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Flexibility and Its Bodily Limits: Transnational South Asian Dancers in an Age of Neoliberalism

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I was nervous. My muscles were tight, and I only had a few minutes to stretch before my audition with one of the most well known contemporary South Asian choreographers in the UK. It was November, and the steady drip of the London rain was settling deep into my bones. All of a sudden, the door to the studio on Wightman Road flew open and let in a blast of cold air. And there she was. "So, shall we start?" she asks, folding her arms across her chest and looking me up and down. She wastes no time and launches into teaching me movements in rapid-fire succession. She tells me to extend my arms in a diagonal line and imagine being pulled in opposite directions. She asks me to stretch my leg back ("Farther. Farther. FARTHER!"). Next, she tells me to wrap my right arm underneath my leg, reach my left arm across my head, lift up on to my toes, bend my torso toward my back leg, sink lower, straighten my leg, and twist my head to the side. I feel a sudden twinge in my lower back and a shooting pain travel down the back of my leg, and I start to wonder: "How flexible do I need to be to get this job?"

In this essay, I focus on the flexible bodily practices of transnational (diasporic and migrant) South Asian dancers working in the UK. My research draws on my experiences as a professional dancer with Angika (2004–2008), a contemporary British Asian dance company that was founded in 1998 by Mayuri Boonham and Subathra (Suba) Subramaniam, and the individual companies they started, Atma (2009) and Sadhana (2010), respectively, after the company devolved in 2008.[1] I suggest that examining the practices of South Asian dancers as transnational labor reveals the body's flexible response to the contradictions between race and citizenship in late capitalism.

My idea of dance as transnational labor draws heavily on Marta Savigliano's *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (1998) and Priya Srinivasan's *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (2011). Both Savigliano and Srinivasan emphasize the cultural and political work of transnational dancers, and argue that in order to make visible this important work we need to analyze the material as well as the immaterial, or affective, labor of dance, and, more importantly, the link between the two, i.e. how dance produces affect that has material effects.[2] In this essay, I refer to both the material (political, economic, and cultural) and affective (emotional) labor of flexibility, and examine how flexible practices produce affect that has real effects on dancers' bodies, lives, and citizenship. As economic migrants, cultural workers, and expressive bodies, it is particularly important, I argue, to look at all the different kinds of labor that the flexible, transnational South Asian dancing body performs.

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Dancers are acutely aware of their flexibility. They spend years working to extend their lines and widen their turnout. But what does it mean to be flexible in an age of neoliberalism? If we understand dance as transnational (material and affective) labor, how can we think about the bodily labor of flexibility and the work it does in terms of performing citizenship? Aiwha Ong, in her groundbreaking work *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (1999), argues that the inequalities and unevenness of late capitalism have forced transnational subjects to become more and more flexible, making creative accommodations and arrangements with capital and nation-states. She suggests that globalization has engendered "flexible citizens" who "respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions to accumulate power and capital" (Ong 1999, 6) in order to navigate increasingly volatile and uncertain market forces.

Although Ong theorizes the unevenness and disjunctures within globalization, she does not necessarily address the *corporeal* dimensions of transnational labor and flexible citizenship. Karen Shimakawa (2002), looking specifically at the subject of Asians in the U.S., argues that "the heightened anxiety over the erosion of borders wrought by globalization" has led the nation-state to seek "to reconcretize national difference on/through the racialized body" (130–2). If, as she suggests, the material body is used as a spectacle in difference-making (131), then we must look at issues of corporeality in order to fully understand the contradictions between race and citizenship that underpin globalization.

I suggest that by examining transnational dancing bodies, we can see how late capitalism has created not just flexible citizens but flexible *bodies*.[3] I understand flexibility here as a broad range of practices that includes, among other corporeal tactics, a dancer's physical ability to stretch her limbs or bend her spine backward to meet the demands of a particular work or choreographer, her ability to negotiate immigration regulations and restrictions in order to move more easily across national borders, and her ability to pick up multiple movement vocabularies and deploy them strategically to increase her marketability and broaden her employment prospects. South Asian dancers in Britain, for example, have become increasingly mobile and flexible in their movements and dance practices in order to gain access to mainstream funding, venues, audiences, resources, and touring circuits, which have historically marginalized South Asian dance practices.[4] Being flexible has allowed them to retain their cultural capital as ethnically "authentic" and "diverse" (important currency in a multicultural dance market that commodifies difference), while also enabling them to secure limited state funding, attract mainstream British audiences, and sustain long, thriving careers. Thus, I argue that flexibility is not just a political strategy to negotiate capital; it is an embodied response to the contradictions and unevenness of globalization and a bodily tactic that allows racialized bodies to accumulate power and capital.

Understanding flexible citizenship from an embodied, corporeal perspective also lays bare the limits of both flexibility and flexible citizenship. Immigration and citizenship laws have placed limits on how far the flexibility of flexible citizenship can stretch. While flexible bodies have been mobilized by global capital for cultural production in the global north, their mobility has also been restricted within the nation-state through racial discrimination and strategic regulations on citizenship. Within Britain, the racial calculus of identity politics has squeezed South Asian bodies into narrow ethnic boxes and also stretched them to the breaking point. South Asian dancers in the UK push themselves to be stronger, more agile, and more versatile in order to remain competitive and adhere to the constantly shifting demands of British multiculturalism on ethnic and minority subjects. This has resulted in frequent injuries, broken bones, repeat sprains, and chronic pain. I suggest that physical injuries point not only to the bodily labor involved in the production of South Asian dance, but also to the limitations of the flexibility of brown bodies to move within the structures and strictures of state power.

Addressing the various complexities and contradictions in which transnational bodies are embroiled, this essay is both a tribute to the creative, flexible practices of South Asian dancers as

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well as an acknowledgment of the limits of flexible citizenship and a critique of neoliberalism's toll on the racialized dancing body.

Workers, Citizens, and Dancers: Theories of Flexibility in Political Economy and Dance

In theories of political economy, flexibility refers to a particular mode of capitalist accumulation that emerged in the 1970s. David Harvey (1989) argues that Fordism, the dominant system of capital accumulation in the first half of the twentieth century, collapsed because it was too rigid[5] to keep up with the growth of new international markets, technological and organizational innovation, increased automation, and faster turnover times. This systemic rigidity paved the way for "flexible accumulation," a new type of capitalist production that could adapt to these quickly changing market demands and highly uncertain, ephemeral, and competitive environments. This shift resulted in changes not just to capital accumulation, but also to labor conditions and labor power, including the dismantling of unions and fewer labor regulations. Harvey suggests that "employers have taken advantage of weakened union power and the pools of surplus (unemployed or underemployed) labourers to push for much more flexible work regimes and labour contracts" (1989, 150), such as an *on average* 40-hour work week (which means much longer hours during peak demand periods and shorter hours during the low periods), temporary work, subcontracting, outsourcing, short-term contracts, job sharing, use of apprentices/trainees, and part time work. In addition, employers have reduced the number of "core" workers and instead rely increasingly "upon a work force that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad" (152). In this way, Harvey argues that flexibility has not only given employers more control over their workforce, but also made already disadvantaged groups even more vulnerable.

