# *Why Dance Literacy?*

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[The dancer] *used his weight to manipulate the sculpture. He swayed, pulled, flipped, bent, and climbed over and around the sculpture until it seemed as though his body was just an . . . extension of it.*

*like a spider, scurrying through a complicated web . . . a sort of rolling cage for the dancer.*

*smooth like an acrobat on a never-ending jungle gym of metal bars.*

*It reminded me of DaVinci's drawing showing the proportions of the human body . . . it combined rigid geometric aspects of the sculpture with organic movement.*

*I … can appreciate how athletic and precise you would have to be to do* Circle Walker *without being crushed or completely out of control. My favorite part was when the dancer was crawling upside down, hanging onto the frame, and inches from the floor while the sculpture rolled over him.*

Eleventh grade language arts students in Columbus, OH wrote these bits of dance description and interpretation. They are responding to a videotape of *Circle Walker*, a dance created by Alan Boeding in 1985.[i] The dance is a duet between a man and a large, mobile, metal sculpture that looks a bit like a giant dream catcher rotated on some central pivot into

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perpendicular halves. As the students describe, the dancer climbs inside the sculpture and the piece is an exchange of muscle and kinetic energy, as the dancer initiates and guides, enjoys and responds to the sculpture's motion (Feck, 2005).[ii]

I begin here in hopes that the reader will notice the contents of the writings. Students attend to the kinesthetic properties of dance—bodily position, deployment of weight, sense of tension or freedom in the muscles—and retell their experience of the movement in evocative verbs. They describe the images called up by the dance through metaphors, venture their own opinions, and form meaning by drawing on their past experiences of motion, everyday life, and other subject areas. They are learning about dance while sharpening their language skills and beginning to engage in the cross-disciplinary, cross-experience thinking that builds understanding and sparks creativity (Robinson, 2006).

The question that is my title—Why dance literacy?—is inspired by a comment made after I delivered a conference paper last year in which I discussed the terms "dance appreciation" and "dance literacy" (Dils, 2007). An audience member worried that my preferred term—literacy—had a harsh ring and seemed to create a distance from art, while cozying up (inappropriately?) with language and reading. It is not my intention to lose dance as an arts practice grounded in technique and dance making, but to embrace a broader understanding of dance as embodied experience and system of representation that offers many possibilities, among them artistic and scholarly inquiry about personal, historical, social, and cultural experience.

For dance readers familiar with the work of Tina Hong (2000) or the curriculum development project Accelerated Motion: Towards a New Dance Literacy in America, the use of the term will not be surprising.[iii] Nor will it be to educators familiar with the work of Henry Giroux (1992a and b) and Elliot Eisner (1998) who discuss literacy as the ability to shape and understand meanings available in any number of expressive systems including language, media, the arts, and popular culture (see especially Eisner 1998, p. 12). On the one hand, the concept of literacy is important as it calls into question the centrality of particular forms of literacy in schooling.[iv] One the other, applying the term "literacy" to dance dignifies an arts practice that has been traditionally ignored within schools and calls us to ask questions about its potential

contribution as a way of knowing and field of inquiry in general education. What Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences did for our recognition that people might be "dance smart," the idea of literacy does for our recognition of dance as a field of human achievement with established knowledge, practice, and literature.

Throughout this paper, I continue to flesh out an answer to the "Why dance literacy?" question by presenting some of the benefits of integrating the body, movement, and dancing into classrooms—a process begun, I hope, with the dance descriptions above. I also provide an overview that helps situate dance literacy within current practice in dance, dance education, and dance scholarship. Dance literacy is not a mainstream notion about dance learning, either in higher education or in K-12 education, but an exciting possibility currently pursued by a handful of scholars and teaching artists.[v]

## Recovering the Body

While I see reading and writing, those activities most associated with the term literacy, as vital to our abilities to think, create and share information, participate in society, and find pleasure in life, I also, as someone involved in dance in multiple ways for nearly fifty years, ascribe those same attributes to dancing. What might it mean, not only for dance-interested people like me, but for all students, to move the expressive body in from the margins of schooling? How might it enrich how we teach traditional subjects, help us rethink difference in schooling, and provide more integrative experiences for students? How might this help us create schools that recognize the richness of human intelligence and prepare children to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world?

