City Ballet’s success as a part of the Spoleto Festival in 1954, the State Department strongly supported such works that showcased many performers and could also garner non-governmental funding. Indeed, Inness-Brown had been instrumental in the 1954 festival by raising money from the private sector. A State Department report credited the festival with providing inspiration for Eisenhower’s Emergency Fund. In 1963, the Graham company would be one of a host of American exports, and the spotlight would no longer be on the woman as ambassador.

While Graham performed at the Edinburgh festival, she used Phaedra’s sexuality and the surrounding critical attention to deflect from her failings; the controversy surrounding the work gave her a much-needed publicity boost. In Edinburgh, Graham and Phaedra became a focal point. The explicit eroticism of Graham’s technique and dramaturgy filled reviews. A reporter noted that each year a particular artist or work gave the festival importance. In 1963, Phaedra became “the moment everyone had waited for.” Reviewers described the tale of “lust” with “mounting passion” which propelled the narrative

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206 “Martha Graham: Evaluation.”

207 “Virginia Royall Inness-Brown,” MC468, box 49, folder 24, UAK.

208 “Ballet Causes Controversy,” Jewish Chronicle, August 30, 1963, scrapbooks, box 357, MC-LOC.

209 G.C.S., “Graham the Appetizer,” Evening Dispatch, August 8, 1963, scrapbooks, box 357, MGC-LOC.
to its conclusion.\textsuperscript{210} Clive Barnes concluded that Graham had interpreted the Greek myth more “in terms of Dr. Kinsey’s report than Euripides or Racine.”\textsuperscript{211} In the \textit{Sunday Times}, the noted critic Richard Buckle noted that, for the public, “Shock [was] usually followed by a glow of delight and admiration.”\textsuperscript{212}

The publicity, however, did not shield her. The appearances received both good and bad reviews, with Graham herself receiving most of the critical press. Buckle wrote that Graham had become a poet of the dance.\textsuperscript{213} Other critics followed with laudatory reviews of individual works.\textsuperscript{214} One report concluded that Graham’s female heroines, who “lived the complexities of the mind,” demonstrated that Graham was “truly modern.”\textsuperscript{215} Graham herself, however, continued to come under scrutiny as a performer. Although Buckle had written a glowing review about Graham’s compositions and her company, he wrote of Graham’s work as a dancer: “She is older than the [Noguchi] rocks among which she sits.”\textsuperscript{216}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[210] Ibid.
\item[212] Richard Buckle, “The Voice from the Cave,” \textit{The Sunday Times}, September 6, 1963, scrapbooks, box 357, MGC-LOC.
\item[213] Ibid.
\item[214] Frank Dibb, “Bare Foot Technique,” \textit{South Wales Evening Argus}, September 6, 1963, scrapbooks, box 357, MGC-LOC.
\item[215] Susan Lester, “Approach to Martha Graham,” \textit{The Sunday Telegraph}, September 1, 1963, scrapbooks, box 357, MGC-LOC.
\item[216] Buckle, “The Voice from the Cave.”
\end{footnotes}
Reflecting on the festival in New York, Clive Barnes complained that Graham had passed her prime.

While Graham performed in Edinburgh, the State Department crippled the Dance Panel in the United States. The Panel only included four dance experts. William Bales became “Acting Chairman,” and critic Walter Terry continued to serve on the Panel as he had from its inception. Dance educator Martha Hill and publicist Isadora Bennett, who had attempted to produce a mixed bill season of modern dance on Broadway, also sat on the committee. Six of the eleven participants represented the State Department or USIS directly. The meeting opened with a State Department representative setting the agenda with a review of the types of dance that Area Specialists, the State Department, and USIA (USIS in the international arena) needed for export. While a “dance group” could be considered for Latin America, the selections in order of preference were a symphony orchestra, a musical comedy, or “Holiday on Ice.” The seventh item on the wish list included dance, but a “national folk song and dance group.” When the government asked the panel to come up with a prepackaged group of 25 performers, Bennett objected. She reminded the government that 25 dancers could not represent the nation. Moving forward without responding to Bennett, a government representative noted, “Modern dancers have done a lot with folk material.” He suggested that a repertory group including various choreographers go into the field with works such as *Appalachian Spring* coupled with Sophie Maslow’s *Folksay*. This official had not heard Graham respond to *Folksay*: “Oh Sophie, you’re so agricultural.” Graham would have had no intention of sharing a stage with Maslow. The government official then suggested combining the Graham and Maslow works with Alvin Ailey’s “folk” works, in
addition to pieces by Donald McKayle and Jerome Robbins. They had no knowledge of the many attempts to coordinate choreographers into a single season of mixed repertory which had continually failed in New York, much less offering a solution to international touring. During these mixed bills, even when producers as skilled as Bennett pulled them off, tempers raged both on and off stage as choreographers and dancers competed for attention. In addition, these artists would hardly acknowledge that their interpretation of “folk” met the other choreographers’ interpretations. The government’s provincial understanding of dance as a sophisticated genre could not be countered by the diminishing number of dance representatives on the Panel who understood the modernist terrain.

In the fall, Graham remained in Europe for a season in London. While Graham performed, the “Phaedra Scandal” unfolded in the United States. The work had received widespread acclaim abroad, yet two congressional representatives in the United States called the overt sexuality of the work into question as an appropriate cultural export. During the hearing “Winning the Cold War: The U.S. Ideological Offensive,” the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives launched the inquiry to ask “[h]ow the United States [was] doing on the cold war battle-ground of ideas.” The discussion began with questions of trade unions and American military and economic power. Then chair of the committee steered the hearing back to “the projection of image.” Questions about the purpose, range,

\footnote{DP/IEP, July 23, 1963, UAK.}

\footnote{House Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, \textit{Winning the Cold War: The U.S. Ideological Offensive: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs}, 88\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., May 1, 13.}
and efficacy of international cultural propaganda initiatives prompted the discussion. On Monday, September 9, the committee heard testimony on “U.S. Cultural and Artistic Exchanges.” Using early Cold War rhetoric, the committee felt that the programming “should display the highest artistic achievements of our free society” in order to “reach into the hearts and minds of men.” During the Graham tours, the State Department and USIS had dropped references to the “hearts and minds of men”; internationally, USIS presented Graham’s work as an exploration of the individual human psyche. This did not enter government discussions. Within the United States, the 1950s Cold War rhetoric remained potent.

The hearings elucidated the intention of the cultural project since inception. One congressman noted that using culture to project an image of the United States into the international arena was “nothing more than a form of selling” and “a soft sell in particular.” He concluded, “We would rather sell at the soft end of things than the opposite.” The committee then launched into a discussion of a tour by Vice President Nixon during which he had been heckled, but was followed by the New York Philharmonic. While Nixon had created animosity, the orchestra fostered goodwill. Although one congressman, tongue-in-cheek, said that perhaps the Soviet Union could stir up people by having its orchestras play “Yankee go Home,” cultural diplomacy remained a valuable part of American propaganda. The soft sell of culture eased the friction created by politics.

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219 Ibid., 171.
220 Ibid., 389A.
221 Ibid., 418.
222 Ibid.
The committee turned to congressional oversight and the Congress’s ability to screen and determine programming; they landed on the example of Graham’s *Phaedra*. Representative Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey (D) showed his provincialism when he asked NYCB dancer Melissa Hayden to explain the difference between dance exchanges and athletic exchanges. He noted that dancers were really trained athletes. Again, tongue-in-cheek, another congressman quipped, “Don’t start on the opera singers.”

Hayden argued that creativity and sports projected different aspects of the nation. *Phaedra* served the representatives well as discussions continued. Representative Edna Kelly of Brooklyn (D-NY) testified that she had seen the “unfortunate” programming selection during the 1962 Graham performances in Bonn. “This is a matter of direction,” she argued, because it “dealt with the seamier side of life.”

Kelly argued that the “unfortunate selection” served as proof positive that Congress should be able to mold programming to suit a particular image of America. Frelinghuysen described *Phaedra* as “an act” with men in loincloths. He continued, “They had some couches which they reclined on with companions,” and added, “The import was quite clear.” He concluded, “I found it distasteful as to any kind of image of this country.”

The two congressional representatives used the choreography to argue for censorship.

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223 Ibid., 435.

224 Ibid., 421.

225 Ibid., 436-437.

226 Ibid., 438.
Hayden defended Graham as a part of a sophisticated group of company leaders who would work with the government. She noted that Balanchine had been asked not to take *Prodigal Son* to Russia because of the biblical theme and that “intelligent” discussions took place.²²⁷ Hy Faine, a witness who represented the American Guild of Musical Artists, reminded the committee that *Phaedra* was a classical story from antiquity. He admitted that Graham’s work was “erotic” but denied that it was “salacious.” He argued that eroticism “takes place in all forms of life” and cited the Russian ballet *Spartacus*: “The reviews I saw stated that there was more eroticism in that ballet than Martha Graham’s ballet.”²²⁸ Kelley continued to argue for government oversight of content, adding, “I don’t want to limit that just to ballet.”²²⁹ By September 1963, the hearings had become a cause célèbre, and Graham attracted the bulk of media attention.

The press battle over Graham’s *Phaedra*—erotic or salacious—began on September 10, 1963. The *New York Times*, *The Herald Tribune*, and the *Post* reported on the House investigation “Winning the Cold War”; on the same day, newspapers from Chicago, Pittsfield, Kansas City, and even Elmira, New York, printed articles. The following day, *The Tribune* and *Post* published follow-up pieces; the international edition of the *New York Times*, the *London Daily Express*, Montreal’s *Star*, and papers in Hackensack, NJ, Minneapolis, MN, and Sunbury, PA joined them. Over the following week, articles appeared in the Baltimore *Morning Sun*, Glens Falls’s *Post-Star*, Indiana’s *News-Sentinel*, as

²²⁷ Ibid.
²²⁸ Ibid., 438-439.
²²⁹ Ibid.
well as follow-up articles in New York and Kansas City. *Life* magazine ran an extra section titled “Is Martha Too Sexy for Export?” During the ten-day period, letters and telegrams flooded into Kelly’s office from Graham representatives and even the conductor of the Mozart Festival Orchestra.

The press went to town. Like the *Times*, which reported that *Phaedra* was “an allegedly erotic dance,” large city newspapers came to Graham’s defense. Reporters and critics poked fun at Kelley and Frelinghuysen’s provincialism: indeed, it turned out that the representatives had walked out of the performance before the moral of the story could be told. One reporter questioned the problem of *Phaedra* writ large: “Anyway, it’s a bit late to be trying to suppress the Phaedra story. In the past few thousand years, it’s kind of got around.” Another reviewer noted that Euripides, Seneca, and Racine had used the myth. In addition, articles cited Frelinghuysen’s comment that he “couldn’t quite make [the dance] out.” In smaller towns, *Phaedra* became evidence of “sagging morality” and “national

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230 “Is Martha too Sexy for Export?” *Life*, scrapbooks, box 355, MGC-LOC.

231 Baird Hastings to Edna Kelly, September 15, 1963, scrapbooks, box 355, MGC-LOC.


233 “Nothing Quite Like a Woman Scorned,” *Charlotte News*, September 26, 1963, scrapbooks, box 355, MGC-LOC.

decadence.” Indeed, *The Binghamton Press* wrote, “We can see where [Graham technique] might give the erroneous impression that all Americans run around barefoot.”

Sophisticated viewers understood that the seeming extremes of sexuality constituted an artistic choice. The often fickle Lincoln Kirstein wrote a letter to *The Herald Tribune* and defended Graham: “Her analysis of time and spaces have altered the vision of all of us.” Limón, who had headed the first modern dance company to tour under the auspices of the State Department in 1954, cabled the State Department from Manila. *The Tribune* reported, “Dance leaders and theater artists were both amused and irritated.” In New York, papers noted that after Graham’s Broadway season in October, she would be performing at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC, for the president and first lady. The young and fashionable Mrs. Kennedy had become an arbiter of good taste. The *Baltimore Sun*, in a tongue-and-cheek manner, questioned whether Graham should be censored when she appeared in Washington. Both the artistic and the political elite defined the parameters of Graham’s modernism.

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236 Ibid.

237 Lincoln Kirsten to John Whitney, September 17, 1963, scrapbooks, box 355, MGC-LOC.

238 José Limón to United States Department of State, September 11, 1963, scrapbooks, box 355, MGC-LOC.


240 “Not Bubbles.”
In addition to American elites, the European artistic sensibility became a way to demonstrate Graham’s misunderstood importance: *Variety* suggested that members of Congress could learn from European audiences.\(^{241}\) A letter received by the *Times* noted that the two members of the House had become “a laughing stock” in Europe.\(^{242}\) Hy Faine, secretary of the American Guild of Musical Artists, defended Graham’s work as a part of a tradition of choreography that broke boundaries. He used the example of the Paris opening of *The Rite of Spring*.\(^{243}\) Even more significantly, Mary Wigman weighed in with a letter to the *Times*. In Germany, critics had not embraced Graham’s work in 1962. However, Wigman noted that the desire to censor artists dated back to the Nazi regime and that critical reception was not the issue. Wigman wrote that the incident was “quite a shock” to her because it took place in the United States, “the country in which freedom and liberty have always been written in capital letters.” She noted that artists must all stand up against “this queer threat.”\(^{244}\) She believed that this type of censorship would stifle young choreographers. Thus the woman whose work had been declared dead, and whose lineage did not form an integral part of Lloyd’s “modern dance,” came forward to denounce government censorship.

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\(^{244}\) Todd, “Letter to the Editor.”
While the battles raged, in London Graham remained above the fray and positioned herself as an elegant ambassador: she declined to comment. In October, when the press began to lose interest, she spoke. Noting that European audiences could not understand American complaints, she reminded the public that the congressional representatives did not even know in which city they had seen the dance. Regarding the men sitting on couches, she said that there was only one couch in *Phaedra* and that it was small and tilted and that dancers could not possibly lounge around on it in salacious loincloths. She reaffirmed her dedication to freedom of expression. In a manner typical of her flair for dramatics to drive home a point, she told the press that she “felt pawed by dirty hands.” The reporter for the international *New York Times* noted that Graham, in an aside to a colleague, had said, “Evil is in the eyes of the beholder.” Graham reaffirmed her voice as an artist who dared to “disturb,” concluding, “For all the arts disturb, or should.” Graham needed a boost, and the *Phaedra* scandal gave her the opportunity to insist that her choreography could be as innovative as Nijinsky’s *Rite of Spring*.

As the year progressed, the modernist companies that had led the export project continued to tour, albeit with more overt oversight. While the early tours had appeared to receive assistance from USIS and the Embassies, by 1963 the Dance Panel meeting minutes stated that Limón’s “booklets, heralds and posters were designed within the State Department.” In addition, the State Department representative noted that repertory had to fit


local audiences and indicated that the Dance Panel should weigh in on problematic works. State used the Dance Panel to control programming and keep it out of the reach of Congress. Visceral objections to government oversight increased at Panel meetings. When the State Department announced that decisions would increasingly be made at the post level, Bales asked who made the decisions at the post. “They ‘kick it around’ and come up with a solution which represents the general thinking,” replied an official. Inness-Brown, who had once overseen exports geared towards culturally sophisticated audiences, and sent Graham to Congress Hall, began to show her frustration despite the fact that she worked hand-in-hand with the State Department. While the Department wanted to send more jazz artists and the Harlem Globetrotters to Africa, she suggested that even if audiences were small, it would be worth sending a symphony quartet: “If only we reach the European-educated African and the students, this is sufficient.” One post reported that Africans thought that American culture was merely jazz. Even Inness-Brown, who had represented the State Department and supported its interests in the past, began to balk.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the discussion turned to export of the modern companies. Graham’s company was denied funding, although soloists in her company including Ethel Winter, Mary Hinkson, Helen McGehee, and Yuriko received support to give workshops internationally.\(^{247}\) Inness-Brown, a champion of Graham, resigned and became a consultant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. As the State Department solidified its power through the creation of administrative offices and official positions, private-sector individuals who had led the Panels left and went to work

\(^{247}\) DP/IEP, April 23, 1963, UAK.
directly for the Department of State where they might influence decisions behind closed doors.

In March 1964, State Department officials usurped the power of the Dance Panel. After the 1962 tour and congressional attention, the State Department did not appear eager to continue working with Graham. The Advisory Committee on the Arts became the sole governing body. It would take direction from the Panel only after the committee had made determinations about which companies to send “in terms of geopolitical area interests, past successes and failures” and which groups best represented “American cultural achievements.” By the end of the meeting, Walter Terry led the charge to challenge the State Department’s hegemony. He was seconded on the motion not to discuss items on the agenda until the Assistant Secretary of State clarified the function and procedures of the panel.248 The Dance Panel unanimously approved the Graham company to be the first modern dance troupe sent to Russia, yet the State Department asked for alternate suggestions including a “folk song and dance company.” Despite Terry’s insistence that Graham be given the “first consideration,” a Graham company deployment did not merit further discussion.249

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248 DP/IEP, March 18, 1964, UAK.

249 DP/IEP, May 19, 1964, UAK.
Chapter Five:  
After the Fall, the Rise of Modern Graham as an Icon in Asia, 1974

Both the international and domestic press pressured Martha Graham to retire from the stage, and in 1969 Graham did. Soon after, she became incapacitated by the effects of alcohol and poor health and nearly died in the hospital. Although visitors such as Ben Garber, who had introduced Graham to Lila Acheson Wallace and supported Graham financially, Agnes de Mille, and other luminaries visited Graham in the hospital, no one emerged to care for the ailing woman full-time except Ron Protas; he became a force of renewal for Graham. After her recovery, which began at Garber’s home, Protas began his reinvention of Graham as an icon.¹ Although numerous individuals found Protas overly controlling and even repugnant, supporters such as Francis Mason remained with Graham.² Those who remained believed in the power of her repertory and her creative genius. Once reestablished as the matriarch of “modern dance,” Graham could, once again, become a potential export by the State Department.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon, who had been vice president during Graham’s celebrated 1955 tour to Asia, needed to send pro-American propaganda to the region again. During the 1950s, tensions with China, the aftermath of the Korean War, and the fear of a communist infiltration of decolonizing countries had inspired the executive branch to send Graham into the

¹ Martha Graham to Ben Garber, 1970, box 1, folders 24, 25; Still photographs, polaroids, box 3, folders 26, 27, both from the Ben Garber Collection, LOC.

² Some discussions about Ron Protas have been related to the author off the record or expunged from oral histories.
international market as a cultural export; five years after the “fall” of China, Eisenhower announced that if Indochina fell to the Vietminh, then Malaya, Burma, India, and Iran could follow. His administration had sent Graham to all these countries except for Vietnam. In 1974, with Nixon as president, Graham’s company again toured Asia amidst the protracted war in Vietnam, and the repeat tour included Saigon. Nixon needed not only to “soothe internal mayhem,” as had been said of Graham’s work in *The Real Ambassadors*, but also to further develop opportunities for United States diplomatic relations with the opening of China. One State Department representative noted, “A principal objective of the visits is political.” He then corrected himself: “Or politico-cultural.” A formal State Department memo asked, “Why Asia?” and answered, “Because Asian posts regard cultural presentations as important to local objectives.”

Despite Graham’s tour to the same regions in 1974 that she had visited in 1955, much had changed at the State Department and with domestic funding of the arts. In the years leading up to the 1974 tour, Dance Panel meetings had been largely suspended. When meetings started again in 1970 after a two-year hiatus, membership had been reconfigured, and meetings were relocated from New


4 “Summary,” handwritten Memo, box 65, folder 2, 143, UAK.

5 Department of State to Mr. Fox, April 23, 1974, Group II, Series 2, Subseries 1, box 65, folder 3, UAK.
York to Washington, DC. As opposed to having a single covert State Department representative speaking at the meetings in the 1950s, the 1970 meeting included six official State Department participants and six representatives from the arts. While this may have been a balanced group officially, three “observers,” two from the Department of State and the other from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), tipped the balance to the government side. In all cases, the observers spoke during the meeting, and their input guided decisions about policy.

The State Department official opened the 1970 meeting by noting that the Alvin Ailey tour had “erased” any questions about the effectiveness of dance as propaganda. It remained the second most important export behind music. He then set the direction for the private sector experts and asked the dance panel members to give each company a grade of A, B, C, or F. Heated discussions ensued about criteria and whether the dance officials should evaluate companies for particular regions. State representatives insisted that the panel members rate the groups, but only as companies in the abstract. They were to make no further evaluations. Arguments began to take a bitter tone. State Department officials insisted that the


7 Ibid., 1-2.

8 Ibid, 22.

9 Ibid, 38.

10 Ibid., 29-32.
Office of Cultural Presentations make all decisions about how to send out the dance troupes.

By the early 1970s, the NEA had also become a force in international export projects, however uncomfortably or even illegally. Unlike ANTA, which had been able to work with the State Department, Congress chartered the NEA as a domestic institution to promote “[t]he encouragement and support of national progress and scholarship in the arts.” In 1966, NEA formed its own Dance Panel. In 1970, during the State Department Dance Panel meeting, the Office of Cultural Presentations asked the NEA to fund companies internationally. The NEA representative noted that the institution, according to its charter, could not legally work in the international markets; State Department representatives responded that if NEA supported a company domestically, it could then tour internationally and that NEA should assume some of the financial “onus” of tour operations. If a company garnered good domestic reviews, USIS could then advertise the company for the State Department internationally. These joint operations became known as “rescue missions.” Yet the NEA funding had to appear unconnected to State


13 “Summary.”

Department export projects, or else the propaganda would be perceived as government-sponsored projects.\textsuperscript{15}

With budgets cut at the State Department and increased financial pressure at NEA as applications skyrocketed, the Cultural Presentations Office relied on other funding mechanisms. Although there had been allusions to the “marriage” between business and government during earlier tours through program advertisements, personal relationships, or corporate contributions, the 1970 Panel minutes made these connections explicit. The Panel members decided that the organization could be more “canny” in fundraising and noted that Pepsi “helped us enormously” in exporting jazz to Africa because the company wanted to sell its product there.\textsuperscript{16} IBM got Ailey to Paris with one phone call.\textsuperscript{17} They considered how to get oil companies to help in South America.\textsuperscript{18} The overall discussion centered on how to identify particular companies that had interests in the countries targeted by the State Department for dance as a propaganda export.