While for Harvey flexibility is a tool for labor exploitation, for Ong, who focuses on "practices of elite transnationalism" (1999, 24), flexibility can be a tool for the late modern subject to accumulate capital and social prestige. She argues that "[w]hat is missing from Harvey's account is human agency and its production and negotiation of cultural meanings within the normative milieus of late capitalism" (3). Focusing on the transnational practices of flexible subjects, such as Hong Kong elite who accumulate foreign passports "as insurance against mainland Chinese rule" and "uncertain political times" (1), she suggests that we look at flexibility not just at its exploitative function in terms of work and labor but also its agentive role in terms of geographical and social positioning (3).

Whereas Harvey gives little or no agency to the worker in a post-Fordist era, where labor is exploited and made to be flexible for the sole purpose of capitalist accumulation, Ong gives, perhaps, too much agency to transnational citizens in late capitalism in terms of their flexibility and mobility. Transnational South Asian dancers, I suggest, lie somewhere in between.[6] They are not as mobile or flexible as Ong's transnational citizens, nor are they as vulnerable or exploited as Harvey's capitalist workers. On the one hand, South Asian dancers are English-speaking and often from middle class families, which enables greater mobility. However, unlike Ong's elite Chinese subjects, South Asian dancers do not have multiple passports to facilitate transnational movements. Moreover, as artists they often lack the financial capital to pay for visa fees, support themselves in a new country, or purchase air travel, which would allow them to move freely across borders. Nevertheless, because of their cultural capital as artists, they are invited to perform in various parts of the world and, therefore, enjoy a certain freedom to move across borders that other types of racialized labor do not. Thus the condition of being South Asian dance artists both facilitates and restricts their flexibility and mobility.

Anna Tsing's notion of *friction*, or "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (2004, 4), is particularly useful in theorizing these complexities. In her analysis of diverse and conflicting interactions between global actors involved in environmental

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movements in Indonesia, Tsing argues that while some social theorists are intent on showing "an integrated globalism of everywhere-flowing money, people, and culture" (11), "[f]riction refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine" (6) and belies globalization's rhetoric of the free-flowing movement of people and cultures. Similarly, Arjun Appadurai (1990) critiques the notion of globalization as the seamless flow of financial capital, electronic information, or mediated images and suggests, instead, that global flows are disjunctive, chaotic, and unpredictable. Others rightly note that we must address "power in relation to the flows and the movement" (Massey 1991, 25–6), and the fact that bodies, particularly racialized bodies, do not flow as efficiently as capital (Joseph 1999, 8). In fact, race fundamentally structures today's global capitalist system. Capitalism, as Bonacich, Alimahomed, and Wilson point out, "relies on racialization as a tool to exploit labor more thoroughly" (2008, 352). Nation-states redefine borders and erect barriers to the movement of global labor by restricting immigration and citizenship rights of racialized migrant bodies.[7] In this way, the idea of friction lays bare the racial limits of flexibility and the fact that neoliberalism has not been a "liberating" force for everyone, as the term might imply. Again, the free flow of flexibility touches its limits both from within and without the body itself.

Bringing together ideas of flexibility and friction, this essay explores both the barriers to transnational mobility as well as the creative, corporeal tactics deployed by transnational dancers to navigate the inequalities of globalization. It is divided into three main sections: flexibility, hyperflexibility, and inflexibility. In the first section, I examine how British Asian dancers practice *flexibility* to maneuver creatively between the dual demands of "diversity" and "innovation" imposed on South Asian and other ethnic and minority artists by the Arts Council, the national funding body for British Asian dance in the UK. In the second section, I explore the notion of *hyperflexibility*, to describe the heightened flexibility of migrant and diasporic South Asian dancers who adapt to and thrive under increasingly temporary and unpredictable work regimes under late capitalism. Finally, in the last section I examine the limits to flexibility and flexible citizenship by looking at instances of *inflexibility*, where the transnational, racialized dancing body is immobilized either through injury or through immigration and citizenship restrictions.

Flexibility: Balancing the Dual Demands for "Diversity" and "Innovation"

I auditioned for Angika in November 2003 in Mayuri's studio at the back of her South London flat. It was my first audition for a dance company, and I was not sure what to prepare or what to expect. I decided to present a short excerpt from a *Varnam*, a classical Bharata Natyam piece, to demonstrate the quality of my technique and the extent of my classical training. I sat in a deep *aramandi* position, lifted my elbows, extended my fingers into the *katakamukha* hand gesture, and stamped my feet in complex rhythmical patterns. *Thaka dhi mi thaka thakita thaka dhi mi thaka thakita . . . kitathaka tharikitathom tha kitathaka tharikitathom thaku diku kitathaka tharikitathom*.

After I had finished, Suba and Mayuri told me that they wanted me to learn a bit of the company's repertoire. For the next half hour, they taught me a section of a duet they choreographed in 1999 to see how well I could pick up more "contemporary" Bharata Natyam choreography. The movement phrase began with a dynamic jump and a deep bend to the right, the right hand whipping across the body in a diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right corner. The sequence used mainly *pathaka*, the flat hand gesture and most basic and neutral of all the Bharata Natyam *mudras*, which lends itself to more abstract looking movements. Most of the time, the sequence used only one hand, challenging the symmetry of traditional Bharata Natyam. There was no repetition, and the phrase was fluid and covered space quickly in contrast to the restrained elegance of Bharata Natyam.

It seemed that while a strong foundation in Bharata Natyam was paramount to the artistic directors of Angika, it was also important to them not to be restricted to solely traditional ways of moving.

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Bharata Natyam, a classical dance form which can be characterized by rigid postures, symmetry, frontal orientation, and an upright spine, is seen as opposite to Western contemporary dance, which tends to privilege fluidity, asymmetry, a more dynamic use of space, and a flexible spine. Like many Bharata Natyam students, I had only trained in Bharata Natyam and had not learned or been exposed to contemporary dance. Moreover, I had trained in California, where learning Bharata Natyam was less about a potential career path or developing artistry and more about preserving and passing on cultural traditions to young diasporic Indian girls. As such, it was especially important for me to prove not only that my body could be flexible and move in different ways but also that I was open to experimenting with a traditional dance form.

I found the choreography exhilarating. I had never used Bharata Natyam in this way. Even though I stumbled and struggled to grasp some of the choreography, I liked the way my body felt moving in such a dynamic manner. The fluidity and flexibility of the movements were a welcome contrast to the rigidity, symmetry, and set patterns of the traditional style of Bharata Natyam that I was used to.

This was my introduction to British Asian dance, or contemporary South Asian dance, which, broadly speaking, blends elements of Indian dance (e.g., hand gestures, rhythmic footwork, musical influences, thematic inspirations) with recognizable contemporary elements (e.g., asymmetry, contact work, lighting, costumes, staging, soundtrack, abstract concepts from Indian philosophy and mythology). It was thrilling to see how Bharata Natyam could be stretched, pushed, deconstructed, reconstructed, and re-imagined in new and exciting ways. I was impressed that there was not only a demand and an audience for contemporary South Asian dance within mainstream British dance circuits, but also state funding available to produce contemporary South Asian dance works.