While I hesitate to suggest that movement experience is necessary to learning (I wonder, for instance, about the compensatory capacities of people with varying degrees of mobility and differing sensory acuities), it's clear that we integrate sensory information, thought, emotions, and actions to assign meaning to experience and in making experience meaningful. In *Homo Aestheticus* (1995), Ellen Dissanyake makes the claim that:

> [T]he best and most comprehensive way to regard most

> experiences is to recognize that they are simultaneously perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and operational. Thoughts and percepts have emotional concomitants; emotions and percepts are mental events; thoughts and emotions are often induced by perceptions; many percepts, thoughts, and emotions presuppose or lead to action. (p. 30)

At the very least, movement provides another means, a way of connecting up experience through the body (as would touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, and voicing), that helps students understand the materials, ideas, and information found in schooling. Movement is especially important to particular kinds of learners, likely to be pleasurable, and calls up emotions that may make school important to learners.[vi]

Karen Kransky (2004), and Madeline Grumet (1988) explore the roots of reading in human action and the pleasures and possibilities of moving reading back into action. Grumet introduces the term "bodyreading" as an extension of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of "body-subject" which holds that we perceive and comprehend everyday experience through the body and its relationship to the world.

Kransky discusses the body as important to cognition and to the pleasure that we find in reading. The body is most evident in the early years of teaching reading, as teachers ask children to expressively sound out phonemes, clap out syllables, or respond physically to the rhymes and rhythms of children's literature. But then the body disappears. Kransky maintains that:

> [M]odern schooling has functioned in ways that excise the body and the sensual from anything we deem has educational merit for children. Casting aside the phenomenal experience of the reader to accommodate instruction based on a hierarchy of discrete skills and the demand of aligning with policy makers' criteria for "scientifically-based evidence," the aesthetics of bodyreading remains exiled as a curriculum project worthy of pursuit. (p. 96)

Drawing on the work of Suzanne Langer and Grumet, Kransky presents the idea that language has emotional and imagistic roots, perhaps based in rituals that linked sounds and actions. (While entirely speculative, a similar evolution is posited for dance: early rituals involved envisioning and acting out events, such as success in the hunt or victory against an enemy. Both dance and language have, perhaps, developed into symbol systems that allow the reader/watcher to re-visit experience and to envision new life possibilities.) Noting the use of chanting, or "ruminative reading" by monks to "rehear, and re-experience" text, Kransky sees reading as a means of grounding ourselves, as a way to bring ourselves back to our emotions and experiences.

In "Bodyreading," (1988), Grumet points out the etymology of reading, finding it linked to ruminating (to thinking things over), to giving and receiving counsel, and to explaining the mysterious or obscure. She reminds us that our independent, isolated contact with words begins with the warmly communicative, voice and touch-rich, act of being read to as children. Calling on theories (deconstruction and reader-response) that point to the partiality and multiplicity of texts and the importance of the reader to meaning, Grumet wonders why adult critics may know the pleasures of textual interpretation, while school children are often locked into finding and understanding standard interpretations in the literature they read. Grumet sees a solution in bringing action and text together:

> Performance simultaneously confirms and undermines the text. The body of the actor, like the body of the text, stumbles into ambiguity, insinuating more than words can say with gesture, movement, intonation. Mimesis tumbles into transformation, and meaning, taken from the text, rescued from the underworld of negotiation, becomes the very ground of action. (p. 149)

As Grumet suggests, action makes personal interpretation visible but also brings into view a range of unanticipated possibilities related to the text at hand and for the student. Action requires commitment, creating a bond between student/actor and the text and its meanings, and making the

student an actor in both theatrical and sociological senses: someone vital to the activity at hand, able to create change personal and social change, and important to the shared meaning that bubbles up through the synergy of individuals, text, and environment.