Graham’s condition, as well as her company’s management and financial problems, meant that the company could not be considered for export. In 1970, deficits at the Martha Graham Center became unsustainable; financial


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 18.
problems plagued even the school, which had typically been a source of income.\textsuperscript{19} In 1971 the President of the Martha Graham Center resigned in response to the financial crisis.\textsuperscript{20} Executive Director LeRoy Leatherman worked with star dancers Bertram Ross and Mary Hinkson to save the company. In order to restart, he lobbied NEA as well as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, all of which came to the Center’s rescue with limited funding.\textsuperscript{21} Leatherman planned a collaborative season with other choreographers so that a “younger, larger company of dancers” could reinvigorate Graham’s work, and he wrote to NEA requesting support.\textsuperscript{22} In addition, Ross and Hinkson arranged studio showings of works.\textsuperscript{23} In 1970, a State Department official noted that countries in Asia wanted modern dance.\textsuperscript{24} Consequently, the panel sought modern companies that could serve these needs in

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\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{19} Martha Graham to Nancy Ross, March 31, 1971, “Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, Inc., and Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, Inc., Statement of Estimated Receipts and Expenditures, 1972,” Series 5, box 87, folder 5, NWRP.

\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{20} Jeanette Roosevelt to Members of the Board of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, Inc., October 4, 1971, Series 5, box 87, folder 7, NWRP.

\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{21} LeRoy Leatherman to Martha Graham, Mary Hinkson, and Bertram Ross, October 4, 1971, Series 5, box 87, folder 9, “Statement of Estimated Receipts and Expenditures, 1972, 2,” Series 5, box 87, folder 5, NWRP.

\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{22} LeRoy Leatherman to Nancy Hanks, National Endowment for the Arts, June 15, 1971, 2, Series 5, box 87, folder 5, NWRP.

\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{23} LeRoy Leatherman to Members and Directors of the Martha Graham Center, Inc., and the Martha Graham School, Inc., Series 5, box 87, folder 5, NWRP.

\hspace*{1cm} \textsuperscript{24} “Transcript of Proceedings,” 1970, 145.
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the Near East, South Asia, and East Asia; although Graham had triumphed in the region, they could find no viable company for export.25

After a two-year hiatus, the Dance Panel met again in 1972. The Cultural Presentations Office determined that it needed a large modern dance company once a year, although it had largely ceased underwriting this type of tour.26 Smaller companies with less established choreographers brought more accessible choreography and a lighter financial burden because they required fewer technicians, musicians, and sets. Nevertheless, members of the Panel acknowledged the need to send at least one large company into the field to counter the Soviet Union, which sent out groups such as the Bolshoi. Even though popular entertainment might garner better audience applause levels, a highbrow genre remained important to the American diplomatic project, even as a smaller percentage.27 An official asked the Dance Panel if the Graham Company was ready.28 “Not ready yet,” replied the member, who then added, “It will be six to nine months before anyone has an opinion.”29 During the May meeting, the Panel selected Limón as “our modern dance company for ’72-’73.” He passed away in

25 Ibid., 145.

26 Ibid., 102.

27 “Summary.”

28 “Transcript of Proceedings,” 1972, 64.

29 Ibid., 65.
December.\textsuperscript{30} At the end of the meeting, the State representative asked, “So now who is next for the agreement that will cover 1974?”\textsuperscript{31}

Graham returned to the company and school in 1972, and over time she became furious with the new approaches taken by management to save the company, such as studio showings and appearances at a shared evening of dance. The informal showings arranged by Ross and Hinkson violated her belief that her works had to be performed on Broadway to maintain the company’s reputation for sophistication. Regarding Leatherman’s desire to include Graham repertory in evenings of shared programs, she declared, “I never share a stage,” although she had participated in several concerts from 1930 through 1955.\textsuperscript{32} She announced to some members of the Board that LeRoy Leatherman would be leaving, although he had not been made aware of his imminent departure. Leatherman followed with a memo in which he defended his actions; he nevertheless concluded: “None of us here imagines that during those years we have not made mistakes.”\textsuperscript{33} Despite Graham’s accusations, Leatherman’s work had helped keep the company afloat. In 1972 the Rockefeller Foundation offered hope for international touring and an

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\textsuperscript{30} Lynn Garafola, introduction to \textit{José Limón, José Limón: An Unfinished Memoir} (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).
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\textsuperscript{31} “Transcript of Proceedings,” 1972, B-83.
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\textsuperscript{33} LeRoy Leatherman to Members of the Martha Graham, September 22, 1972, Series 5, box 87, folder 6, NWRP.
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appearance at the Spoleto Festival. Individual funding certainly remained an important part of Graham’s financial viability, but Bethsabée de Rothschild had slowly tapered off funding for Graham. Lila Acheson Wallace made significant investments in the company, but she did not match the largesse of Rothschild. After Leatherman’s departure, Bertram Ross served as acting artistic director, a position that became doomed by his relationship with Protas. While Ross and Hinkson worked, Graham demonstrated that the woman had been rejuvenated and received a facelift courtesy of Ben Garber. One reporter noted, “Martha herself is in wonderful form again. Why she even looks like a young girl!”

Yet within a year, Ross had resigned and Hinkson had walked out. Ross wrote Graham that Protas had “caused the leaving of a great many other loyal, devoted, competent, talented employees.” The *New York Post* reported, “A New Boss – and Dance Company is Out of Step.” The article noted that NEA sought a

34 William B. McHenry to Nancy Wilson Ross, January 14, 1974, Series 5, box 87, folder 9, NWRP.

35 LeRoy Leatherman to Nancy Hanks, National Endowment for the Arts, September 22, 1972, Series 5, box 87, folder 7, NWRP.

36 Martha Merz, interview with author and Elizabeth Aldrich, Dance Curator, Library of Congress, April 20, 2009, box 4, folder 15, Benjamin Garber Collection, LOC.

37 *Time*, January 7, 1974, Series 5, box 87, folder 11, NWRP.

38 Bertram Ross to Martha Graham, December 4, 1973, Series 5, box 87, folder 7, NWRP.

federal audit of the Graham financial legers. Graham hired a lawyer to inform Ross that he must “cease and desist.” With Protas using the press to defend himself and Graham, the *New York Times* wrote that Hinkson “threw a dagger, used in the production of Clytemnestra” before walking out on Graham. Hinkson notes that the dagger was a set prop and that she merely put it down forcefully on the table in frustration.

Despite turmoil at the company, new dancers had been trained by Ross and Hinkson with the help of other principal dancers from the 1950s; a company could be assembled and readied for work. In 1973, Graham’s Board President and former cultural attaché Francis Mason alerted the State Department that Graham was ready to tour. He asked the State Department to consider Graham for the 1974 slot. In addition to demonstrating that Graham could produce repertory and dancers, the commissioning of Graham became linked to her renewed power as a personality. During the previous decade, Alvin Ailey had taken the lead as a cultural ambassador of dance. Ailey demonstrated his prowess with a mixed repertory appreciated by all audiences, dancers of color, and his

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40 Ibid., 19.

41 Arnold Weissberger to Bertram Ross, Series 5, box 87, folder 10, NWRP.

42 Anna Kisselgoff, “Amid Discontent, Tour of Europe is Planned by Graham Dancers,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1973, also in Series 5, box 87, folder 11, NWRP.

43 Author oral history with Mary Hinkson, March 3, 2005, closed except with the permission of Mary Hinkson.

44 John Richardson, Jr. to George S. Springsteen, September 11, 1973, MC468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.
persona; the Cultural Presentations Committee and NEA joined forces with corporations such as IBM to strengthen the company financially in the United States.\textsuperscript{45} Although Merce Cunningham’s performances proved “unquestionably that the United States is the world leader in modern dance,” he received little funding.\textsuperscript{46} The embassy in Paris offered Cunningham $2,000 with the blessing of the State Department.\textsuperscript{47} Despite Cunningham’s standing in the international market as what the government called “modern dance,” a term that he would have abhorred but that proved the creative mettle of the United States to state officials, he did not always act like a diplomat. Unlike Graham, who in the 1950s sat and socialized with women’s groups and charmed diplomats at embassy parties over cocktails, Cunningham did not show ebullience in his role as ambassador. While cultural presentation officers at the State Department considered Alwin Nikolais’s work “theatrical gymnastics” rather than dance, he received full funding for multiple tours.\textsuperscript{48} They noted that Nikolais was “[r]ather elegant” and “awfully good at talking.”\textsuperscript{49} By 1974, Graham had been transformed into the “High Priestess” of modern dance – a “Doyenne” in some nations. Although she did not dance, Graham managed a group of youthful, bright dancers who accompanied the iconic “modern” artist. Thus she could be considered ready to reenter the world


\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 30.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 45.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 195.
stage as an ambassador who could charm and impress elites with her sophistication and rhetorical grace.

The Nixon administration’s State Department, led by Henry Kissinger, concentrated its foreign policy on Asian issues, and it needed strong ambassadors to represent the United States in the region. In 1971, Kissinger had begun sending quiet overtures to the People’s Republic of China and flew on a series of secret diplomatic missions to Beijing. In 1972, Nixon ended a twenty-five year period of separation and resumed diplomatic relations with the communist People’s Republic of China (PRC). The Graham Company began its official State Department tour in August in Taipei and proceeded to the British colony of Hong Kong. Renewed response to the Vietnam wars had led Nixon’s administration to engage in unprecedented attacks and covert bombings. These actions led to a distrust of and disgust for the United States and its foreign policy. In 1973, Nixon began peace negotiations in Paris to end the Vietnam War. In the secret protocol to the 1973 Peace Agreement, Nixon promised reconstruction aid, and the South Vietnamese government welcomed foreign investment. Following the desire to repair damage and strengthen relations and repair damage, the company proceeded to the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Burma, and then closed in Vietnam. The tour continued unofficially to Japan, funded by box office


receipts and what the State Department called “commercial auspices.” The Nixon administration’s cultural team skipped over some 1955 tour stops, including India, Pakistan, and Iran, focusing instead on Hong Kong and Vietnam.

The State Department had been looking for bookings to Asia since 1970; Kissinger recognized that he needed cultural diplomacy. The Department of State told the Dance Panel that “deployments” would be made “based on what we need,” and they needed diplomacy in Asia. Before the Dance Panel could officially approve or deny Graham funding based on their own six-to nine-month observations, the State Department “locked in” the tour. She garnered State Department support, along with NEA funding, donations from individuals, and sponsorships from embassies, host country organizations, and USIS. Although Lila Acheson Wallace donated significant sums of money herself, she also used the Reader’s Digest Foundation to promote American interests abroad through the distribution of the magazine. Indeed, multiple layers of the American government funded Graham in 1974. In Saigon, the embassy and the State Department offered “joint sponsorship” because the post felt that having a cultural presentation that represented the United States had become urgent.

52 “Summary.”


54 Ibid., 40.

55 Ibid., 53.

56 Embassy Saigon to Department of State, Telegram, [nd] 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.
Youth Ministry also added financial support. Although performances in Korea were cancelled at the last minute because of the assassination of the Korean President’s wife, the Seoul embassy had brokered a funding relationship between Graham and the National Theatre as well as the Vice Minister for Culture. The government required the use of the private sector, foundations, and “the marriage between culture and commerce” to pay for cultural exports. Yet the government did not show confidence in the company overall. It sent the contract for the 1974 tour directly to Mason and skipped over the company manager and Ron Protas, the logical recipients of the document.

Despite government trepidation and uncertain leadership, Graham opened in Taipei eighteen days after Nixon’s resignation. When Gerald R. Ford assumed the presidency, political backing for the tour accelerated, although the State Department remained the lynchpin. The First Lady, Betty Ford, publicly supported Graham as had both Eleanor Roosevelt and Jackie Kennedy, yet her voice carried greater weight because she had been a student of Graham’s. Mrs. Ford’s biographer even wrote, “No other person had more of an influence on Betty than Martha Graham.” Mrs. Ford telephoned Graham before she left on tour;

57 Ibid.


59 Mark. B Lewis, Director, Office of Cultural Presentations, to Francis Mason, May 28, 1974, box 237, folder 3, MGC-LOC.

60 John Robert Greene, Betty Ford: Candor and Courage at the White House (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 9; For the continuing support of Graham alongside Jackie Onassis at benefits in the late 1970s, see also Denise A. Seachrist, The
USIS milked the relationship and repeatedly mentioned Ford’s call to Graham in press packets. Internationally, Graham became known as “The First Lady” of modern dance. Kissinger remained a consistent force supporting Graham. In a memo to the president, Kissinger outlined the tour locations and reminded the president of Mrs. Ford’s history with Graham and the congratulatory phone call. While the company toured, Kissinger received detailed cables about diplomatic meetings: a telegram from Singapore noted that Graham would be meeting with the Minister of Culture. Kissinger believed that White House should show “appreciation to the grand lady of dance for her contribution to international understanding.”

Cultural representatives of the State Department believed that in nations Graham had already visited, audiences would remember the modern sophistication and vigor that she had demonstrated as a part of the American project overall. In other nations, Graham symbolized American potency as a long-time innovator who brought the power of regeneration, iconic status, and youth with her revitalized company. Indeed, at the conclusion of the 1974 tour, an embassy telegram from Jakarta, which copied all embassy posts and reported to the State

Musical World of Halim El-Dabh (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 116-117.

61 “Martha on Private Life,” The Nation, September 8, 1974, [np], box 65, folder 6, UAK.

62 Embassy Singapore to Department of State, Telegram, [nd] 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

63 Henry Kissinger to Gerald Ford, September 6, 1974, MC468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.
Department that the Graham performances had met the government’s objectives. Her modern dance was a “demonstration of discipline and movement which expressed modern cultural language which overcame national boundaries; that choreography expressed the restlessness of modern man; and that performances convinced everyone that modern American culture had made [an] important contribution to the development of the twentieth century.”

Cables, however, did not always reflect all events on the ground. In a private note, a State Department official who accompanied the group wrote that, with the choreography, “[d]rama becomes melodrama” and added, “It occasionally approached the ridiculous.”

Noting the old-fashioned nature of the work, he added that the “modern” should be tempered with adjectives like “classical” or “traditional.” Nevertheless, when Graham entered the international arena, the State Department sought to enact foreign policy aims through cultural diplomacy; it used Graham to argue that the United States had become an established world leader while maintaining its dedication to innovation. As an export, Graham succeeded and failed location to location. Her consistent success lay in her value as a representative of American power as an iconic leader, however old-fashioned the behavior of the government in its approach to other nations or the “modern” dance.

The State Department cultural officials discussed the tour repertory with Graham and drew on all four components of her work. As in 1955, the pieces

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64 Embassy Jakarta to State Department, 1974, box 198, folder 14, MGC-LOC; identical memo, box 66, folders 6 and 2, UAK.

65 “Summary.”
included works of that had been called “Americana,” pieces that exhibited Asian influences, and mythic and biblical dances that argued for the universality of the American interpretation of the Western tradition. However, in 1974 the nature of the Cold War had changed. “Americana” now symbolized hegemony rather than liberation. Neither the integration of Asian forms nor Western myths argued for a universal mankind. Biblical works, however, became important repertory choices, and USIS promoted works about America in religious terms. Although the company continued to perform *Appalachian Spring*, USIS no longer referred to Miles Standish or the power of the frontier. Instead, the frontier became the “Promised Land.” Second, neither the integration of Asian forms nor Western myths argued for a universal mankind, which again became a hegemonic concept because they emanated from the stories that had come to define the West. In 1955, the publicity had made no mention of religion on Graham’s work; in 1974 religion might seem to promote a common bond among men and women. Again, this backfired: Asian audiences interpreted biblical tales as strictly Western.

Although touring programs had aspired to be new and modern in 1955 and the 1960s, the programming in 1974 demonstrated how Graham had become the representation of a codified form. The repertory taken on tour only spanned 1940 through 1958; she did not bring new choreography. The company performed dances that had been seen in the region and had become signature pieces; none of the works could convey that her choreography had remained modern in the sense of innovative. Drawing from the 1955 trip, the company performed *Appalachian Spring, Night Journey, Cave of the Heart, Errand into the Maze,* and
Diversion of Angels. In addition, Graham brought Seraphic Dialogue, the story of Joan of Arc, and Embattled Garden (1958), which brought the story of Adam and Eve. New programming included El Penitente, the oldest work in the repertory; it had never been seen on a State Department tour.

In 1962, Graham had attempted to use eroticism to present herself as an up-to-the-minute choreographer. In 1974, however, this tactic could not be used in Asia to assert an avant-garde approach to dance by Graham. The Cultural Presentations Committee’s Dance Panel, moreover, strongly discouraged explicit works. “Exploitation,” “flirtation with the audience,” and “overdone” sexuality became taboo. Embassy post memos showed concern that some of Graham’s male dancers had long hair; in Singapore, men and women could not share hotel rooms. The company staged dress rehearsals of all the works for censors in Burma, who ultimately decided that the provocative technique could be shown.

In the context of “modern” dance, government officials in the United States and all countries on tour did not object to the depiction of sex on stage in Night Journey because it counted as erudite culture. However, the company could not perform Phaedra, which had caused a sensation in 1962. Rather, in order to display Graham’s dynamic approach to modern dance, the dancers performed Clytemnestra, the first and only full-length modern “ballet.”

66 “Martha Graham Company Opens Engagement September 12,” Philippines Daily Express, September 9, 1974, folder 5, Box 65-UAK.

67 “Summary.”
Although the press, USIS, and cables back to the State Department celebrated Graham, private misgivings recorded by a cultural official demonstrated the tenuous nature of the Graham Company’s position as an export. While the company toured, a State Department official accompanied them. His handwritten notes both follow cables sent back to the State Department verbatim when they were unclassified and positive; he reported negative comments and private reflections in classified cables, or they did not make their way back to America in official form. According to him, Graham achieved success because no other cultural attraction had been sent to the region in years, and USIS inundated markets with publicity. Moreover, as opposed to the cultural officer in Jakarta who wrote the celebratory cable, this unnamed author remarked that the old-fashioned dramatic style made Graham seem like an “old silent movie director.” To prove his point and show that he “was not alone in [his] reaction,” he took note of “suppressed giggles” from the audiences. Repeating Eisenhower's famous line, he wrote that Graham had failed to get the government’s “bang for its buck.” The handwritten

68 “Summary”; Henry A. Kissinger to Gerald Ford, September 6, 1974, MC468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.

69 “Summary.”

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.
memo concluded that with the performances and repertory, “The tour did not fully achieve its theoretical optimum potential.”

Notices of mismanagement littered unclassified and private memos, but unclassified cables accentuated the positive. A summary prepared for the Director of Cultural Presentations at the State Department insisted that despite “temperamental” management, the posts visited on the tour reported that the group was a “resounding success” and that praise for the company “would fill pages.” The handwritten memo, however, noted that “[w]eak, erratic” company organization, direction, and management threatened to cause cancellations. In addition, unlike Graham's previous iron control over her dancers regarding manners and issues of protocol on tours, when she was ill, management showed a lack of sophistication regarding local customs. Problems became so severe that he wrote a classified document to the Department of State about the difficult personalities. They demonstrated a “holier-than-thou, arts-for-arts sake, take-it-or-leave-it attitude.” When Ron Protas had to eat with the company members and crew, “unpleasant confrontations” took place. In public, his behavior, which was not

73 Ibid.

74 “TO: CU – Mr. John Richardson, FROM: CU/EA, SUBJECT: Weekly Activities Report,” November 12, 1974, MC468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.

75 “Summary.”

76 Embassy Tokyo to Department of State, Telegram, September 4, 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

77 “Summary.”
detailed in the handwritten memo, “caused embarrassment.” For USIS and the State Department representatives, he proved “the most burdensome, annoying, and time consuming” individual. However, because of the vital role he served in supporting Graham personally, there seemed to be no way around him. Indeed, the memo detailed allegations that the company manager had embezzled funds. When it came to management, “[t]he company failed.”

Graham’s power as an ambassador for the United States became the lynchpin. Although her company might have ups and downs, Graham herself represented the country as an artist and diplomat. In 1974, Graham continued to receive accolades for her contributions despite touring problems. The private memo foregrounded Graham’s brilliance during “protocol affairs.” Politically, Graham remained above the fray: “I am not a propagandist,” she repeated in each country. Her charm, personality, anecdotes, “old-fashioned courtesy,” and her “almost intuitive feeling for the right gesture” made her an incomparable asset for the Department. This memo concluded that because of Graham herself the tour “made a positive contribution to overall Department of State foreign relations objectives.”

78 “Summary.”
79 Ibid.
80 “Bridging the Past and the Future,” The Bangkok Post, September 28, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK. See also, “Martha Graham’s ‘Rebirth,’” The Nation (Bangkok), September 27, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.
81 “Summary.”
82 Ibid.
For the State Department, Graham remained a potent export because of her rapport with the political elite. The attachment to Kissinger’s memorandum to Ford that suggested Graham visit the White House noted, “Among the various audiences were the First Lady and President Marcos of the Philippines; the King and Queen of Thailand.” In the Philippines, papers noted that President Marcos and his wife sat with the United States ambassador, two Italian opera stars, and the CCP theater director. The dancers remember being showered with rose petals at the conclusion of the last performance. In Taipei, the papers reported that the Vice President and the Premier sat next to the American Ambassador. USIS promotional programs clearly stated what earlier tours had suggested: that those who could understand Graham’s dance showed artistic sophistication. Such understanding allied them with the United States and an international art form. USIS constructed the tour programs and wrote the biographical introduction to Graham: “Martha Graham, from early in her career, has had recognition from perceptive audiences.” It equated her with Picasso because it took a sophisticated


84 “Brief Summary of Martha Graham’s International Tours,” [nd], MC 468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.

85 Press photo caption, Daily Express, September 4, 1974, 1, box 65, folder 5, UAK; Eilber.

86 “Taipei All Praise for Graham Dancers,” The Times Journal (Taipei), September 8, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

87 Martha Graham Dance Company Program labeled, “Martha Graham Dance Tour,” USIA Programs, 1970-1978, RG 306, box 1, NARA.
eye to understand modern art. As noted by the State Department in discussions
with NEA, USIS generated Graham press packets that quoted renowned New York
critics, who were then quoted by reporters in host countries. Yet the private memo
suggested problems with the elitist approach, which had also been noted in the
1960s: “Too many people came to be seen – rather than to see.”

Graham wooed the elites during cocktail receptions and dinners both at American embassies and in
the homes of dignitaries. The Kissinger memo concluded that “her performances
were hailed [by the intelligentsia] as one of the most significant cultural events to
take place in years.”

On all tours, especially in 1955, Graham’s meetings with women’s
groups had been an important part of her work as a cultural ambassador. USIS
guides advised that in Asia, Graham should remain seated with women, and press
photographs always showed her following protocol. According to USIS, its largest
problem with Graham was that she did not want to be photographed during
unstaged public appearances, even with these dignitaries, because of her vanity.

She did, however, have a candid picture taken in Hong Kong with other women.