This was not always the case, however. In 1976, Naseem Khan wrote a scathing report titled "The Arts Britain Ignores: Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain," which criticized the government for its lack of support toward black, Asian, and other ethnic minority artists and highlighted the immense contribution of ethnic minorities to the arts in Britain. In an effort to be more inclusive, the Arts Council developed specific policy agendas for ethnic and minority artists. In 1983, the Arts Council sought to redress inequitable distribution and enforce a minimum representation of ethnic arts in the arts infrastructure of the country. In the mid-1990s, the Arts Council adopted the promotion of cultural diversity as a central part of its mission statement. Since then, the Arts Council's agenda for ethnic and minority artists has centered largely on the two-pronged goal of diversity (i.e., ethnic, traditional, black/Asian/non-Western) and innovation (i.e., experimental, contemporary, British/Western). Broadly speaking, South Asian dance practitioners who demonstrate "innovation" within their respective traditions are funded and made visible within mainstream dance venues, while those who only promote "tradition" and cultural heritage are marginalized to the community hall. State funding, according to the Arts Council, is intended to develop the *professional* South Asian dance artist, "[not] to replicate nor support existing or developing participatory community and grass roots activity" ("Chaturang" 1997, 1). Innovation is seen as the cornerstone for developing a strong British Asian dance infrastructure ("Chaturang" 1997). The Arts Council does not fund, for example, individual dance schools (such as The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan where Suba and Mayuri trained), which specialize in training students in classical Indian dance forms. Though I am not dismissing the state's efforts to be more inclusive with regard to what constitutes British dance and expand the boundaries of cultural citizenship, their policies toward ethnic and minority artists have fundamentally shaped the direction of South Asian dance in the UK, creating a division between those who "innovate" (contemporary, professional South Asian *artists*) and those who do not (traditional, community-based South Asian *practitioners*). Not only are traditional practitioners excluded from consideration for national funding, South Asian dancers who are not trained in a particular South Asian dance form or do not draw on their South Asian heritage in their work also tend to be overlooked or denied funding because they do not meet the "diversity" criterion.

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I suggest that it is the specific combination of ethnic difference and modern experimentation that determines what constitutes "contemporary" South Asian dance and indexes the modern British Asian citizen-subject—a multicultural ethnic subject who is adequately "other" but not excessively "foreign," a subject who can be integrated within British society but still remain contained within the "ethnic/minority" box, a subject who retains some recognizable "ethnic difference" without being inaccessible to non–South Asian audiences, a subject who is simultaneously *a part of* and *apart from* British culture.

This is not to imply that British Asian dancers do not want to or do not enjoy experimenting with tradition. Many South Asian dancers who grew up in the UK do not always identify with traditional dance forms or want to use dance to express their identities as South Asians living in Britain. Creating work that adheres to mainstream understandings of contemporary South Asian dance also means they have access to national funding, more prestigious dance venues, and bigger and more diverse audiences. Angika's ability to display diversity by drawing on traditional Bharata Natyam movement vocabulary while also demonstrating innovation through experimentation in staging and choreography, for example, enabled them to consistently secure funding from the Arts Council England. Nevertheless, for Angika (and British Asian dance companies more generally), proving ethnic authenticity while also displaying innovativeness was often a tricky balancing act, which required agility, flexibility, and creative maneuvering. In what follows, I draw on my experiences as a dancer with Angika to look at how the company negotiated and balanced the dual demands of British Asian artists to perform both "diversity" and "innovation."

The company's rehearsals and choreographic process, for example, were often where these tensions and contradictions were worked out. For each new production, the creation and rehearsal period began with a few weeks of daily, two-hour classes with Mayuri and Suba's guru, Prakash Yadagudde, who they respectfully called "Guruji."[8] Suba and Mayuri, having only ever trained in Bharata Natyam, were committed to working with(in) the form as the basis for their work. It is also what differentiated them from other British Asian companies that integrated ballet and/or Western contemporary dance in their choreography. As such, intense training in Bharata Natyam was paramount in the creation process for each of their works.

Every morning we would arrive at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in southwest London in our jeans, scarves, and jackets, and, as per Guruji's dress code, change into our practice saris and bindis and pay obeisance to him by touching his feet at the start of each class. Since all of Angika's dancers came from various parts of the world (U.S., Malaysia, UK, India) and were trained in different styles, training with Yadagudde (who taught the Pandanallur style) was a way to make us more synchronized. Coming from the softer Vazhuvoor style of Bharata Natyam, I would often be told to lift my legs more, make my head movements sharper, or swing my arms around faster. I lost the rounded curves and elegant softness of my previous training. Instead, I became more aggressive in my style, stomping harder, jumping higher, and spinning faster, in order to match the style of the other dancers in the company.

The process of losing our individual styles and adopting a more hybrid one stripped us of part of our individuality and specificity as dancers. We were no longer recognizable as students of this guru or that, or experts in one style or another. In a post-Fordist era of neoliberal globalization, the worker is required to be flexible "to satisfy the highly specific needs of each firm" (Harvey 1989, 150). In this case, flexibility was required of the dancers in order to meet the specific needs of Angika to create a unified movement aesthetic. As a result of working so closely together, the way we moved and the vocabulary we drew on as a company became not only a conglomeration of many styles but also a unique movement aesthetic within the spectrum of British Asian dance companies. Being stylistically flexible was not only an asset; it was a necessity.

After class, we would change out of our sweaty saris and air them out on the radiators in the large hall where we practiced. The saris were fine for traditional Bharata Natyam repertoire, but they were uncomfortable and restrictive, especially when wet with sweat, when it came to creating more experimental movement vocabulary. We were thankful to be free of the saris as they curbed our movements and our ability to stretch, extend, and experiment with the form. Dressed in loose, comfortable pants and t-shirts, we would begin the creative process of choreographing. The question of how to innovate and experiment while still staying within the form, i.e., how to adhere to the "rules" of the form so that it was still recognizable as "South Asian" to non–South Asian audiences and funders in Britain, while also making it innovative, modern, and accessible so as not to alienate those same groups, was frequently the (unspoken) starting point for developing the movements.

Suba and Mayuri would set a task to be done either individually, in pairs, or as a group, depending on what section of the piece we were working on. Examples included the following: "as a group, make a sequence in a straight line using only footwork," "on your own, make a sequence that describes the various qualities of the goddess Durga," "in pairs, make a sequence that draws only on the upper body movements of a *jathi*." Tasks would usually last fifteen to thirty minutes, followed by a sharing with the group. Suba and Mayuri would give pointers on how to re-work the sequence—speed up, slow down, lengthen, shorten, make it bigger or smaller, repeat, cut out, change levels—or they would combine individual sequences to explore complementary and contrasting movement qualities or different spatial arrangements and patterns. Dancers were valued not only for their technique, but also (and maybe more so) for their ability to be stylistically flexible—to physically break out of, change, adapt, and experiment with the traditional form. While flexibility has been discussed largely from a political economy perspective, focusing specifically on how the capitalist worker (Harvey) and the elite citizen (Ong) accumulate capital, I suggest that by looking at the flexible artistic practices of transnational dancers, we can see that flexibility is not just a political tool, but also an embodied and corporeal tactic to acquire various forms of capital (symbolic, cultural, and financial).