If movement is considered a literacy, what might this do for children who have difficulty reading and writing, but not in expressing themselves physically? This nugget of possibility is included by Christopher Kliewer, Douglas Biklen, and Christi Kasa-Hendrickson in their 2006 article "Who May Be Literate? Disability and Resistance to the Cultural Denial of Competence." Their article focuses on the importance of teaching reading skills and of access to literature for children labeled with various kinds of disabilities:

> On Isaac's first day of school, Robbins brought out the book [*Where the Wild Things Are*]. The children listened intently to the familiar story while Isaac sat, a stuffed Max character in his arms, gleefully awaiting each turn of the page. When Robbins got to the illustrations where the character Max engages in dancing rumpus with the Wild Things, Isaac could no longer contain himself. He leapt to his feet and began dancing along with the book. Rather than demanding Isaac take his seat, Shayne Robbins had all of the children start rumpusing! We observed the spinning, giggling children with a degree of wonder, having never considered the possibility of dancing to books at all.
>
> In his previous, segregated program, Isaac's literate possibility was rendered invisible. Amazingly, within 1 hour of starting school at Shoshone, Isaac had directly influenced the choice of literature, had been part of a peer group focused intently on a book, and had demonstrated dance and movement as a mode of symbolic communication that could augment and enhance text and illustrations. In doing so, Isaac took on the role of leader and experienced great literate joy. (p. 173)[vii]

What might be possible if we were prepared to consider fluency in

nonverbal behavior and dance as other forms of literacy, equally important to our communication? Would this change our sense of who was succeeding in schooling and who was not?

Dance might also be an important contributor to the cross-disciplinary dialogues that foster both creative and critical thinking. In a compelling, twenty-minute video of his February 2006 TEDTalks presentation, "Do Schools Kill Creativity?," Ken Robinson discusses intelligence, creativity, and the necessity of the arts to schooling that develops children's creative capacities. Robinson sees traditional public schooling as a product of both industrialization and academia, of the need to train people for jobs and to attend college and meet the demands of a professorate who, Robinson claims, are largely disembodied, living "mostly in their heads" and "slightly to one side," referring to the left, analytical part of the brain. Instead, Robinson says, we need schooling that honors intelligence, which we know to be diverse, dynamic, and distinct. Children need math and they need dance (and Robinson emphasizes dance and theatre as neglected in the curricular hierarchies of general and arts education) and they need to experience and think across disciplinary lines. As Robinson (2006) states, "Creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value. … More often than not it comes through the interaction of different interdisciplinary ways of seeing things." The importance of this to the idea of dance literacy, is that we not only honor and nurture those "distinct" aspects of intelligence linked to dance practice (kinesthetic, spatial, and musical, for example) but that dance moves across interdisciplinary lines as well, not helping to teach math, science, and reading, but in integrative experiences that shed new light across the disciplines. What might be gained, for example, in situating daVinci's *Vitruvian Man* and the *Circle Walker* dance in a math or science class where they might contribute to discussions of geometric form, mathematical proportion, simple machines, and kinetic energy? Such a situation might stimulate discussion of critical questions that could be useful in both dance and math such as the idealization of natural forms through geometry.

Important as new ideas are, the ability to assess, reflect on, and think about the underlying assumptions of ideas and practices—critical thinking—is equally important for students. One well established critical discussion in dance studies is dance as a way of thinking about social

and cultural expectations of the body. Petra Kuppers, in her "Accessible Education: Aesthetics, Bodies and Disability," demonstrates the power of rethinking our assumptions about the body through a rethinking of the ballet body. Rather than thinking about the ballet body as perfectly "abled," she describes the ballet body as teetering on the edge of "immateriality." Kuppers (2000) makes a convincing argument by discussing the emphasis on thinness for ballet dancers and by analyzing balletic movement which strives for weightlessness in the lifting of limbs and in jumps and clear lines, rather than speed or force. Thus, she sees that ballet bodies reveal a complex of fears and fascinations in western culture that have to do with hiding women's muscularity and physical forcefulness. The ballet body is not "perfect," and certainly not "normal," but a body built for a particular task that supports a certain value system (pp. 122–126).