This work continued to be a selling point for the embassies: in Rangoon, Pao’s wife

88 “Summary.”
89 Ibid.
90 “Brief Summary of Martha Graham’s International Tours.”
91 “Summary.”
92 *Hein Chung Yuan Pao*, September 1, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.
worked with the State Department to arrange a luncheon and tea with other women to discuss Graham’s career choices as a “modern woman.” Although Graham had always been cooperative, her patience wore thin. Meetings with women became “a type of activity which she found particularly abhorrent.” Graham had claimed never to have been a “liberationist,” and she refused to be associated with the feminist movement in the United States. The only complaint she expressed about her role as an ambassador came with the obligations of socializing with women and speaking to them about the politics of being a woman in the 1970s.

Even though the straightforward definition of the American as modern, in the sense of new, had diminished by 1974, the combination of Graham and her company provided a dual propaganda opportunity: Graham could be presented as a staid and mature reflection of American culture, while her company of dancers wooed a younger generation. According to the State Department, Graham provided something “gloriously made to order: high level and yet still associated with the youth.” She had become a part of the “high level” because of her relationships with executive branch and international leaders. The protracted war in Vietnam had made the United States seem to many an old-fashioned imperialist power; like a protectorate, however, Graham, as a globally recognized

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93 Embassy Rangoon to Department of State, Telegram, October 5, 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

94 “Summary.”

95 Hein Chung Yuan Pao, September 17, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

institutional power, could carry weight as a cultural symbol of both maturity and the ability of the nation to foster new approaches. She demonstrated how the post-World War II United States had developed its own highbrow forms, which had become an international institutional force. According the State Department, “Her company illustrated in the most dramatic form possible the image of America as a culturally dynamic society.”

The youthfulness and vitality of the new company members could prove the potency of the American character. The Cultural Presentations Committee looked for the “certification of youth,” which Graham’s members provided. Publicity photos showed them in leaps flying through the air; tall, classically trained dancers with faces like models performed long, high leg extensions. A USIS press packet contained an article titled “Martha Graham attracts world’s young dancers.” While Graham remained the “Madame” and “Great Lady,” her company represented the youth of America with vitality and discipline. An embassy telegram back to the State Department noted that the members of the company as a “collective” became a “sound representation of the youth of America.”

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97 “Brief Summary of Martha Graham’s International Tours.” Note that this memo quotes the following source: Embassy Jakarta to State Department, 1974, box 198, folder 14, MGC-LOC; identical memo, folder 6, Box 65-UAK.


99 “Brief Summary of Martha Graham’s International Tours.”

100 Embassy Rangoon to Department of State, Telegram.
In 1974, Graham articulated the influence of the four factors outlined; she said, “Mankind has been my inspiration – the life of man, whether Asian, Greek, Western.” Of the four, she indicated her desire to make a universal dance, she acknowledged the Asian influence and the influence of Western civilization. Although the company performed both Appalachian Spring and El Penitente, Graham did not mention the influence of “Americana”; those associated with government projects no longer used the word. Reactions to Appalachian Spring demonstrated the backlash against Americana. Cultural officials in the Philippines contacted the embassy and asked the work removed from the repertory. The local cultural intelligentsia considered the work’s folk elements and subject matter inappropriate for the concert stage. The embassy responded by cabling the State Department, copying all posts, and asking that Graham not use the work. If the dance were shown, they requested that it be performed only at the Folk Arts Theatre. The agency admitted that Appalachian Spring had gotten bad press as Graham’s “Surrealist fence act.” The performance included only excerpts of the work, and USIS promoted the work as the story of a dream of the “Promised Land,” and not the frontier. The change in tour program descriptions emphasized the spirituality and abstract quests of the Bride and the Husbandman rather than

\[101\] “Graham to choreograph for Nureyev,” The Times Journal, October 1, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

\[102\] “Martha Graham tour Begins in Triumph,” USIS Press Release, September 19, 1974, box 65, folder 7, UAK.

\[103\] “Graham Technique Currently on Show,” Business Day, September 13, 1974, MC468, box 65, folder 5, UAK.
territorial conquest. “Sophisticated audiences,” USIS claimed, would see beyond the fence. With the work, Graham “looked into her own future.” The publicity continued, “It is not a frontier you can find on an atlas.” Rather, it was a universalized and modernized Turnerian frontier in which a person became “a bride or a mother-to-be, a soldier or an astronaut or a scientist or…of you and me. It was everyone’s frontier.”

Graham’s link to Miles Standish and the Mayflower also went unmentioned in USIS information provided to newspapers and did not appear in the press. In 1955, publicity in Asia had repeatedly emphasized her connection to the anti-colonial British leaders who became Americans. In 1974, the “American” also could be postulated as more eclectic with El Penitente. USIS advertised El Penitente as another part of the American spectrum, both in the composition of its population and its religiosity. Set in the American Southwest, it depicted a sect whose flagellant believers reenacted the Passion of Jesus Christ at Easter. The “primitive” roots of the nation became a part of the presentation of the United States, particularly in its dedication to Christianity. Graham had created El Penitente as a particularly American rite. She depicted a “Hispanic” population, and not an “Anglo” one and thus showed an American ethnic and religious diversity not present in Frontier or Appalachian Spring.

USIS again found traction from Graham’s Asian roots, but not as a symbol of cultural convergences that would bind “the hearts, minds, or souls of

104 “Martha Graham Tour Begins in Triumph.”
105 Ibid.
mankind.” In Taipei, Graham was said to have transcended her “American modern dance” by “integrating Oriental symbolic props and simple set pieces.”

According to a reviewer who looked at her technique, Graham had “been greatly influenced by the study of Oriental culture and [had] incorporated into her work the kneeling, squatting, rising, sinking and sliding on the floor, which is an essential part of Oriental dancing.” In all nations on the tour, audiences appreciated Noguchi’s sets. In contrast to its design of the 1955 tour publicity, USIS did not foreground his works as pure sculpture or provide biographical details on Noguchi to underscore Graham’s synthesis of other cultures. Neither the press nor Graham made any overtures towards universality implied by the cultural convergences. A picture of Graham in an oriental work by Denishawn lay under the headline, a quote from Graham: “It is a Great Privilege to go Back to Asia.”

The handwritten memo by the State Department official on tour explained why the idea of “universals” had dropped out of the argument and rhetoric. This author wrote, “While many of the themes Graham deals with are eternal, their treatment strikes reviewers as dated.” He continued to refer to Denishawn publicity used by USIS as problematic because both Denishawn and

106 “Taipei All Praise for Graham Dancers,” The Times Journal (Taipei), September 8, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

107 “Martha Graham and Dance Company Sets 3 Manila Performances,” Philippine Evening Express, August 17, 1974, 8, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

108 “Summary.”

109 “‘It is a Great Privilege to Go Back to Asia,’ – Martha Graham,” Philippine Evening Express, September 7, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.
Graham seemed “campy.”

Newspapers offered a different perspective: like reception in the 1960s, audience members understood the works as reflective of the individual. The use of Asian forms “left the audience room for their imagination.”

Ideas of “human truths” contained in the Graham works became offset by ideas of individual “inner compulsions.”

Graham called her works “ballets,” as did others who toured, such as Alvin Ailey; it was a term that worked particularly effectively in the international market for the State Department. A telegram from the embassy in Rangoon noted that Graham’s appearance should be scheduled in order to preempt appearances by a Russian dance troupe.

State remained concerned that the Soviets and bloc countries continued “their impression of us as barbarians.” In order to counter the Soviets, the committee recommended calling dance works that went out into the field “ballets.” When the Americans advertised works as such, the cultural presentations officers believed that the international public would have a frame of reference but would also understand that the American choreography was not “steeped in nineteenth-century tradition,” but rather “innovative and

110 “Summary.”

111 “Taipei All Praise for Graham Dancers,” The Times Journal (Taipei), September 8, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

112 Letty Magsanoc, “Modern Dance ‘High Priestess’ & Troupe Here,” Bulletin Today, September 11, 1974, 8, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

113 Embassy Rangoon to Department of State, Telegram, May 4, 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

contemporary.” On this tour, Graham announced that she had not “rebelled” against ballet; rather, she “used it.” The reporter added, “She builds on it.” Papers reported that Graham said that some of her source material came from ballet.

Graham’s use of the European, or French, term countered the Soviets who only had the European-derived classical ballet to export as sophisticated dance art: her integration of and expansion on the European-derived form proved the creative mettle of the United States. Subtle anti-Soviet messages took hold: while Graham toured, the international press announced that Graham would be choreographing a special work for the Soviet defector and ballet star Rudolf Nureyev. He would also play the Preacher in *Appalachian Spring*.

USIS began to rewrite Graham’s modern dance as American rather than “The Modern Dance.” Neither USIS nor reporters compared Graham to Wigman in 1955 in Asia, but by 1974 Germany had risen as a force in dance that could not be ignored. In the review of Graham that explained that she had expanded on the ballet, the author also found similarities between the work of Graham, Wigman, and Jooss. As the modern dance became more internationalized, with other nations rediscovering or developing their own forms, these critics and audiences identified with her European predecessors, be it the ballet that she used

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115 Ibid., 6.


117 Orosa-Goquingco, “Graham Extrapolates Emotion.”

increasingly in her technique, or the early roots in the Germanic modern tradition. Thus USIS reports noted that the modern dance that would be seen in works such as *Cave of the Heart* and *Diversion of Angels* was “Grahamized and Americanized.”

The universal in man became tied to religion rather than to the idea of cultural convergences. For the first time in Asia, the press emphasized that Graham brought works with “religious themes.” The “soul” became more defined, and universality had been tempered by religion. Tour repertory including *El Penitente*, *Seraphic Dialogue*, and *Embattled Garden* emphasized the shift from the myth-based idea of a universal to the religious as mythic. According to a critic in Bangkok, *El Penitente* showed a “universal dance language” that he believed had been clearly understood by everyone in the audience. According to Graham, these works “portray the soul’s yearning.” During press conferences, Graham discussed her attachment to religion. She said, “I believe in God.”

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120 “Famed Martha Graham Dance Company to Perform in Saigon,” USIS Vietnamese Press #6808, 22 September 22, 1974, MGC-MGF.


ambassador, however, Graham continually repeated, “I am not a missionary,” and said, “I don’t go to church.”

In all nations Graham visited in both 1955 and 1974, USIS promoted her in advance publicity as the “Picasso” of modern dance. Yet like modern dance, Picasso’s modernism had aged. In response, USIS adopted company publicity in 1974 to accommodate such changes over time. From nation to nation, the program covers chosen to represent Graham featured her black-and-white silhouette as she perched on a stool. Regional adaptations by USIS to fit local needs in 1955 that promoted her in black and white photos of her face in a headpiece, or as a Rita Hayworth look-alike, had been replaced by a single image of Graham’s shadow. Unique to the international market, tour programs that featured Appalachian Spring no longer showed the Bride and her Husbandman across from a line drawing of George Washington looking west; in 1974, the Pioneering Woman appeared as a black shape against a yellow background. The two-toned pages in 1974 contrasted sharply with the three-dimensional renditions in staged photography or poster art in the 1950s. USIS wrote that neither “age, nor change of country nor condition” could alter Graham’s work. However, publicity molded the elements of her image and choreography in order to reflect changes over time. The promotion of cultural

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124 Grossbeyer, “Martha Graham: Back to Work”; “Bridging the Past and the Future,” The Bangkok Post, September 28, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK; “Martha Graham’s ‘Rebirth,’” The Nation (Bangkok), September 27, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

125 Folder 6, Box 65-UAK; Scrapbooks, box 373, MGC-LOC.

126 “Martha Graham Dance Tour,” USIA Programs, 1970-1978, record Group 306, box 1, NARA.
convergences through advertising had been replaced by a single image for every nation. The United States presented a regionally unwavering image.

Tour publicity reminded audiences that Graham had been to Asia in the 1950s, but Graham took matters into her own hands and noted that the landscape had changed. Graham said, “It is a great privilege to go back to Asia.” However, she demonstrated that she understood the complexities of the war in Vietnam. She noted, “I know the Asia I will now see will be different.”

In South Vietnam, the cultural attaché felt that after the Tet Offensive, cultural exports might “give some balance to the overwhelming military presence.” Before the Graham Company left on tour, she expressed concern to the State Department about the political situation near Saigon. Indeed, after arriving in the city, a motorcade held the company in the dark. A State Department representative noted in his memo, “After that, everything came up roses.” Six months after the company left the region, the North Vietnamese took the city.

As in 1955, tour publicity addressed Soviet accusations that the United States did not bring freedom to all people, particularly African Americans. Graham had toured during the 1950s at the time of the Little Rock crisis; publicity for her tours had emphasized the racially integrated nature of the company. In 1974, USIS continued to counter the Soviet claim that the United States had a racial


129 “Summary.”
problem. While casting choices had been based on talent and not race, in 1955 Matt Tierney, a dancer of African American descent, played the Pioneering Woman in *Appalachian Spring*. Although Tierney had retired, in 1974 USIS used her picture by making it into a black shadow on a yellow background. Although African American Mary Hinkson had left the company, USIS used her picture as Mary, “Virgin, Magdalene, Mother,” in press photos for *El Penitente*. In 1954, publicity photographs of Ethel Winter, known as a star of Puritan stock, showed her in a simple black leotard and tights entwined with Donald McKayle, an African American dancer who had trained largely at the New Dance Group and choreographed solos and concert works with strong radical themes. The government had also used Ailey to demonstrate the power of African Americans in the United States during his 1972 tour to Russia. Indeed, at the 1972 Dance Panel meeting, one member said, “We must always face the fact that black today is not always beautiful,” which mirrored the phrase used by Civil Rights leaders. He concluded, “It is exotic.”

Graham’s integrated company repelled ideas of the black exotic from discussions about the United States; instead, her company demonstrated the integration of these dancers into the repertory as they took leading roles that they shared with women of all colors and backgrounds.

In 1974, USIS touring publicity emphasized that Graham maintained a racially integrated company that included both African American and dancers of Asian descent. Whereas in 1955 USIS implied that Graham had been a pioneer in integration in the 1950s, during the 1974 tour, the press was explicit: “She was the

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first to integrate her group racially, using Asians and Negros in the regular company.”

Another newspaper added, “The company is not unlike a mini United Nations.” USIS foregrounded her integration of all nations, although it also reflected the nation with its ambivalent commitment to racial equality. When Graham became too weak or ill to speak, dancers explained the technique or the choreography to audiences for her. The press particularly lauded the work of Diane Grey, a principal dancer with the company. Often, however, an Asian woman would speak as well. The State Department complained that her accent was strong and that “Americans should represent America.”

The State Department and USIS wanted to promote Graham as an icon. A Department telegram noted, “Graham age a distinction here.” She was “venerated.” A newspaper in the Philippines quoted USIS and called her a “living legend.” In 1974, newspapers took hold of her iconic status and called her “The Oriental Queen-Mother” of modern dance who “held court from her throne” during

131 “Manila Visit of Martha Graham Dance Company,” Bulletin Today, August 18, 1974, 25, box 65, folder 5, UAK.


133 “Summary.”

134 Embassy Rangoon to Department of State, Telegram, October 4, 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

135 “‘It is a Great Privilege to be Back in Asia’ – Martha Graham,” Philippines Evening Express, September 7, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.
interviews.\textsuperscript{136} Some papers even called her the “Old Lady” of dance. One noted that Graham changed the course of dance history.\textsuperscript{137} Demonstrating that as the “Old Lady,” she had influenced the course of dance innovation, USIS emphasized repeatedly that Graham had created the new, fresh choreographers in the United States who were re-revolutionizing dance. They included Merce Cunningham as progeny. However unlikely, they also included Twyla Tharp and Yvonne Rainer, avant-garde artist in the 1960s and pioneers of post-modern dance.\textsuperscript{138} USIS proved connections among the artists using a Lincoln Center publicity photograph of all the artists.

In her own self-generated publicity, the State Department’s “High Priestess” insisted on remaining “forever young” rather than “forever modern.”\textsuperscript{139} USIS allowed her free reign during lecture-demonstrations because the State Department called them “one of the great solo acts of the American theater.”\textsuperscript{140} One paper reported that “[Graham] is youth herself,” during these performances.\textsuperscript{141} During press interviews when USIS could not interfere, she described her return as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Leonor Orosa-Goquingco, “Graham Extrapolates Emotion,” \textit{Bulletin Today}, September 14, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Jane Ram, “Legend in her Time,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, September 4, 1974, MGC-MGF.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} “Summary.”
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} “Martha Graham Company Receiving High Praise During Southeast Asian Tour,” USIS Report Saigon and Singapore, October 2, 1974, MGC-MGF.
\end{itemize}
a “rebirth.” In Bangkok, a newspaper headline reported that Graham described herself as “A Woman Who Doesn’t Believe in Age.” In the article, she complained that people make a “fetish” out of youth. In Bangkok, where she allowed a well-staged press picture to be taken, she presented herself in the interview as so young that her mother was still alive. She exclaimed, “I sent my mother a card on my birthday thanking her for giving me life.” On Graham’s 80th birthday, her mother had been dead for years.

Graham’s insistence on eternal youth and her rebirth backfired in some host countries. Multiple face-lifts allowed her to claim that she looked like a young girl, yet reporters in the international market saw through the façade and remarked on her “mask like face.” A leftist newspaper challenged the designation of Graham as Miss Graham and insisted on putting “Miss” in quotes around references to her. Another paper in Vietnam, not translated for the State Department, asked, “Martha Graham – loneliness in old age?” Confusion led to cables in which the State Department tried to reconcile what Graham had told them

142 “Martha Graham’s ‘Rebirth.’”

143 Heather Miller, “A Woman Who Doesn’t Believe in Age,” The Bangkok Post, September 28, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

144 “Martha on Private Life,” The Nation (Bangkok), September 28, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

145 Magsanoc, “Modern Dance ‘High Priestess’ & Troupe Here.”

146 “Poor Clown, Light Actress,” USIS excerpts, Tien Tuyen, October 12, 1974, MGC-MGF.

147 Frachachart, September 29, 1974, MGC-MGF.
versus documented facts. A telegram addressed to Secretary of State Kissinger asked for clarification: while Graham had claimed that she had been born in 1902, the tour manifest showed that she had been born in 1894.\textsuperscript{148} The facts won out. In all newspaper articles USIS gave her age as 80.

Nation by nation, cables sent back to the State Department about the performances themselves did not entirely reflect events on the ground. In Taipei, government reports remained selective. Headlines such as “Taipei All Praise for Graham Dancers” filled the news reported back to Washington.\textsuperscript{149} Every work in the repertory “created a cultural sensation.”\textsuperscript{150} However, internal telegrams did not support these newspaper articles. One cable sent to Kissinger noted that although the elites were well represented at the Graham performance, “tepid applause” met the performers.\textsuperscript{151} In some cases, the works were not well performed.\textsuperscript{152} Private musings of the State Department official proved even more devastating. He noted that in Taipei – as well as in Hong Kong and Singapore – audiences had little comprehension of what they had witnessed.\textsuperscript{153} The Western myths and biblical

\textsuperscript{148} Embassy Singapore to Department of State, Telegram, 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

\textsuperscript{149} “Taipei All Praise for Graham Dancers,” The Times Journal (Taipei), September 8, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

\textsuperscript{150} “Martha Graham Gets Warm Reception,” Bulletin Today, September 6, 1974, box 65, folder 5, UAK.

\textsuperscript{151} Embassy Taipei to Department of State, Telegram, [nd] 1974, box 65, folder 4, UAK.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} “Summary.”
stories did not catch the audience's imagination because most in the audience did not understand the references, or had to study program notes extensively. Even the crowd-pleaser *Diversion of Angels* met with a mixed reception. The strong technique demonstrated by the dancers, however, led to “acceptable levels of applause.” Overall, the performances were “not a total disaster.”

USIS carefully wrote a report on the Graham company in Singapore, noting that the company’s “final performance” met with appreciation. Quoting the *Straits Times*, the government agency reported back to Washington that audiences appreciated the “brilliant and dynamic group of dancers,” who made a “tremendous and unforgettable impact on all present.” The “impact” included changed opinions and even agreement that the United States brought both potent institutions and high culture while retaining its youth and vitality as a global leader. Although the last performance had, indeed, been warmly received, initial performances were not. The handwritten memo asserted that audiences did not appreciate the works on opening night and noted that audiences felt the works were overly melodramatic and at times “approached the ridiculous.”

In Bangkok, Graham’s company received strong advance press, but not all reporters were impressed by the performances. Rick Grossman, an American reporter, followed USIS guidance and announced, “Miss Graham Never Fails to

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154 “Summary.”

155 “Martha Graham Company Receiving High Praise During Southeast Asian Tour,” USIS Report Saigon and Singapore, October 2, 1974, MGC-MGF.

156 “Summary.”
Astound.” He wrote about the company’s “sheer joy” of movement, and the dancers’ fine interpretations of Graham’s roles. USIS reports reported that in Bangkok, the King had appreciated the dance and understood that she had transformed “the world of dance,” not just the American genre. Indeed, he gave Graham a national medal. However, in an article titled “Too Self Conscious,” a local author critiqued the Biblical works. If *Embattled Garden* was about Adam and Eve, the reporter wrote, “[i]t is news to me,” and complained, “I was not very clear about the moral or purpose of El Penitente.” The religious works seemed to carry no weight as allegories or as “maps of the human heart.” *Diversion of Angels* often closed performances with its spectacular lifts, spirals, and runs. The young dancers with their new and daring technique should have awed audiences, even those who had seen the work in the 1950s. The reporter, though, complained that the work depicting the facets of love showed no joy or freedom and the dancers’ “self-conscious” and “[n]eurotic expressions” crippled spontaneity. The author concluded that having seen other “ballet” companies he had seen, particularly New York City Ballet, could better describe the “spirit of modern man.”

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157 Grossman, “Miss Graham Never Fails to Astound.”

158 Ibid.

159 “Martha Graham Company Receiving High Praise During Southeast Asian Tour,” USIS Report Bangkok and Hong Kong, October 3, 1974, MGC-MGF.


161 Ibid.
In Hong Kong, Graham’s choreography brought politics directly into the dance. Some independent reviewers shared Graham’s disdain for classical ballet’s bourgeois undercurrents: they called Graham’s technique a “breakthrough” because it stood in contrast to the “elegant hypocrisy” of classical ballet. According to some press, the tour began in “triumph.” Yet neither representatives of the State Department nor the communist Chinese observed unmitigated success either aesthetically or politically. The State Department unpublished memo noted that El Penitente was “totally strange” to the audience and applause petered out before the curtain descended. Prompted by USIS reports, a local reporter explained the characteristics that Chinese dance shared with the American modern dance. In Chinese-language newspapers, reporters compared Graham unfavorably to the “Chinese modern dance.” The Chinese form celebrated the masses, while the American form was “directed by individual taste.”