Since Suba and Mayuri and many of the dancers were not trained in contemporary dance, but were expected to be "innovative," they often brought on established, well-respected (white, British) contemporary dance artists as mentors, such as Jonathon Burrows and Russell Maliphant, to give feedback on choreography. As mentors, they would suggest we play with repetition, theme, and variation; juxtapose music and dance; blur the transitions between sections; and play with contrasts between movement, lighting, and sound. For British Asian dance companies, collaborating with white choreographers has helped them gain visibility and credibility in the contemporary dance world. Shobana Jeyasingh's 1988 work *Configurations*, a collaboration with composer Michael Nyman, catapulted her onto mainstream stages. More recently, Aakash Odedra, a young British Asian kathak dancer, performed *Rising* (2011), a series of three solos choreographed by three of the most well known contemporary dance choreographers, Russell Maliphant, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and Akram Khan. *Rising* has received widespread attention and acclaim, and has been an important catalyst for Odedra's career. If South Asian dancers collaborating with white, British choreographers is perceived as a marker of innovation, it suggests that ideas of "contemporary," "experimentation," and "creativity" in Britain are not neutral labels, but raced and laden with meaning.

Angika's other collaborators also helped to make the work seem more contemporary and less traditional. Angika's lighting designer, Aideen Malone, who was trained in Western theater production and worked mainly with Western dance and theater companies, would often suggest lighting states for Suba and Mayuri to use as choreographic inspiration. Angika's costume designer, Gabriella Ingram, made costumes for opera and theater and would take key elements from the traditional Bharata Natyam costume (e.g., the fan, the hip piece, or asymmetrical *pallu*) and transpose them onto more modern designs. Lighting designers and costume designers were an integral part of the choreographic process and usually came into the studio in the very early stages of the creation

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process. We would often incorporate their comments and feedback into our choreography or use their suggestions in terms of costume design or lighting possibilities as starting points for developing movement material. The location of authenticity in the dance form they drew on meant that Suba and Mayuri could bring in "Western," "contemporary" influences in other aspects of their choreography and production without losing the cultural capital of their identity as South Asian artists. High production values, such as highly technical lighting designs and sleek costumes that highlighted the choreography and the body's form (as opposed to traditional South Asian dance performances in which lighting is seen as secondary rather than integral to the staging and costumes are not tailored to specific performances), also gave their performances the look of a professional, polished production and made them more marketable to mainstream theaters and venues. While Angika carved out a niche for itself by creating work that was distinctly South Asian and drew only on Bharata Natyam, the company's collaborations with artists outside of the Bharata Natyam world allowed the company to break into and move fluidly within mainstream British dance circuits.

It was not only in the choreographic strategies but also in the conceptual content of its works that Angika demonstrated diversity and innovation. Suba and Mayuri consistently worked with concepts and themes rooted in Indian philosophy but interpreted them in an abstract, non-narrative, non-literal fashion. Each of Angika's productions paired a spiritual or philosophical concept drawn from Hinduism or Indian culture with an abstract concept, such as the body, mathematics, space, rhythm, time, or energy: *Kala* (2000), Angika's second work, explored the cyclical nature of time and rhythm through the seven stages of man outlined in Hindu philosophy; *Bhakti* (2003) sought to express the concept of devotion and faith but through the body rather than through religious or mythological narratives such as in traditional Bharata Natyam performances; *Ether* (2006) used geometric abstraction and the body to sculpt space in an exploration of the fifth element, "akasha"; and *Cypher* (2008) represented the divine goddess in Hindu mythology through mathematical and geometric patterns.

The lack of narrative, of mythology, and of facial expressions ensured that the company's work was accessible to non–South Asian audiences, could garner a broad base of support, and had mainstream appeal. The focus on Indian spiritual, philosophical, or religious themes allowed it to retain their particular identity as a company rooted in Bharata Natyam and Indian culture; the focus on the abstract and the body allowed it the flexibility to explore themes in a non-literal, non-traditional way that made its work more accessible to white British audiences. In this way, Angika carved out a niche in the British Asian dance market that retained its ethnic identity without being branded as traditional community performers, thus meeting the agenda of British multiculturalism and the Arts Council's funding goals of diversity and innovation.

Angika's flexible practices allowed the company to fill a gap in the South Asian dance market and increase its uniqueness and visibility. In 1998, John Ashford, then director of The Place Theatre, a major theater for contemporary dance in London, invited Suba and Mayuri to perform *Sudarshana* in Oldenburg, Germany, "to represent the best of British dance" (personal interview, April 6, 2011). *Sudarshana* was the duet's first major work, which they choreographed for *Resolution!*, a platform for emerging choreographers sponsored by The Place Theater. The work used the Hindu notion of chakras (energy centers in the body) to explore the nine basic emotions in classical Indian dance. According to Suba, to be asked to represent *British* dance was "quite a big thing" for them, but also for "South Asian dance more generally" (personal interview, April 6, 2011). It was also after Sudarshana that Suba and Mayuri were asked to be artists-in-residence at The Place Theatre, where they were encouraged by Ashford and others to develop a contemporary South Asian dance aesthetic and vocabulary. Sudarshana launched Suba and Mayuri's careers and led to the founding of Angika as a full-fledged company. Through their choreographic and aesthetic choices, Suba and Mayuri were able to shift Bharata Natyam out of a traditional, community-based setting and onto more mainstream and nationally recognized stages.

Hyperflexibility: Navigating the Desire for Racialized Labor and Restrictions on Immigration

Several of Angika's dancers were from India or parts of the Indian diaspora and were hired largely on a short-term basis. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, Arts Council funding is project-based. Most ethnic and minority dance companies are granted money to make and tour a particular work; few are funded on a regular, long-term basis and can afford to keep dancers on salary. Second, there is a shortage of professional South Asian dancers in the UK. Many local dancers work in other fields and are unable or unwilling to take extended leaves to join a company for just a few months of the year. While the work is too irregular for South Asian dancers in the UK, dancers from India, or other countries where there are not as many opportunities for contemporary Indian dancers (such as the U.S.), are often more willing to take short-term gigs in the hopes of gaining experience and earning money as professional dancers.[9] Third, long-term work visas are difficult to obtain while short-term (six months or less) work permits are more readily approved by the UK Border Agency. Because of these various constraints, British Asian dance companies have developed a highly flexible and mobile, or what I call "hyperflexible," migrant dancer work force, which is able to deal with gaps of un(der)employment in between periods of making, rehearsing, or touring work.

Usha,[10] a Bangalore-based dancer, was hired by Angika to work on the company's last production, *Cypher*. When I met her in Bangalore in 2008, she was visibly nervous about her job situation. She was supposed to leave for London a few weeks earlier, but got a call from Suba and Mayuri the day before her flight was scheduled to depart informing her that Angika's funding application to the Arts Council had been declined and the project was on hold until further notice. Since she had already quit her job and had turned down other employment opportunities, Usha felt particularly vulnerable. She could do nothing but wait.