Kuppers' way of looking at the dance to get at questions of perception and social assumption has endless possibility. Imagine a discussion based on images of ballet dancers, body builders, music video performers, and wheel chair racers. The Accelerated Motion curricular materials provide an example. In these materials, *Circle Walker* has been pared with Elizabeth's Streb's *Wild Blue Yonder*, a dance in which performers dive from scaffolding and flip into space assisted by a trampoline, and Victoria Marks's *Outside In*, a dance for the variously-abled British dance company Can*do*Co, which includes dancers locomoting in wheel chairs. Through observation of these dances and attendant writing and physical activity, students examine their assumptions about who dancers are, and the implications of human and machine interactions. How do various kinds of machines extend and/or limit our physical capabilities? How does the machine metaphor serve and not serve as a way to think about the body itself.[viii]

Processes already at work in teen lives make drawing together dance observation, discussion, and interaction with various kinds of images and texts compelling. During the teen years, the process of becoming oneself, already begun through play in childhood, heats up and becomes especially serious. Identity formation occurs through everyday performance of style and of behaviors associated with sexuality, gender, class, and myriad other social categorizations. At the same time teens reject and modify already familiar ways of being. All of this is an

intensely literate activity, with teenagers reading, criticizing, and seeking understanding from multiple sources: the values and behavior patterns put forward by families, schools, and churches and, especially, the multiple possibilities presented by the interrelated images and texts of popular culture: films, television, graphic novels, magazines, and music. Indeed, authors throughout the 2006 collection *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescent's Lives* contend that a primary form of teen literacy is reading the intertext of popular culture. Surely these skills can be transferred to observing dances, with teens undertaking a rich critical dialogue about the bodies imaged in contemporary media, those seen in various forms of dance and movement practice, and the social values these represent. When you think about the restrictive nature of most school-sanctioned bodily behaviors and the no holds barred imagery and behaviors presented through the Internet, films, graphic novels, and television, it seems especially important to have nuanced discussions with young people about ways of being and of becoming in the body and about bodily representation.

## Dance Literacy and Dance in Education

As currently configured, dance is often taught as professional practice, which both honors the value of dance as an art form and leaves dance and dancers with few opportunities for conversations with other subject areas. Dance in colleges and universities in the United States is usually centered in contemporary or modern dance (and occasionally in ballet or musical theatre). Students are taught dance technique and choreography and offered chances to practice their skills through performances. Other courses supplement this core curriculum including anatomy, kinesiology or somatics, movement analysis, dance history or criticism, dance technology, and dance education (Hagood 2000).[ix] K–12 education in dance often recasts this model in age-appropriate ways, as students primarily study dance technique and make dances with some supplemental study that supports healthy living, an awareness of dance in other eras and places, and an ability to respond to dancing in discussion and in writing.[x]

Many university dance educators cling to the importance of dance as a professional arts practice as, until the 1970s, dance was usually

considered an adjunct to or women's aspect of physical education within university structures, instead of its own subject area. Some dance educators simply do not see the necessity to reach beyond practice. Lynn Garafola, quoted in a recent *New York Times* article by Claudia La Rocco, "Mind and Body at Yale," makes this point:

> "There is a real tension between dance — at even a department like mine, which is very well established — and an academic context," said Lynn Garafola, a dance scholar who is a professor in Barnard College's dance department. "Most of the people teaching technique classes have been longtime professionals. They've never been to a liberal arts college. There really is a deep anti-intellectualism, but in some ways it's almost a naïve anti-intellectualism. It's just not a part of their world." (September 2007, p. 2)

At the same time, conceptual and methodological changes in higher education have fostered new approaches to dance scholarship. These have often come, not from inside dance departments, but from dance-interested scholars working in any number of areas: cultural studies, performance studies, women's studies, education, anthropology, and the like.

