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The *Self* is the Dancer

A Cross-Cultural Conceptualization of Dance Education

Randolph-Dalton Hyman

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy of Education

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For Esteria,

my grandmother

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

Given its interdisciplinary nature, this thesis is highly original.

Primarily, the structure of the thesis is entirely original. It mirrors an operatic movement sequence, with sections entitled: *impetus*, *overture*, *preface*, and *reprise*. Furthermore, the thesis adopts the term *Lessons* (for what is traditionally referred to as 'Chapters') to demarcate a "dance performance", or dance class. This unorthodox terminology highlights the theoretical arguments of subject/object that are developed. Furthermore, it echoes the ultimate argument for change in contemporary dance education in Canada inherent in the thesis.

Exceptionally original are: the comparative study, critical reviews, and thematic analyses regarding the methods and philosophies of a prominent modern American dance artist, Martha Graham, and a prominent contemporary African dance artist, Zab Maboungou. The comprehensive study of Zab Maboungou, a "pioneer" of contemporary African dance, presented in Lesson #2 and Lesson #6 is an original literary proposal.

The historical inequity analyses regarding non-Western dance education in the concept of a relation between conventional museum exhibitions, and media images in Lesson #5 is also original.

The conclusion proposed, to elucidate the contemporary dance conflict, is entirely original. And the new dance definition presented at the end of Lesson #2 is original.

Finally, the multimedia contemporary dance video, which accompanies this thesis, is not only an original interpretation, it is a "unique" piece of work.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the work of Martha Graham, pioneer of modern dance in America, and Zab Maboungou, pioneer of contemporary African dance in Canada. The objective of this study is to identify in 'world dances' their unifying principle, to suggest implications of this for an at-one-ness in dance education. Drawing from early critical theory, specifically, I argue that a cross-cultural definition of dance is essential for inclusion of African dance, and other non-Western dances, in contemporary education.

To do so, this thesis first raises the question *what is dance*, and examines four commonly accepted definitions of dance. From the framework of critical multiculturalism, the *politics of nonrecognition* and *misrepresentation* are discussed. The 'primitive' trope attached to contemporary non-Western art, the regard of cultures as 'objects', and the 'tokenism' practices in multicultural education are examined in direct relation to art museums, educational institutions, and media images in particular.

From the notion of self, the thesis uses philosophical foundations, primarily Eastern, to challenge the Eurocentrism present in contemporary dance education in Canada. This addresses the question of *who is the dancer*.

Throughout the thesis, the shifting dialogue between theory and philosophy, past and present, movement and voice, is employed to argue for change in dance education in Canada. In response to the questions raised, the final conclusion of this thesis is developed in a six minute video presentation which accompanies this thesis, entitled: *I am the two in One*.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse est une étude du travail de Martha Graham, pionnière de la danse moderne en Amérique, et Zab Maboungou, pionnière de la danse Africaine contemporaine au Canada. L'objectif de cette étude est d'identifier dans les "danses du monde" une unité, à partir du laquelle il serait possible d'envisager un autre enseignement de la danse. S'inspirant des débuts de la théorie critique, je défends précisément l'idée qu'une définition inter-culturel de la danse incluant la danse Africaine, et toute autre forme de danse non occidentale est essentielle pour un enseignement adapté à un monde contemporain.

En premier lieu, cette thèse soulève la question "qu'est ce que la danse", puis elle examine quatre définitions de la danse communément acceptées. Du point de vue du multiculturalisme critique, les politiques de non-reconnaissance et de fausse représentation sont discutées. Les pratiques relatives à la dénomination (primitif par exemple) et celles qui consiste à servir de 'faire valoir' dans l`enseignement multiculturel sont examinées, tout à ce qui à trait aux musées d'art, aux institutions éducatives jusqu'aux médias (images de l'Autre).

Partout de la notion du "Moi", la thèse utilise les bases de la philosophie orientale pour contester l'Eurocentrisme présent dans l'enseignement de la danse contemporaine au Canada. Ce qui mène à la question "qui est le danseur"?

À travers toute la thèse un dialogue alternant entre la théorie et la philosophie, le passé et le présent mais aussi le mouvement et la voix est developpé avec pour objectif de revendiquer un changement. En réponse aux questions soulevées, la conclusion finale de cette thèse est developpée dans une présentation vidéo de six minutes qui accompagne la thèse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With love, and deep respect, I recognize everyone, who supported this thesis. Foremost, Swami Muktananda, and Swami Chidvilasananda for their teachings, which assisted me in the often painful process of searching for truth.

Alain Janelle, how can I describe in words my feelings for you and for what you have given to me, of your being, to ensure the completion of this thesis? You are a glorious gem.

Dr. Elizabeth Wood, I thank you for being my thesis advisor. You guided me on a path where I discovered many treasures. The richness in your editorial, intellectual, and philosophical advice has awakened me to a world of scholarship.

Paul Miller, your offering of gentle patience and generosity is deeply felt. Thank you for opening the door, and welcoming me into the world of study in African art education and politics. At the same time, Zab Maboungou. Only in time may I prove to you what the meaning of your words "keep on" do for me. You encourage me to be.

To: The Department of Culture and Values Administrative Assistant, Grace Wong-McAllister, and Claudia Weijers, the Department Secretary, never forget that the expert advice and help you gave to me is cherished as a blessing. The process of being a student in a sophisticated and complex institution can be exhausting, however, you both made it easy for me. As well, I acknowledge the dance department at the Université du Québec à Montreal for providing me with video material and dance literature on Martha Graham.

Shamille Mohammed, I cherish the effulgent light you provided me over the years. Thank you Shamille for believing in me. My blessings to you. *Om Namoh Shivaya.*

CONTENTS

A copy of the video, which accompanies this thesis, is available through the Education Library at McGill University, 3700 McTavish Street, Montreal, QC.

Impetus

Knowledge is bondage.

Siva Sutra 1.2

This aphorism accompanied my thesis process. Astounding as it sounds, I find it is completely true. It has helped to enlighten my perception of what constitutes legitimate education, or *knowledge*, as well as my perception of the problems concerning non-Western cultures in contemporary education in Canada.

The research for this thesis project helped me to realize that all our inner states: joy or sadness, anxiety or ignorance, inhibition or accretion are manifestations of how we perceive the outer world. *Knowledge* of the outer appearances in the world is the stimuli that causes reactions in us and causes *bondage* when we identify with outer images and permit them to cloud our true nature.

Early in my research I identified the fact that ballet is, for some dance scholars and students, the "highest divinity" of dance. Particularly for its aerodynamic movements; it was esteemed by European monarchy to appear on the most illustrious theater stages

throughout the world, and was offered in standard dance education, even today, in schools and universities around the world. Today, the same *centrism* in Canada places similar high status and titles on Martha Graham's modern American dance.

From the notion of 'knowledge is bondage', for this thesis, I specifically investigated the self, or inner, experience and appearance, in dance education in Canada. From the arguments put forth in the approaching Lessons, I acknowledge that Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou are two pioneers of dance in the world. Graham's method, the "Contraction" is primarily inspired by Asian and African traditions, and Maboungou's method, "Rhythms and Movement" is strictly inspired by ancestral Africa, namely that of the Congo and Central Africa.

Both dancers emphasize expression of the 'inner landscape', or the self of the dancer. They have both developed individual approaches to dance, which are equally rich venues for dance students to discover mind, body, and soul at-one-ness, necessary for the self experience of being truly human. Though their individual style are distinctly different in their outer appearances, there is one fundamental, or inner, movement that unites them together, and that is 'rhythm'. Rhythm, then, is the dancer. And breath, as I will discuss, is the wind that propels the dancer to change.

I would suggest that there is one constant that dance institutions must preserve: I call it the *rhythmic change*. Change that encourages all dancers the freedom to be in her own physical enterprise in order for her to experience her spiritual essence. Maboungou and Graham are agents for *rhythmic change* in the world.

The underlying fact is that contemporary African dance is struggling to be recognized in contemporary dance education in Canada. If this fact was not so, from my own experience, the years of contemporary African dance training I gained, which was imperative to the completion of this thesis, would be recognized by McGill University's Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research as creditable ccurse work. However, it was not accepted.

On the other hand, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research did award me transfer credit for studies in modern American dance which was equally important to this study, for which I am thankful. The Université du Québec à Montréal, where I took the modern dance courses, is a "legitimate" institution of knowledge, and Zab Maboungou's *Studio Danse Nyata Nyata*[1] is not. Though Maboungou has been invited to teach her dance method and philosophy at various universities and highly recognized institutions of dance in Canada, the United States, Africa, and Asia, including the Université du Québec à Montréal, studying at Maboungou's dance studio does not constitute valuable accreditation towards this research. Notwithstanding, contemporary African dance is not offered at any "formal" school, or university in Canada.

This opens up the obvious debate over what counts as knowledge, or legitimate education in Canada. Without Zab Maboungou's teachings, this thesis would not have been possible. In part, this experience is the impetus behind this research and for future research in the study of African education in Canada.

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[1]Studio Danse Nyata Nyata (successfully established since 1981) is recognized on a international level and receives hundreds of students each year from across Canada, and abroad. It is the first African studio to be funded by the Canada Arts Council, a federal government granting agency in Canada.

Failure to recognize, and respect contemporary African dance at-one-ness, at a level parallel with modern American dance, in education, is a failure to challenge existing colonial structures of education in Canada.

I look forward to change.

Overture[2]

Just as pearls on a necklace are strung on one string, likewise all the individual souls are strung on the same thread, which is God.[3]

Swami Muktananda Paramhamsa

As we hover on the brink of the year 2000, how far have we advanced in our willingness to recognize, with love,[4] and respect, the different 'rhythms' that inspire us as human beings. African polyrhythms, for example, in terms of their philosophical underpinnings, serve to inspire, to make one aware of the multiple appearances that make life the vibrant creative experience it is.

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[2]In the sense of a contemporary African dance, like Wagner, Maboungou's 'poetic' dances are evening long operatic movement sequences. In both a 'physic' of time and a 'poetic' of time, each movement sequence incorporates gestures from past sequences and movement to come in future sequences. The use of this choreography style as a structural model for this thesis is a formal proposal in order to set the mood for the material to come.

[3]*See* Zweig, P. (1976).

[4]As Charles Taylor (1994) writes, love relationships are not just important because of the general emphasis in modern culture on the fulfilment of ordinary needs, but are the key loci of self-discovery and self-affirmation. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity (p, 81).

According to Zab Maboungou (1997), the central question often proposed to her concerning 'rhythm' in African dance is: "where is your 'One'?"[5] This raises the notion of time: when does the dance sequence begin; where is the end; and, what is the 'rhythm'? Maboungou's specific response is elaborated on later in this thesis. In African philosophy, according to Maboungou, the body consists of a web of dynamic polyrhythms.