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162 “Martha Graham Company Receiving High Praise During Southeast Asian Tour.”

163 *Hsin Chung Yuan Pao*, September 24, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

164 “Summary.”

165 “Martha Graham,” *Shih Chieh Jit Pao*, September 27, 1974, folder 6, Box 65-UAK.

166 “Martha Graham.”

167 “Martha Graham”; “Watching the Martha Graham Dance Company,” USIS excerpts of the *Song Than*, October 12, 1974, MGC-MGF.
The performances in Saigon received the most accolades, and Graham herself saved more press releases from Saigon than any other city.\textsuperscript{168} Cold war rhetoric returned in USIS reports back to the United States from the war-ravaged country. The front page of one newspaper that reviewed Graham had headlines about the failure of Kissinger while “Reds Shell.”\textsuperscript{169} As a war raged, Graham “stepped lightly into the heart.”\textsuperscript{170} She demonstrated the “beauty of life and nature,” although Western myths and themes were “foreign and difficult to understand.”\textsuperscript{171} USIS made no mention of cultural convergences.\textsuperscript{172} Despite the lack of these arguments and the commonality of all men through shared myths, some appreciated Graham as a symbol of unification. The elites at the opening night performance included the South Vietnamese First Lady, and they all “warmly applauded.”\textsuperscript{173} However, the general and uninvited population raved: the walls of the theater were heavy grates that allowed the public to observe the performance. The mass celebration included cheers and banging on the gates in response to falls.

\textsuperscript{168} Clippings files, MGC-MGF.

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{The Saigon Post}, October 14, 1974, MGC-MGF.

\textsuperscript{170} “Watching the Martha Graham Dance Company,” USIS excerpts, \textit{Song Than}, October 12, 1974, MGC-MGF.

\textsuperscript{171} Hai Vien, “We were in a kind of ‘Alice in Wonderland’ World,” USIS excerpts, \textit{Viet Hoa Daily}, October 16, 1974, MGC-MGF.

\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Shih Chiew Jit Pao}, September 27, 1974, box 65, folder 6, UAK.

\textsuperscript{173} “First Lady Presides Over Performance of Martha Graham Dance Company,” Official Government News Agency translation, October 6, 1974, MGC-MGF.
jumps, tilts, and contracted torsos. Dancers did not know whether to perform to the staid elite or to the enthusiastic crowds barred from the theater.174

The Vietnamese audiences also took away what they wished. Although USIS provided an article by Walter Terry on Graham that was translated verbatim in the newspaper Tien Tuyen, this American critic did not provide the final word for the Vietnamese.175 Reviewers interpreted Graham as bringing the avant-garde rather than classical modernism. Straying from USIS guidance, the newspapers equated Graham with Mark Rothko, who was associated with Cunningham, rather than Picasso, as suggested by USIS publicity.176 Graham became a youthful legend, a woman who would change the course of dance history in the future because of her present-day work. A group of young Vietnamese believed that following the American way would bring positive results: “The Martha Graham Dance Group has sown the seeds of modern dance in Vietnam, which, of course, will reap brilliant results in the future.”177

Nevertheless, resistance could be seen by the older elite audiences invited into the theater. Some Vietnamese politicians who had attended the

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175 Walter Terry, “San-Khau cua Martha Graham,” Tien Tuyen Ngay, October 12, 1974, MGC-MGF.

176 “Watching the Martha Graham Dance Company,” USIS excerpts, Song Than, October 12, 1974; “Famed Martha Graham Dance Company to Perform in Saigon,” USIS Vietnam Press #6808, September 22, 1974, both MGC-MGF.

performance did not accept the invitation to attend the post-performance reception because of “friction over Vietnamese issues.” One article by an opposition party referred to Graham’s “old age” and beseeched Vietnamese artists to share national and traditional dances. In an article titled “Poor Clown, Light Actress,” a reporter demanded to know whether the choreography was purely artistic or propaganda “aimed at promoting the Gospel.” He demanded, “Does it have other missions, other than touring the world?” The newspaper reported that representatives of the American government called a press conference in order to “dispel the suspicious atmosphere.” They attacked Graham personally to diminish her power as an ambassador. A reporter asked, “Is it possible that she has never understood the ‘perfume’ of love?” The USIS representative defended Graham’s title of “Miss” because she was single, but ended up cornered and spoke about her marriage and divorce from Erick Hawkins. The paper then quoted USIS when it defended Graham by reminding reporters that Graham had trained President Ford’s wife. Even USIS could not help connecting Graham to the White House, and the newspaper commentary made this clear to its readers.

Despite the changes in Graham’s career, the violence the United States had brought to the region, the decline of the ruling elite, and mixed reviews on the ground, the government persisted in celebrating Graham as a cultural export and a national symbol to target the international intelligentsia and to promote

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178 “Summary.”

179 “First Lady Attends M. Graham Dance Show.”

180 “Poor Clown, Light Actress.”
American interests. As evidenced by the 1974 memo copied to Saigon that celebrated the persuasiveness of modern dance in exemplifying American contributions to the twentieth century, despite wars and their outcomes, State Department officials proclaimed the validity of American-style modernity and its positive influences, however dated it may have seemed to some. When the company returned to the United States, Kissinger stated that Graham herself should be considered as a guest at a state dinner in connection with a visit of a chief of state from one of the East Asian countries that she had visited. Graham even received a holiday card from the ambassador to the PRC. In 1976, Graham accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Gerald R. Ford for her service to the nation. Presenting the medal, the President said, “Martha Graham’s visits abroad have given the word real meaning: ambassador.”

Largely because of Graham’s relationship to the executive branch and her value as a cultural ambassador with nationally representative works, she remained on the government watch list. With Mason’s guidance, the company’s management astutely kept the State Department Office of Cultural Affairs apprised of Graham’s independent European tours and available repertory. In 1976, the Office of Cultural Affairs contemplated picking Graham up for a tour after her company’s June performances in cities throughout Western Europe that would end

181 Han Xu to Martha Graham, Correspondence, correspondence, box 231, folder 6, MGC-LOC.

in Germany. They also considered an export after the company’s October season in Madrid and Paris. Yet the Office determined that communist-bloc regions in Europe viewed American modern dance as old-fashioned; these countries had developed their own forms, or had become overly familiar with “Western cultural themes.” Graham’s American rewriting of stories from the traditional Western canon held little novelty. As a she had little new value as an ambassador, and her age made her unreliable. In 1974, the internal musings of a government officer described her as “aged, fragile, ailing, and crippled,” and noted that she required constant medical assistance with daily shots. This became vital because he concluded that without Graham, the value of the tours became questionable as pro-American propaganda in any region. As management problems persisted, and Graham grew older, the company would not be sent out for tours, or given money for festivals, until the private sector intervened. Although the handwritten State memo contained blunt and critical reviews, the author ultimately concluded that Graham demonstrated American prowess and sophistication overseas when the work seemed novel and addressed local themes in targeted particular regions. Cultural convergences could no longer rely on the reconfiguration of Western myths, stories, and traditions.

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183 Cynthia Parker, Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, to Beverly Gerstein, State Department office of Cultural Affairs, June 4, 1976, MC 468, box 65, folder 2, UAK.

184 “Summary.”

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.
Martha Graham Fights for Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, 1979 and 1987

Martha Graham and her company represented the United States in the Middle East in 1979 and in West Germany in 1987. Although Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan could not seem more different in their approach to foreign policy, particularly when highlighted by the hostage crisis in Iran, they both acted under the ideology of Pax Americana, or, put simply, “We know best.” Despite the differences between Carter’s comparative liberalism and Reagan’s conservative approach to international affairs, both men held clearly defined ideas of American righteousness. For Carter, both his evangelical Christian beliefs, which encouraged him to seek peace, alongside his desire to counteract moves by the Soviet Union enacted later in his presidency, drove his foreign policy in the Middle East; he sought reconciliation.¹ Reagan took the opposite approach, particularly in publicity tailored for the public, and defined the Soviet Union as the “Evil Empire”; he used images of the American frontier in a psychological battle for American support. Graham’s repertory for “The Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour” in 1979 and the company’s performances in East Berlin in 1987 reflected the approach of each administration.

The 1979 tour revolved around her new work, Frescoes, the story of Cleopatra. As an export, the work imparted the message of mutual understanding through cultural convergences because it told the familiar story of Cleopatra to audiences in

Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. In 1987, the company performed *Frontier* during the celebration of the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin in the East. This work proclaimed the power of the American frontier to combat the ideology of the Communist-constructed wall that divided the city; during the same celebration, Reagan stood in front of the Brandenburg Gate in the west and demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, Tear down this wall!” While one president took the approach of reconciliation and mutual understanding, and the other confrontation in the public eye, both men believed in the international hegemonic power of United States foreign policy to enact change. In both cases, Graham’s repertory followed the tactics of each president while she, too, asserted the ultimate power of the nation with her American technique that had become known internationally as “the modern dance.”

The 1979 Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour centered on performances of *Frescoes*, choreographed for the opening of the Metropolitan Museum’s Sackler Wing for the Temple of Dendur, a star-studded event. The program began with *Lamentation*, performed by three dancers sitting on rocks around the temple.\(^2\) *Frescoes*, the story of Cleopatra, opened when the dancer emerged from the tall temple opening with her arms over her chest, wearing a silver unitard and jeweled pieces. “You felt the antiquity,” the dancer said. “You felt generations that had worshipped and witnessed the temple.”\(^3\) While stories differ about whether State Department officials in the audience saw the work and decided it would be a good cultural export, or Egyptian officials relished the


\(^3\) Eilber.
choreography and then went to the State Department to suggest a tour with *Frescoes* as the centerpiece, the dynamic remains the same: for both sides, American modern dance stood for both political rapprochement and the power of modern state alliances.

*Frescoes’s* inspiration and the preservation of the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum linked the project to long-standing Cold War battles. Although historians largely define the Carter administration’s foreign policy with its concentration on reconciliation in the Middle East, others recognize his underlying problems with the Soviet Union, particularly in 1979 as his presidency grew to a close. Although Cold War tensions may have eased, scuffles continued to prove supremacy. Like Stalinallee and Congress Hall in the 1950s, the use of architecture and design remained important weapons and included the preservation or erection of national monuments. The American preservation of the Egyptian Temple of Dendur countered the Soviet portrayal of the United States as a bastion of uncivilized greed; indeed, it reversed the equation. Following the Egyptian revolution in 1952, as part of a modernization program the Egyptian government strove to build the High Dam at Aswan. Both the US and the Soviet Union became interested in participating in the project to prove their technical expertise. In 1955, the US, alongside Britain, offered $270 million to build the dam in exchange for an Israeli-Arab peace negotiation. While Egypt brokered an arms deal with the Soviets, the State Department continued to support efforts to build the dam, albeit with less money. In 1956, the Soviet Union came forward with just over $1.2 billion, and the West

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withdrew its promises of support.\footnote{Dale Whittington and Giorgio Guariso, \textit{Water Management Models in Practice: A Case Study of the Aswan High Dam, Developments in Environmental Modeling} (London: Elsevier Science, 1983), 34.} The project became a clear example of the Soviet support of modernization projects with money, machinery, and manpower. By 1963, however, the dam had begun to submerge cultural monuments. Soviet modernization experts did not consider the region’s cultural heritage, an accusation often launched at the Americans by the Soviets themselves.

Critics positioned the removal of the monuments as a cultural salvation project.\footnote{Cyril Aldred, \textit{The Temple of Dendur} (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), 67.} A special committee under the aegis of UNESCO spearheaded an international effort to relocate the monuments. Adding political and cultural cachet to the project as American-led, former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy became a figurehead for the project. The Egyptian Department of Antiquities took the temple apart in 1963, and blocks remained in Egypt. Finances ran low, and a home for the temple could not be identified. As with Congress Hall in 1957, the United States government partnered with private institutions to do political work. In 1965, Egypt offered Dendur to the United States in exchange for financial assistance in saving the monuments at Abu Simbel.\footnote{Ibid., 67.} President Lyndon B. Johnson created a commission to review proposals by American museums for the funding and placement of the temple. The Lila Acheson Wallace Curator in Egyptology won the bid for the Metropolitan Museum. The formal announcement was
made in 1967, and plans for the reconstruction began the following year.\textsuperscript{8} In order to study the blocks and their durability, chemists from New York University alongside experts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Brookhaven National Laboratory studied the problem of preservation and reconstruction. Experts announced that it was “a great moment that no one will ever forget: the most advanced technology of the twentieth century was used to save one of the most amazing achievements of a civilization that preceded it by 3,300 years.”\textsuperscript{9} In 1974, construction for the new wing began. The Sackler Family Foundation along with Lila Acheson Wallace, a longtime patron of Graham, commissioned \textit{Frescos} for the opening of the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The opening of \textit{Frescos} in the Sackler wing also positioned Graham as a modern artist who understood the integrity of its subject. The wing followed the entrenched tenets of the Foreign Building Office mandates, which had guided the construction of Eleanor Dulles’s Congress Hall in 1957 in Berlin, where Graham had performed \textit{Judith} for the opening ceremony. Architects housed the temple in a glass casing with an unobstructed view from Central Park.\textsuperscript{10} The glass accented the democratic ethos of transparency and highlighted cultural convergences. The façade and skylight introduced light, but it was controlled by scientific experts.\textsuperscript{11} Architects designed the

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  \item \textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 67.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Zahi Hawass, \textit{The Mysteries of Abu Simbel: Ramses II and the Temples of the Rising Sun} (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Aldred, \textit{The Temple of Dendur}, 77.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 71.
\end{itemize}
space to approximate the light and surroundings of the original location in Egypt, and oriented it from east to west as it had been; it stood on a platform purposely “imitating the ancient quay.”12 A reflecting pool offered visitors the impression of a modernist Nile River. While Soviet “modernization” projects may have furthered economic aims abroad, here the Soviet Union became a nation that showed an unthinking willingness to destroy cultural artifacts in the name of industrial growth. Publicity proclaimed that the American project saved “ancient sites submerged forever under the rising waters of the Nile.”13 The U.S. became the leader of a cultural rescue mission, and New York provided a home for the world’s cultural achievements as far back as antiquity. Thus, embedded in the opening of the temple at the Metropolitan Museum was a Cold War victory for the United States.

Graham’s choreography reflected the same mandates as the temple and its new home. As an icon and now vocal cold warrior, she continually repeated familiar tropes about the power of ancient civilizations and myths to capture a universal humanity. Associating herself with the universals that drove men to action, Graham said the work “holds in its memory all matters of life and death and love.”14 American artistic strategies rehoused and rewrote ancient civilization’s monuments and myths, just as had been proposed by the government as a Cold War tactic in the 1950s.

12 Ibid., 78.
13 Ibid., 67.
14 Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”
The 1979 State Department tour began as a Graham-funded international tour; it piggybacked on the company’s international bookings. When possible, the Department of State refrained from directly funding Graham company tours, particularly in locations where Graham company performances did not require significant outside support to remain financially viable. The 1974 tour to Asia had been successful when the government added stops to Graham’s unfunded performances in Japan; however, with an aging matriarch and questionable financial dealings that even included allegations of embezzlement, the State Department remained wary. Thus, in 1979, rather than merely providing financing to the company administration, the government distributed currency directly to the dancers or to vendors. Non-cash support, however, remained consistent: embassy receptions and USIS publicity remained intact, although USIS did not stage the publicity blitz noted during the 1974 tour.

Without government backing, the company tour began in Copenhagen, Denmark, on July 16. In London, the season ran from July 23 through August 4. During the 1960s, Graham technique had become a part of the standard training curriculum at the London School of Contemporary Dance, which former Graham dancers had established. In 1969, the State Department-supported tour had met with critical success. By 1979, Graham had a critical following in London, and the company could fill theaters. The company then moved to Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and performed for three days on August 7, 8, and 9. The State Department had fully funded the 1962 tour to Yugoslavia,

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yet no indication exists that this later trip had direct funding. Yugoslavia had been a success in 1962, and the public had shown an interest in the modern visual arts as well.

After leaving Europe, dancers noted a distinct change: the State Department influence became clear, and the tour leg became known as “The Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour.” The dancers performed in Cairo, Egypt, between August 11 and 13. They received new passports, crossed into Israel using a government-owned jet, and performed in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. They then traveled through Israel by bus to the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem. The dancers carried their luggage over a bridge to Jordan; soldiers with machine guns watched them closely on both sides. They performed in Amman on August 26 and 27. Despite the serious nature of the export project, with government planes, new passports, and border crossings on foot while being watched by guards with machine guns, a Graham Company memo offered dancers tongue-in-cheek written instructions about the countries, their politics, and local etiquette. The memo, titled “Aim for the specific edification and amusement of the MGDC,” was subtitled, “Or thoughts of a Not Necessarily Diplomatic Nature for a Diplomatic Tour.”

The tour locations reflected Carter’s achievements and aspirations. In March 1979, he had supervised negotiations between Egypt and Israel at Camp David

16 Eilber; Lyman.

17 Georgette Gebara, Director, Beirut School of Dance, interview with author, Beirut, Lebanon, July 18, 2012.

18 “Thoughts of a Not Necessarily Diplomatic Nature About a Diplomatic Tour,” “Israel,” Private archives of Terese Capucilli, New York, NY.

19 Ibid.
that led to a peace treaty.\textsuperscript{20} After a meeting with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, he said, “[A] shining light burst on the Middle East for me.”\textsuperscript{21} With the treaty between Israel and Egypt signed, relations with King Hussein of Jordan moved to the forefront.\textsuperscript{22} King Hussein expressed the same desire for peace that inspired Carter’s foreign policy in the region: “I’ve hoped so much, my whole inclination, my whole feeling has been for peace, for a better future for generations to come.”\textsuperscript{23} Carter articulated his desire for a relationship directly with Hussein during negotiations when he wrote, “I need your strong personal support.”\textsuperscript{24} Relations with Hussein remained strained because they disagreed on how to achieve their goal, but progress seemed possible. In 1978, he had married the American-born Lisa Halaby, who became a cultural ambassador. She spoke publicly about the role of women in society and demonstrated support for Graham’s work in Jordan.\textsuperscript{25} The Graham tour, from Jordan to Egypt and Israel, mapped Carter’s political aim of peace and then reconciliation in the region. Indeed, one dancer remembered that

\textsuperscript{20} William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, \textit{A History of the Modern Middle East}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (New York: Perseus Books, 2009), 379.


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 197.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 203.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 208, 256.
the travel between the countries seemed more important to government representatives than the performances themselves.\textsuperscript{26}

The memo “Not of a Necessarily Diplomatic Nature” advised dancers about the politics and specific problems in each country. In Jordan, the dancers received strict marching orders: “Don’t discuss Israel. Period.” In Egypt, the dancers would have to accustom themselves to crowds and noise. Because the dancers would be travelling during Ramadan, their performances would take place late in the evening. The dancers encountered greater problems than expected. A student demonstration was met with tear gas, which stung the performers’ eyes when officials loaded them into the vehicles that took them back to their hotels.\textsuperscript{27} The border crossing from Israel to Jordan would be “terrifying” and would bring them into Israel, described as a militarized zone. However, Amman would provide relief as a “sleepy town.” The memo stated, “To quote an American Agency office, the Martha Graham Dance Company is the most exciting thing to happen in Amman for twenty years.” As opposed to the raucous post-Ramadan celebrations in Egypt, in Amman the dancers could “expect no night life.”\textsuperscript{28} Amman offered the most luxurious accommodations and glowing attention from the U.S. embassy, as well as the King and Queen. Queen Noor questioned Graham extensively on her work, and the royal couple attended performances.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} Eilber.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} “Thoughts of a Not Necessarily Diplomatic Nature About a Diplomatic Tour.”

\textsuperscript{29} Lyman.
Aspirations for international exchange extended beyond the locations on the tour itself. Carter also hoped to pull Lebanon into a cooperative pact that would include Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. The State Department knew that performances in one nation could draw in others that could not yet be visited by a touring company. In 1957, Inness-Brown, working as a private sector representative of the State Department, noted the success of the Congress Hall opening in Berlin because one-fourth of the audience had come from East Germany; in 1979, the Graham performances enticed elites from Syria and Lebanon to Jordan. The American officials particularly wanted Syrian audiences to see *Frescoes*, which promoted the American attachment to Middle Eastern traditions.  

In cooperation with the Egyptian, Lebanese, and American embassies, ten Lebanese dancers travelled to Jordan for the two-day run. Indeed, a principal with the Graham Company gave a technique class that allowed them to bring the system back to their school in Beirut. Against all odds, the school remained open as the city’s buildings were riddled by bullet holes during the Lebanese civil war that had begun in 1975. The director of the school even negotiated with armed rebels by offering them phone lines if they allowed her to keep the building and the school.  

Although the civil war in Lebanon prevented the standing government from entering political negotiations, the Carter administration sought to cultivate future relations. Since independence, Lebanon had

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31 Gebara.
been the Arab world’s symbol of toleration and compromise.\textsuperscript{32} Political leaders and the cultural intelligentsia shared the desire to return to a national unity that would allow the government to reestablish international ties.\textsuperscript{33} As a cultural diplomat, Graham became an intermediary whose performances could draw in audiences from countries that could not be targeted directly.

Graham acted as a symbol of the United States and its stability to the Lebanese dancers who went to Amman. They recall “sitting at the feet of Martha Graham” when they encountered her in an antiques shop where she sat on a carved throne. The troupe member who taught the Lebanese dancers told the newspaper that with the class, the “Lebanese [will] get back to the source of modern dance.”\textsuperscript{34} Although these dancers were well aware of Cunningham technique and the post-modern movement in New York, they worshipped Graham as the center of modern dance.\textsuperscript{35} While the Graham company’s movements seem predictable given the foreign policy aims of all the countries involved, the State Department also made it possible for dancers who worked in nations of strategic importance to see live performances and train in the technique.

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\textsuperscript{32} William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, \textit{A History of the Modern Middle East}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (New York: Perseus Books, 2009), 373.
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\textsuperscript{33} Cleveland, \textit{A History of the Modern Middle East}, 386.
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\textsuperscript{34} Email from Marianne Hirabi, former Graham teacher, Beirut, to the author, July 4, 2012.
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Although the tour was continuous, repertory changed to meet the needs of each location. The London and Dubrovnik performances included staple works such as *Diversion of Angels*, seen on every tour since 1955, and *Seraphic Dialogue*. New works included *Equatorial* (1978) and *The Owl and the Pussycat* (1978), which had premiered with Liza Minnelli in New York. This work connected Graham to the old-Hollywood American legacy. In earlier years, the State Department had used propaganda to combat ideas that United States culture could be defined with “bubble gum and Hollywood”; the propaganda project sought to fight international beliefs that the United States was uncultured and the ensuing national insecurity about its cultural sophistication. Despite positive reviews in the United States and London, *The Owl and the Pussycat* was not performed under the auspices of the State Department. In addition, the company did not perform *Frescoes* in London; some government officials showed concern that sophisticated European audiences from Copenhagen to Yugoslavia would not appreciate “Egyptia.” *Frescoes* only accessed the idea of cultural convergences that had, in past tours, promoted mutual understanding; it, thus, became relevant as propaganda only in the context of the tour to the Middle East. The choreography brought Graham back to her

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37 Graham Company archives show only the London tour taking place with these dances. Graham’s FBI file includes a summary of her government-supported tours but without reference to the dances performed. FBI file requested December 18, 2007, Martha Graham, FOIPA No.1080908, 24 April 2009, box 21, folder 1, Victoria Phillips Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress.