Up until the 1980s, most dance writing revolved around biographical details of famous dancers and choreographers or concerned innovations in choreography and dance technique. Occasionally, a dance educator would write a book about her teaching methods. Most philosophers--with some exceptions including Suzanne Langer and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone-- did not venture into the realm of dance and aesthetic theory. They typically borrowed from the visual arts which seems inadequate when explaining the expressive power of moving bodies

This situation changed radically in the 1980s as other humanistic disciplines began to consider the implications of embodiment, particularly in light of growing poststructuralist critiques of knowledge and critical issues concerning human agency, cultural identity, and social power. At the same time that other disciplines were thinking about how human bodies were interesting sites for the negotiation between the

natural and the cultural, dance was beginning to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives to develop its own intellectual tradition. Deidre Sklar notes these changes in her 2000 "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography,"

> In 1991, when my essay, "On Dance Ethnography," appeared in [*Dance Research Journal*], there was a small body of American research in dance that examined movement in cultural contexts (1). Since then, a radical shift has occurred in American dance scholarship. Cultural critique, with its attention to ethnicity, race, class, and gender, has permeated the academy and dance historians have turned to sociocultural issues, blurring the boundaries between the subfields of dance. We now have a range of theories, methods, and case studies that address the situatedness of dance and movement, a range reflected in the terms applied to the subject "dance ethnology," "cultural studies in dance," ethnochoreology," "performance studies," "anthropology of dance," and "anthropology of human movement." While long established paradigms continue to inspire work from structural, symbolic, and functional perspectives, two new trajectories have arisen [one sociopolitical, the other kinesthetic]. (p. 70)[xi]

For some, the opening of these approaches creates a restlessness with traditional dance curriculum that focuses on the training of the body and the artist, without equally considering questions and perspectives that might bridge practice and theory, art making and scholarship, and create a more integrated dance culture (see for example, Daly, 2000; Desmond, 2000; Perpener, 2000; Sklar, 2000; and La Rocco, 2007).[xii]

At the same time, arts educators have begun to think about the concept of multiple literacies as applied to dance in K-12 education. Tina Hong, the Auckland College of Education-based National Coordinator for Dance in New Zealand, wrote "Developing Dance Literacy in the Postmodern: An Approach to Curriculum," in 2000. Hong's paper is exciting for her overview of established literature, including ideas from

Henry Giroux, Elliot Eisner, and The New London Group, and for her thorough treatment of the subject. Hong makes the pragmatic admission that "literacy" is a word that school administrators and teachers are familiar with and that will help them see dance as contributing to the skills and competencies that children need for employment and to lead fulfilling lives. But she sees literacy as contributing to a rethinking of disciplinary dance: "learning in dance education is not to be undertaken in terms of a set of decontextualized skills and competencies to be mastered. Rather it should be understood as open ended and evolving confluences of knowledge, skills, understandings, and dispositions that are socially constructed and contextualized within social events and practices" (Hong, 2000, p. 7).

Hong sees the contributions that dance practice can make to general education. She states that in making dances, for example, "students become adept in the art of creating and choosing, not just memorizing and following. They learn to view complex situations from multiple perspectives, to analyze, structure, and work both independently and collaboratively to develop multiple solutions to problems" (p. 10). She also emphasizes the importance of broadening the dance curriculum. Hong sees the New Zealand curriculum as developed from a "dance as art model or discipline-based model with the consequent content for teaching being drawn predominantly from Eurocentric and western theatre art dance forms" (pp. 12–13). She advocates a more equitable representation of dance styles that confirms the significance of past and current dances from other cultures, and the dances of popular and youth culture.

Sue Stinson, an eminent scholar of dance education in the United States, discussed similar issues in her 2006 keynote for the dance and the Child, international conference (pp. 48–53). While she does not use the term "dance literacy," Stinson encourages dance educators to think about dance as a social practice that has implications for how difference is dealt with in public education, as well as a creative/kinetic experience for children. Stinson offers a critique of creative dance for children, especially of the idea that creative dance might be a "natural" movement response in children, and ponders both the need to respond to children's interest in urban popular culture and the problems with integrating pop dancing and breakdancing into K–12 education.