Similarly, the arguments raised in this thesis are multiple and changing. Before we go further into this thesis, I want to stress that it is crucial to note that, if the changes in the arguments seem unrelated, I urge you, the reader, to accept them in the spirit of 'poetic' change. Consider each argument, or Lesson, raised as another rhythmic movement, with only one constant being the at-one-ness, or the *unity* in diversity, which is a coalescence[6] of *differences*. My use of *overture* is related to Maboungou's 'poetic' sense response, that is, there is only "One" movement with multiple rhythms. Muktananda's "string of pearls" reference is intended to establish a tone of at-one-ness in this thesis that what will emerge again and again through the body of this thesis til the end where we will arrive at the *Om*.

Just as a 'rhythmic' dance sequence serves to interpret the Om, the all pervading non-material universal Cosmic Vibration of God (Cornell, 1994), when manufactured as sound, creates the 'rhythm' which is the basis of dance. Furthermore, it is the basis of all

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[5]This refers to the first beat of a bar in standard Western musical time.

[6]Coalescence does not compromise the individual qualities inherent in two distinct cultures. To do so would imply "difference-blindness". Instead I am concerned with a 'unity in diversity' The forming of one whole, in the sense of a coalition to bring about a particular common desire, at-one-ness, a unity and attunement of artistic activity, idea, and material endeavour with the universe and all its inhabitants. *See* Lesson #6, p. 82, of this thesis, *The Third Space Theory.*

manifestations. Just before we enter the body of this thesis, I feel it is important in the following *Preface* to discuss the specific 'rhythms', the chapters, or Lessons, of this thesis and how they will manifest. Notwithstanding, the mood of this *overture* will continue through til the end of this thesis, where it concludes with a video recorded universal dance interpretation of the *Om*.

Let us now move to the *Preface*.

Preface

O the wonder of joy!
I am the food of life, and
I am he who eats the food of life:
I am the two in One.

(Taittiriya Upanishad III.10.6)[7]

The LESSONS which follow will invite us to consider the notion of two distinct dances, contemporary African dance and modern American dance, and their shared at-one-ness, in dance education. In these Lessons I will argue that what one tradition does, the other does; both express the soul of the dancer, the inner self. Thus, precisely, this thesis will argue for change in contemporary dance education in Canada. Dance in this country must come to recognize by way of including contemporary African dance in education in the same way that it gives recognition to modern American dance.

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[7]Martland, T. (1981). Religion as Art. New York: State University Press, (p. 91).

To support this contention, I will identify and discuss matters of *misrepresentation* and *non-recognition* of non-Western cultures and the forces which deny contemporary African dance a legitimate place in "Formal", "Non-Formal", and "Informal" education in Canada (Ghosh, 1995, p, 3).

My discussion will follow in a total of seven Lessons. I expound the use of the word lesson as it applies to something learnt. For readers unfamiliar with the issues I elaborate in this theses, consider each lesson in this sense, in the fullest sense of the word. (The Concise Oxford Dictionary suggests that we profit from systematic lessons, as in lessons in dancing, as a thing to be learnt by a pupil). The Lessons are as follows:

Lesson #1: Profiles introduces two distinct leading figures of dance in the world: Martha Graham, pioneer of modern dance in America, and Zab Maboungou, a pioneer of contemporary African dance in Canada. I narrow my focus to these two dance artists to clearly facilitate the theme of this thesis, the investigation of a coalescence of differences, in dance education.

Though I am aware that different cultures have very different understandings of dance, and very different conceptions indeed of their relative social positions, these considerations contribute greatly to the development of my argument. Different dance traditions, whose outer appearances are radically different, yet whose concerns are intimately woven, is the subject of this study. I believe that dance education should truly be concerned with development of the self of the dancer and its implication for a coalescence in the dance world.

Theoretical study of dance philosophy, in addition to numerous years of practical dance training, facilitated my choice to limit the focus of this thesis to the methods and philosophies of Maboungou and Graham. In addition, their individual contributions proves to answer the two thesis questions, which are: *What is Dance?* and *Who is the Dancer?*

In an interview with Dance Magazine (1991) Glen Tetley, a former Graham dancer states, "Being in her studio was something akin to a religious experience . . the spiritual aspects of her teaching; she was leading me into Oriental philosophy and Freudian psychology" (p, 44). In other words, Philip Szporer (1995) writes of Maboungou's dance, " . . . sessions at her Studio Danse Nyata Nyata are like a stand-in for religion: Maboungou gives back what religion takes away". What Maboungou and Graham teach, I will argue, is fitting for the study of the self in dance education.

Lesson #2 addresses the first question of this thesis, *What is Dance?* Drawing from the teachings of Graham and Maboungou I will probe some definitions of dance. My analysis will demonstrate how and why the definitions examined are not suitable to my argument for a need to form a dance coalescence in education in Canada.

My analysis ultimately constitutes a search for a definition of dance that applies cross-culturally.[8] In my analysis, I identify ancestral African elements in Graham's modern dance technique, as well as some fundamental differences between the dances are discussed. This type of cross-cultural study of dance may help to alleviate what I propose is lacking in Canada, namely an inclusiveness, a coalescence in dance education that includes

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[8]By cross-cultural I mean the subject under investigation is applying to all cultures.

non-Western traditions, specifically African, as well as those originating here.

This brings us to *Lesson #3: The Dance in Theory*. Here I draw on the theoretical framework of dance critic John Martin (1965), *Metakinesis*, to essentially establish that what modern American dance does, contemporary African dance does; they both communicate aspects of the inner self, of the dancer to the audience.

My choice of Martin's theory is threefold. First, his theory frames a broad and inclusive response to the question *'What is dance'*. Second, Martin was a strong supporter of Martha Graham's modern dance. Finally, he was a performing artist himself. At the end of this lesson I will be in a better position to propose my definition of dance.

Lessons #4 and #5 deal specifically with educational theory, critical pedagogy, which systematically prepares for a more specific look at dance education discussed in Lesson #6.

Lesson #4: Multiculturalism argues that non-Western cultures are misrepresented and excluded from contemporary education in Canada, and contends that rather it must address the "politics of recognition" and "mis-representation"(Taylor, 1994) . To develop this, I consider early critical theory of emancipation, and then address the concerns of critical pedagogy in multicultural education.

Standard dance curriculum in Quebec claims that "because of its nature, dance is, a visual art".[9] In agreement with this generally accepted notion, *Lesson #5: The 'Objects' of Culture* presents art museums as a prime example of the institutions which contribute to the misrepresentation and non-recognition of non-Western cultures in contemporary dance

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[9]*See* Elementary School Curriculum. (1989).

education in Canada. Drawing on the impetus of my discussion of critical pedagogy, I will urge educators to trace history in order to understand and teach the injustices that are impounded in the present. I claim that museum curators commit an injustice, "tokenism" (hooks, 1994) in their approaching and looking at culture as 'objects' and in their representation of non-Western cultures. This is mirrored in schools and other contexts of education. By extension, I argue that museums with their artifact exhibitions, must accept "responsibility" (Moran, 1996) at least in part, for the crisis facing contemporary African dance today.

Consequently, I look briefly at two specific examples of museum artifact exhibitions and examine how they misrepresent contemporary African art and society by reinforcing the trope of African culture as "static" and "primitive" 'objects' from the colonized world.

Lesson #6: The Self in Dance Education proposes how to address the historical crisis facing non-Western cultures outlined in Lesson #5. The solution proposed to this crisis is Homi Bhabha's "The Third Space" (Rutherford, J. & Bhabha, H.,1990). Bhabha provides an instrumental influence on discourses in cultural politics through his view on cultural identity, race relations, and identity difference. Furthermore, racism, the politics of power, gender, class, diversity of different cultural points of view, religion, and the partiality of ones particular perspectives are central topics in the field of critical pedagogy. Applying Bhabha's 'Third Space' theory to contemporary dance education in Canada may provide a cross-cultural conceptualization, or resolution, for the negative bias against non-Western dance.

Lesson #6 also presents a lengthy discussion on aspects of contemporary dances.

First, I detail four principle elements of dance: sexuality, *Kundalini*, courage, and discipline, focussed on the teachings from Martha Graham. In the final analysis, aspects of contemporary African dance from Zab Maboungou's "Rhythms and Movement" are presented. The "fusion" (Ghosh, 1995) of aspects of contemporary dance in this section is not to be viewed as a homogenizing of contemporary African dance and modern American dance into one teaching model. My concern, rather, is only to frame principal aspects of two distinct contemporary dances.

Lesson #7: The Conclusion answers the second thesis question *Who is the Dancer?* The response to this question is determined by the strength of the accumulated Lessons; Lesson #7 may contribute to settling the contemporary dance crisis in education in Canada. How do we attend to this data? The thesis title stated, The *Self* is the Dancer. I do not provide a comprehensive explanation for the self, however brief, my response to this question suggests the Self is all pervasive.

In the final element of this thesis, the video, I use a hybridity of movement images to create a video interpretation of one dance from the repertoire of Lord Siva, King of Dancers, the *anandatandava*, based on "The Legend of Tandava" (Deverell, 1984). According to Deverell, it is "The dance of Eternity, a dance of universal death and joy" (p, 452). I invite the viewer to witness images of the Atman philosophy of all pervasive Self and, secondly, to recognize representative artistic manifestations by their respective context. With this complete, it becomes apparent that we have only 'One' lesson, Om.

Let us begin.

LESSON #1

PROFILES

MARTHA GRAHAM

Martha Graham (1894 - 1991)[1] was one of the great American dance artists of the 20th century. Though she was born in Allegheny, America, of Scottish and Irish and Mayflower Pilgrim parents, she has acknowledged that, from a very young age, she felt more Asian than American (Graham, 1991). In Seoul, Korea, and Hong Kong where modern dance education has only a brief history, Graham is a legend. She did not master the verbal Oriental language, but the body language of her dance is befitting the Oriental. Daryl Ries in *Dance Magazine* (1991) commented on her dance by saying "It is strange how well it suits the Asian body" (p. 11). Ries does not, however, acknowledge the wealth of cultures, primarily Asian, and African, that have inspired and influenced modern dance in America. [2]

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[1]For a thorough biography of Graham's work her achievements *see* McDonagh, 1973. In addition *see* Dance Magazine: *Special Issue* (July 1991) which features Graham's life and her dances from 1926 - 1990 with commentaries from her dancers and associates. For Graham's autobiography *see* Graham, M. (1991). *Blood Memory.*

[2]The African presence in modern American dance will be discussed in Lesson #2.

Hong Kong hosted Graham's farewell tour to the world before her death. During an interview with *Dance Magazine* (1991) Graham confessed her Asian like-ness by declaring, "I approach Asia as I would a stream of water." In a curious way, Graham said, "I have always felt Asian" (p, 10). Indeed, it was Asian, along with Spanish, and African-American dance influences that propelled Graham to pioneer modern dance in America. While she never called her dance technique 'Martha Graham technique', it has come to be known as such around the world.

Graham discovered a new language of movement and used it to reveal the love, the hope, and the fears common to human experiences. Graham danced for seventy years, and created over two hundred dances. She was the first dancer to perform at the White House, and the first dancer to receive the *Medal of Freedom* from the President of the United States. She received honours ranging from the *Key to the City of Paris* to Japan's *Imperial Order of the Precious Crown*.