38 Eilber; Lyman.
pre-modernist, post-Denishawn creations, which John Martin had labeled “orientalist” in
the 1920s. In 1979, the orientalism of her new work did not go unrecognized, even by the
company: the subtitle for the report for dancers referred to the tour’s “irreverent
exotica.”

Shunning John Martin’s definition of the modern as driven by “inner
compulsion,” Graham used representational movements and sets. She structured *Frescos*
as four continuous sections set to two arias by Samuel Barber. The work begins with the
rustling of wind, and the operatic music opens with a crash. Sections alternate between
the godly love of Osiris and Isis as the representation of Antony and Cleopatra’s love.
The ancient Egyptian myth tells the story of the brother and sister who are born as a
result of an unwound curse. They married, and Osiris and Isis bring wealth and plenty
through the ebb and flow of the tides that swept around the temples, making it possible to
grow barley and other food. The love between the two is interrupted by death when Osiris
is tricked into lying down in a chest full of gold and jewels, which was then closed shut.
Isis looks for him; upon finding his body, she embalms him and places him in the tomb
so that the gods will return to him.

The second and concluding passages center on Antony and Cleopatra and
became the focus of positive critical attention. During the sections choreographed for the
young Antony and Cleopatra, Graham relied on the tried-and-true stage and movement
techniques that spanned her career. Reaching back to her Denishawn days, she had her
dancers execute poses that mimed ancient Middle Eastern vases. Cleopatra moved

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39 “Thoughts of a Not Necessarily Diplomatic Nature About a Diplomatic Tour.”
between positions that mimicked the friezes on the temple walls. The elder Cleopatra mourned the death of Antony with a red sheath, reminiscent of the material and movements in *Lamentation*; she pulled it over her body as she wept. Indeed, on tour, the elder Cleopatra also performed *Lamentation* during the program, making the allusions unmistakable. In the earlier section about the young couple, Graham set the protagonists’ passages to the aria “Give Me Some Music”; she accented the music with a playful, inviting, and even frolicking Cleopatra reminiscent of the “Woman in Yellow” in *Diversion of Angels*. Using a flashback technique to set the tragedy in the context of past love, as in *Night Journey*, Graham accented Cleopatra’s despair with her memories of happiness. The corps entered holding a sheath and spread it along the length of the stage, bringing *Cave of the Heart*’s technique into the choreography with its long fabric in which Medea wrapped her foe after killing her. In *Frescoes*, Graham’s dancers moved the stage-length fabric so that it undulated like flowing water or the Nile in front of the temple. In another section, Graham employed the *Clytemnestra*-like red fabric to cover the tormented body of Cleopatra after Antony’s death. In this section, the older Cleopatra became part-actress, part-dancer. While the movements demanded full one-hundred-degree arabesque penchées and flawless Graham technique, the dancer used facial expressions to mime grief. Indeed, the woman who originated the role had trained as an actress. In order to succeed, the dancer had to act to carry the role.

With *Frescoes*, Graham returned to her pre-modern past with “irreverent exotica” tempered and translated by American modern dance. Set in the context of a mythical story of love, the tomb’s architecture could theoretically reflect a human universal that could not be identified with a Western myth. References to these stories,
from Greek plays to Joan of Arc, had failed in 1974. The idea of cultural convergences had to be updated to meet audiences that recognized the importance of its national heritage. *Frescoes* met with critical acclaim in every nation on the Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour. To a twenty-first century viewer, however, the success of a work reliant on a mélange of “oriental” references and eroticism seems improbable. Yet in 1979, Graham's “exotica” became acceptable because of her status as a modernist who understood universal “inner compulsions,” such as love in the case of *Frescoes*. In the three countries she visited, Graham remained the innovator of what had become the modern dance. Advance press also relied on the idea of cultural convergences when quoting Graham speaking about the piece as specific to the temple; she spoke about “the frescoes inside the skull, the unknown avenues upon which we paint our images.”

Reviewers in Jordan concluded that the work “instilled a driving force for the eternal drama of love by opposing joy to tragedy, youth to age, and gods to men.” On the tour, a local reporter remarked, “Miss Graham’s name is synonymous with modern dance. Her ideas have changed the character of Western dance in staging as well as in technique.” Ironically, he concluded, “She is a tireless innovator.”

*Frescoes* juxtaposed the pre-modernist work of Ruth St. Denis, whose work had become both passé and politically inappropriate as a mixture of “Middle

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41 Mai, “Two Evenings with Martha Graham.”

42 Ibid.
Eastern” forms, with idioms from Graham’s established iconic works. In the Middle East, however, audiences did not understand the work as a bow to her Denishawn past because reviewers positioned the work as abstract modernism. A principal dancer commented, “[Frescoes] was still abstract enough that we didn’t feel that we were going over to Egypt to tell people what their history was like.”43 Because USIS billed the work as the public’s “first encounter with modern dance,” the “exact historical and geographical details fade and acquire a lesser degree of importance.”44 Noting that the “brilliant” work had drawn both Lebanese and Syrians to Amman, a reviewer even applauded the work for its mixture of cultural signs and signals: “Martha Graham took care to keep the Egyptian frescoes theme recurring by having ancient Egyptian personages file by now and then, with a profiled face, front view chest and upper limbs, and profiled lower limbs, right in keeping with tradition.” The style, however, was not just “Egyptian.” The reviewer continued, “The oriental feel was there, even if sometimes it looked more like classical Hindu dance and Indonesian folklore.”45 He specifically noted that Graham was not “aping” the “Orient.” While the Egyptians didn’t elaborate on their reception of Graham’s Egyptian translations, one Lebanese dancer remarked, “Throughout the centuries we lived much of the grief, greed, jealousies, hatred, loves Graham exposed on stage. And so for them Graham’s attention to the human condition was directly related to our own 5000-year history. Her universality struck a deep note in our history and in our

43 Eilber.

44 Mai, “Two Evenings with Martha Graham.”

Graham’s status as a modernist allowed her to take liberties that should have been questionable to a twentieth-century audience in either the Middle East or the United States. Yet with her status as the ultimate modernist established, Graham's *Frescoes* could employ unmistakable and mimetic cultural references. In this way, her “universal” yet American-made work mirrored the unwavering stance of Carter as a savior of the region.

Graham’s status as a revolutionary modernist continued to allow her to push the boundaries of sexuality on stage. *Frescoes* included physically explicit sexual passages and costuming that made the dancers look nude; the press explained the eroticism as a product of Graham’s modernist sensibility. Graham used her signature move, the contraction and release, as the culmination of sex. Cleopatra lengthened into a split-leg arabesque as she stretched over Antony’s body. The dancers wore unitards fashioned by Halston that made their bodies look nude. The women wore bejeweled headpieces and what resembled beaded thongs or codpieces. Preparing audiences for the performances, a reporter told the public, “Through sexual statement she can lead us to feel the magnitude of the actions.” In Jordan, reviewers noted the “prevailing Symbolism.” The lovers were not “everyday” people showing sexual passions; rather, the characters were mythical figures and political leaders who signaled an attachment to the elite. The paper quoted Graham telling audiences that in order for them to understand

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46 “Martha Graham Dance Company Perform in Cairo Soon” *The Egyptian Gazette*, August 2, 1979, 4; Gebara, email exchange with author, July 16, 2012.

47 Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”

48 Mai, “Two Evenings with Martha Graham.”
the dance, they must comprehend that the human body “is the instrument through which all the primaries of experience are made manifest.” The reviewer concluded that in the modern dance art there could be “no distinction between the costume and the body within [this] theatre of mind and tingling muscle.”\(^{49}\) The article linked the heightened sexuality of *Frescoes* to Graham's classic work *Night Journey*: “The idiom is brutally explicit, from the moment when Oedipus plants his heel in Jocasta’s groin, through the thickening and swelling of his limbs, to the fatal incestuous impregnation—but what stirs us is the sense of tragic destiny, not the physical events.”\(^{50}\)

Although audiences in the Middle East and at the opening of the temple accepted the extreme sexuality of *Frescoes*, some Americans at home found Graham’s work extreme during the Temple of Dendur opening. A dancer recalled her mother remarking, “My God, did you have any clothes on?”\(^{51}\) The dancer playing Cleopatra said, “I looked like I was completely nude.”\(^{52}\) Graham’s sexual references had been accepted as a part of the modernist project by international elites, even in Burma. In the United States, however, the reception of Graham’s sexuality had plagued the company for years. In 1963, Congress questioned Graham’s explicit movements in *Phaedra*; nevertheless, it remained a part of the repertory in some State Department-sponsored tours. In 1976 Graham’s *Clytemnestra* had been X-rated for television viewers. Dancers, however,

\(^{49}\) Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Lyman.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
remember, “Martha was very proud of it.” As part of her claim to being
“contemporary,” extreme sexuality served Graham well. It defined her work
internationally as modern in the sense that it challenged conventional boundaries, and
combatted the idea that her work had become “traditional,” as noted in 1974.

One can easily frame the Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour and Graham’s
orientalism as hegemonic projects of empire; critics, USIS, and Graham conflated a
distinctly American dance modernism with universality. This gave Graham permission to
borrow “exotic” forms and use replication as a tactic, which the government then used to
show commonalities among nations it had targeted for diplomatic aims. However,
because both sides participated and celebrated the work, even “empire by invitation” does
not describe the nation-to-nation interactions. The project became a shared effort, and
often the host countries seemed more eager to have Graham perform than the United
States government. Cultural and political leaders, as well as local businesses and banks,
showed support for America and its culture. At the same time as the American people
were losing confidence in Carter, many people on the “goodwill” international tour
celebrated the United States and its foreign policy. One dancer remembers people saying,
modern dance signaled the host nation’s attachment to a larger, global project. A
Lebanese dancer in Jordan recalled, “The Lebanese LOVED ‘all things American.”

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Gebara.
The United States had used modern dance in the early days of the Cold War to assert itself as a culturally sophisticated modernizing force, and the ideology had become entrenched in the international dance community. The United States had established itself as the center of modernism; international elites who joined the American modern movement became attached to culturally elite projects and thus asserted their sophistication when they represented their own nation. Graham’s reconfiguration of civilization’s great stories in a modernist language, particularly if not limited to Western traditions, allowed convergences to create cultural allies among the sophisticated elite. With the integration of Middle Eastern tales, Graham created an imagined community in which the host region and the modernist language of dance bound the countries to the international artistic intelligentsia.

In Egypt, newspaper articles indicated that while most in the audience would not have understood anything about what they were seeing, cultural leaders fully participated in the American modernist project. Starting in the 1960s, classical ballet became an important part of Egyptian cultural life, so reporters used the Egyptian knowledge of the classical form to define modern dance: “In contrast to the traditional ballet is the modern style, leaving complete freedom for a choreographer to bring out his creative abilities.”56 The article stressed that music and unusual costuming allowed the choreographer artistic freedom.57 While Graham’s works were said to be a product of the


57 al-Mansi, “Martha Graham Inspires American Ballet in Cairo.”
United States, newspapers reported that she used Egyptian composers to inspire her work. The cultural convergence offered legitimacy as a part of New York’s refined cultural position: “[Graham uses] the most famous musicians in the United States—including the Egyptian composer Halim el-Dabh who made his debut with her troupe at the Metropolitan Theatre in New York.”\textsuperscript{58} The elites both imported and sanctioned the project: “In attendance were mostly Egyptians, including: Jalal al-Sharafawy, the Head of the Egyptian Ballet Troupe, and his son, as well as the leader of the group, Tajwa Fuad, all of whom had met with Martha Graham beforehand.”\textsuperscript{59} In Egypt, Graham met with leaders, lectured to groups, and held press conferences, and the company was hosted by the embassy alongside diplomats and the cultural intelligentsia. Martha Graham became the cultural symbol.

Because Bethsabée de Rothschild had sponsored Graham’s tours to Israel since 1955, as well as a school and a company based on her vision of modern dance, the Israeli audiences understood the Graham repertory, and thus critics reviewed the American dancers as interpreters of these works. One performer “danced well” but was not “sensuous enough.” Although the performer’s partner was “strong-limbed “and “sexy,” the reviewer remarked, “[O]ne lover does not a love affair make.”\textsuperscript{60} In Israel, critics and audiences evaluated the specifics of the performers, their technical finesse, and

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} “What Says Martha Graham to Najwa Fouad?” \textit{Al-Akhbar}, August 6, clippings in translation, MGC-MGF.

\textsuperscript{60} Dora Sowden, “Martha Graham’s Magic,” \textit{Jerusalem Post}, August 24, 1979, Entertainment section, 6.
their star quality because their familiarity with the work gave them a sophisticated evaluative eye.

In Jordan, however, Graham’s technique and choreography had not been seen; thus, Graham’s visit offered an opportunity for this nation’s elite to demonstrate their cultural sophistication through an understanding of the “High Priestess” and her modern dance. Critics asserted that cultural sophistication transcended traditions. “The Martha Graham Dance Company was the first modern dance troupe to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, breaking the traditions of [the] opulent hall,” noted one reviewer.61 Two articles in the *Jordanian Times* celebrated Graham as a figure associated with dance of international importance. She arrived “laden with honours and knee-deep in laurels,” as “the doyenne of American modern dance.”62 In Jordan, Graham was not a “Jimmy Carter” export; rather, the performances were “at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture.”63 King Hussein and Queen Noor hosted Graham, and the final night in Amman closed with Graham receiving the first order of the Jordanian Medal of Freedom. The King did not reserve the medal for cultural figures; recipients included government officials, foreign military officers, physicians, and authors.64 Graham and the company received a rapturous standing ovation.

61 Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”

62 Mai, “Two Evenings with Martha Graham.”

63 Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”

64 “The Independence Medal in Jordan is in five degrees (one to five). The first degree medal is granted to people of the level of Prime Ministers and Ministers, the second degree is granted to Secretary Generals and Head of Departments, the rest of the
In 1979, the idea of cultural convergences became the guiding mantra, and yet the other components of Graham’s aesthetic persona did not disappear. *Appalachian Spring* represented “Americana,” as it had on most tours. While the seemingly heavy-handed choreography that promoted the frontier as a lesson in democracy could seem to be oppressive propaganda rather than modernist art, reviews in Egypt, Israel, and Jordan did not understand the work as a moral and economic lesson. The Egyptian report stated that the dance showed “the immigration of Whites to the New World.”65 In Israel, one reporter noted that Graham “created backwoods America—its ethos, its charm” and added that it was “the perfect picture, the perfect dance.”66 In Jordan, reviewers felt that the ballet was poorly performed or old-fashioned but did not interpret its message. *The Jordan Times* reported that a British critic stated that *Appalachian Spring* came from “the golden age,” and then added, “but they aren’t the golden age Graham dancers.”67 The review concluded, “It may be too strongly reminiscent of the discarded classical ballet with its romanticism, its epoch clothing and appropriate scenery, even if just the suggestion of it.” Regarding content, the audiences found it “puzzling.”68

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65 al-Mansi, “Martha Graham Inspires American Ballet in Cairo.”
66 Sowden, “Martha Graham’s Magic.”
67 Tutunji, “Martha Graham Dance Company to End World Tour.”
68 Mai, “Two Evenings with Martha Graham.”
The Lebanese dancers, however, understood the political message of the frontier and embraced it as a symbol of American strength that they could emulate. According to the Lebanese teacher who brought Graham technique back to the school, “Appalachian Spring represented the spirit of America which is what we most admired—its voracity, its daring, sense of exploration, the sense of nationhood—as the Bride & Husband embraced their future together. While the sense of nation and unified expression may have eclipsed the Lebanese during the years of the Civil War, they never lost sight of how great those values are. And for this all things American, Martha Graham embod[ied] those ideals.” While Appalachian Spring brought mixed enthusiasm overall, the Lebanese dancers who longed for the democratization of their militarized nation saw it as a dance of jubilation and as a signal of hope.

Errand into the Maze and Cave of the Heart demonstrated Graham’s enduring invocation of Western civilization and what had been defined as the universal truths embodied in classical mythology and the story of Joan of Arc, yet the press and audiences treated them as by-products of an established dance form. In 1979, these dances had become signature works in the international arena and staple goods for the State Department. In all locations, the works received strong critical marks for drama, presentation, technique, and composition. In addition, Graham’s stock pronouncements about the works representing the human “soul” and the fact that “movement never lies” were faithfully repeated in newspapers.

69 Hirabi, email to author, May 15, 2012.
Within a year after Graham returned from “The Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour,” the president lost re-election to Ronald Reagan. Carter had emphasized international cooperation in foreign affairs, and yet he ended his term in direct conflict with the Soviet Union and the hostage crisis in Iran, or the escalation of a revamped Cold War. This failure fed directly into Reagan’s foreign policy aims, and he used Americanism to promote his agenda. In the domestic market, Reagan used symbols from the frontier, such as his cowboy hat, and the rhetoric of Americana westward renewal to combat the malaise that had taken hold of many citizens. In the international arena, for Reagan the Soviets presented the ultimate threat, and thus the divided city of Berlin once again symbolized the contest for supremacy. Less than five years after Martha Graham had performed for the opening of Congress Hall, a “beacon of freedom” placed at the Soviet-U.S. border, the East German government erected the Berlin Wall; it divided families, friends, and cultural elites. Reagan’s ideology, which included the exceptional American frontier as a symbol of freedom, could not have been better served than by the walled and barbed-wire architecture of Communism. Thirty years after Graham’s first performance in Berlin, she returned to the East with Reagan.

The erection of the Wall brought about the division of this emblematic city; for Reagan, the Wall became a propaganda goldmine.70 His incoming Republican administration offered little direct threat to the GDR, yet it did ignite verbally “ruthless” anti-communist propaganda. He functioned as the international “hard cop.”71 In addition,  

71 Ibid., 385.
the British government backed the administration with its own anti-communist, pro-capitalist stance. In 1981, Reagan told a university group that capitalism would not “contain” communism; rather, it would “transcend” it.\textsuperscript{72} Two years later, he announced his “Star Wars” program that would develop a futuristic anti-missile system. Meanwhile, in the GDR, the economy withered. It had become overly dependent on West German credits, and the nation had lost skilled workers and scientists to the West. In addition, the Soviet Union appropriated industrial goods. Gray buildings, shortages, and power outages were day-to-day realities for its citizens.\textsuperscript{73} The GDR needed propaganda help, and thus the government initiated the 1987 celebration of the 750\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Berlin to reassert its supremacy.\textsuperscript{74} During the festivities that celebrated Berlin as one city, Graham’s company crossed into the East and performed \textit{Frontier} at the same time as Reagan demanded in the west, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

The last State Department demonstrated government unease with the Graham company, and the failing abilities of Graham as an ambassador because of her age. Between 1979 and 1987, the Martha Graham Dance Company became increasingly unstable even while Graham collected awards and garnered public attention and institutional recognition. The company teetered financially. Infighting and wrestling for

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 386.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 388-389.

\textsuperscript{74} Webber, \textit{Berlin in the Twentieth Century}, 14; Dirk Verheyen, \textit{United City, Divided Memories?: Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin} (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 216; Komitee der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zum 750 jahrigen Bestehen von Berlin, \textit{750 Years of Berlin: A Selection of Events from the 1987 Anniversary Programme} (in English).
control plagued the institution. Some allied with the company’s director, Ron Protas, while others found him unsound; still others worked with him while remaining suspicious.\textsuperscript{75} Despite the controversy, Protas continued to put Graham in the public eye. Dancers remember it as the period “when she accepted being a living legend,” which secured the company’s legacy.\textsuperscript{76} In 1979, Graham became a Kennedy Center Honoree. The well-known actor Gene Kelly served as the Master of Ceremonies, and he spoke of her enduring power as an American treasure and icon of dance. She garnered awards in both the national and international arenas. In 1984, the French government presented Graham with the French Legion of Honor for her “creative talent and original choreography.” In 1985, Reagan nominated her to the National Council on the Arts. In the same year, she received the National Medal of the Arts.

Like her choreographic characters, Graham had become an American archetype. In 1986, Andy Warhol, whose depiction of American cultural products included Campbell’s soup cans and women such as Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy, made a set of three lithographs of Graham positioned in signature works. Warhol chose cultural images that had once been new, formidable, and sexy, and turned them into American cultural artifacts, screened and colored images that could be replicated and sold. Like Constance Rourke, he created American archetypes in images. The Graham Company sold the lithographs at a company benefit because they were in desperate need

\textsuperscript{75} Eilber.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
of cash. With her multiple facelifts, both Graham and her new dances stood before audiences like relics.

In January 1987, as celebrations for the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin began in the GDR, they prompted a debate in West Berlin about whether to counter with extensive festivals and appearances by key politicians or to ignore the East Berlin events as propaganda. West Germany had relocated its capital to Bonn and officially recognized East Berlin as a Soviet zone and not a city. The GDR kept Berlin as its capital. The mayor of East Berlin opened the year by stating that events would constitute “an outstanding political event of national and international significance.” He asserted that Berlin, as the capital of the GDR, demonstrated the power and timelessness of socialism. On New Year’s Day, the Office for National Anniversaries and Memorial Holidays produced a concert attended by the political elite, including Erich Honecker. The GDR newspaper Neues Deutschland reported on the front page that more than one thousand exhibitions, concerts, theatrical events, congresses, and conferences were planned throughout the year, and UNESCO would hold a meeting in the east. The government brought in city planners and architects to “give the city a facelift” with new construction and renovation. From restorations of the Ephraim Palace and the German State Opera House, to the building of “the most attractive shopping street,” according to


78 “Festliches Konzert im Schauspielhaus gab den Auftakt zur 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins,” Neues Deutschland, January 1, 1987, 1, LA.
Honecker who arrived in June to join the 750th anniversary celebrations including Reagan’s speech, the GDR advertised itself as a culturally sophisticated bastion of plenty. With the Wall firmly in place, official publicity stated that Berlin was a “hospitable city”: “imaginative, inventive, and open to the world.” The commitment to the city of Berlin as the capital of the nation included the maintenance of the “border security facilities of the GDR,” or the Berlin Wall. Publicity continually stressed that the GDR alone brought the city peace.