## What's in it for Students? What's in it for Dance?

At its boldest, then, dance literacy reconfigures the dance curriculum as a set of interconnected knowledges through which we understand the body and movement, how these operate in various dance traditions, and what meanings they might hold for us as individuals and societies. As an activity in which people participate as doers and observers, dance conceived of as a literacy might spill over into many subject areas with any number of outcomes: individual physical, creative, and intellectual accomplishment; improved problem solving skills in individual and group settings; improved observation and writing skills; critical understanding of the body and dance as social constructs; social integration; historical and cultural understanding; and sensual, critical, intellectual, and imaginative engagement. Dance underscores the importance of bodily experience as an integrative agent in all learning.

In discussing her project working with *Circle Walker* and dance writing, Feck states that, in addition to serving as a way to heighten observation and recall skills and linguistic abilities, that dance writing "holds untapped potential as a vital player in the overall project of understanding dance" (Feck, 2005, pp. 3–4). Calling dance in K–12 schooling and concert dance "endangered species," Feck notes that both face increasing pressures. In schools, dance is often left out of the arts curriculum or the first subject area to go as budgets tighten. She believes that,

> [T]hese kinds of connections between … lived experience, previous bases of knowledge, and the dance [are] not only indicative of knowledge transfer, but … begin to build community. Dance ceases to be a rarefied and distant experience and has become something—at least for the moment — that relates to them. Through repeated experiences such as this, at intervals over time, a student might graduate from high school with some knowledge of the art form, knowledge which might propel the student into a deeper investigation of dance, but equally valuable, into an informed audience member. In the meantime, a

> relationship is deepened between the university [or local artists, as sources of the dance viewed] and the surrounding community. (pp. 11–12)

Increased affection for dance within the general public is important as concert dance faces stiff competition for audiences from films, television, and the Internet. It's especially expensive to compete with the high production values that audiences have learned to expect from films, rock concerts, and major league sports.

The idea of dance literacy is one means of accomplishing what Thomas Hagood calls for as he concludes his (2000) *A History of Dance in American Higher Education: Dance and the American University*:

> We must help the … field expand its notions of the merit and worth of dance related pedagogy, develop multicultural appreciation, and theoretical inquiry. Excellence in dance education must be referenced not only to professional art standards, but also to individual creativity, to cultural understandings, to theoretical appreciation, and to intellectual and kinesthetic development. (pp. 317–319)

This does not preclude dance as professional practice, but it does move dancers beyond considering dance as "my work"—which tends to ghettoize or rarify dance and dancers—and moves them into thinking about dance as part of the social and cultural fabric. For dancers worried about losing the practice-based center of dance as art, I offer the image of the dancer and the Circle Walker, their interaction enhancing the ways in which each moves, and their emanations spilling out into investigations of art and history, science and math, society and culture, and into people's lives.

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[i] I have not been able to secure permission to include an excerpt from *Circle Walker* with this article. Some idea of the dance can be had by visiting http://www.richfieldproductions.com/screening.html. In late 2007, a clip of the dance (or something very like Boeding's dance) could be seen integrated into an advertisement: The Circle Walker Corporate Recruitment TV Spot. Imagine an extended version of the brief sample seen here, to music, without the fog, and extracted from the advertising context. Seeing the work contextualized this way makes an interesting case for the need for both media literacy and dance literacy. Within this corporate context, the dancer is discussed as an "acrobat" and appears as a stand in for "professionals in systems management and integration" who are "harnessing" technology and, to my eyes, using the technology to soar. Boeding's dance, in contrast, is a collaboration between dancer and device that has elements of danger and involves a sense of respect. This is especially interesting as, according to the ad, the advertiser, Sperry, makes "defense electronic systems."