Due to the volatility and unpredictability of funding and capital flows, British Asian dance companies require a mobile, flexible work force that can accommodate these sudden changes. In his study of Indian information technology (IT) workers, Xiang Biao shows how globalization has made labor from the global South increasingly flexible, temporary, and disposable through a system of global "body shopping"—"a uniquely Indian practice whereby an Indian-run consultancy (body shop) anywhere in the world recruits IT workers, in most cases from India, to be placed out as project-based labor with different clients" (2006, 4). He argues that the volatility and uncertainty of late capital market forces have engendered the creation of a mobile workforce that can easily respond to market fluctuations with minimum time lag. With most IT projects lasting only six months or less, "temporary and multiple labor mobility became the norm in the industry" (18). According to Franco Berardi (2009), surplus value is founded not only on the accumulation of speed, but also *differences* in speed. Just-in-time production and expectations of workers to be permanently on-call require a labor force that is flexible enough to deal with these frequent changes in the rhythm of work.

Dancers, such as Usha, are asked to be available for work but are frequently given confirmation only just before work is to begin. In the IT sector, this is known as "benching" (Biao 2006, 5). Indian IT workers who are on temporary work visas are "put on the bench," i.e., made to wait indefinitely, before starting employment or during periods of unemployment, without being paid or given a nominal stipend. While migrant Indian dancers are not obligated to honor or renew their contracts if funding does not come through or if they find work in the interim periods, most of them have declined other offers in anticipation of working in the UK, which is seen as a prestigious, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that can bring international recognition and invaluable work experience. As a result, they are forced to wait out gaps or delays between contracts. Dancers (and, to a lesser degree, dance companies) are forced into a position of precariousness in relation to capital. If funding does not come through, as happened initially with Angika's project *Cypher*, dancers are left without employment or compensation. It is a gamble, but one which many Bangalore dancers like Usha take

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for the opportunity to work in London, which they feel will lead eventually to greater opportunities, cultural capital, personal satisfaction, career advancement, and financial gain. As a result, many dancers end up locked into a pattern of frequent and temporary mobility. While short-term contracts are a relatively ubiquitous practice in terms of creative labor in the UK, for migrant dancers from India, their claims to residency and eventually British citizenship hinge on demonstrating continuous, regular employment.

Without any guarantee of stability, migrant dancers have developed various strategies to deal with these vulnerable and temporary work regimes. After their contracts expire, many move back home with their parents and work short-term jobs while they wait to be offered their next contract in the UK. Due to a favorable exchange rate, they are able to use the money they save in the UK to cover periods of un(der)employment in India.

In my case, I was issued six different work permits between 2004 and 2011 for contracts that lasted six months or less. I usually had one or two days to leave the country after my permit expired. Since I was not from the European Union, my only option was to return to the U.S. and wait for the next contract to begin. In between contracts, while in the U.S., I was, for the most part, un/underemployed and had to rely on the financial support of family. Since Indian dance had not been professionalized in the U.S., dance jobs were not as readily available as they were in the UK. For this reason, I put up with this less than ideal work arrangement for a number of years.

The flexibility of transnational dancers from India, not only in terms of their mobility and adaptability, but also in terms of their bodily technique, has made them an attractive commodity to British Asian dance companies. Anita[11] is one of the most flexible dancers I know. I first met her in London in March 2006. We had both been hired to work on Angika's new production *Ether*. The first thing I noticed about Anita was that she was tall, skinny, and had a cute, pixie haircut. I soon realized, though, that there was nothing weak or cute about her body. During rehearsal, she would launch herself into a handstand with no support, and arch her back seemingly all the way to the opposite wall. She could also do the splits and bend backward with ease. I was astonished by her strength and flexibility. Dancers with only Bharata Natyam training, like myself, have difficulty moving in that way. My turnout is not as wide, my back is not as flexible, and my arms are not as strong. In the U.S., I trained only in Bharata Natyam, where the emphasis within Indian communities was on preserving cultural traditions rather than creating a contemporary dance language. Anita, on the other hand, has trained in multiple movement languages.

Before joining Angika, Anita came to London to work for Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company in 2005 on the creation and performance of *Flicker*. Though Anita already had diverse training in Bharata Natyam and kathak, working for Jeyasingh made Anita's body even more flexible and versatile. Rehearsals would include company classes in ballet and contemporary dance in addition to Bharata Natyam. The adoption of ballet technique in the training practices and movement vocabulary of contemporary South Asian dance companies is especially interesting. The physical in-corporation of ballet into the British Asian dancing body points to the racial dimensions of flexibility. Extended limbs, long lines, raised/forced arches, and pointed feet index whiteness, European-ness, and Western-ness. South Asian dance, otherwise marginalized as "other" or strange in the UK, has been made familiar in and through these ballet signifiers.

The use of ballet (and contemporary dance) in British Asian dance not only helps audiences to see South Asian dance on par with Western dance forms, but it also lends credibility to the choreographers as "artists" rather than as "traditional practitioners" and expands the range of movement possibilities for British Asian choreographers to work with. In the studio, Anita and the other dancers would use these various movement vocabularies to create movement phrases based on specific tasks. Jeyasingh would then ask the dancers to edit, modify, deconstruct, reconstruct, and re-compose the raw movement material. She preferred a disjointed to a fluid aesthetic; several

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dancers told me that if the movements did not feel awkward in their bodies, if they were too easy to execute, she would ask them to change it. Afterward, all the dancers would have to learn each other's movements. As a result of this process, Anita's body is like a rubber band. She admits she has not always been the strongest dancer in companies, but she had the physical flexibility to pick up a range of movements quickly. Her lithe and supple frame has learned to bend to the various demands and expectations of the choreographers she has worked with.

Susan Foster (1997) suggests that independent choreographers today encourage dancers to train in different techniques rather than adopt a single aesthetic vision based on a particular choreographer (e.g., Cunningham, Graham), style (e.g., modern, postmodern, classical), or form (e.g., ballet, Bharata Natyam). Choreographers now "require a new kind of [dancing] body, competent in many styles" (253). Foster calls this the "hired body." This is especially true of British Asian choreographers who have been pressured by the Arts Council and multicultural rhetoric to perform a British Asian identity that embodies both diversity as well as innovation, cultural and ethnic uniqueness as well as Britishness.

Despite their hyperflexibility and mobility, however, migrant dancers are not economically efficient to hire, and can prove to be quite burdensome, especially for small companies like Angika since they are responsible for paying for dancers' flights to and from the UK, visa application fees, and sometimes accommodation or a housing subsidy. In the last few years, as I will discuss later, changes to immigration legislation, and the introduction of quotas and other restrictions, have made hiring dancers from India even more difficult than it already was. Even though Anita worked with Angika in 2006 and 2008, Suba and Mayuri were unable to hire her after that due to changes in UK immigration regulations. (As I will discuss further in the next section, immigration restrictions on racialized labor point to the bodily limits of flexibility.)

Instead, it has become easier to hire white or non-Indian Bharata Natyam dancers, since they usually come from the European Union, countries that do not need visas to work in the UK.[12] However, since the pool of local or European Bharata Natyam dancers is relatively small, an increasingly common practice has been to hire British or European contemporary- or ballet-trained dancers and teach them Bharata Natyam. In August 2009, Mayuri hired two contemporary dancers and one ballet dancer, in addition to me, to work on developing new movement material for her project *Sivaloka.* Since I was the only Bharata Natyam–trained dancer, Mayuri would conduct technique class each day to introduce the other, non–South Asian dancers to the basic vocabulary of Bharata Natyam. Her emphasis was not on forcing the dancers to master the technique but on giving them enough vocabulary so that they could then experiment and interpret the form in their own way. Although when she was with Angika, Mayuri (and Suba) was committed to working only with Bharata Natyam–trained dancers, the lack of professional Bharata Natyam dancers in Britain as well as the immigration restrictions and quotas on non-EU workers has led British Asian choreographers to hire ballet or contemporary dancers.