Initially the West responded with small gestures, sending artists to festivals at the start of the year. The Graham company tour was an early response to the anniversary initiative; it crossed through Checkpoint Charlie and performed in East Berlin on February 19 and 20 in the Metropol Theatre, and from February 21 to 24 at the Komische Opera. By the late winter, the scope and traction of the East Berlin initiative caught West Germany off guard. Graham promoted the American nation, but planners did not launch into full swing until March. Later events featured appearances by British royalty and the speech by Reagan at the Wall.

The State Department saw an opportunity to send Graham to Berlin as an add-on leg to her European tour and advertised her as an international icon; the GDR


80 “Entstellende Berichte der BRD-Medien zurückgewiesen,” and “ Unsere Zeit,” Neues Deutschland, June 11, 1987, 2, LA.

81 “Graham Company im Metropol,” Neues Deutschland, February 18, 1987, LA.
took her work and appropriated it for its own purposes. Now focused on promoting
Graham as a legend, the company had developed a program that demonstrated Graham’s
genesis, providing an overview of her standing as a refined American choreographer. She
transcended national figures. Program notes began with a list of international awards she
had won, other dancers she had trained, and famous actors who had taken her movement
classes. As always, USIS equated her stature with Picasso and Stravinsky. In order to
maintain the idea that her technique, however codified, retained legitimacy as something
that brought new life to dance, the program added, “Its productivity has still not been
exhausted.” The program concluded of her legacy, “Only a few people are able to
become monuments in their own time. Martha Graham belongs to one of these few.”

Summing up the historical significance of her now traditional art, the Western-written
brochure explained, “Modern dance has the characteristics of a historical and thus is a
‘classic’ phenomenon.”

Despite such publicity, the East German press appropriated Graham for the
GDR’s purposes. Newspaper reviews in the East took their own cultural turn. *Neues
Deutschland* reported, “She provided important impulses for modern stage dance and
contributed substantially to the extension of artistic expression to Modern Dance.”

Here, the Germans differentiated between what they called “modern stage dance” and

82 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987,” program courtesy of Jens
Giersdorf, available from author upon request.

83 Ibid.

84 “Brillante Tanzkunst, die zum unvergeblichen Erlebnis wurde,” *Neues
Deutschland*, February 20, 1987, LA.
what they defined, in the English language and in capital letters, as “Modern Dance.” They did not connect Graham to the German dance of the 1920s, although the program traced Graham’s performing legacy back to Ted Shawn’s *Serenata Morisca* (1916), which long predated *Lamentation*. The communist newspaper referred to her, again in English, as the “Grand Old Lady of Modern Dance.”

A review noted that Graham “grapples with the alienation and estrangement of the individual in the highly [capitalistic] industrialized society. Her dance attacks hypocrisy.”

A woman’s magazine noted that Graham fought against woman’s “stagnation and emptiness” in America. The author thus concluded that the company’s appearance was “triumphant.” Phrases used in the article were similar to official GDR propaganda, and did not review her works, especially the expression *Verständigung der Völker in Frieden* or “understanding among peoples in peace.”

Graham became anti-capitalist for GDR audiences.

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In East Berlin, opening night began with *Diversion of Angels* (1948), the internationally acclaimed abstract work about three elements of love that had been inspired by Kandinsky. East had used Nazism for its purposes and reminded the population of the Soviet sacrifices to defeat the Nazis, and the West used the régime as a stand-in for Communist totalitarianism. Kandinsky had been banned by Hitler as *entartete Kunst*, or degenerate art, yet the East German government did not encourage modernist visual art. It had supported socialist realism, although non-government sponsored artists had turned towards abstraction.\(^9\) By 1968, the art of the West and East crossed. Abstract art had become a symbol of artistic freedom, particularly in the East. As in all locations on tour since 1955, the technical demands of the work showcased the dancers’ stamina and finesse. With a strong opening, the company performed a series of solos that traced the development of new American dance in the 1920s and established Graham as an international master of innovation. The section opened with *Incense*, choreographed in 1906 by Ruth St. Denis. Progressing in chronological order, the evening continued with *Serenata Morisca* (1916), with choreography credited to Martha Graham with Ted Shawn. The piece advertised Graham’s “Orientalist” work with incense burning on both sides of the dancer, who was draped in filmy cloth as she moved around the stage. The first work that represented the independent Graham was *Tanagra* (1926) with music by Erik Satie. *Lamentation* brought Graham’s genesis as an innovator into high relief. This section of the program culminated with *Frontier* and its story about the exceptional American nation that resulted from the power of the individual, not the collective. In program notes, it was subtitled, “American Perspective and the Prairie.” It

became “[a] tribute to the vision and the independence of the American pioneer woman, her strength and tenderness, her determination and her exultation in having overcome the dangers of the new land that she loved.” 90 The program noted that the dance movements corresponded with the enlarging horizon of the stage to transmit a sense of distance, loneliness, and courage. It added that with Frontier, Graham started her series of what USIS again called, “Americana,” a word not seen for decades.

Depending on the evening, the repertory included Cave of the Heart (1946) and Clytemnestra (1958). Since Clytemnestra was an evening-length work, it demonstrated that modern dance “ballets,” as Graham called her works, could stand in comparison with full-length classical ballets. It testified to the ability of Graham’s choreography to sustain a narrative work over a full evening. Other programming accented Graham’s recent choreography. These works included Acts of Light (1981), which referred to Emily Dickinson’s poetry and highlighted the company’s impeccable technique, as well as the less successful Temptations of the Moon (1986), which was interpreted in the United States as a statement about male and female equality. 91 In all of these works, whether effective or dramatically outdated, Graham took her standard choreography and recycled movements and dramatic undertones.

90 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987.”

Program notes offered the Americans the opportunity to present Graham herself to foreign audiences by picking and choosing aspects of her life. USIS carefully mapped Graham’s personality with publicity offered to the communist region. Unlike programs in the United States, the notes fashioned for the GDR introduced her as a product of her father, “a psychiatrist and neurologist,” rather than her mother, a tenth-generation descendent of the Mayflower. Graham’s works featured “female characters [that] looked back on their lives in moments of crisis [and who] were influenced by psychoanalytical achievements embraced in America.” Communist nations did not embrace psychoanalysis, or the study of the individual psyche, because the society focused on the individual’s commitment to the collective. Therefore, communist reviews interpreted these characters as emblematic of American angst and weakness. USIS noted that Graham grew up following both the Protestant and Roman Catholic religions in order to demonstrate America’s commitment to freedom of religion, a combination not noted in programs from 1955 through 1979. Publicity accented her works that used the New Testament: “Graham’s latest work is Song (1985), inspired by the New Testament.” As a religious chameleon, Graham demonstrated the freedom available in the United States. Other standard tropes that countered traditional Communist propaganda infused program notes. For instance, she was noted as the first company leader who accepted Asian and “colored” people. Reviews ignored issues of religion or integration where the

92 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987.”

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.
The communist government would have seemed repressive, as in the case of religion, or incorrect, with the claim that the United States remained a racist state.

The casting in the works of Americana combatted international charges of American racism in both 1987 and on the first tour. Indeed, dancers on the tour noted that the character in *Frontier* provides the underpinnings of the Pioneer Woman in *Appalachian Spring*. The two characters did the same theatrical work: “You had to fill yourself up with the feeling of the Great American West and that energy, and that drive, and the fearlessness and the optimism, and quiet, calm determination.” Peg Lyman or Janet Eilber, for whom Graham had staged the reproduction for *Dance in America* in 1976, generally played the character. In the GDR, Thea Narissa Barnes, a skilled African American dancer, played the role despite Lyman’s availability. The choice of the dancer remains an echo of Matt Tierney’s casting as the Pioneer Woman in *Appalachian Spring* for the 1955 tour.

Program notes and GDR reviews both attended to Graham’s Asian ties, but East German reviewers remained uninterested. Program notes supplied by the United States linked Asian influences to her early genesis as a “modern” dancer with Denishawn but did not carry it forward into her relationship with Noguchi and the sets that were on tour in the GDR. St. Denis and Shawn were presented as “trailblazers for modern dance”; with their company, “Martha got to know the different exotic dance techniques, e.g.

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95 Lyman.

96 Ibid.
Asian, Egyptian, Oriental, ancient Greek, Spanish and Native American styles.” Only one GDR review noted the Asian influence on Graham’s work. This author more accurately associated it with Noguchi and pinned it to *Errand into the Maze*, but predictably conflated it with the work’s depiction of the “human soul.” In the program notes, Graham repeatedly invoked Cold War mantras such as “freedom,” “soul,” and “humanity,” with statements such as, “The language of the body describes the landscape of the human soul.” GDR’s reviewers altered Graham’s sentiments to meet their own ideological needs when they ignored Asian influences and attached universals to the corruption of the American soul because of capitalism.

The GDR appropriated Graham’s appeal to generalized universalism in press reports to declare her dedication to “peace.” Reviews insisted that Graham was a guest of the city and not part of any Western export program. The GDR press announced, “With the world-known Martha Graham Dance Company from the USA, the internationally renowned ensemble gives Berliners a taste of their skills for their 750th anniversary.” She came as a peacemaker, not as a hegemonic export. While Western publicity had described Graham’s refusal to attend the 1936 Nazi-led Olympics, the reference remained a clause in a sentence that described her legacy overall. The most

97 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987.”

98 Prof. Dr. Eberhard Rebling, “Künstler aus den USA gastieren zum Berlin Jubiläum,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 15, 1987, 7-A-3 reviews GDR newspapers, LA.

99 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987.”

100 “Tänze der Hoffnung.”

101 “Berliner Zeitung,” *Neues Deutschland*, 7-A-3 reviews GDR newspapers, LA.
detailed and expert GDR review used the totalitarian Nazi régime to its own ends, far more forcefully than the West. The GDR celebrated “modern music” as “anti-fascist.”¹⁰² One critic launched into a prolonged description of Graham’s dedication to peace, particularly as it pertained to Germany: “Staying true to her humanistic principles she warned against the dangers of war. She warned against war in *Chronicle* already in 1936, against new war.”¹⁰³ The GDR claimed that she allied herself with the Soviet government by refusing to collaborate with the Nazis. Although during interviews before she arrived she had said, “This is a great honor for me to be here because dancing is a bond that connects all countries,” there is no evidence that Graham used the word “peace.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Graham did not use the politically charged word in her writings and memoirs except to describe the inner “peace” achieved by her characters Jocasta and Clytemnestra in death. Evidence of her understanding of the word as political can be found in her work *Tribute to Peace* for the 1939 World’s Fair, with Roosevelt watching from the stands. Despite the fact that Graham did not use the phrase in East Germany, after the close of the season GDR publicity asserted, “For the 1987 season she used the motto, ‘For peace in the world.’”¹⁰⁵

Graham’s “European” influence presented an opportunity for the West, and this publicity linked her to the work of Mary Wigman and sculptor Ernst Barlach.


¹⁰³ Rebling, “Künstler aus den USA gastieren zum Berlin Jubiläum.”

¹⁰⁴ “neue Berliner Jllustrierte”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
Regarding Wigman, USIS provided no dates, which would have put Wigman’s innovative development during the time that Graham performed the Denishawn works. Program notes for the GDR appearances portrayed Graham and Wigman as products of the same impulse: to follow Isadora Duncan directly and oppose the ballet. Wigman “introduced a fundamental, sometimes radically conducted process of rethinking and paved the way for the creation of *Ausdruckstanz* in Germany and other parts of Europe.”

Thus Graham became the hegemon and molded the German form. A reporter in the GDR asked Graham about the influence of Wigman and Gret Palucca on her work, and Graham replied that although she had been influenced by the Germans while she was a young woman in California, the German influence had been completely removed from the modern dance form. Graham participated in “the creation of what is now summarized as existing as modern dance in America, exerting influence globally.”

USIS also highlighted the influence of Barlach on Graham’s *Lamentation*. The notes for the work read, “On the way to content-focused creation, ‘Lamentation’ is one of her first essential successes. In it, she personifies human grief. The figure dancing in a wide cape reminds in its archaic, block-like plasticity of the creations of Ernst Barlach.”

Two GDR reporters picked up on this reference. One reporter compared the dance with Barlach’s statues. But like the two preceding reviews, he stressed that although Graham’s

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106 “Martha Graham: USA, 750 Jahre Berlin, 1987.”


109 Ibid.
style was abstract, and could be accepted as a part of the German tradition, Graham’s work offered a new approach. On the other hand, understanding works such as *Lamentation* required a knowledge of the original context, such as Barlach’s sculptures, to fully appreciate it.\textsuperscript{110}

While the GDR reviews reported tremendous reception for the company, for the dancers the response was not memorable. According to the GDR, the Graham company’s first performances were met with “rapturous applause for an evening of great dance art.”\textsuperscript{111} A review of a performance at the Komische Oper announced, “Ovations for the guest performance of the world famous dance company of the USA. Brilliant dance art became an unforgettable experience.”\textsuperscript{112} In other locations where performers recall being hailed by audiences and receiving standing ovations or even local reactions of awe, a dancer on the tour reports, “I don’t remember the audiences [in East Berlin] at all; I don’t remember what they were like.”\textsuperscript{113} The woman who performed *Frontier* also did not have any recollection of the reaction to the dance.\textsuperscript{114} In addition, Graham had not felt


\textsuperscript{111} “Graham Dance Company zu Gast,” February 18, 1987, clipping labeled BZ am Abend, Berlin, Globus VEB Zeitungsausschnittdienst, “Martha Graham,” box 21, folder A4, TLA.

\textsuperscript{112} Rebling, “Künstler aus den USA gastieren zum Berlin Jubiläum”; for a summary of the positive season see, “Huldigung für Martha Graham,” *Tribüne*, February 21, 1987, LA.

\textsuperscript{113} Lyman.

\textsuperscript{114} Thea Narissa Barnes (performer in *Frontier*), phone interview with the author, 2011.
comfortable in the communist country. A dancer who rode back to the West in Graham’s limousine recalled, “She did not like going [to East Germany]. She talked all the time there about the ground being covered in blood.” Graham had performed repeatedly in the West, however. Suggesting that Graham had reacted to her long-time anti-communist tours, the dancer noted, “Maybe that’s why she wouldn’t go to Russia.”

The dancers had been well trained by Graham to present themselves in public as good spokespersons for the United States; if Graham had reservations about the trip, she did not show them. Unlike on other tours, dancers had not been briefed about conditions before they left. Once the company arrived, the State Department stepped in with both currency and advice. Each dancer received a stipend, although it seemed impossible to buy anything. A German dancer in the company had attempted to educate the Graham administration about what they would experience in the GDR: “They didn’t believe me, so they went without their tissues, without their soaps. I said, ‘It’s not there. You’ve got to bring it—if you need this you’ve got to bring it.’”

Stories of how to wrangle tissues to get makeup off their faces and bath toiletries became lore: “There was a reception at the embassy, and we just raided the bathrooms and took every roll of toilet paper we could put our hands on.” Some were able to secure fur scarves and hats in the freezing weather. One dancer recalled of the trip overall, “East Berlin was really


115 Lyman.
116 von Bardeleben.
117 Ibid.
depressing,” and added, “[E]verything seemed to be in a state of decay.”118 Despite the dancers’ sentiments about useless currency, shortages, and unremarkable audience reactions, the GDR press reported on their excitement with the trip and the dancers’ love for the city of East Berlin, which they toured with GDR officials.

In March, researchers for Radio Free Europe noted, “A day does not pass without there being some mention in the official media of the 750th anniversary.”119 They added that the celebrations gave the GDR “an opportunity to stress its achievements, reinforce its political position, and to promote international prestige.”120 West Berlin’s government began a large publicity initiative, and the celebration of the city as one turned into a competition, albeit with the East on a stronger footing. While the GDR had opened the year with a distinct logo that marked all the 750th anniversary events, the West Berlin symbol did not emerge until March. While planners scrambled to put together cultural events and congresses, the West Berlin newspaper Der Tagesspiegel began printing a regular report on the history of Berlin from Frederick the Great to the present. “The 750th Anniversary of Berlin” became the header of each page. The stories focused most heavily on the years 1933 through 1936 with pictures of Nazi rallies in front of the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate, both a part of the East Berlin landscape. Articles emphasized the destruction of the German people by totalitarian rule, intended as a direct swipe at the Soviet-controlled sector.

118 Lyman.

119 Donovan, “East Berlin’s 750th Birthday Celebrations.”

120 Ibid.
Events increasingly targeted the youth in the West yet also remained centered around building cultural institutions. The 750th anniversary newspaper section announced an event in the Tiergarten: “Looking for dance fans of disco, jitterbug, rock and roll, twist.” Programs included a show of cars and bathing beauties. Like its East Berlin counterpart, the West Berlin mayor’s office engaged architects and city planners. The German Federal Government chartered and funded the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum). The government charter slated its architectural footprint for the museum on the Western side directly across from the Reichstag, which mirrored the placement of the Kongresshalle built in 1957 as a “shining beacon of peace.” Although not a formal part of the celebrations, in 1987 Kongresshalle reopened after being restored largely in its prior form. The Berlin planners renamed it Haus der Kulturen der Welt (the House of World Cultures).

As the official publicity wars grew more intense, West Berlin recognized that it had to send its mayor to the GDR convention of mayors. The Netherlands, Spain, and even the United States sent representatives. In response to this dilemma, the government asked Honecker to speak in the West as a part of an exchange. By late spring, the British government had sent the Queen Mother, Prince Phillip, and even


Princess Diana to the West to celebrate the city’s birthday. Reagan decided to appear on June 12th, as the most potent American foe of Communism. Before Reagan arrived, events on both sides of the Wall thwarted the East’s project. At the “Concert for Berlin” in front of the Reichstag on the Western side, thousands of young people flocked to the Brandenburg Gate and shouted, “The Wall must go!” Honecker travelled to the West where he strayed from the Soviet party line during a public speech. While he acknowledged that there were two Germanies, he argued that the borders “are not what they should be.” He concluded that one day, “The borders will no longer divide us, but unite us.” The Soviets reacted with amazement, but young people in the GDR believed that the speech “signaled the obsolesce of the Berlin Wall.” Just two days before Reagan arrived, David Bowie, the Eurhythmics, and New Model Army performed a rock concert at the Wall. Western newspapers reported that during the three-day concert of popular British and American performers, 300,000 young people gathered. More importantly, 4,000 listeners stood at the “border security facility” in East Berlin. At the end of the program, the East German youth shouted, “The Wall must go!” and threw explosives and fireworks at police. In newspapers, a spokesman for the Soviets responded that the youth were “very energetic.” He continued,


125 Taylor, The Berlin Wall, 391.


127 “Rockstars gratulieren zum Fest,” Berliner Morgenpost, June 10, 1987, LA.
“Sometimes one is a bit envious of how boisterous and happy they act in stadiums and sports arenas and sometimes also on the streets.”

After Reagan’s speech, Der Tasspiegel featured him and his wife, Nancy, in front of a tiered birthday cake. The following day, the First Lady appeared in a cowboy hat next to her husband, who wore blue jeans and a rancher’s belt.

The distinctly American modern dance of Martha Graham presented in the GDR, youth movements, slips by politicians, and Reagan’s demand in June certainly did not indicate that the fall of the Wall was imminent. Reagan had come to represent the old-fashioned hostilities of the Cold War on both sides of the Wall, not a refreshing new start for foreign relations that would achieve immediate results. For the Graham performers in East Berlin, the situation looked “very bleak.” One dancer remembered, “I didn’t feel any sense of hope, or you know, impending, you know, looking forward to something that was percolating positively at all.”

While a majority of the mass audience stood and listened to Reagan, demonstrators in the West also had to be quelled, often with force. Although the West German newspapers made light of these events, the Soviets drew inspiration from the protests. Claiming that Reagan’s speech flew in the face of the East’s promotion of peace that infused the birthday celebrations, a reporter for


130 “Reagan fordert Sowjets auf,” Berliner Morgenpost, June 13, 1987, LA.

131 Lyman.

132 Ibid.
*Neues Deutschland* noted that the government had handpicked those who stood
enraptured at the gate on the Western side, and many others rioted against the
warmongering Reagan.\(^{133}\) The GDR celebrated Berlin in the name of peace. A GDR
newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, showed a picture of a Western officer hitting a woman who
was carrying a child.\(^{134}\)

From a publicity standpoint, however minor the Graham appearances,
Reagan’s speech can be directly linked to her export as propaganda: although Graham
addressed an elite that could not be reached by speeches or rock concerts with sound
speakers pointed to the East, the two American exports were a part of an international
group directly associated with the 750\(^{\text{th}}\) anniversary celebrations.\(^{135}\) The Graham
programming linked her work to Reagan’s outlook, with their shared tropes of the
frontier.\(^{136}\) In 1982, Reagan had declared, “In the future, as in the past, our freedom,
independence, and national well-being will be tied to new achievements, new discoveries,
and pushing back new frontiers.”\(^{137}\) In 1983, Reagan embraced the “High Frontier”
concept of Assured Survival in his speech on national security during which he

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\(^{133}\) “Polizeieinsatz mit Schlagstöcken und Tränengas gegen Friedenskundgebung,”
*Neues Deutschland*, June 13, 1987, 1, LA.

\(^{134}\) “Brutaler Polizeieinsatz in Berlin (West) hat massenhaft Verletzte gefordert,”
*Neues Deutschland*, June 14, 1987, 4, LA.

\(^{135}\) Lyman.

\(^{136}\) Ibid.

\(^{137}\) Ronald Reagan, “Ronald Reagan and the Frontier: Remarks at Edwards Air
Force Base, California, on Completion of the Fourth Mission of the Space Shuttle
Columbia,” July 4, 1982, accessed March 2013,
articulated ideas of nuclear defense against the Soviet threat. Several days before Reagan’s appearance, *Morgenpost* produced a color photo of Nancy and Ronald Reagan, an expensive technology for newspapers in 1987, which featured the two at their ranch, with Nancy wearing a cowboy hat. In the 1930s, Graham had described the American West “whose meaning was inexhaustible, whose purpose was infinite.” This was the inspiration for *Frontier*. In 1937, she performed the dance at the White House on a rickety platform. In the GDR, her dancer did so on a stage in the finest opera houses replete with a full-scale Noguchi fence. With Martha Graham now the “Old Lady” of modern dance, her stand-in pressed her arms against the top rung of the abstracted American split-rail fence; she looked just above the GDR leaders as though surveying the Western plains. While her sidelong leg sweeps for Roosevelt had almost touched the White House chandelier, in the opera house the sweep of the dancer’s leg that lifted her skirt into a wide, arching semicircle engulfed the seemingly limitless space of the large stage. As in the performance for Roosevelt, *Frontier* ended as the dancer placed her leg on the fence, standing in profile, again marking the land with her arm’s reach over the audience.