Sorting out the relationship between the dance and the ad would be an interesting project. Boeding's name is not mentioned as part of the production of this ad and a date for the ad doesn't appear. Boeding's dance is dated 1985 and Sperry became part of Unisys in 1986. The ad may have existed before the dance.

[ii] Candace Feck collected this data as part of a 2005 project in Columbus-area public schools. I appreciate her support of my current use of her data.

[iii] Accelerated Motion: Towards a New Dance Literacy in America, co-directed by Ann Cooper Albright and Ann Dils, was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts from 2005–2007. That effort produced three units of study entitled Bodies and Machines, created by Ann Cooper Albright and Candace Feck, Ecologies of Beauty, created by Deidre Sklar and Loren Bucek, and Creating American Identities, created by Ellen Graff and John Perpener. Further developed through a grant from the NITLE foundation, Accelerated Motion is current in development as a web-based project by Wesleyan University Press.

[iv] Henry Giroux, in his 1992 "Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy," lists "cultural remapping" among six points for a libertory "border" pedagogy, for its attention to students and subjects marginalized in traditional schools.

[v] In addition to Hong and Albright and Dils, the term "dance literacy" has been used by scholar/ teaching artists Tina Curran (see especially her work for the Language of Dance Center), Loren Bucek (1998), and Brenda Pugh McCutchen (2006).

I enter this discussion as a dance historian trained in performance studies. My own teaching of dance history and dance appreciation courses were grounded in the idea that dance contains multiple knowledges that might be approached through bodily and choreographic experimentation, study of established literature, and exploration of established dance works long before I heard the term "literacy" and realized it applied to my work. While I hope that my speculations about the possibilities of dance literacy as a curricular construct within K-12 education are useful, they are not grounded in day-to-day work in the schools nor by a research specialty in education.

[vi] I am leaving important resources un- or under-explored and potent connections unmade. Dissanayake, for example, includes this intriguing reference to Mark Johnson's (1987) work in her *Homo Aestheticus*: "Central to metaphor in Johnson's view is the human body: 'bodily movement, manipulation of objects, and perceptual interactions involve recurring patterns without which our experience would be chaotic and incomprehensible' (xix). Certainly, the description above of the brain's modular storage of representations suggests how making 'connections across domains of our experience' (which is how Johnson describes metaphor [103]) is the way, or one of the ways, that the brain works" (p. 175). Because the writer must conjure up metaphors from varying realms of experience, writing about dance seems an excellent opportunity to test our patterns of association that become "the brain's modular storage of representations."

[vii] Thanks to Sue Stinson for calling this article to my attention and for her help with this article.

[viii] Observation of dances invites such questions as: What does this dance tell me about my own habits of perception? What informs those perceptions? When does a performer seem to "stand for" some idea or group and when does she seem to resist a simple understanding of ideas or groups? When does a performer allow us to share her experience of movement; and when does she seem to display a bodily ideal? What cultural myths or stereotypes does this

dance reproduce or disrupt? Who is the intended audience for this presentation and whose values does it represent? Does the dance represent the perspectives of the dancers, the choreographer, or a movement tradition? Whose perspectives are unvoiced, silenced, or left unrepresented?

[ix] In addition to referring to Hagood's work, I base this claim in my own observation of dance in universities in the United States, especially in working with dance department accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Dance, looking at their standards for dance departments, and attending their meetings. See http://nasd.arts-accredit.org for their publications. As a former Director of Graduate Study for my department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I had reason to know other schools and their programs in order to update our own curriculum and guide potential students to institutions that best fit their trainings and interests.

[x] See the National Dance Stardards at: http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm.

[xi] Sklar's endnote states: "For an overview of U.S. ethnographic research in dance prior to the 90s, see Frosch (1998). Reed (1998) and Farnell (1999) also offer overviews for the 1990s" (p. 75).

[xii] An upcoming issue (2009) of *Dance Research Journal*, edited by Mark Franko, will focus on Dance, the Disciplines, and Interdisciplinarity.