During the 1950's Cold War with the Soviet Union, the United States Government began to search for the best ways to present the country in a culturally favourable light to East and West Europe. Since the Soviet Government emphasized dance in their cultural efforts to influence foreign governments, the United States did the same. Graham was among the first dance artists asked to represent the United States abroad; she accepted to represent the United States as a Cultural Ambassador in 1954. For her contributions to the world of dance, Graham has earned the title 'Ambassador of Dance' and an 'acrobat of God' (McDonagh, 1973).

The basic principle of her dance philosophy was that "movement never lies" (Graham, 1991, p, 8). She proposed to the dance world that what is in the heart is revealed in movement. The overwhelming sense I have of Graham is that of a dancer who was an avid believer in change. Graham (1991) asserted, "My only passion is to work, to be what St. John Perse calls born to the instant, the now. To become part of that one constant in life, our only constant - change" (p, 261).

Graham's ardent regard for change might be characterized by the "ancestral footsteps" (p, 13) she felt pushing her from behind, inciting her to create dances which ultimately changed the way the world perceives modern dance in America. She took seriously the different cultures that shape the 'inner landscape', the soul of the dancer.

Graham's philosophy for dance is basic to life. Graham conveyed, "It is about freedom and a love of the body through which a dancer can express himself" and before movement technique, she contended, a dancer was a "bringer of light", "a god of light" (Graham, 1991, p, 241). Members of Graham's company were encouraged to become an "athlete of God" (p, 3). Graham's idea of a dancer's world is comprised of many elements. In Lesson #6 I will integrate four principal elements of her philosophy: sexuality, *Kundalini*, courage, and discipline. From my own experiences as a dancer, I share Graham's belief that these elements are essential to knowing dance.

ZAB MABOUNGOU

Zab Maboungou is a pioneer of contemporary African dance in the West. Maboungou is a well respected artist in Africa, Canada, Europe, the United States, and Asia. In 1990 her Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata, was the only dance company invited to perform in honour of Nelson Mandela's historic visit to Montreal, where she performed for an audience of ten thousand people. Most recently she travelled with her company to Seoul, Korea for the Asia premiere of "Incantation", her latest full length "poetic" choreography. Maboungou's approach to dance radically challenges typical perceptions of African dance in Canada and America. In "Choreographing Differences - The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance", author and dance scholar, Anne Cooper Albright (1997)[3] writes,

> Maboungou's dancing . . . have a much more dialogic relationship with the music, and she often sustains a gesture across many beats. Her movement is rarely punctuated in an emphatic or forceful manner. Rather, the rhythms seem to mull around in the centre of her body . . (p, 23)

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[3]A performer and feminist, Ann Cooper Albright is Associate Professor of Dance at Oberlin College, where she teaches dance, performance studies, and women's studies courses

Maboungou executes her freedom as an artist by refusing to enter popular mainstream perceptions of what constitutes an African female dancer. It is difficult to label Maboungou's "poetic" dance creations with the colonial gaze. Cooper Albright adds; "her dancing signature simply resists any simple categorization" (p, 23).

Dance critic Phillip Szporer (1995) writes in *Dance Connection* magazine, confirmimg that Maboungou's work is a walk through a physical and psychological countryside. Maboungou has composed a way for dance that holds undeniable power. Szporer adds that she is a vehicle of a 'life-force', a vessel of infinity. For me, the appearance of Maboungou dancing is reminiscent of witnessing a butterfly meandering in perfect harmony with the wind.

Built into Maboungou's dancing is an individual and transformative power that frames her approach to dance. Her cross-cultural and highly democratic dialogue of diverse perspectives, is vividly pioneering for contemporary African dance.[4] Since Maboungou's history as a dancer in the West is much shorter than that of Martha Graham, I will provide here a brief biography of her life and achievements. This does not attempt to chronicle her entire twenty-six years as a professional dancer, but rather will mere highlight some of the essentials.

Maboungou, born of Franco-Congolese origin, was raised in the Republic of Congo during the post-revolutionary wake of independence. By the age of 13, Maboungou became aware of the ancestral art of African dance and music; this would hold a very

[4]In Lesson #6 I provide a detailed discussion of Maboungou's 'rhythm'.

powerful and privileged position in her life. Before settling in Montreal in 1973, Maboungou studied philosophy in France, and danced with various African Ballets in Europe and America such as: Fua Dia Kongo (San Francisco) , Malaki Ma Kongo (New York), and Ballet Lokolé (Paris). Maboungou traveled extensively throughout Africa (Mali, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Guinée, Senegambia, Nigeria, the Congo, and Cameroon,) to do intensive dance research. She worked with various masters of traditional African music and dance, for example, Babatunda Olatunji from Nigeria, and Lucky Zébila from the Congo.

Based in Montreal, Quebec, Maboungou's dance company, *Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata*, is distinguished for being the first professional African dance company to be awarded grants by the Canada Arts Council and the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec. Since 1987, Maboungou's dance studio, *Studio Danse Nyata Nyata,*[5] a place of dance teaching and practice, is where she teaches a truly unique method of contemporary African dance. Maboungou's method, called "Rhythms and Movement" is based on what she terms the "rhythmics of breath". I discuss Maboungou's method in Lesson #6.

In her book, *HEYA! Poetic, Historic and Didactic of African Dance*, Maboungou elaborates on the unique teaching method she has developed, which underlines her approach to movement. Her method is now received and practiced in Canada, the United States, Africa, Asia, and France.

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[5]"Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata" - composed of dancers and percussionists of diverse ethnic origins committed to creating and promoting contemporary African dance and music; "Studio Danse Nyata Nyata" - a dynamic cultural exchange centre; and "Rhythms and Movement" is the trade name of Zab Maboungou's practical teaching.

Maboungou's choreographed dance creations, which she calls "poetics", are intensely personal. She contends that her dances are not stories, but tapestries spread out to express the various landscapes within the dancer. From the intricately woven and intertwined rhythms, which Maboungou extracts from African tradition, are abstract forms which reveal the codified spaces of the intimate and the universal. The art portrayed is not one of dramatization, but rather one of ritual and ceremony. "Poetic" dances are essentially inspired by ancestral rhythms and movements from the Congo and other Central African countries. In her twenty-six years of dance experience, she has produced over twenty "poetic" creations.

Zab Maboungou is not only a choreographer and dancer, but also a philosopher, professor,[6] writer, and composer. Maboungou's achievements extend beyond dance to include participation in international conferences and forums on issues related to art, humanity, beauty and civilization, and African philosophy and culture. Her expert insights are solicited by principal organizations such as: The Canada Arts Council; The Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency of the French Government (ACCT); the African Market for the Performing Arts (MASA - Ivory Coast); Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Forum des Arts (Canada); The Government of Congo Pan-African Music Festival; The CELAFI Festival (Canada); SKYE International(the United States); Canadian Conferences for the Arts; and the Minister of Cultural Affairs of Quebec.

Insights on Maboungou's works are documented in various published sources,

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[6]Zab Maboungou is a full Professor of Philosophy at Collège Montmorency in Montreal, Quebec.

including: Revue Noire (1997), an international publication of contemporary African art; Ann Cooper Albright`s (1997) book; and in "TABALA" (1996), a documentary film about the integration of artists of African descent living in Montreal.

An introduction to Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou has now prepared us to move further into the landscape of the Lessons.

Let us continue.

LESSON #2

What is Dance?

O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance? [7]

[W.B. Yeats, "Among School Children,"Section VIII, lines 61-64]

. . . definitions are the outcome of the processes of inquiry and communication . . .
(Kaplan, 1955, p, 527)

. . . definitions are tools of thought and not eternal verities . . .
(Wolf , 1955, p, 453)

Distinctions are prior to judgements and to definitions.
(Sokolowski, 1979, p, 659)

Can we actually formulate a definition comprehensive enough to cover the diversity of cultures that constitute what multiculturalists call 'world dance'?

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[7] *See* Nims, J. (1981). *The Harper Anthology of Poetry.*

Accepting to define dance, rather than to describe it, was one of the most difficult, frustrating, yet ultimately enlightening experiences encountered in the process of formulating this thesis. Initially, my own definition would inevitably exclude, or include an element that prevented it from applying cross-culturally.

More often than not, my definition would entail what Roger Copeland (1993) [8] calls 'descriptive bias'. In his paper "Dance Criticism and the Descriptive Bias," Copeland adamantly argues that the dance world pays a considerable price for the ongoing intense emphasis on vivid, loving descriptions of dance. Such dance writings, for Copeland, often seem to preclude rather than generate the sort of self-reflexiveness that enriches the criticism of almost every other art. Descriptive-oriented dance theory or criticism, Copeland argues, emerges because dance writers have experienced what T.S. Elliot described: "They had the experience but they missed the meaning" (p, 28).

Dance is further burdened by the persistence of 'primitivism' in dance theory and interpretation. Primitive descriptions attached to dance are overemphasised, and bind dance to a compensatory function which links the idealised past to the urban present. According to Copeland (1993), this is applicable to all dances, not just to those that are rituals of so-called "primitive" peoples (p, 29).

Martha Graham's "Primitive Mysteries" (1931), for example, is a work that translates religious myth into puritanical movements that are modern, yet are enforced by ritual

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[8]Roger Copeland is a regular contributor to *Dance Theatre Journal*. He is an international dance writer and critic, currently Head of Dance at Oberlin University, Ohio.

elements of the non-Western ethnic region of California. McDonagh (1973) describes the preparations for "Primitive Mysteries" where, for example, Graham had her dancers study kangaroos (jumping, for example) in order to learn the appropriate expression. Traditionally, African dances incorporates the study of movement in nature, including animal ritualizations, and such dances tend to get labelled with the 'primitive bias'.

The critic, Marcia Siegel (1971), speaks for many people in the dance world when she argues that dance is a physical art, and the over-intellectualized theoretical kind of writing where the writer detaches him/herself from all sensory ephemeral qualities and emotional connotations is worthless. The one inescapable fact about dance criticism, according to Siegel, is that the writer must to be in contact with the dance as it is performed.

Before I move on to an attempt at defining dance, in light of Marcia Siegel's argument of "over-intellectualized" writing about dance, I would like to reemphasize the fact that my research involved practical, as well as theoretical and philosophical study of contemporary African dance and modern American dance. While a range of dances are examined here, I am neither in total agreement nor disagreement with any specific one. Considering the vastness of 'world dances', I will attempt in this paper to unearth the meanings of dance, rather than to come to any absolute fixed new definition.