Non–South Asian dancers have also been hired for their ability to expand the movement possibilities of contemporary Bharata Natyam. Mayuri felt she had reached a point where she could not take the form any further with her own body or those of other Bharata Natyam–trained dancers. She became interested in working with contemporary dancers without any training in Bharata Natyam to see "how their bodies might push the form in different directions" (personal interview, August 2009). Hiring non–South Asian dancers was not only a way to avoid immigration issues, but also a way for her to keep her work "diverse" and "innovative," and remain eligible for Arts Council funding for ethnic and minority artists.

Both transnational migrant Indian dancers and British Asian choreographers alike have become hyperflexible in terms of their employment and hiring strategies to deal with the contradictions in late capital between the demand for racialized labor and the desire for restrictions on immigration from the global South. Choreographers have expanded their criteria for hiring dancers and

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applied a more flexible notion of what constitutes a South Asian dancer. Transnational dancers, who move frequently between London and Bangalore, have learned to adapt to the needs of labor markets in both places in order to market themselves more broadly and hedge bets regarding future employment prospects. In order to survive and adapt to increasingly draconian immigration and citizenship laws, as well as increasingly temporary and unpredictable work regimes under late capitalism, migrant dancers have become hyperflexible, continuously moving back and forth between countries, uprooting each time, never settling in any one place.

Inflexibility: Immigration, Injuries, and the Limits of Flexible Citizenship

There are, however, limits to flexible accumulation. The inflexibility of the borders of nation-states and citizenship procedures places limits on how far the flexibility of flexible citizenship can stretch. In February 2004, I was hired by Angika to work on the company's first ensemble production, *Bhakti*. When I landed at London's Heathrow Airport, my possessions were confiscated and I was interrogated about my "intentions" for coming to the UK by one of the UK Border Agency's Entry Clearance Officers. The officer's concern, he informed me, was that I was going to overstay my six-month work visa,[13] try to illegally settle in the UK, and, eventually, be a drain on public resources. After being held in a locked room for hours, I was informed by the officer that I could enter the UK, largely because I was American and not from "Yemen or India or one of those countries." He cautioned me, however, that if I did not leave at the end of my work permit, I would not be allowed back in the country again. While my brown body initially posed a barrier to my transnational movements, the political and economic capital of my American passport eventually granted me access, albeit limited, to enter the UK. Citizenship overrode race in this case. As an American, and more recently as an American *academic*, I occupy a more cosmopolitan position within the global politics of labor, and have enjoyed even greater flexibility and mobility to move more freely across national borders.

This, however, has not been the case for the majority of transnational South Asian dancers from India. While migrant dancers from India have been integral in filling a labor shortage in the UK, and have played an important role in establishing a British Asian dance aesthetic and creating major dance works that have become part of the British dance canon, British immigration and citizenship legislation has made it increasingly difficult for them to settle in the UK. Forced returns to India and extended periods of stay outside the UK make transnational South Asian dancers ineligible to apply for permanent residency despite working for the same company for several years (foreigners need to work three years full-time before applying for permanent residency). Immigration and state funding for the arts facilitate short-term movements in and out of the UK that benefit the British economy, but impede long-term settlement of immigrants in the UK. This combination has created a fragile, unstable, and unpredictable labor market for the professional migrant South Asian dancer.

The increasingly common practice of hiring short-term contract labor has enabled dance companies to extract greater financial as well as cultural and physical surplus value from dancers, particularly migrant dancers from the global South, while adhering to immigration and citizenship legislation that restricts and constrains the movements of racialized bodies. Contrary to Lisa Lowe (1996), who argues that the needs of capitalism contradict those of the nation-state, these temporary, flexible work arrangements reflect the *complementary* needs of capitalist/cultural production in the global North for "a smooth flow of immediately available short-term skilled labor" (Biao 2006, 6) from the global South and the desire of Western nation-states to limit the settlement of non-white immigrants. The nation-state colludes with capital to profit from racialized labor without granting workers citizenship or settlement rights.

There are also physical limits to flexible accumulation. Anita complains that her body went through a lot of changes when she started doing contemporary dance after doing Bharata Natyam for almost ten years. She had a lot of aches and pains, knee and back injuries, and remembers not being able to

walk in the mornings after rehearsals for *Flicker*. Jeyasingh's choreography is known to be particularly taxing on the dancers' bodies. One former company dancer said that she left in part because she was tired of being injured and feeling run down. Pain and injury is one of the reasons Anita left the company after only one season. Her body was literally immobilized due to its required use under late capitalism. As I discussed earlier, when I started dancing with Angika, Suba and Mayuri scheduled Bharata Natyam class with their guru for two hours a day, every day, so that we would look more cohesive in our movement styles. My body was not used to training so rigorously. For weeks, I was not able to walk down the stairs or sit down without being in excruciating pain. Examining dance as transnational labor lays bare not just globalization's impact on labor flows, but also its toll on the physical, material body.

The constant back and forth also takes its toll on migrant dancers' bodies. They often suffer injuries when they return to London. In between contracts, there is no consistent source of money to continue training and keep the body fit and healthy. British Asian dance work is generally very physical, fast, sharp, and disjointed. Unable to cope with jumping straight into intense rehearsals and classes, dancers are often in chronic pain and suffer recurring injuries. While British Asian choreographers benefit from pushing their dancers' bodies to the limit and have built their reputations on the backs (and knees and shoulders and ankles) of dancers, the dancers suffer long-term injuries in exchange for short-term contracts that offer no basic citizen rights such as social security or healthcare. Injuries show that dancers do not endlessly and effortlessly flow across the stage, and that movements are frequently interrupted. They lay bare the restrictions on flexible citizenship and the limitations on mobility within globalization. Though temporary, flexible work arrangements have increased dancers' mobility and their ability to move, dancers' injuries show how globalization has literally stretched transnational dancing bodies to breaking point.

The limits of flexible accumulation are made visible not only through their bodily labor, but also through the body *as* labor. As an Indian passport-holder, rather than Ong's elite, multiple passport-holders, Anita was often blocked at the UK border, questioned, and interrogated in order to work in the UK. In 2008, Angika was booked to perform in Zaragoza, Spain, at the World Expo. Anita was forced to make multiple trips to the Spanish embassy to secure a visa to perform there. The Spanish embassy kept delaying and making Anita jump through endless bureaucratic hoops. Until the eleventh hour, we were unsure whether she would be able to travel with us to Spain. The increasingly draconian immigration restrictions on foreign workers, bureaucratic red tape, high fees, and long processing times have made choreographers more and more reluctant to hire foreign dancers. Although it has always been an expensive and lengthy process to apply for work permits for foreign workers, it has in recent times become nearly impossible.