In 1988, the year after Reagan and Graham appeared in Berlin, Reagan gave his famous speech, “On the Frontier of Freedom.” After the fall of the Wall in 1989, in 1991, just before her death and the fall of the Soviet Union, Graham retold the story of an East German woman who could not understand the concept presented by

138 Graham, *Blood Memory*, 44.

*Frontier* because she believed that “when you reach the frontier, you’ve reached a barrier.” Mirroring Reagan and the beliefs that had become etched into her legacy, the Graham who had become a reliable American cultural archetype herself responded to the East German woman and explained that the frontier signaled the “spirit of man and union of man.”

Reagan spoke about the “kinship” among those who had been divided. Indeed, “when [the politicians] sensed internal mayhem, they sent out Martha Graham,” across checkpoints that divided Israel from Jordan and East from West Berlin because Graham and her Presidents shared ideologies that inspired American approaches to art, democracy, and foreign policy.

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Conclusion

“Never forget: Martha was a genius,” commanded the dancer who defined the power of passion as *Diversion of Angel’s* Woman in Red. Little did I know, Pearl Lang was on her deathbed. I have followed her words to both remember and celebrate Graham, while also challenging the legacy she created – that she was an apolitical artist. The United States government – in partnership with private foundations and individuals – used Martha Graham and her modern dance works as a cultural Cold War export because Graham and her choreography expressed American values through her cutting-edge choreography and technique, including the many permutations of freedom. Because of the State Department tours, Graham became a leader of the modern dance and gleaned financial backing that, in some cases, funded the company’s survival. The history of Martha Graham’s role in cultural diplomacy suggests that foreign policies in the years between 1955 and 1987 were a series of Cold Wars that required steady products that could meet propaganda needs to enact foreign policy.

In various nations and cities and before diverse audiences, reception of Graham varied. Negative criticism became pronounced when cultural convergences denied the inventiveness and avant-garde host country dance forms. German audiences, for example, did not respond favorably to USIS publicity claiming American ownership of the modern dance. In addition, when presented with stories from the Western tradition, be they myths or biblical tales, those who either did not know the narratives, or found the presentation overly complex, often rebelled against the performances with scathing reviews. Yet when cultural convergences worked, Graham was heralded. In 1955, while Graham performed in India, Secretary of State John F. Dulles wanted to show India that
“there were no real divergences of interests between the U.S. and India.” In turn the press reported, “Martha Graham, through her art, is helping to bring people together.” The tour’s resounding success established Graham’s credibility as an artist and ambassador who served the national interest. Over time, as resistance increased, reports sent back to the State Department from the field overemphasized her successes. In addition, they demonstrate that the government, as it took more control over selections, sent out Graham as a export even when she seemed only somewhat reliable. The reputation earned in 1955 served her through less successful tours.

The messages in Graham’s works also succeeded in improbable places. In 1955, Appalachian Spring brought a story of decolonization and political freedom as the Bride and Husbandman explored the land frontier after having been colonized by the British. The year before Graham arrived in recently decolonized nations, the USIA strategically promoted the British colonial heritage of the United States in order “to establish a basis of understanding.” The Appalachian Spring program featured Graham as the Bride, clad in a layered frontier dress. The opposite page featured a line drawing of George Washington looking westward. In 1974, the embassy in the Philippines asked that the work not be performed. By then, publicity shifted and framed the dance in biblical language as a story of “The Promised Land.” Although the dance, as pro-democratic propaganda, may have seemed dated and ineffective by the 1970s, Lebanese dancers, who met Graham in 1979, heralded Appalachian Spring. They believed it demonstrated the power of American freedom and its ability to triumph in the political arena. As their nation struggled with civil war, the dancers found hope and uplift in Graham and her work.
Unexpected successes took place when the use of host country forms seemed to ape local traditions, and yet elite audiences applauded the work. For example, retelling Greek myths in Greece, the story of Joan of Arc in Europe, the story of Judith in Israel, and the story of Cleopatra in Egypt – set in the Egyptian Temple of Dendur itself – all would seem to indicate the use of cultural imperialism. Yet audiences celebrated these works as representative of their culture and traditions: Martha Graham understood them. Although orientalism would seem to contradict success in the Middle East, the elites showered Graham with flowers and national awards. The modernism of choreography for export allied the host country intelligentsia with the Americans through a common understanding of art that could not be understood by the “other,” or the less well educated in the Western canon. Graham’s work created a metaphorical community of cultural understanding and sophistication that transcended national borders, while at the same time she claimed to be speaking in a universal language that could communicate to all men and women. Yet common bonds, forged in a shared elite culture, served as the foundation for newly formed personal connections that aided political alliances. In such a way, Graham’s orientalism worked for the rulers and cultural elites of the host countries as well as the United States government.

The story of international deployment also engages domestic politics. Because Graham’s art targeted leaders, their counterparts at home in the United States championed and exported her work. While Congress showed a provincial understanding of modernist art in 1963, the Department of State and affluent private individuals enabled Graham to go on tours under the auspices of the government. With the inception of Eisenhower’s Emergency Fund in 1954 and the export of Graham in 1955, the State
Department did not lend its name to tour programs in the field. Programs appeared to be sponsored exclusively by foundations, companies, and individuals. Upon inception in 1955, the dance panel of independent private sector experts appeared to be making decisions. Shortly thereafter, as the tours became successful propaganda, the State Department became active in Dance Panel meetings. Over time, the State Department became more and more visible. By 1970, the panel had not met in two years, and government representatives dominated the membership. More importantly, the officials dictated mandates to the private sector members, offering little room for debate. Meetings that addressed international deployments included the National Endowment for the Arts, a domestic government agency. By 1972, rather than the government working loosely to oversee the private sector, the exchange took place between government agencies.

Chapter One argues that although a modernist dance began in Germany just before the start of World War I and circulated in the United States in the mid- and late 1920s, with German-trained Japanese dancers as well, the story of “modern dance” became a victor’s history. After the defeat of the Germany and Japan at the end of World War II, American critics asserted that because the modern dance was born of the individualistic and freed body, it was a distinctly American invention. Moreover, these critics further asserted that the modernity of the dance proved its universality. Thus, in the post-war Cold War, American modern dance became the universal language used to speak about the “graph of the heart.” Over time, institutionalization diminished the role of the modern dance as an innovative form. It became classical, traditional, and even old-fashioned. Yet the government used what I have called Graham’s “four minds” to meet its propaganda needs. Graham’s biography brought her work infusions of universalism through her early relationship with her
mother and father, ideas of Western civilization as a young woman at school at the turn of the century, a dedication to American idealism and exceptionalism with her move from the East Coast to the West Coast, and orientalism during her dance training in California. During the early tours, the United States had to prove to elites that America had high culture and accomplished this through the use of an indigenous, innovative form. As the nation grew into a superpower recognized as a cultural leader, Graham gained recognition as an icon—the “High Priestess,” “Grand Old Lady, and “Doyenne,” depending on locale.

Because Graham’s choreography blended Americanism, universalism orientalism, and the Western cultural heritage—all themes emanating from her own biography—the Department of State exported Graham’s dances as propaganda and used Graham as a successful female cultural ambassador to “soothe internal mayhem,” quoting Brubeck and Armstrong, in countries of strategic importance between 1955 and 1987. As a distinctly American and modern cultural product, Graham represented the nation, while at the same time the four elements allowed targeted messages that changed across locations and time to meet the State Department’s publicity needs in Asia, the Middle East, and both Western and Eastern Europe. Directed at elite audiences, the tours fought the Soviet Union, which only had classical ballet to counter the modern dance, in a cultural cold war and engaged leaders and the intelligentsia in a bid to join the United States as a global partner. The early liberal idealism promoted by Graham’s works aged over time; the promotion of United States as modern, and thus represented by the modern dance in the 1950s, metamorphosed into the use of the dance as iconic, traditional, and even a conservatively-tinged demonstration of American foreign aims.

Each tour foregrounds a particular aspect of the argument. In 1955, after
the establishment of touring mechanisms begun by Roosevelt and codified by Eisenhower, Graham established her political power both with the resounding success of her performances as well as her work as an ambassador. Although the choreography met with resistance in newly decolonizing nations, which were exploring dance forms as a voice of independence, the tour overall offered Graham a credibility in the field that resonated for decades. Eisenhower’s NSA oversaw the deployment with a committee including Vice President Richard Nixon. He would re-deploy Graham to Asia when he became president over a decade later. Graham’s 1957 performance in West Germany at the opening of Eleanor Dulles’s Congress Hall demonstrated the power of Graham’s direct connections to the government. In addition, the performances of both 1955 and 1957 demonstrated the role that affluent private sector women played alongside the State Department in supporting Graham’s tours. These two tours solidified Graham’s political legacy.

In 1962, resistance became manifest, and yet failure was neither straightforward nor predictable. In Germany, because USIS promoted Graham’s modern dance as a universal and the Germans had come to recognize their own tradition, Graham’s work met with resistance. The example of Yugoslavia demonstrated that From George Kennan to Francis Mason, government representatives had institutional memory. As ambassador to Yugoslavia in the early 1960s, Kennan sponsored an exhibit of modern American art proposed by his cultural attaché, Francis Mason, who had worked for Voice of America and later became the chair of the board of Graham’s company and foundation. The exhibit drew unprecedented crowds; Graham toured Yugoslavia the following year with her modernist art. Past successes and connections helped Graham:
she could not have toured in 1974 without the assistance of Mason. Each nation, and with each tour over time, tells a nuanced story. However, the tour also demonstrated that when Graham began to fail as an ambassador, she no longer received support. Reports from the field in 1962 noted her “exhaustion” and described her as “tired.” Such reports corresponded to stories of Graham’s technically weak performances and drunken behavior both on stage and during public appearances. In arcs of decline and rise, with the steep declines merely offset by weak recoveries, the 1962 tour marked the end of the “cocktail circuit” of diplomacy until 1974, when Graham staged a personal recovery.

The tours from 1974 through 1987 show Graham’s prowess as a choreographer and ambassador, and not a performer. In 1974, although memos sent to the State Department made the tour seem as though the tour had been a resounding success, private musings by a State Department official showed otherwise when Graham herself faltered. In 1979, her orientalist choreography that became celebrated in host countries demonstrates that Graham created an imagined community, which validated her work in the field. 1987 brought her relationship with the executive branch full circle as both she and the president used old-fashioned frontier tropes in order to fight communism with American culture and the rhetoric of freedom. Although modern dance had become codified, iconic, and old, Graham remained useful when she expressed the aims and ideals of the government with her repertory and work as an ambassador, however old-fashioned.

Graham cannot be put forth as either an ideologue or a government prop. Yet in 1978, the Sackler Foundation commissioned a new work that was particularly well suited for the needs of the Carter administration in the Middle East. Although she publicly
denied her attachment to politics, her connections to the United States government were active and calculated. Both parties actively participated with the other and used modernism—throughout its evolution from a universalistic postwar avant-garde replete with American idealism to an established global language—to promote global diplomatic aims and an American understanding of freedom during a series of cold wars that spanned both geography and time.
Archives

Akademie der Künste, Tanz Archiv, Berlin
Mary-Wigman-Archiv

Terese Capucilli, New York, NY
Private Collection

Columbia University, New York, NY
Rare Books and Manuscripts Library
Historical Subject Files, Series I: Academics and Research, Columbia College, Curriculum

The Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, Köln, Germany
Martha Graham, Clippings File

Georgette Gebra Archives
Private Collection, Beirut, Lebanon

George Mason University Libraries, Arlington, VA.
Robert Schnitzer Collection
Robert S. Breen Papers

The George Washington University, Washington, DC
Special Collections Research Center
Eleanor Lansing Dulles Papers, 1867-1993
National Security Archive
FBI Filings, Martha Graham and Lincoln Kirstein

Haus der Kulturen der Welt
Institutional Archives, Berlin, Germany

The Martha Graham Foundation, New York City, NY
Uncatalogued collection
Files available from author

Harvard University, Boston, MA
Special Collections
Hugh Stubbins Archive
The Early Years Collection, uncatalogued

Landesarchiv aus dem Aktenbestam, Berlin, Germany
Newspapers
Neues Deutschland
Der Tagesspiegel
Die Zeit
Benjamin Franklin Stiftung B. Rep. 160
Dulles, Eleanor B. Rep 124
Kongresshalle B. Rep. 166

Library of Congress, Washington DC
Manuscript Division
Frances G. Wickes Papers
Papers of Lucy Kroll
Music Division
Martha Graham Collection, 1896-2003
Martha Graham Legacy Collection
Erick Hawkins Collection, 1940-1993
Ethel Winter and Charlie Hyman Collection
Ben Garber Collection
Helen McGehee and Umaña Collection of Dance Materials
New Dance Group Collection

Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, NY
Exhibition Files of the Museum of Modern Art

National Archives

Presidential Libraries and Museums
Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Abilene, KS
Eleanor Lansing Dulles Papers, 1880-1973
Dwight D. Eisenhower:
Records as President, White House Central Files, 1953-1961
National Security Council Staff Papers

Gerald Ford Presidential Library and Museum, Grand Rapids, MI
White House Special Files Unit, Presidential Files, 1974-77
Presidential Speeches: Reading Copies

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston, MA
The Personal Papers of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
President’s Office Files

Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, Simi Valley, CA
White House Staff and Office Files, 1981-1989
Freedom of Information Act request for Martha Graham related materials, November 3, 2010

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY
Papers as President
President’s Secretary’s File
Master Speech File
Executive Orders and Proclamations

National Archives, College Park, MD
Central Decimal Files, 1910-1963 (RG 59)
(1954-56) United States to Japan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Iran,
(1961-1962) Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Germany, Poland
(1967 and 1974 by archivists) Portugal, Japan, Burma, Vietnam
Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, 1912-1973 (RG 84)
(1954-56) Japan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Iran
(1961-1962) Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Germany, Poland
(1967) Portugal
(1974 by archivists) Japan, Burma, Vietnam
Office of War Information, 1926-1951 (RG 208)
Special Media Archives Services Division
Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Records Division
Still Pictures Records Section
Information Center Service
Motion Picture and Television Service
Office of the Director
Office of Policy and Plans
Office of Private Coordination Office of Research
Press and Publications Service

National Archives, Washington, DC
The Center for Legislative Archives
Congressional Records
Representative Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey (D-NJ)
Representative Edna Kelly of Brooklyn (D-NY)

The New School for Social Research, New York, NY
New School Arts and Public Programs
The New School Scrapbook Collection, 1918-1953

New York Public Library, New York City, NY
Jerome Robbins Dance Division
Morton Baum Papers, 1938-1968
Isadora Bennett Collection, 1940-1972
Martha Graham Dance Company Records, 1944-1955
Martha Graham Dance Company Records, Uncatalogued Box, 1955/6 Tour
Bertram Ross Papers, 1910-2006
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
Mudd Manuscript Library
Eleanor L. Dulles Papers, 1863-1989
Topical Files
George F. Kennan Papers, 1871-2005
Personal Files
Writings

Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York
Nelson A. Rockefeller – Personal Files
Washington DC Files
Special Assistant to the President
CIAA
Donovan, William
Cultural Activities
Exploration of Soviet Vulnerabilities
Personal Projects
Planning Coordination Group
Propaganda
Psychological Warfare
Psychological Warfare, Non-Military
Radio Division
Roosevelt, Franklin D. - Correspondence
Special Projects – Lincoln Kirstein, MoMA
U.S. Government, Arts Foundations

Office of Masseurs Rockefeller
Civic Interests
Rockefeller Foundation Papers
Project Series
Rockefeller Family Papers
Cultural Interests
Special Projects – Lincoln Kirstein
United States Information Agency

Tanzarchiv, Leipzig, Germany
Leipzig University Library, Special Collections
Graham, Martha - Clippings

University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, AK
Special Collections
Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection
Group II, Cultural Presentations Program

University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
Harry Ransom Center
Nancy Wilson Ross Papers, 1913-1986
Electronic Archival Databases

Declassified Documents Reference System

George Mason University - Mason Archival Repository Service
http://www.scholarly.gmu.edu/?page_id=21

The George Washington University
Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project
http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?y=1958&f=md004071
National Security Archive

Official Website of Jordan - Laws and Regulations

University of California, Santa Barbara - The American Presidency Project

University of Virginia – Miller Center Presidential Speech Archive
http://www.millercenter.org

Books and Journals


Hill, Martha. *Interview with Martha Hill.* Conducted by Agnes de Mille, January 18, 1984. Audiocassette, 2 sound cassettes, 100min. New York Public Library: Jerome Robbins Dance Division.


United States Committee for the World Youth Festival. *The Bright Face of Peace: The Story of American Participation in the World Youth Festival, Prague, July-


**Interviews and Oral Histories**


Films


Appendix I

Archival Abbreviations


- DTK: Martha Graham, Clippings File, The Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, Im Mediapark 7, D-50670 Köln, Germany. Note all translations from this archive were done by Heidi Ziegler, New York University.


• ELD-GWU: Eleanor Lansing Dulles Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The George Washington University, Washington, DC.


• FWC-LOC-MD: Frances G. Wickes Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Note that these letters are undated.

• HSA: Hugh Stubbins Archive: The Early Years Collection, uncatagoluged, Special Collections, Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.


• LA: Landesarchiv aus dem Aktenbestandm, Eichborndamm 115-121, 13403, Berlin, Germany. Note all translations from this archive were done by Julio Decker, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.


• LOC-MD: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, DC.

• MGC-LOC: Martha Graham Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

• MGLC-LOC: Martha Graham Legacy Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

• MGC-MGF: Martha Graham Collection, Martha Graham Foundation, New York City, uncatagoluged collection, files available from author if documents have been destroyed in the 2013 flood.

• MWA: Mary-Wigman-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Tanz Archiv, Berlin.

• NARPF: Nelson A. Rockefeller, Personal Files.

• NWRP: Nancy Wilson Ross Papers, Harry Ransom Center Archives, Austin Texas.

• NARA: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

• PAA: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin. Note all translations, when needed, and research guidance was done by Elisabeth Engel, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.
• RAC: Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

• RG: Record Group

• RBTC: Robert Breen Theater Collection (ANTA), Special Collections & Archives, George Mason University Libraries, Arlington, VA.

• RSTC: Robert Schnitzer Theatre Collection, Special Collections & Archives, George Mason University Libraries, Arlington, VA.

• TLA: Tanzarchiv Leipzig e.v., Leipzig University Library (Albertina), Special collections, Beethovenstraße, Leipzig, Germany. Note all translations from this archive were done by Julio Decker, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

• UAK: Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection (CU 468), group II (Cultural Presentations Program). Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, AK.

Appendix II

Choreographic Works by Martha Graham (Ballets)

_Appalachian Spring_, premiered 30 December 1944, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Aaron Copland, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Edith Gilfond.

_Chronicle_, premiered 20 December 1936, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Wallington Riegger, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.

_Deep Song_, premiered 19 December 1937, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Henry Cowell, costumes by Edith Gilfond.


_Errand into the Maze_, premiered 28 February 1947, choreography by Martha Graham, set by Isamu Noguchi, music by Gian-Carlo Menotti, costumes by Martha Graham.

_Judith_, premiered 4 January 1950, choreography by Martha Graham, music by William Schuman, set by Charles Hyman and revised by Isamu Noguchi (1951), costumes by Martha Graham, revised by Isamu Noguchi (1951).
The Legend of Judith, premiered 25 October 1962, choreography Martha Graham, music by Mordecai Seter, set by Dani Caravan, costumes by Martha Graham.

Letter to the World, premiered 11 August 1940, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Hunter Johnson, set by Arch Lauterer, costumes by Edith Gilfond.

Night Journey, premiered 3 May 1947, choreography by Martha Graham, music by William Schuman, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.

Perspectives - Frontier, premiered 28 February 1935, choreography and costumes by Martha Graham, music by Louis Horst, set by Isamu Noguchi.

Seraphic Dialogue, premiered 8 May 1955, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Norman Dello Joio, set by Isamu Noguchi, costumes by Martha Graham.

Three Gopi Maidens, premier 18 April 1926, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Cyril Scott, costumes by Norman Edwards, uncredited film, Rochester School of Music).

The Triumph of St. Joan, premiered 5 December 1951, choreography by Martha Graham, music by Norman Dello Joio, set by Frederick Kiesler, costumes by Martha Graham.

Appendix III

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests Granted

Federal Bureau of Investigation File – Martha Graham

Appendix IV

Literature of the Field

Both Agnes de Mille and Don McDonagh’s narrative biographies of Graham rely primarily on unfootnoted interviews and anecdotal evidence, although McDonagh also includes newspapers and other written sources.¹ De Mille provides an engaging, if not fully accurate, account of Graham’s life. McDonagh’s work contains fewer inaccuracies; however, as the

¹ Note that all full references appear in the introduction’s footnotes that reference Appendix III as well as in the bibliography.
biography was unauthorized, one must still question the details and narratives he presents. Merle Armitage’s edited volume *Martha Graham: The Early Years* presents a series of essays and even line drawings on Graham by artists and intellectuals and offers valuable anecdotal evidence about Graham’s development. Ernestine Stodelle’s *Deep Song: The Dance Story of Martha Graham* presents the most comprehensive and reliable source on Graham and her choreography. However reliable, it incorrectly locates information as demonstrated by recently opened archives at the Library of Congress. LeRoy Leatherman, a key member of Graham’s company administration, wrote *Martha Graham: Portrait of a Lady as an Artist* largely as homage to Graham. This early literature focused on recovery and not analysis. In all cases, the authors produced the books while Graham was alive and presented their works as the celebration of a genius.

Graham’s autobiography, *Blood Memory: An Autobiography*, cannot be used as testimony in a traditional sense, even though many of the passages follow Graham’s thoughts. Graham was given a contract to write an autobiography in 1959 but was never able to complete the written work. As the years progressed, she made tape recordings that were reduced to twenty pages of text. The book, published after her death, “cobbled together” oral testimony, letters from her psychiatrist, interviews for television, and a smattering of stories altered to fit the publicity needs of a company that had just lost its leader.