Unfortunately, the theoretical literature of dance reveals considerable limitations in defining dance cross-culturally. Many definitions are accepted commonly in both dance and social science literature: Krause (1969), Kurath (1960), Merriam (1974), Langer (1953), Kealinnohomoku (1970), Lomax, (1960), provide in depth discussions which incorporate

anthropological inquiry. However, the definition I seek, I am convinced, must transcend strictly anthropological movement studies of the physical human body. For both Graham and Maboungou, dance goes beyond this. Graham (1991) in her biography "Blood Memory" argues, " . . . the essence of dance is the expression of man - the landscape of his soul . . . a kind of fever chart, a graph of the heart . . . from desire" (p, 6). Similarly, In a document entitled: "Aspects of African Contemporary Dance", Maboungou (1998) also contends that dance symbolizes our existence, and is not just a story but rather explains the various instruments and landscapes within the dancer. I now invite us to further define what is meant by dance.[9]

In light of this, from historical and conceptual perspectives, analysis of the definitions of dance proposed by Kurath (1960), Lomax (1968), Williams (1978), and *Webster's Third New English Dictionary* s.v. (1981) (all of which are accepted by some dance scholars and anthropologists) are relevant to the study of cross-cultural dance education.

After presenting each definition, I will refer to the methods and/or philosophies of Maboungou and/or Graham to underscore certain flaws in the definitions examined, highlighting where they fall short. At times I will elaborate more on one dancer's perspective and less on another, in attempt to avoid "over intellectualized" descriptions.

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[9]The result of such "defining" will, by extension, illuminate some of the problems facing dance education in Canada. Though the definitions examined are not recent dates, they are still published and used to define dance today.

Definitions

Kurath (1960, p, 233-254), proposing a first definition for our purposes here, writes,

> What identifies dance which uses the same physical equipment and follows the same laws of weight, balance, and dynamics as do walking, working, playing, emotional expression, or communication? . . . Out of ordinary motor activities dance selects, heightens or subdues, juggles, gestures and steps to achieve a pattern, and does this with a purpose transcending utility.

Kurath's definition is not entirely accurate, in my view, in his belief that dance must have "a purpose transcending utility". In Indian and African cultures, for example, deities love dance, and their devotees perform for the sole purpose of appeasing them.[10] Graham (1991) was often referred to as a "devidassi" (p, 96) dancer because of the Indian elements in her dances.

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[10]In the video conclusion Lesson #7 on *Who is the Dancer?* I present the *Legend of Tandava*, which represents a history around the auspicious symbol of Lord Siva, to whom classical *devadasis* dancers worship with temple dances in Indian culture. The Legend tells us that Lord Siva is "Lord of Dancers or "King of Actors". *See* Coomaraswamy (1924, p, 56).

In Congo, Maboungou (1996)[11] states, dance is often used in training and as motivation in work activities. Particularly in traditional African societies, there are hunting dances, death dances, birth dances (varying with the number of children), marriage dances, dances for cultivation, harvesting etc., all of which are conceived and communicated in terms of a specific 'rhythm' constructed to suit the emotion of the dance. Thompson (1963) confirms that there must be at least a thousand different varieties of dances performed within a specific group in African culture.

Secondly, intentional rhythm, internal movement, and the importance of cyclical motion, all of which are inherent in African dance and modern dance, are absent in Kurath's definition.

The second definition is also flawed. Lomax (1968, p, 223) compares dance to everyday movement in order to show that "danced movement is patterned reinforcement of the habitual movement patterns of each culture or culture area." Lomax surmizes dance as,

> an adumbration of or derived communication about life, focussed on those favoured dynamic patterns which most successfully and frequently animated the everyday activity of most of the people in a culture . .

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[11]I am grateful to Montreal filmmaker, Erica Pomerance, who provided me with manuscripts of personal interviews with Zab Maboungou. The manuscripts were part of the research and development of the documentary film entitled: TABALA (1996) which is still aired on public televison, covering the history and development of African artists living in Montreal. This film is available for viewing through Cercle d'Expression Artistique Nyata Nyata. Where 'Maboungou (1996)' is referenced, I refer to the manuscripts from "TABALA".

In response to this, I would point out that Thompson (1963) asserts that danced movements are not only patterned on habitual patterns of people, but may also be patterned on athletic feats (acrobats), animal behaviour, inverse movements requiring specific training, polyrhythmic and polycentric movements. Many African dances are directly inspired by movements of animals. For example, the finest Bangwa dancers of Cameroon model many of their dance movements on the palm bird. Martha Graham, also elaborates on inspiration of the lion, bird, monkey and other animals that have inspired her dances. Graham (1991) stated clearly:

> I miss the animal strength, the beauty of the heel as it is used to carry one forward in life. (p, 15)
>
> The elusive aspects of the black swan have always held me fast. The black swan can hypnotize you. (p, 30)
>
> I learned from the lion inevitability . . . the shifting of one's body. The shift of weight is one key aspect of that technique. (p, 103)
>
> We have lost the quality of an animal. (p, 104)
>
> When I had a choreographic block and would begin to panic, I would leave my studio and walk through the old John Wanamaker department store, where Suzy the monkey lived. (p, 124)
>
> After doing Cave of the Heart . . . I was given the name "Elephant Going Amok". (p, 205)
>
> Horses have always given me wonderful images for teaching. (p, 253)

Taking from other cultures would not necessarily constitute "everyday activity" for all dancers. Graham exceeded the parameters of Lomax's definition with her extensive

borrowing, not from animals alone, but with her indisputable borrowing of conventions from the Indian, the Chinese, the Spanish, and the African cultures (McDonagh, 1973; Graham, 1991; Gottschild, 1995). Graham developed an intimate comprehension of Asian philosophy which permitted her a feeling of freedom to borrow movement principles from other cultures. Where ballet had exalted the possibilities of the *pas de deux*, Graham eschewed lifts and concentrated on keeping both feet firmly planted on the ground (McDonagh, 1973, p, 58).

Other influences appear in Graham's work: McDonagh confirms for us that Graham described life in Southern California as the place where she came upon the "power of the Indian and the knew freedom of the Negro" (p, 12). Unabashedly, Graham also said, "We have two primitive sources, dangerous and hard to handle in the arts, but of intense psychic significance - the Indian and the Negro. That these influence us is certain"(Graham, cited in Gottschild, 1995, p, 101). However, according to Gottschild (1995), the acknowledgement of Graham's "Negro" influence has gone unnoticed. This is clear if we look at what Pearl Lang, a principle teacher and dancer with Graham's Company wrote in an article published by *Dance Magazine* (1991):

> Before Martha's way with dance, the front of the torso was immobile. Dancing involved the arms, the legs, the back, the hands, feet, and head. With laser-beam clarity, she isolated and caught the passion of the contraction (which is amplification of an involuntary physical reaction to a sob or laugh). She harnessed it into use as the visceral illumination of the hidden inner life of the dancer and it added a vitality as well as a vulnerability to the dance phrase, depending on the need of the theme. The contraction became the initiator of the beginning of

> movement that finds its way out from the centre of the torso to the arms, legs, head, and finally into space. She disciplined it into a formalism lest a vestige of expressionism make it sentimental or soften or blur its impact. This formalism, no doubt, accounts for its durability over all of these years and throughout the facetious. Teeter-tot-tering changes in aesthetic fashions.[12]

Lang's first sentence can be strongly contested when considered in light of African dance.

Release of the pelvis and release of the breath in African dance leads to what Maboungou teaches her dancers, the expert isolation of body parts. As I mentioned earlier, Maboungou's dance is strictly inspired by rhythms and forms of ancestral Africa, namely of the Congo and Central Africa. Maboungou informs dancers that the release of the torso over all is mastery of the art of dance. Thompson (1963) adds that in the Congo, where Maboungou's method and philosophy originates, a non-flexible body, released torso and pelvis, is taken for a corpse. Release and flexibility is demanded in African dance to accommodate a complicated series of rhythms and transitions. So, in fact, Graham's technique is neither unique nor original.

The central tenet in Graham's "contraction" comes from the basic behaviour inside the human body. The contraction and release of the organs: the heart, the lungs, the digestive system, and the birth process. When the dancer contracts, the front of the body shortens and the back lengthens. Furthermore, it is clear to me, Graham's "contraction" is derivative of the African "Get-Down Quality" (Thompson, 1963, p, 13). Graham tried to

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[12]This excerpt was quoted from Pearl Lang's forward to Ernestine Stodelle's biography, "Deep Song: The Dance Story of Martha Graham". *See* Dance Magazine (1991, p, 33).

deploy the "Get-Down," which she actually developed as a thrust in the pelvis, calling it a "contraction" to produce a squad of powerful dancers.

The African "Get-down" quality, or pelvis release, is not just a thrust in the pelvis, but also requires the dancer to assume the deeply inflected pelvis necessary to release the hip and knees. In this position, the dancer attains a virtually crouching position, in proximity to the level of the earth. This level is often reserved for high intensity passages of African dance. Lincoln Kirsten, an opponent of Graham's methods wrote:

> Her jumps are jolts; her walk, limps and staggers; her runs, heavy blind impulsive gallops; her bends, sways. Her idiom of motion has little of the aerial in it, but there's a lot of rolling on the floor. (McDonaugh,1973, p, 65)

Cooper Albright (1997) proposed this description of Maboungou's dancing after seeing only the beginning section of "Reverdanse," an evening length "poetic" work:

> Her knee lifts in a step that gets caught in mid-air, suspended while the underbeat of the drums gradually coaxes its way through her torso and out her shoulders, arms, and wrists until it reaches a final parting caress in her hands. Then another, and another, each step rising like the tide through her body while she tilts her head to listen and wait for another impulse to move. Her eyes are lulled by the soothing rhythms of the drums and her face seems almost sleepy as it shifts from one side to another. A deep breath pulls her out of here reverie and her chest rises up, swelling with a call that fills the space with sound of her voice.

Albright goes on to mention that Maboungou resists the stereotypical production values of what often gets presented as "African" dance in the modern world. Albright

identifies that Maboungou is clearly African wearing traditional dress: a raffia skirt, raffia necklace with shells and beads and barefoot. Maboungou's movements are "multifocused" and "multirhythmic" clearly showing isolations of the body parts. Her movements are rarely emphatic nor forceful. Rather the movements meditate around the centre of her body. Albright confirms her dance departs mainstream notions of "African" (p, 21-27).

Two final examples will be provided here of the borrowing in dance from other cultures. First, the Spanish-Indian Christian ritual that Graham used for "Primitive Mysteries" is reminiscent of the Mexican muralists who were attracting considerable attention in the 1930's. McDonagh (1973) explains that, according to Graham, her dance "Ceremonials" was based on Indian material (p, 87). Second, in Tokyo, when asked specifically whether she would borrow Japanese modes, Graham answered that she would not copy Japanese dance forms unless she knew their spirit, that copying only the surface of something would be pointless (p, 244). In an interview with George Jackson of *Dance Magazine* (1991), Graham stated, "In a curious way, I have always felt Asian . . . We are all carriers of lives and legends" (p, 10).