Up until recently, migrant dancers had to be sponsored by a dance company, theater, or arts organization, and have secured a work contract or performance dates prior to entering the country. The company had to apply for the permit through the Home Office and demonstrate that they had adequately advertised, searched for, and failed to find a resident UK worker who could fill the position. Under this system, many contemporary South Asian dance companies, including Angika and Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, were able to hire a number of migrant South Asian dancers, including Usha, Anita, myself, and other dancers from India, the U.S., and Malaysia, by proving that they could not find adequately trained dancers in the UK.

This simple work visa scheme was replaced in 2005 with the Points Based System (PBS), a much more complicated and convoluted immigration system introduced by Tony Blair's Labor government in response to the global War on Terror and concerns over Britain's global economic competitiveness. The PBS works by identifying shortages in the labor market—namely shortages in highly specialist skills, shortages due to unattractive wages or conditions, or shortages due to insufficient investment in skills—and awarding points to skills that might fill those gaps in the labor market. Emphasis is placed on recruiting first from the UK labor market and establishing tighter resident labor market tests (e.g., more extensive advertising, higher qualification requirements, etc.).[14]

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In terms of the contemporary South Asian dance economy, the PBS has made it increasingly difficult for dance companies to hire migrant dancers, maintain continuity in terms of company dancers, and plan long-term operations. The system has also made it near impossible for freelance choreographers and smaller-scale dance companies with limited resources to hire foreign dancers. The Arts and Entertainment Taskforce (made up of dance companies, organizations, promoters, and choreographers, including, notably, choreographer Akram Khan) has criticized this move to a points-based system for making it more difficult to get foreign dancers to work and perform in the UK ("National Campaign for the Arts" 2009; "Position Paper" 2006). Both temporary and longer-term work visas require applicants to earn a minimum number of points based on previous earnings, formal educational qualifications, maintenance funds, and language ability.[15] This new scheme, however, does not adequately cater to or recognize the skills acquired by experienced dancers. Points are based on past earnings and academic qualifications, both of which elude many dancers who often do not have university training, do not earn throughout the year, take on unpaid work, have little liquidity to prove availability of maintenance funds, and whose total earnings cannot compare with an applicant who is a doctor or businessperson. There is an "overemphasis on formal qualifications at the expense of professional experience or training" ("Managing Migration" 2009, 95). The English language requirement also unfairly discriminates against South Asian and non-Western dancers who may not necessarily need English for the job. In addition, visa processing times and biometric requirements under the PBS have increased, making it difficult to guarantee that dancers, who are often called to perform on short notice, will be there for particular performances. On a number of occasions, I have had to turn down offers for performances because of visa processing times.

The recent global economic recession has put pressure once again on ensuring that there is a "British job for every British worker."[16] Some migrant categories (Tier 1: highly skilled migrant) have been terminated altogether,[17] while quotas have been placed on the number of visas (Tier 2: skilled migrant) that a company can grant for foreign workers. Artists, including dancers, have to apply under the Tier 2 (General) category, unlike elite and internationally recognized sportspeople. Previously a distinct visa category (Creative and Sports people), artists must now compete for a limited number of visas under the Tier 2 (General) category. Migrants coming under Tier 2 can initially stay up to three years, depending on the length of their contracts. However, because of the short-term, project-based nature of Arts Council funding, most South Asian dance workers enter under the Tier 5 (Temporary Workers) category for performers, entertainers, coaches, and sportspeople coming to work in the UK for less than twelve months. These changes reflect the increasingly temporary and flexible nature of dance work in the UK, and the way in which immigration legislation works to allow short-term labor flows while inhibiting long-term settlement.

Multiple short-term contracts prevent migrant dancers from being eligible for any kind of permanent residency or citizenship. Without citizenship or residence rights, they are unable to challenge potentially exploitative working conditions and institutional relations. They are also ineligible for housing or work benefits, national health services, or other kinds of public support, including Arts Council funding for dance. As a result, they are forced to sell their creative labor to British choreographers who reap the cultural capital. Short-term work permits make migrant dancers increasingly mobile but less and less flexible to make choices that would benefit them professionally and financially. Since Angika sponsored my work permits, I was not allowed to work for anyone else. And since I had to leave almost immediately after my contract expired, there was no opportunity to look for other work.

In 2009, the newly elected Tory government introduced labor shortage lists to fill gaps in the UK workforce that cannot be filled by a settled worker. The Arts and Entertainment Task Force was able to lobby to put skilled ballet dancers and skilled contemporary dancers on the shortage occupation list, which means that non-EEA (European Economic Area) migrant dancers do not need to meet the Resident Labor Market Test (RLMT).[18]

While in theory this should have helped to ease restrictions on recruiting migrant dancers, in practice dancers must still meet the highly discriminatory points-based system, which doles out points based on higher education qualifications, future expected earnings, English language ability, and availability of maintenance funds (at least £900).[19] Many foreign dancers, particularly those from the global South, do not meet these requirements. Dancers from India have had to ask friends and family to lend them money in order to temporarily inflate their bank balances and meet the maintenance funds requirements for their visas. Moreover, while dancers are on the occupation shortage lists at the moment, these lists are reviewed every six months. In future, shortages in the dance sector, which experiences fast turnover times and short project durations, may be overlooked. In addition, sponsors must have a license before recruiting non-EEA migrant dancers, privileging bigger, more established companies and excluding independent, freelance choreographers and smaller-scale companies.

The inflexibility of dancing bodies—evidenced by injuries and immigration restrictions—exposes the limits of flexible citizenship and the myth of seamless global flows, and reveals that cultural accumulation is limited by the nation-state's desire to control its borders and the composition of its citizenry. In short, transnational South Asian dancers make visible not only the flexibility, but also the fragility, of labor in globalization.

Conclusion

Multiple varieties of flexibility have become a key strategy to navigate the inequalities and contradictions of neoliberalism. Both Angika and the company's dancers developed an array of flexible practices in order to navigate the various demands of global capitalism and the nation-state, race and citizenship, and immigration legislation and multicultural agendas. Examining dance as transnational material and affective labor lays bare the bodily performance of flexible citizenship. As Priya Srinivasan notes in her work on transnational South Asian dancers in the U.S., "Citizenship is in process and is made visible by dance labor" (2011, 14).

British Asian dancers must constantly demonstrate "Britishness" through innovation and contemporary approaches to dance-making, while at the same time making sure to display their difference, or their "ethnic-ness," in order to remain eligible for funding earmarked for ethnic and minority artists. Dancers learn contemporary dance and ballet to make themselves more accessible to mainstream audiences and more marketable to different dance companies. They market themselves as culturally different but socially integrated, flexibly moving between familiarity and otherness to meet the ever-shifting and unpredictable demands of working as dancers in the UK. Through a range of flexible bodily practices, they were able to accumulate power and capital within an unstable, uneven, and uncertain global (dance) economy. In other words, citizenship gets read in different ways in and through dance and the dancing body.