Resources available for the dissertation also include biographies of Graham’s dancers, autobiographies, interviews, and oral histories. Dorothy Bird’s autobiography, *Bird’s Eye View: Dancing with Martha Graham and on Broadway*, explores the earliest period of Graham’s work from 1930 and the years immediately following. Bird trained luminaries such as Jane Dudley and other dancers who originated roles in Graham’s major works in the 1940s. This
book provides insights into Graham, her early creative process, and the development of modern dance in the United States. Bird’s work demonstrates that Graham became interested in the Greek dramas and myths well before the late 1940s, as some scholars argue. Bird recalls working on the Chorus in *Seven Against Thebes* in 1930. Graham explored Greek plays and myths from the start of her career as a choreographer. In addition, her testimony demonstrates the influence of German music on Graham’s technique. Graham developed a central thematic movement, the back fall, while she choreographed Richard Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*.2

In *May O’Donnell: Modern Dance Pioneer*, Marian Horosko explores O’Donnell’s career as a dancer through oral testimony informed by biographical interludes. Demonstrating the cross-pollination of dance training in the 1930s, Horosko uses oral testimony by O’Donnell to show that she began her training in 1930 at the Mary Wigman School. O’Donnell moved to the Graham school in 1932 and studied alongside luminaries Jane Dudley and Sophie Maslow. Her discussion of the often unrecognized seminal influence of Louis Horst on Graham reinforces the argument that his approach to dance through the visual arts and his German heritage and interest in the German intellectual tradition influenced Graham’s growth as a choreographer. Horst also brought the ideas of the Western tradition to Graham and her dancers through the exploration of myth and the reinterpretation of French music and dance, which formed the basis of ballet. After O’Donnell left Graham, choreographed her own dances, and worked with José Limón, she returned in 1944 to find that Graham’s technique had evolved.

Graham used O’Donnell’s skills both as a dancer and choreographer when Graham choreographed *Cave of the Heart* and *Night Journey*, both of which formed a core part of the repertory in all State Department tours. In *Appalachian Spring*, O’Donnell choreographed much

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of her own role and premiered as the Pioneering Woman, later played by Matt Turney On the State Department tour of 1955-1956.3

In the biography *Martha Hill and The Making of American Dance*, Janet Mansfield Soares discusses Graham as one of the “Big Four” of American modern dance. Because the author uses Hills’s life to build a story of an art form, Graham takes a more central position in the narrative. Hill directed the seminal summer program at Bennington College where Graham premiered some of her most important works, such as *Diversion of Angels*, which accompanied her on all State Department tours. In addition, the Bennington program included critics who are central to the dissertation, such as John Martin and Margret Lloyd. Hill worked with Graham from the 1930s through Graham’s death in 1991. The two influenced one another both professionally and personally.

Martha Graham hired Yuriko after she was released from an internment camp during World War II, a demonstration of Graham’s enduring support of racial and social equality. In addition, in Graham’s statements about integration through action, she always chose highly skilled dancers who could both contribute to the creation of new works and would also assume Graham’s own roles later in their careers, much to her chagrin. In *Yuriko, An American Japanese Dancer: To Wash in the Rain and Polish with the Wind*, Emiko Tokunaga uses the traditional biographic format to explore Yuriko’s life. At the conclusion of the book, Tokunaga wrote about each of Yuriko’s own choreographic works including premiere dates, descriptions, and Yuriko’s commentary. Yuriko’s life demonstrates three seminal influences on Graham: her “Asian” mind, modernism, and the German dance tradition. Yuriko’s teacher, Baku Ishii, had

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studied modern dance in Germany as a part of the Japanese drive towards modernization in the early twentieth century. Ishii noted that the Germans emphasized “movements as the decisive elements bestowing modernity on the body.” In her review of her own dances, Yuriko also describes some of Graham’s works, including choreography that has been lost. Of particular note is her commentary on *Judith*, which Graham performed on behalf of the United States in Berlin in 1957.⁴

Published interviews and oral histories also provide insights into Graham and her creative process when she created the works that went on State Department tours. Robert Tracy conducted interviews with thirty dancers who worked with Graham from the 1920s through the 1990s and then edited the testimony. The dancers gave their personal accounts of Graham and their experience of her work. Typical of oral histories, the interviews are at times contradictory or even factually false. In addition, Tracy intervened with his editorial hand. Once parsed, however, the material provides personal insights into Graham and her works. Marian Horosko’s *Martha Graham: The Evolution of Her Dance Theory and Training* uses a combination of oral testimony and biographical information to weave together a story of Graham’s development as a choreographer, performer, and technician. Horosko moves from 1925 through the twenty-first century in her revised edition. Francis Mason’s unpublished book of interviews provides unedited transcripts of discussions he had with dancers. Because Mason was an insider—as a longtime champion of Graham’s, financial savior of the company, and Chair of her Board—his interviews provide a more intimate look at Graham. Finally, another unpublished manuscript and oral histories conducted by Mason offer insights into the specific tours. In *Part Real-Part*

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⁴ Tokunaga, *Yuriko*, 12.

⁵ Ibid., 135.
Dream: Encounters with Martha Graham, Stuart Hodes explores his career with Graham through his experience learning and creating parts in her works. The oral interviews become shaded by the specific topic of the tours. Dancers struggle to remember facts about a particular series of events rather than letting these tours become a part of their larger experience.

Although numerous artists influenced Graham’s work, two individuals in particular shaped her development as a woman, a dancer, and a choreographer: Louis Horst and Isamu Noguchi. Janet Mansfield Soares’s Louis Horst: Musician in a Dancer’s World offers dance scholars a vital perspective on Graham because Horst watched and guided her development from her first audition at Denishawn through the 1960s, and also became her lover. Soares provides descriptions of events from Graham’s early exposure to the German intellectual tradition and modern European visual artists, to her first performance at the White House and her use of choreographic motifs later in her career. In biographies of other collaborators, Graham appears as a significant yet small part of the artist’s larger life. For example, in The Life of Isamu Noguchi: Journey Without Boarders, Masayo Duus provides a reference to the set for Frontier: “He took the job, he later said, for the money.”6 Although Dore Ashton positioned the Frontier set as “one of the most important events in Noguchi’s life” in Noguchi: East and West, she offers only five pages of analysis in the context of a lengthy biography.7 Soares positions Noguchi differently. She quotes Graham in the context of Horst’s music for the dance: “When at last I asked Isamu for an image of those endless [Westward bound train] tracks for my dance, he brought me the set for Frontier – the tracks now the endless rope into the future.”8 Whereas

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6 Duus, The Life of Isamu Noguchi, 179.
7 Ashton, Noguchi East and West, 53-54.
8 Soares, Louis Horst, 121.
Soares, Graham, and Graham’s biographers understand the first collaboration between Noguchi and Graham as significant for both artists, Noguchi’s biographers positioned the work as a precursor to his development when he melded his Japanese sensibility with Graham’s vision. Both artists searched for the modern in the sense of “lean, clean, less-is-more desire” to “seize the essence of beauty itself.”\(^9\) All three books argue for Graham as an Asianist, or a woman whose works could only be fully realized with the influence of Japanese artists.

In addition to ancillary biographies, analytical books and journals dedicated to Graham and her technique provide resources for the dissertation. The two most important books, Marcia B. Siegel’s *The Shapes of Change: Images of American Dance* and Sally Banes’s *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, position Graham within a long history of new approaches to ballet and modern dance as well as within feminist history. Both books present narratives of historical continuity and look through a particular lens to see a new history of dance as a total genre. Siegel begins in the early twentieth century with Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes and Ruth St. Denis’s Denishawn through Twila Tharp’s *Push Comes to Shove* (1976), a dance that used modernist and comic themes and the ballet vocabulary. The book approaches history through biographies of dances, and Graham’s choreography receives extensive analysis in her chapter “The Epic Graham.” Siegel largely offers recaps of the works, with some analytical gestures. For example in her section about *Night Journey*, she claims that it shows the first “faltering” of Graham as choreographer.\(^{10}\) She does not, however, address this claim in any extensive way. Siegel’s tone sharply contrasts the analytical approach Banes takes, using feminist theory to challenge thinking in the field. With the concept of “the male gaze,” Banes

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\(^{10}\) Siegel, *The Shapes of Change*, 209.
explores women’s dancing bodies from the Romantic period through George Balanchine’s “modern ballets.” Like Siegel, Banes describes dances; however, she contextualizes them with theory, the choreographer’s biography, and the period in which the artist constructed the work. In her analysis of Night Journey, she explores Graham as a feminist, and after carefully constructing an argument; she concludes that Night Journey was “a complex product of Graham’s sexual politics” in which Graham showed herself to be a conservative. In both cases, the authors provide insights into a staple work on the State Department tours.

Two journal issues dedicated to Martha Graham offer scholars insights into new research. Dance Chronicle’s “Special Issue: Martha Graham” includes articles on politics and Graham’s work Primitive Mysteries, and Yuriko, as well as a roundtable forum on Clytemnestra and Graham’s “dance dramas.” These articles begin research into unexplored areas of Graham’s dance, and the panel discusses the particular nature of Graham as dramaturge. Choreography and Dance’s issue dedicated to Martha Graham, edited by Alice Helpern, provides four articles and several roundtables with dancers. “The Orient in America: Fertile Soil for Martha Graham” by Mark Wheeler argues that scholars must understand the influence of Asia, and particularly Japan, on Martha Graham in order to understand her aesthetic approach to dance. This repeated trope underscores the importance of understanding what Alice Munroe calls “The Third Mind,” or American artists’ use of Japanese forms. The preponderance of articles and books that identify this demands that the understanding of Graham as influenced by outside factors must be complicated to explore her understanding of the Western tradition, as well as the concept of universalism.

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11 Banes, Dancing Women, 167.
12 Munroe, The Third Mind.
Before the 1990s, historians of Martha Graham divorced their analysis from national politics. However, both dance historians and performance studies theorists have begun to explore the political aspects of dance in the U.S. Mark Franko has made this turn with his book *Martha Graham in Love and War: The Life in the Work*, which explores Graham as a political choreographer. Franko uses Graham’s well-documented commitment to fighting fascism as a starting point for his analysis of *Appalachian Spring*, *Night Journey*, and *Voyage* (1953). He argues that she created these works in response to her political beliefs in combination with her psychoanalytic work. Myth and politics come together when Graham “explores her own spirituality as a means of communicating her political commitment, creating a unique chapter in the history of modernism in the process.” Franko melds biographical information with both Graham’s politics and the context of contemporary social movements to understand two works that formed the backbone of the State Department tours, *Night Journey* and *Appalachian Spring*. Although Franko uses difficult concepts including a particular *zeitgeist* in her connection to Nazi artists, as well as a concept of her “afterlife,” the book introduces the possibility of scholarly discussions about her life as a political speaker. In this way, the text adds to the dissertation because it establishes Graham as a political choreographer. Before Franko’s book, in *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*, historian Ellen Graff dug into Graham’s response to the Spanish Civil War and *American Document* to unravel the connection of Graham’s choreography to the left despite the fact that she was hardly a fellow traveler. Mark Franko, in his *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*, uses images of Graham and snippets of her work to explore the emergence of modern dance as a convergence of modernism and politics.

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Dance historians and performance studies theorists have used Graham’s works to provide examples for larger arguments. In *Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey*, Julia L. Foulkes argues that the modern dance of the 1930s and 1940s expressed the aspirations of the nation as a whole and defined Martha Graham as a “historic” modern dancer. Helen Thomas dedicates a section of *Dance, Modernity and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance* to an analysis of *Appalachian Spring* through the lens of theory from sociology to Foucault. Ramsay Burt, in *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, ‘Race’ and Nation*, discusses trends in Europe in the context of modernity and addresses sexuality, race, and consumerism. Burt does not find continuity in Graham’s life and work; rather, he presents her career as a series of schisms. Her work as a modernist is not linked with her experiences at Denishawn and its training in both an appreciation of Asian forms or theatricality.

Dance scholars have addressed politics in general, particularly in Europe, and experts in foreign policy have joined them. Lilian Karina and Marion Kant’s *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich* opens up new research on dance in Nazi Germany, and uses these archives to explore the relationship of choreographers central to the development of modern dance to the Nazi Party. The book analyzes Graham’s letter to the Nazi Olympic Committee and her response to only one person, a key figure in dance, rather than to the committee. In *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*, Susan Maning recognizes Wigman as “a major innovator of dance modernism,” thus reversing cold war histories that write out Wigman’s seminal influence on the genre. Jens Giersdorf’s *The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945* uses both historical research and theory to explore the politics of dance in East Germany and other socialist states.
during the Cold War. Because Graham performed in countries discussed by Giersdorf, these sources become important to analyze. In addition, Giersdorf has provided primary sources to the author that are not available in dance or government archives. In *Dance and Politics*, Alexandra Kolb has collected a series of essays that explore or build on arguments in the field both in Europe and the United States. Kant builds on her analysis of the work she presented in *Hitler’s Dancers*. Stacey Prickett explores American dance during World War II. Other authors use theory and oral histories to understand human rights, socialism, the 2008 financial crisis, and Iraq. Most recently, Emily Rosenberg and Shanon Fitzpatrick have assembled essays for their forthcoming *Body/Nation: The Global Realms of U.S. Body Politics in the Twentieth Century*. Although their essays touch on dance only briefly, their authors’ discussions of modernity, race, gender, and war will create a productive dialogue with scholars who write about dance.

Recent books on the Cold War have focused the domestic implications for dance. In *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945-1960*, Gay Morris analyzes how the works of major choreographers in New York, such as Graham, responded to broad cultural and social issues. Rebekah J. Kowal uses the concept of Cold War containment in *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America*. She also includes Graham’s works, yet she reflects on how the policy of containment fashioned for international markets affected domestic trends in dance.

General works have understood Graham through the broader lens of the twentieth-century intelligentsia. Howard Gardner’s *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi* understands Graham in the context of what he calls “intelligence.” Through biography and analysis, Gardner strives to elucidate the “modern era” through each individual’s creative
approach to varied disciplines. In *Letter to the World: Seven Women Who Shaped the American Twentieth Century*, Susan Ware includes Graham with Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, Margaret Mead, Katherine Hepburn, and Marion Anderson to understand the interconnections of the public and private lives of notable women. She examines how these women embodied the problems of the “modern woman” and used personal qualities to innovate and then sustain careers.

The literature of foreign policy and the Cold War is vast. *From Colony to Superpower: United States Foreign Policy since 1776* by George C. Herring provides a narrative of American foreign policy. In addition to the historical narrative, the author provides an extensive bibliographic essay to guide the research with in-depth readings. Anders Stephanson’s *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* provides a concise long history of United States expansionist policies. Odd Arne Westad’s *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* ranges chronologically and geographically, demonstrating the way the Third World moved to the center of international politics by the end of the Cold War. He analyzes decolonization and nation building and argues that the United States brought high modernism to American Cold War policies. Rashid Khalidi’s *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* extends arguments about the Cold War in the Middle East and proposes that the resonance of the Cold War continues into the present. His arguments become particularly important to the chapter “Pax Americana,” which traces Graham’s “Jimmy Carter Goodwill Tour” to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.

Overviews of cultural diplomacy provide excellent resources. In *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, Richard T. Arndt provides a review of the history of United States agencies and cultural diplomacy in nations from Germany
to Sri Lanka. He underscores the elitist genealogy of diplomats and men who worked in direct confrontation with the tenets of an American participatory democracy. His chapter “The Arts of Performance” argues that the United States agencies needed more high-art products as cultural diplomacy, yet he skims over the offerings utilized by the State Department. Although he cites the early use of ballet in Lincoln Kirstein’s American Ballet Caravan, he largely ignores other forms of dance.\footnote{Arndt, \textit{The First Resort of Kings}, 404.} David Caute’s \textit{The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War} highlights the shifting nature of the conflicts through changes in cultural diplomacy over time as propaganda to fight the Soviets. He concentrates on the defection of Soviet ballet dancers and the use of ballet as a weapon but does not mention the involvement of modern dance in cultural diplomacy.

Historians have explored the State Department cultural tours specifically through the lenses of the visual arts, jazz, and dance. In \textit{How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War}, Serge Guilbaut shows the shifts in post-WWII power from Europe to the United States as New York replaced Paris and London as a global cultural center in the visual arts. He argues that abstract expressionism achieved its success not solely on aesthetic grounds but because of the use of the works to promote the American ideology of freedom in the international arena during the Cold War. He establishes ideology as a driving force behind cultural exports that redefines the concept of freedom. He asserts that the art laid claims to liberty or liberation at best.

In \textit{Satchmo Blows Up the World}, Penny von Eschen argues that the State Department exploited the cultural contributions of African Americans to advance domestic and
overseas agendas. According to von Eschen, these cultural ambassadors fought perceptions of American racism and encouraged trade in oil uranium. Using Louis Armstrong, or “Satchmo” as her focus, she shows that the jazz tours preceded covert CIA actions in Europe and Africa, and she provides a model for how to build an argument about the underlying intentions behind U.S. cultural diplomacy.

Naima Prevots’ *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* offers a sweeping narrative of both modern dance and ballet tours from the 1950s. She argues that Eisenhower initiated the cultural exchange program in order to reinforce complex relationships with contested Cold War nations and fight the Soviets. Graham receives attention as one in a series of dance artists sent out by the Dance Panel. Prevots’s book establishes the dance tours as an important part of cultural diplomacy and offers an outline from which to make specific arguments about individual choreographers. Her book provides the backbone for scholarship on dance exports and the Cold War. The books by Prevots, von Eschen, and Guilbaut establish the link between specific artistic genres and diplomacy.

New works about the USIA, or USIS in the field, chronicle its history and provide an analysis of the agency’s work. Nichols J. Cull’s *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* uses a strong, methodical narrative. In *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War: U.S Propaganda and the Cold War*, Laura A. Belmonte focuses on a shorter time-span of USIA history, Truman through Eisenhower, and narrows the examination to the function of ideology. Belmonte shows how the USIA was both sophisticated and flexible in its project of the “Selling of America.” Belmonte as a part of the larger propaganda project has opened the exploration of the selling of the American woman in the Cold War. Walter L. Hixson’s *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-
1961 offers a good but abbreviated history of the USIA while arguing that consumer products became just as powerful as troops. Kenneth Osgood’s *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* uses Cull’s work to narrow arguments to the Eisenhower administration’s formation of cultural diplomacy.

Numerous authors use cultural exports as evidence. In *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*, Victoria de Grazia uses cultural products such as film to explain how an American “market empire,” created through a partnership between government and private enterprise, spread the values of consumption. She presents the U.S. as “a great imperium with the outlook of a great emporium.” Her use of a case-study approach alongside a solid argument about empire provides strong analytical strategies. In the edited volume *Cold War Constructions: The Political Constructions of the United States, 1945-1966*, essays by the editor, Christian G. Appy, and the anthologized authors argue that cultural diplomacy was a part of a larger project of American empire. Francis Stonor Saunders redefines the role of the CIA in the Cold War. Rather than a monolithic or bumbling agency that staged coups and used spies, Saunders shows how sophisticated covert activities that engaged the long history of the elite in the United States included interventions in the cultural arena. She mentions Graham twice as a recipient of funds funneled through various agencies buttressed by CIA money.

Reviews of individual national histories offer useful context for understanding their foreign policy. These books include Robert J. McMahon’s *The Cold War on the Periphery*. In addition, long histories of the nations Graham visited provide context for the analysis. *India*
After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy by Ramachandra Guha presents a revisionist history of India that provides a national backdrop. Guha uses the tools of both political science and sociology and adds gender to the exploration of the new national construction.

A study of the interplay of U.S. culture and the East cannot ignore the work of Edward W. Said; other authors have used his works to make new interventions that discuss interactions versus colonization and hegemony. He offers an argument about the East and West as a long-term dialogue that used print and material culture. Since Graham’s early career in the 1920s included the performances of “Orientalist” works, Said’s methods provide a basis for reading Graham’s later Eastern-influenced modernist dances. In addition, the 2009 exhibition catalogue by Alice Munroe, The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989, demonstrates new approaches to texts from dance to visual arts, film, and music. The catalogue based on the exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City traces the start of artistic development that relied on Eastern forms with the increase in commercial trade from 1860 and argues that American artists used translation and interchange in an active dialogue with Eastern forms. The Third Mind relevant to interpretations of Cold War cultural work. First, trade provided the underlying motivation for cultural exchange among nations; second, culture is never unilateral or hegemonic because its products necessarily rely on interchange.

Explorations of “soft” power and its importance to diplomatic efforts have taken place in the context of empire and gender. Charles S. Maier’s Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors addresses the “civilizing” mission of empires over time. For the purposes of the dissertation analysis, he does not connect “soft” power to gender. Many books that focus on women and empire, however, equate the “civilizing” mission with the role of
women. May Jenny Sharpe and Ann Laura Stoller launched the historiography of empire and
gender in the 1990s. The “feminization” of empire formed a central thesis of Barbara Bush’s
“Gender and Empire: The Twentieth Century.” Bush credits World War I with transformative
power as British women brought the “civilizing mission” to empire. She concludes, “Key
defining features of twentieth-century empire include ‘feminization’ of imperial policy and the
wider participation of emancipated white women.” These studies have not been extended to
understand the position of women in the aftershocks of WWII that unraveled traditional empires.

Nils Gilman’s work *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Policy in Cold War America* provides the cornerstone that connects modern art to foreign policy and modernization
theory. According to Gilman, the academics developing policy in the late 1950s looked to
themes of modernity brought by art. The literature of traditional modernization theory starts the
official trajectory with the Kennedy administration; it includes the edited collection *Staging
Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* and Michael E. Latham’s
*Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era*. Like Gilman, in *America and the Cultural Cold Wars in Europe*, Volker Berghahn asserts
that modernist ideology had already been recognized as key theme for foreign policy well before
it was named.

The historiography of gender and the international Cold War is strikingly small.

In *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Elaine Tyler May focuses on the

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19 Ibid., 80-81.

20 Ibid., 109.
domestic story of home-bound tranquility amid the fears associated with the nuclear age and the Cold War. She argues that families at home followed the mantra of “containment”. Her argument follows Stephen J. Whitfield’s assertion that the culture of the Cold War produced conformist behavior, enforced especially within the context of the family. Several studies address the problems of gays and lesbians in the blacklist era such as The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government. These books provide a useful recovery, yet the Cold War complicated themes of femininity as a domestic and international ideal that should be explored regardless of sexual identity. Thus the study of Cold War gendered constructions includes books from outside standard historiographical parameters. For example, Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China by Eugenia Lean demonstrates how the story of one woman involved in a dramatic and public event engages culture, politics, and shifts in ideas of a gendered modernity. She asserts that “female bodies” become the “dramatic sites upon which discussions of modernity could take place.”

The literature of oral history provides the underpinnings for the analysis of oral histories with dancers, diplomats, and the people who surround them. Oral history methods can pull apart autobiographies and published collections of interviews with dancers that authors have previously used as statements of fact rather than sources that must be navigated within a larger pool of information and testimony. Because information about the later tours has either

21 Lean, Public Passions, 13.

been destroyed, is reported only in communist-sponsored newspapers, or exists only in the private papers of individual dancers, oral histories form the backbone of the chapters on the 1979 and particularly the 1987 tour. Yet the testimony must be analyzed and used as evidence accordingly.