I continue this search now with an analysis of Williams' (1978, p, 213) definition, which provides a relatively more exhaustive definition of dance. Williams writes:

> dancing is essentially the termination, through action, of a certain kind of symbolic transformation of experience . . . "a dance" is a visually apprehended, kinesthetically felt, rhythmically ordered, spatially organized phenomenon which exists in three dimensions of space and at least one of time. It is articulated in terms of dancing on the level of the articulation of the dancers' bodies; in

> the body-instrument space which. . . is ninety-dimensional. It is articulated in terms of "a dance" on the level of a pattern of interacting forces; the form space of a dance . . . [is] the empirically perceivable structure which modulates in time . . . Whatever its surface characteristics, a dance has limitations, "rules" within which it exists and which govern any of its idiomatic or stylistic expressions.

The first problem here is that this definition views dance as socially based, due to the presence of "rules". Maboungou, contrastingly, holds that dance gains strength only when it is depersonalized and desocialized. In a paper entitled: "The Art of Improvisation in African Dance", Maboungou (1997) argues that "Improvisation is an essential element of African dance. Much more than simply the end result of a process" (p, 50). Improvisation has no "rules" as such. The dancer's freedom in African dance is encouraged through the act of being in rhythm within his own body and no other.

The second problem in Williams' definition is that it is not necessary for dance to be visually apprehended: It may occur in the dark. Maboungou's "poetic" dances rests on the contribution and interaction of various elements of the dance; body, voice, instruments, lights, and darkness. Maboungou is adamant that where there is silence, there is darkness, and the dance never ceases to exist.

Similarly, Graham's dance need not be seen. Helen Keller used to visit Martha Graham at her school on Fifth Avenue in New York, and Graham (1991) says, "She (Keller) felt as if she was watching the dancing. What she was focussing on was the feet on the floor and the direction of the voices. She could not see the dance but she was able to allow its

vibrations (rhythmic frequence) to leave the floor and enter her body" (p,148).[13]

A final flaw in Williams' definition of dance is again his insistence that dance is "visually apprehended". In fact, a person may dance in the absence of an observer. Graham (1991) demonstrates this with a memory, "It must have been around two o'clock in the morning because it was pitch dark and the house was completely still. I was in darkness, dancing and practising alone" (p, 67). Maboungou's notion of 'One' as mentioned earlier, indicates that, for her as well, the dance never ceases, with or without an audience.

The last definition is also flawed. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1981) defines dance as:

> rhythmic movement having as its aim the creation of visual designs by a series of poses and tracing of patterns through space in the course of measured units of time, the two components, static and kinetic, receiving varying emphasis (as in ballet, and modern dance) and being executed by different parts of the body in accordance with temperament, artistic precepts, and purpose.

The first major flaw in this definition is the "measured units of time". Neither Graham nor Maboungou would support the Webster's definition. Both Graham and Maboungou approach dance based on their belief that there are no measured units of time in their dance as such, as in the classical ballets. Accordingly, the only constant in dance is

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[13]For another example of darkness, the Iroquois of Canada have a women's medicine dance that is performed in complete darkness. *See* Kurath (1964: p, 13-14, 143-149). As with the Helen Keller example, dance may occur with a blind person perceiving its existence through the auditory, olfactory, or tactile senses.

in relation to change. Rather rhythm is central to understanding and in the construction of their dances. Emphasis on rhythm in this definition is welcome here, since rhythm is crucial to dance philosophy, and particularly to Maboungou's method "Rhythm and Movements".

Since Maboungou's teaching method and philosophy is born out of the polyrhythmic musical tradition of the Congo, and Central Africa. Rhythm is fundamental to her every gesture. Notwithstanding, Maboungou does not borrow elements from non-African cultures. She constructs contemporary African dances which are inspired entirely by ancestral African movements, music and, particularly the rhythms. She has, however, travelled extensively throughout Africa to do rhythms and movement research.

In the extensive two hour long interview with Montreal filmmaker Erica Pomerance, Maboungou (1996) gives a detailed discussion of rhythm. Rhythms, she states, "are like an architecture of the emotion of the whole world around us". Maboungou argues that "we are carried by rhythms constantly. Rhythms helps us to find our place in the dance, and in the world, so the dancer is not lost in just entertainment." In her paper entitled "Where is Your 'One'?" Maboungou (1997) writes,

> Because dance is not merely perceived here as an enjoyment of the senses or the abandonment to uncontrollable rhythms, but because dance is an embodiment of our true intelligence . . . making us feel part of things while at the same time demanding that we play our own part. In traditional, and still in modern dance . . . rhythm contains all the notions by which we can understand life and the universe. Learning to organize and constantly create sequences of time (which is what the art of rhythm is about) while at the same time experiencing it (which is what dance is about) involves a full mind-body participation within the context of the support of the collectivity transfigured as the other. (p, 4)

The African dancer learns various different rhythms based on human emotions and nature. In a sense the dancer watches herself growing in 'rhythm'.

Maboungou goes on to state, "My ability to change the rhythmic structure within established patterns while purposefully and constantly ignoring a fixed point of departure refers in face to a tradition that constantly integrates all elements of life within a rhythmic context (hence the necessity of dance), transcending them at the same time, such that the separation of these elements form their dancing context" (p, 5).

Similarly, in her autobiography "Blood Memory", Graham (1991) stresses that dancers must know rhythm, not as just a participatory (entertaining) element, but as something which connects them to each other. Human beings are connected not only through memory, which is constantly surging through us, but we are also linked by the rhythm of blood surging through our body.

McDonagh (1973) explains that Graham hated ballet. She enforced methods that brought on change; her dance was not measured in static units of time, or counts. Graham blunted ballet gestures that seemed to have been fixed in measured time, and took away its romantic ornaments and the embellishment of fluttering fingers and arms.

Graham (1991) writes, "What I had to do with each of them (the dancers) was, of course, teach them . . . they didn't learn by counts. No real dancer I know learns counts. And that's exactly what I do" (p, 243). Maboungou (1997), similarly, clarifies that static kinetic time is not appropriate in African dance. Instead, her method teaches dancers based on a cyclical time, or a physic of continuous time with no specific beginning nor end.

Maboungou summarizes exquisitely in her poem "Prelude" her notion of time,

When the rhythm is accomplice to silence
And breath suspends all time
How can one know,
In the moment which will come
To embrace the moment past,
If a trace remains of these beings and things
No longer what they are . . .
Have no fear!
As accomplice of silence
We shall suspend time forever . . .

[From "Reverdanse", 1991]

Mirroring Maboungou's philosophy, Graham repeated constantly, almost as a mantra,[14] the words she received from St. John Perse, "We have so little time to be to this instant" (McDonagh, 1973, p, 276). Rhythm, then, for both Graham and Maboungou, flows in and is connected to the inner self of the human body.

Non-verbal body movement rather than a static series of "poses" and "tracing of patterns" are rejected in African dance inherent value. African dances rarely use the end-stopped poses, for example, that are common to classical European ballet and classical Bharata Natyam dances of India. Instead, Maboungou points out, movement just keeps on spiralling and shaking through every part of the body in nonetheless recognizable patterns.

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[14]This is a spiritually charged word or phrase; a mantra has the power to invoke God. It carries with it His power and energy and is a form of initiation by Him. In the *Siva Sutra* 1.22 we are told by awareness of the great ocean, the potency of mantra is realized (*mantravirya*). The direct experience of *Parasakti* as universal Consciousness, the dawning of perfect bliss in the heart - this is the realization of the power of mantra.

From the preceding analysis of dance definitions, I have brought to light the flaws which make these definitions unsuitable for a cross–cultural conceptualization of dance education. Primarily I have maintained that the methods and philosophies of Maboungou and Graham share beliefs and practices, leading us to begin to construct a definition of dance in a way that is inclusive of contemporary African dance and modern American dance.

Before presenting the definition of dance that I argue would be more appropriate to contemporary dance education, however, it is important to acknowledge that there are fundamental differences between cultures that makes it difficult, even impossible, to fit them together into one framework. This is particularly a challenge for those of us concerned with trying to locate dance cross-culturally. Differences are to be maintained: There is no desire to assert "difference-blindness" (Ghosh, 1995, p, 237). Cultures are different and the challenge facing multicultural education is to recognize cultural differences while encouraging a coalescence where no one culture is dominating over another.

Fundamental Differences

The differences between cultural traditions are bountiful. I will not labour on these here. Instead, I will provide a few examples in dance.

First, the torso in European ballet must be held upright for correctness, as in classic form; the erect spine is the centre - the hierarchical ruler - from which all movement is generated and functions as a single unit with a single pulse. From my own training I have learnt that the straight, inflected torso indicates elegance and acts as the absolute monarch, dominating the dancing body. This vertically aligned spine is the first principle of European ballet. Arm and leg movements emanate from and always return to the straight centre spine. In fact, one might argue that this structural principle can be seen as a microcosm of the post-Renaissance, colonialist world view, where European colonizers assumed their geographical positions as the "centre of the universe" as a way to justify their domination over "others".

African dance, on the other hand, is concerned with a democratic equality of body parts. The spine is just one of many possible movement centres, and rarely remains static. The African dancing body is poly-centric, meaning that one part of the body is played against another, and movements originate from more than one focal point (Gottschild,

1995). The body is also polyrhythmic.

(Thompson, 1963) confirms that different body parts moving to two or more rhythms simultaneously privileges flexible, bent-legged postures that reaffirm contact with the earth, the "Get-Down Quality" (p, 13). The component and auxiliary parts of the torso - shoulders, chest, rib cage, waist, pelvis - can be independently moved or articulated in different directions (forward, backward, sideward, more often in circles) and in different rhythms. Thompson also observes that "the Kongo sense of flexibility in the dance is stark: dance with bended knees, lest you be taken for a corpse" (p, 9). Within that tradition, a pulled-up, aligned stance and static carriage indicate sterility and inflexibility.

As assessed by Thompson, Africans perceive the European dancing body as rigid, aloof, cold, and one-dimensional. By European standards, the African dancing body is vulgar, comic, uncontrolled, undisciplined, and, most of all, promiscuous. The presumption of promiscuity is allied with, and leads directly to, the sexually licentious stereotypes that the Europeans attribute to African dance and, by extension, African peoples. The origin of conflict here is the clash between European and African values regarding the relationship of body, mind, and spirit. As Husserl (1977) notes:

> Most of the things in our life world . . . are immediately experienced by us as mentally significant things; they are not seen as merely physical, but in their sensuously experienced shape . . . a mental sense is expressed . . . a two-sided material-mental object . . . stands before our eyes. (p, 84)

Thus, physical manifestations are simultaneously influenced by a mental awareness. African religions are geocentric, based on the beneficence of polytheistic forces, or attributes, whose identifying characteristics represent particular facets of the human personality.[15] Deities make contact with humans when they are embodied by their followers in danced ceremonies.[16] The significance of this relation is not passive; it is received along with the sensual perception. Thus, dance and the dancing body are manifestations of mind, body, and spirit.