Nevertheless, the flexibility of transnational South Asian dance labor to move across national borders is limited by technologies of racial exclusion. While the British nation-state has mobilized South Asian (dance) labor for cultural production and made the dancers' bodies increasingly flexible, it has also limited the ability of South Asian (dancing) bodies to stay, settle, and move freely within the space of the nation. The denial of basic citizenship or resident rights, immigration quotas, visa regulations, and other strategic measures implemented by the state are "for the purpose of more effectively exploiting the labor of subordinate racialized groups" as "[h]igher levels of surplus value can be extracted from these racialized workers, who have limited recourse for defending themselves" (Bonacich et al. 2008, 343). In the UK, the issuing of multiple short-term (rather than long-term) work visas, for example, limits South Asian migrant dancers' ability to obtain permanent residence or citizenship, and all the benefits that accrue from having such a legal and political status. The use of temporary labor has also forced dancers to work harder and faster for shorter periods. This has led to more frequent injuries and chronic pain.

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These lived experiences call attention to the transnational movements of South Asian dancers in the UK in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century and the conflicting and paradoxical ways in which race and citizenship intersect in late capitalism. Focusing on the onstage and offstage movements of British Asian dancers and choreographers, I have shown how the contradiction between the demand for South Asian labor and the racialization of South Asians in the UK as "other" is reconciled in/on the flexible dancing body. In short, I suggest that the (in)flexibility of South Asian dancers in the UK reveals both the friction of racialized bodily encounters in globalization as well as the creative corporeal tactics deployed by transnational dancers to navigate the contradictions between race and citizenship in late capitalism.

Notes

I would like to thank Priya Srinivasan, Susan Manning, Rebecca Schneider, Melissa Templeton, and all the participants in the 2012 and 2013 Mellon Summer Session in Dance in/and the Humanities for their constructive feedback, invaluable suggestions, and scholarly inspiration.

1. Between 2004 and 2008, I collaborated with the Angika on four new works, *Bhakti* (2004), *Ether* (2006), *Urban Temple* (2006), and *Cypher* (2008). After Angika devolved in 2008, I worked with Mayuri's company Atma on the research and development phase of *Sivaloka* in 2009 and with Suba's company Sadhana on the creation and touring of *Shiver* in 2010. In addition to performing throughout the UK and Europe, I was also actively involved in the choreographic process, post-show discussions, and educational outreach of the companies I worked with. I became close friends with the two artistic directors, Suba and Mayuri, as well as many of the dancers I worked with during those years. I lived, danced, performed, toured, and socialized with my subjects. As a result, though I left the UK in 2011, I have sustained long-lasting friendships with many of the dancers I worked with or came into contact with.

2. Savigliano links affective and material labor by looking at the political economy of passion in tango. Her works reveal how the affective labor of the tango dancing body has helped to circulate ideas of nation and the "exotic" through the performance of passion. Srinivasan shows how the American audience's emotional responses to the nineteenth century nautch women in New York led to the dancers' disappearance from U.S. soil and, consequently, from the national imaginary. She also discusses how Ruth St. Denis's affective response to the nautch dancers on Coney Island led to her mimicry of them in her dances. Through their work, Savigliano and Srinivasan show how affect caused by racial and national difference has real, material effects, or consequences.

3. Emily Martin (1995), an anthropologist, has written about flexible bodies in relation to conceptions of the body in the medical field. She argues that in late capitalism, flexibility, or adaptability, has become a highly desirable attribute not only in terms of labor, but also with regard to the body's immune system. Though Martin also addresses flexibility and the body, my work departs from hers insofar as I seek to address the corporeal rather than the biological dimensions of flexibility. Moreover, I frame flexibility as a bodily tactic in addition to an expected attribute of bodies in late capitalism.

4. For more on the historical marginalization of South Asian and other ethnic and minority artists, see Khan (1976).

5. Harvey cites specifically the rigidity of labor markets, labor contracts, fixed capital investments, presumption of stable growth and unchanging markets, social security, and heavy-handed state intervention under Fordism (1989, 147).

6. I thank the anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to think about the difference between worker and citizen in relation to transnational dancing bodies.

7. The politics of racialization in relation to labor are important. South Asians are not by any means the only economic migrants to be "othered" in the UK. With the expansion of the European Union, Eastern European workers in Britain, for example, have become the target of discrimination. However, unlike Eastern European migrants, South Asian workers are not part of the European Union and are therefore subject to greater scrutiny and stricter immigration and

citizenship regulations. Furthermore, their bodies are racialized in ways that white economic migrants from Eastern Europe are not. South Asian migrant workers have to negotiate not only economic fears of the "other" taking jobs away from "native" British, but also historical (i.e., colonial) and more contemporary (i.e., post 9/11) forms of racism against the brown body. I thank the anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to consider the larger context of flexible workers in the UK and to clarify this difference.

8. Yadagudde, originally from Bangalore, moved to London in the 1970s to teach at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London's first cultural center for education in Indian arts.

9. Being paid for making, rehearsing, and touring work is relatively rare for contemporary Indian dancers in the U.S. and India.

10. A pseudonym.

11. A pseudonym.

12. This points to another example of inequality in globalization: it is much easier for white European dancers to travel to India to train than it is for Indian dancers to travel to Europe to work or perform.

13. I was granted a work visa under the Tier 2 category for the hiring of foreign "Creative Artists and Entertainers," a category which no longer exists within the UK immigration system.

14. Citing the need to balance the needs of business with the wider impact of migration on Britain (i.e., on national security and stability), the government introduced PBS to "meet both the public's concerns" ("Controlling Our Borders" 2005, 5) regarding immigrants, as well as to "respond flexibly to changing economic and labour market needs" ("Managing Migration" 2009, 5) in order to achieve "the right mix of skills to help keep wealth creation, employment and productivity high and rising" ("The Economic Impact of Immigration" 2008, 3) within the current climate of global trade and worldwide recession.

15. The PBS is based on the division of migrants into five categories: Tier 1 (Highly Skilled Workers), Tier 2 (Sponsored Skilled Workers), Tier 3 (Partners and Family Members), Tier 4 (Students), and Tier 5 (Temporary Workers). Tier 1 is further subdivided into General, Entrepreneurs, Investors, and Post-Study Workers. A sponsor/job offer is not required to obtain a Tier 1 visa. Instead, applicants must meet the minimum requirement of 85 points, which is based on previous earnings, formal educational qualifications, availability of maintenance funds, and English language ability.

16. Speech made by Gordon Brown on September 10, 2007 in his first speech to the Labour conference as party leader.

17. In December 2010, British Prime Minister David Cameron stopped all applications to this category indefinitely.

18. Recognized companies can recruit migrant dancers if they have performed at or been invited to perform at venues of the caliber of Sadler's Wells, the Southbank Centre, or The Place, either in the UK or overseas; attract dancers and/or choreographers and other artists from all over the world; or are endorsed as being internationally recognized by a UK industry body, such as the Arts Councils (of England, Scotland and/or Wales) ("Government Approved Shortage Occupation List" 2010). Some of the recognized UK contemporary dance companies include Scottish Dance Theatre, Rambert Dance Company, and, notably, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, the only South Asian dance company represented.

19. From the UK Border Agency Web site: "The balance must show that you have had at least £900, excluding any overdraft facilities, in your account at all times over the 90-day period" (Gov.uk 2013). This is approximately 85,000 Indian Rupees—a prohibitive amount for most artists working in India.

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