On the other hand, Christian values separate mind-spirit from body; the body is regarded as the site of original sin and must be controlled in order for the spirit to be ascendant, or even for daily work to be accomplished efficiently. Christian philosophy and its theoretic (God-centred) practice is predicated upon a paternalistic, monotheistic belief system (as Native Americans characterized it, worship of the 'great White father') wherein the deity does not physically enter the human body, but rather resides above it in an ethereal, heavenly paradise. This separation and hierarchy is replicated in the separation of mind from body, with the former the master of the latter - just as the supreme Deity is master of the human entity.

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[15]African religions have generally eluded Europeanist comprehension. The deities are not objects (trees, rocks), animals (snakes), or people (although people, as ancestors and heroes, may become deities). Instead, they are the attitudinal aspects or driving forces - the sub-texts - that shape people, animals, or things.

[16]I consciously use the term "embodied" rather than "possessed." The process is learned and culturally conditioned, and is characterized by heightened control and a deepened level of perception. The quasi-omniscient spirit-force is embodied in the practitioner. I feel the word "possession" is laden with negative biases, the explanation of which would extend beyond the scope of this thesis.

Thus, traditions that invite and celebrate embodied deities are in direct opposition to the Christian, particularly Protestant, ethic of body, mind, and spirit separation. Specifically, black bodies become the target and screen upon which the dominant culture projects its collective fantasies - the ideals of a nation built on an ethic of denial that designates African people as its hated or loved "primitives", the trope of its frustrations (Gottschild, 1995).

Maxine Sheets (1966), in her book "The Phenomenology of Dance" encourages us to see dance not as separate objective factors with no unifying centre. What we should see, instead, is something which perhaps can only be empirically written as a indivisible wholeness which appears before us.

Similarly, where would dance take us if we consider the importance of dance from it's universality, it's biological and evolutionary significance as innately derived behaviour with survival values? Towards a coalescence, perhaps. An attunement of one common value, freedom from existing notions that cultures are distinctly separate with no shared values.

From the above analysis of dance definitions, it is obvious that similarities and differences exist between contemporary African dance and modern American dance. Graham employed Asian and African influences. The history of slavery marks the history of African presence in America. Without failure, African presence exists in modern American dance, yet contemporary African dance is still struggling to escape the trope of "primitive".

The "Primitive " Trope

If what Maxine Sheets suggests is true about the unifying centre of dance, how then has African dance managed to exist for so long with the trope of the "primitive" descriptive? Gottschild (1995) observes that "seduction of the primitive" is a trope that has played havoc with the European psyche since the Age of the Enlightenment. This love-hate affair of opposites, she says, is evident in the image of the black dancer on the screen upon which Europeans gaze with their fears and phobias, along with their fantasies and desires (p, 100).

Gottschild argues that the primitive trope defines the European concept of the "other", be it the Hottentot Venus in nineteenth-century London; Josephine Baker in twentieth-century Paris; Ashanti Fever in turn-of-the-century Vienna; or the consciously non-European influences in the revolutionary work of artists such as Picasso, Braque, and Matisse.

African culture is part of our daily lives, yet some do not seem to know it, and some refuse to recognize it. Gottschild insists that the African legacy is in musical forms such as blues, jazz, spirituals, gospel, soul, rap, funk, rock, and even European orchestral music. It permeates dance forms, from ballroom and night-club floors to popular and concert stages. And yet, though apparent in Western culture, African presence is vaguely recognized. This

leads to one question: Who is doing the documenting? The recognition of non-Western influences in modern America is encouraged or silenced, depending on who is speaking. Toni Morrison's (1989) voice of "unspeakable things unspoken" (p, 11) in her writings echoes the silenced African culture. That which is African is often unnamed and, as such, remains misrepresented, remains mute, inconsequential, and insignificant, in the eyes of many.

African Influences

According to Gottschild (1995), African presence exists in European-American culture since plantation-era contacts between Africans and Europeans, contacts which forged and shaped a unique, creolized, Afro-Euro-American culture that all Americans embrace, consciously and subliminally. African influences in dance are numerous. I will limit my discussion, however, to two popular examples.

First, it was George Balanchine, of Georgian ethnicity, who was the principal American transformer of classical ballet. Jazz aesthetic was very familiar to Balanchine before he immigrated to the United States. According to Gottschild (1995), once in the United States, Balanchine worked with the Nicholas Brothers, two extraordinary tap-dancing kids, and with Josephine Baker in Follies. Thus, he had direct contact with African-American dancers and choreographers and with genres that were highly influenced by African-Americans.

Balanchine introduced classical ballet in America to African based movements, while maintaining its grounding in the ballet aesthetic. Gottschild (1995) points to many places in Balanchine's ballets where the Africanist legacy comes bursting through. Most notably, she cites, in the new movement vocabulary he introduced to the stage. This consisted in three notable characteristics: (1) the displacement of hips or other parts of the torso, instead of vertical alignment; (2) leg kicks, attacking the beat, instead of well-placed extensions; and finally, (3) angular arms and flexed wrists, rather than the classical, rounded *port-de-bras*.

A second example would be Martha Graham. According to Gottschild, Louis Horst (1961), Graham's musical composer, stated, "Primitive art is evident as a strong quality in every contemporary art style" (p, 53). Horst, who was fond of saying that an artist, like a plant, needs a wall to grow against, reveals, in his book "Modern Dance Forms", poses of Graham with African statues and paintings. He goes on to suggest that most dance artists have totally borrowed from the primitive, contending that primitive to a degree is every modern dance. Moreover, Graham herself recognized African influences in American art when she stated that the Indian and Negro influenced her dances.

From these examples several conclusions can be made: (1) Ballet, like all dance, is subject to the influences and values of its cultural context. Therefore, it can rightfully be called a form of ethnic dance;[17] (2) Influences from the past and present are woven into, intermeshed with, and redistributed in any given cultural mode at any given moment in time. In structuralist terms, every text is an inter-text; (3) The Americanization of ballet by

[17]*See* Kealiinohomoku, J. (1970).

Balanchine proves African-American influences exist in American ballet.

From the analysis of the definitions, and the fundamental differences and similarities between modern American dance and contemporary dance, it is apparent that a more suitable definition of what is dance is essential to cross-cultural dance education. If we consider Martha Graham's "American" dance alone, it is inspired by various different cultures in America. Zab Maboungou's contemporary African dance, on the other hand, is not inspired by any European or American cultures. As such, it is appropriate to move to our next lesson where I will continue this analysis of dance in order to present, what I consider, a suitable cross-cultural definition.

Let us continue.

LESSON: #3

Dance In Theory

When truths about one art are deep enough, they become true about all art.

Sydney Pollack[18]

Critical Theory

For critical theorists, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse in particular, aesthetic critique is inseparable from the search, or struggle for humanity. Held (1980) explains; according to critical theorists, "to analyse a work of art, or a particular cultural artefact, is to analyse and assess the way it is interpreted" (p, 77). From Held's point of view, such an enquiry would require a thorough investigation of the art work's social origins, form, content, and function in relation to the total cultural life. In addition, Held points out, the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School of Social Research insisted that cultural phenomena

[18]*See* Longwell, D. & Meisner, S. (1987, p, xiv).

could not be analysed within the simple base-superstructure model. Furthermore, critical theorists believe that art should be understood in the broadest possible sense in the contemporary era, notably because art is enmeshed in reality. For critical theorists, art is most critical in the contemporary epoch when it is autonomous, free from empirical restraints (Held, 1980).

Drawing from the paradigm of critical theory, this is precisely what I am attempting to do here; struggling for a definition of dance that is inclusive of all traditions, and free from existing colonial bias. To work toward this goal, I will turn to the theoretical work of John Martin, whom I propose has a critical theory of dance.

John Martin

Martin (1893 - 1985) was the major dance critic and theorist of his time, and was dance critic for the New York Times until he retired in 1962. The depth of thought evident in his writings would have made Martin a major dance critic of any time (Anderson, 1989; Copeland, R. & Cohen, M. 1983). Martin wrote numerous books on dance, including: "The Modern Dance" (1933); "Introduction to the Dance" (1939); "The Dance in Theory (1965); and, "The Dance in Theory with a New Introduction" (1989).

According to Anderson (1989), Martin was a risk taker with his theories about dance; moreover, he stated them clearly, and his basic theories have not lost their validity today.

According to Copeland and Cohen (1983), "Martin was the very model of the partisan critic. His flag-waving efforts were instrumental in winning wider audiences on behalf of modern dance" (p, 427-428). Attention to Martin's theory is important because he raised one very important question of dance theory: How does dance communicate?

Metakinesis

According to Martin, the way dance movement communicates to an audience is by a process which he calls *metakinesis*. According to Anderson (1989), Martin states that dances are organized specifically to provoke a response from the viewers. Martin believed that "Good art speaks directly from its creator's emotions to our own" (Anderson, 1989, p, xi). However little some people might be aware of it, we are equipped with a "sixth sense", which Martin calls a movement sense.

Dance movements, Martin believed, stimulate this sixth sense, causing the viewer to respond with "muscular sympathy" (Anderson, 1989, p. xii). This is an inner muscular response that takes place, rather than an apparent outer reaction. The inner self alone, Martin suggests, determines needs and desires it must have; it is up to the outer being to locate these necessities, to figure out how to secure them, and to bring them into the sphere of the inner self.

Sixth Sense Synopsis

According to Martin (1965), the sixth sense is a movement sense concerned with the intricate inner world of the human body. The sense receptors of the movement-sense are to be found in the tissues of the muscles and in the joints. Martin alleges that "these movement-sense receptors comprise the busiest system in the entire body"(p, 14) helping to keep the body in alignment and balance. If these sense receptors were not working, Martin claims, we would be prone to falling over.

This movement sense regulates the force with which we propel our body in movement and co-ordinate it, pick up objects, sit down, jump, etc. Our movement sense (once it is well developed) prevents us from much experimentation in the outside world. For example, when we encounter something seeming too heavy to lift, preventing us from attempting the task of lifting, it is memory of previous experiences. Even though we may never have been confronted with lifting a fallen tree, from memory of previous experiences with heaviness, aroused in our musculature is an estimate of the tree's weight.

Martin alleges that our ability to estimate such things depends on musculature sense. Inside our body are the qualities that exist in objects such as soft and hard, rough and smooth, cold and hot, far and near, square and round. Coming into contact with objects,

we attach qualities to them, the memories of which are stored in us. Without these already established movement-sense receptors in the body, according to Martin, we would not be able to make qualitative distinctions about objects and different patterns in movements; everything would appear the same. Our contact with an object is not experienced merely by recognizing it, but by our emotional reaction to it. The sense organs which report movement and postural change are closely connected to the nervous system of the inner self where our emotions are generated.

Every emotional experience, according to Martin, makes a record of itself in motor patterns, adding new aspects to the already existing records. It is virtually impossible, Martin claims, for us to resist translating what we see or hear into our experience. We are in continual state of postural change, far greater than we realize. What seems simple, for example, the movement of the eyeballs, is actually intricately linked to every nerve channel in the human body.

Diagnosis

Dr. Bernard Jensen (1980) is a nutritionist who pioneered the science of iridology[19] in the United States. Presently, as in the past, many primary care doctors have used iridology along with other diagnostic techniques to facilitate a more complete understanding of their patients. Through the application of iridology, it is possible to study an individual's strengths and weaknesses in the body. Basically, the mysterious iris topography identifies the placement of organs and tissues as would a world map. Jensen tells us there are signs and features in the iris that are still inexplicable and unknown to this time. Since the 1800's iridology has developed into a holistic tool in that it does not deal specifically with one segment of the body, but realizes the trinity of mind, body, and spirit as having interrelated functions.

The eyes, Jensen (1980) explains, "have been proclaimed throughout the ages as the window of the soul. We now acknowledge them as the mirror of the body. Manifestations in and about the eyes have long been used to gain insight into a person"(p, 3). Just as we have a sensorimotor system which keeps us in alignment and balance, so to speak, we also

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[19]Iridology is the science and practice that reveals inflamation, where it is located, and in what stage it is manifesting. The iris reveals body constitution, inherent weakness, levels of health, and the transitions that take place in a person's body according to the way he/she lives. The iris is the portion of the eye that carries the colour. In Greek mythology, Iris was the goddess of the rainbow; she was also messenger of the gods in the Illiad.

find in the intricate sensori-system of the eye, the inner world, the truth. It is not till the end of "The Wizard of Oz" that Glinda 'the Good' reveals this truth about movement when she says to Dorothy:

> The silver shoes have wonderful powers, and one of the most envious things about them is that they carry you to any place in the world in three steps, and each step will be made in the wink of an eye. (p, 72)[20]

Graham (1991) said, "When you look in the mirror what do you see? Do you only see what you want to see and not what is there?" If we are introspective she says, we "see our own death" (p, 224). A mirror, in the tradition of Graham, is the symbol within which we can see our own landscape, our own truth.

On Stage

Sanford Meisner (1987) informs us that Martin's theory was shared by the great actors of Martin's time including: Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Konstantin Stanislavski. Meisner's own organized method of acting was based on the theories of Martin to bring out real human emotions and behaviours within the imaginary theatre context. Sydney Pollack (1987) suggests that ever since Meisner was exposed to Stanislavski's work he has been

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[20]This quote is from L. Frank Baum's story *The Wizard of OZ.* Samuel French version (1928).

changing the face of theatre in America. Meisner's work in the theatre at the Neighbourhood Playhouse in New York included collaboration with Martha Graham.

Actors trained in Stanislavski's approach relied to a large extent upon their inner motivations to bring stage characters to life. For Stanislavski, theatre should develop people's taste and raise the level of their culture. According to Moore (1967), Stanislavski believed actors have the potential to discover the "the life of the human spirit" (p, 26). Therefore, the goal of art is a spiritual communication with people. The inner manifestation must be conveyed to the audience. The most important thing, according to Stanislavski, is to build the life of the human spirit. Moore extends that Stanislavski's way of teaching forms a system based on human functioning according to laws of nature embedded in our memory.

In Dance

When the dancer appears on stage, she presents to us movements we are familiar with, not because the viewer is a dancer, but because familiarity is through the simple fact of a shared form, the human body. The inner self dictates the movements of the dancer, and since no movement is without life experience, Martin (1965) believes it is impossible for the dance movement to be viewed without provoking emotional meaning. Since we react to movement of objects in the outer world, a falling building, a rock thrown, a leaning pole, we

respond to movement of the human body in a similar way, however more forcefully. A viewer of a dance performance then, Martin says, is more than an observer, he or she is now participant.

Naturally, the dancer's goal is to lead the audience into her "inner mimicry" in order for the viewer to experience a certain emotion about a particular situation. Inner mimicry, according to Martin, is the transference of motor experiences to consciousness. Martin insists that it is the dancer's responsibility to present as clear an interpretation of life as possible. Graham (1991) calls this blood memory.

Graham writes, "For all of us, but particularly for a dancer with his intensification of life and his body, there is a blood memory that can speak to us. Each of us come from a mother and father and has received their blood and through their parents' parents' and backward into time. We carry thousands of years of that blood and its memory" (p, 9). Whatever the specific form the dance may take on, no matter how reasonable it may seem or how ingenious, it must ultimately refer back to the inner self.

Dance movements serve as kinetic stimuli and the audience reacts with emotional, intellectual, or muscular response. This means that, any movement an actor or dancer thinks suitable for the stage, regardless how raw or polished, how virtuosic or pedestrian, how elegant or animalistic, or how naturalistic, functions as authentic movement or gesture, despite how unfamiliar it may seem. The movement communicates (Anderson, 1985).

Manson Richard (1995) wrote in *La Presse* about Maboungou's dance, "The emotions that make us tremble of rage or explode of joy, the anguish that insinuates is venom in our

veins that creates a cold sweat fever, it is all those joltings of the body that the dancer (Maboungou) leaks out as she steps onto the stage."

In terms of Graham, kinetic transfer may also explain why Graham was so impressed by the African and Asian culture. Her rapport with earth bound movement, for example, is intricately linked to the African reverence for rootedness to the earth through the feet. This touched the feeling of Graham's spiritual landscape.

In 1931 (when Martin was teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York) Graham joined Martin to demonstrate movements based on her "contraction," to confirm Martin's theories based on *metakinesis*. (McDonagh, 1973). Recall that, for Martin, no movement of the human body is possible without definite relation to life experience, even if it is random or inadvertent. He also stated clearly that, in any movement or posture, based merely on the laws of design, there is bound to be an implication either of motivation or else of the inco-ordinations of mental unbalance. Dances can revitalize or agitate us because in them we sense the same waves of life we see in our world outside the theatre space, in the streets.

Martin's theory can be tested in the work of Graham and Maboungou. For example, the tragedy portrayed in Graham's "Clytemnestra" is about the passions and murderous conflicts in the House of Arteus after the Trojan War. Graham portrays Clytemnestra, who murdered her husband so as to remain with her lover. The story of the dance starts as Clytemnestra's restless spirit wanders through Hades after her death. Though Clytemnestra

had passed from life into death, not even that radical transformation could grant her rest, for she was dishonoured in the eyes of the shadows surrounding her.

"Clytemnestra" is divided into four parts. In the prologue, the protagonist is seen dwelling on the past. In the first act, the time is set back to the queen's tragic life. In the second act the queen and her lover Aegisthus are in charge of Mycenae, but in a dream Clytemnestra is haunted by the ghost of Agamemnon. In the epilogue, Clytemnestra is granted rebirth by acknowledgment of her guilt.

In light of Martin's theory, consider the spiritual philosophy of Kashmir Shavism that teaches "the appearance of the world is nothing but a play" (Chidvilasananda, 1996, p, 41)[21] and we are all mere players, actors and dancers performing various roles; what might the drama be called, and who are players who dictate that African dances are simple repetitive steps? Chidvilasanada explains that the appearance of the world is nothing but "the play of the mind" (p, 44). As in Graham's interpretation of the piece Clytemnestra, it was the ghosts of guilt at play in her mind that ultimately brought her to admit the passions that caused her to kill.

What is in the minds of people who label African dance as simple and repetitive steps? From my interpretation, such false labelling is only attempting to destroy an unbroken ancient tradition. Moreover, this is reflected in education today by way of exclusion. The

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[21]Gurumayi Chidvilasanandais a spiritual Master of Siddha Yoga. She is a Master, who has been commanded and empowered to bestow the grace of an unbroken lineage of Siddhas. Ganespuri, the ancient ground of India, is the home of Siddha Yoga.

most generous explanation I have for the inequity of cultures in dance education is that African dance is often not understood.

Public perception of African dance, often, is that it is merely a series of simple and repetitive steps. Maboungou (1998) helps to clarify this misunderstanding: "the simple and repetitive steps of African dance are neither simple nor repetitive, but are of ancestral power which are inexhaustible." The steps, she argues, "hold a dynamic of movement in movement."

According to Martin (1965), the obvious function of locomotion, movement, is a vigorous vehicle for both expression and perception. If modern scholars of dance are to have any practical comprehension of African dance, they must recognize this. Moreover, not only does African dance movement communicate through movement to its audience, but the viewer must also know how to communicate with the dance.

Unlike Graham, Maboungou's dances are not stories, they are "poetics" that weave a tapestry of rhythms and movement to express the inner landscape of the dancer. Cooper Albright (1997) expresses the notion that Maboungou's dance performance of "Reverdanse" immediately captures the audience's focus by directing the viewer's attention to the intricate dialogue between the rhythms of the drums and the motion of the body. Cooper Albright states, "Sometimes she surfs over the beat. Sometimes she rides the sound of the drums, slowly sinking and rising as her shoulders punctuate the drummers' shifting cadence" (p, 21). In the program notes "Reverdanse" is described as a celebration of movement which emphasizes the intimate over the flamboyant; nuances of internal adventure unravel

through a progression of pieces, a saraband of small metamorphoses emerging from alternating melodies.

The spectator's approach to Maboungou's "poetic" dances must involve all their intellectual powers (applied in the analysis of dance), figuring out its details, and trying to deduce meaning. For Martin (1965), "we have no experience of art until it has been transmuted into life experience, which in basic terms is movement" (p, 4). When the viewer of a dance is left unmoved, Martin explains, there are two reasons for this: (1) either our background does not contain associations of the nature demanded, or (2) our apparatus for aesthetic digestion is unable to cope with the situation. Martin also states, however, "even the lower animals, including birds, fish, are known to dance" (p, 2).

To conclude, I have come to the following definition of dance as a result of all of the above considerations: dance is a cyclical motion of *rhythm*s passing organically through the dancer's body to convey a *movement* of energy[22] in relation to time.

This is a very general definition of dance. However, I believe it is such a definition of dance that is essential to formulate a cross-cultural conceptualization of dance in education.

Let us proceed.

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[22] Energy is a direct reference to consciousness.

LESSON #4

Multiculturalism

In the preceding Lesson, I derived a cross-cultural definition of dance which was assisted by John Martin's theory of *metakinesis*. His contention, simply put, is that dance movement communicates. It is now time to expand on another important component in my proposal for an all-inclusive dance education. Critical theory introduces the central arguments of critical pedagogy in Canada and the United States. I will propose, then, that critical multiculturalism serves as the basis for the cross-cultural conceptualization of a coalescence in contemporary dance education in Canada that I would advocate. Critical theory will provide the theoretical framework for my arguments.

The Fulcrum - Critical Theory

Following the theoretical research and work of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the founders of the Institute of Social Research 'Critical Theory' are Max Horkheimer (philosopher, sociologist, and social psychologist), Theodor Adorno (philosopher, sociologist,

musicologist), and Herbert Marcuse (philosopher) in particular, with the addition of the more recent, recast work of Jurgen Habermas (philosopher, sociologist). These four men are the central figures in critical theory[23].

The Institute, which is often called the Frankfurt School, was established in Frankfurt in 1923. The work that developed out of the School (critical theory) is the foundation for what we know today as critical pedagogy. It is important to recognize these critical theorists for "they emphasized culture and psychoanalysis to expose the hidden social relationships in the objective world" (Ghosh, 1994, p, 5) which is the fulcrum of multiculturalism in Canada today. Their work, however, is not limited to an analysis of the working class, as in orthodox Marxism. Rather, it attempted to change the perspective of the role of culture in Western civilization.

The four critical theorists preserved many of the concerns of German idealist thought - concerns, for example, with the nature of reason, truth, and beauty - but redeveloped the way in which these had been formerly understood. The more contemporary works are centred around Habermas who, for example, imperatively placed the 'course of history'[24] at the centre of a critical theory approach to philosophy and society. Particular attention is given to critical theorists in this thesis because they were thus concerned with interpretation

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[23]Despite a certain unity of purpose in the theories of these men, there are differences between them. However, in later Lessons reference to the critical theorists refers to their work in general..

[24]It is important to note history here because it will become very important to our discussion in Lesson #5 on museums. It is from the impetus of the course of history related to museum education that I draw inspiration for my argument on dance education.

and transformation of society. Held (1980) informs us that Habermas is criticized by his peers for failing to become involved in actual struggles, retreating into theoretical reflection, and in 'practice in theory' only.

Their theories went beyond a focus on the past, and embraced future possibilities, human evolution. According to Held, they mirrored what Marx had argued: "in the womb of the old mode of production a new mode is born and develops." Habermas responds with, "a new and more developed form of consciousness is emerging which will not support capitalist value relations" (p, 375). Like Marx, critical theorists are preoccupied with the forces which move society to ensure true, free, and just life.

Thus consciousness is reference to nature, human beings, overflowing desire, pleasure, and happiness. On Horkeimer's account,

> Man's striving for happiness is to be regarded as a natural fact requiring no justification . . . the satisfaction of desire, unlike 'higher' motives, requires no reasons, excuses, or justifications . . . men are determined by elementary reactions of pleasure and pain. (p,197)

Consciousness,[25] which Horkheimer refers to as shared by all human beings, is a substratum stimuli (p, 43-4).

Ghosh (1994) argues that education has always been shaped by forces: economic, political, cultural and historical, both globally and locally, and formal education also

[25]Writing in 1961, Horkheimer drew on Schopenhauer's theory of consciousness to emphasize the 'dynamic' and 'irrepressible' character of this substratum of human existence (Held, 1980).

contributes to all these areas. It is tied to the ideology of the ruling elite of the country and is political at every stage because of competing demands by various groups. Critical pedagogy based on the works of critical theorists combines their theories of culture, power, and hegemony in defending the nature and purpose of schooling as self-understanding and self-empowerment (Giroux & McLaren,1989, p, xx1).

Critical multiculturalism attempts to rediscover an empowerment and emancipatory potential, without having recourse to fictitious historical agents. Schroyer (1973) claimed that critique can restore the memory of blocked potential and anticipate the emancipation of humanity from constraints or repression and, by addressing empirical instances of struggle and ideology, can "begin to define the emancipatory in the present" (p, 81). It is not always however, clear, what is meant by 'emancipation' in critical pedagogy.

According to Held (1980), in a Habermasian sense, emancipation refers to decolonization of the life world - the expansion of democratic social control over markets and bureaucracies through extended public spheres, combined with a critical attitude towards fulfilment of what is promised by the official values of society but remains unfulfilled, such as gender equality, or minority groups' civil rights (p, 250).

Critical theorists understand that all knowledge to be rooted in interests. By making those interests conscious, and by distinguishing between particular and general interests in the objective advancement of humankind, it moves beyond historical relativism in linking itself with those social forces which the historical situation reveals to be progressive and truly "universal" (Held, 1980, p, 245).

Now that the fulcrum is in place, from the impetus of critical theory, it is safe to say that critical multiculturalism[26] distinguishes its goals from sectarian capitalist interests and allies itself with those social groups and individuals who are part of the struggle for a 'just' society. The Praxis of Critical Multiculturalism[27] which follows lays down the foundation for the cross-cultural dance education proposed as empowerment of self.

Praxis of Critical Multiculturalism

This section is particularly a reflection on critical multiculturalism in Canada and the United States and how it works. Its close relationship to critical pedagogy in art education is the foundation for cross-cultural dance education discussed later in Lesson #6. In this section I will advance the conceptualization of cross-cultural dance education by exploring various positions held within the debate over multiculturalism, using them as a guide. What I present is an overview of some of those issues concerning multiculturalists. I will underscore Eurocentrism[28] in education.

Canada as a multicultural nation is associated with the immigration movements of the late 19th and 20th century. In all areas of art education in Canada (dance, drama, visual arts,

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[26]*See* McLaren (1994) for a thorough discussion on critical multiculturalism.

[27]Praxis refers to accepted and practised theory or method or custom used, by a group or individual, on a daily basis in reflection upon change in the world.

[28]*See* Stam and Shohat (1994) for a good description of Eurocentrism.

music, etc.) multiculturalism has come to be used primarily in connection with demands on behalf of "black" and other minority groups, demands for recognition, representation, and equal-opportunities (Turner, 994). Lengthy studies surrounding culture and multiculturalism, however, have been written Bhabha (1994), Frieire & Giroux (1989), Ghosh (1995), Giroux (1994), Hall (1995), hooks (1994), McAndrew, (1994), Taylor (1994), Weeks (1990) - and others, covering issues such as: national identity, the construction of historical memory, the purpose of schooling, and the meaning of democracy in multicultural communities.

According to Giroux (1994), multiculturalism "wars" in Canada and the United States are being "fought" on two fronts concerning today's "crucial culture." Multiculturalism, Giroux argues, has become a "tug of war over who gets to create public culture" (p, 35). The struggle is deeply linked to a historical American legacy that is strongly exclusionary, nativist, and racist.

Secondly, Giroux argues that the contested terrain of multiculturalism is heating up between educational institutions that do not meet the needs of a massively shifting student population, and which are increasingly perceived as merely one more instrument of repression. This has become so because groups that have traditionally been excluded from curriculum are now becoming more politicized .

Multiculturalists, unlike anthropologists, are primarily concerned with a movement for change. They have developed theoretical analysis challenging cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group (or the dominant class constituted almost exclusively by that ethnic group) in Canada, the United States, and the Great Britain, by calling for equal recognition

of the cultural expression of non-hegemonic groups within the educational system. From the perspective of critical multicultural theorists - Bhabha (1990), Ghosh (1995), hooks (1994), McLaren (1994), Taylor (1994) - and others, multiculturalism is actually an assault not on Europe or Europeans, but on Eurocentrism.

Culture

For multiculturalists, culture refers primarily to collective social identities engaged in struggles for social equality (Turner, 1994). Culture is not externally or geophysically determined. Rather it is made up of individuals and groups who make choices and influence each other in the development of collective values, perspectives, mores, and ways of doing things. To use a simple example, cultural rules govern what one eats, when one eats, and how one eats. In Canada, most of us eat with a knife and fork; the Chinese and Japanese eat with chopsticks; and the Kanuri of West Africa eat with the fingers of the right hand only, since eating with the left hand is forbidden (Rosman & Rubel, 1992). At my home, I prefer sitting on the floor to eat. In other words, there may be a universal drive for meaning, but there are multiple types of meaning, varying from group to group and culture to culture, built into our universal human drive to create and seek meaning (Anderson, 1995).

Marxist Influence

To reflect Marx's critical theory of 1843, cross-cultural theorists, like multiculturalists in Canada, are concerned both with the interpretation and transformation of bourgeois society, aiming to move toward rational institutions.[29]

Marxist theories on class struggles have had a profound impact on multiculturalists thinking about struggle for social change. For Marx, struggle meant a conflict between those who own the means of production and those who do not (and who are therefore exploited). Critical multiculturalists are forcefully pushing forward Marxist theory with the belief that silenced voices must be heard: this is fundamental in their concerns for equality. Multiculturalists hold strong that personal encounters, or "face-to-face relationships" (Unger, 1984, p, 107), are needed to be put to the forefront of our mind's sphere. More personal encounters will diminish the labelling and separation that take place otherwise. People will less likely be treated as "other". In favour of plurality and academic change, in a very

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[29]According to Held (1980), for critical theorists a rational society can only emerge in the struggle for the future . . . it is only through the struggle against existing contradictions that the notion of a rational society can become more clearly defined . . . The struggle must be carried forward and developed if the general interests of the masses are to be enhanced; that is, if the free development of individuals, a just allocation of scarce values, equality in community are to be actualized (p,196-199).

eloquent essay, "The Passions of Pluralism", Maxine Greene (1992) argues that the ethos of multiculturalism is to transcend all differences. Greene writes,

> Changing demographies and the new immigrations are making the phenomenon of pluralism inescapable in this country. At once, what is recognized as an erosion of community requires us to find ways of reconciling a new acknowledged diversity with a Deweyan notion of a "Great Community". . .heeding multiple voices silenced over the years, of making them part of the ongoing "conversation" that distinguishes our culture. This entails an incorporation of visions seldom tapped before; it entails a recognition of exclusions and deficiencies long denied, a discovery of ways to fill the voids and in some fashion to repair". (p,13)

The ethos regards the principles of human rights which encompass freedom, justice, and equality. Greene goes on to suggest that we have to "remain aware of the distinctive members of the plurality, appearing before one another with their own perspectives on the common, their own stories entering the culture's story, altering it as it moves through time". Greene adds that the only way our classrooms will be "just," "free," and "caring"(p, 18) is if they involve dialogue of as many persons as possible.

Greene envisions multiculturalism in a similar way to John Dewey (1954), who identified democracy as the struggle to attain the life of "free and enriching communion" (p, 143ff). It is interesting to note that the life "communion" which Dewey refers is addressed in Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" (1931) where he says:

> Through me many long dumb voices,
> Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,

> Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
> Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
> And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father-stuff,
> And of the rights of them the others
> .. . are down upon
> Through me forbidden voices . . . (p, 53)

Like Whitman, American author, Toni Morrison (1992) addresses themes central to multicultural issues: individualism, social engagement versus historical isolation; acute and ambiguous moral problematic; the thematics of innocence coupled with an obsession with figurations of death and hell. Morrison is interested in speaking from her own individual point of view to enrich life while maintaining respect for ourselves and for other cultures.

In Marxist philosophy, we are independent "actors," performing our own drama on our own stage (Ruhle, 1943, p, 108). Mirroring this notion, the picture of life as a grand stage is captured in Shakespeare's famous lines: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his own time plays many parts . . ." (Baylin, 1996, p, 9).

We experience history, and, fulfil it, in practical and personal examples. In *Misere de la philosophie* "Poverty of Philosophy," Marx (1847)[30] argues that human beings are not subordinate to an idea outside themselves, are not guided by a consciousness existing apart from themselves and working towards its own preconceived ends. Rather, according to Marx, economic production, and the social stratification which is its necessary outcome,

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[30]*See* Ruhle (1943, p, 108).

form, in each historical epoch, the foundations of the political and ideological history of this epoch.

From Marxists perspective, from the beginning of history, down to our times, there have been class struggles. Today, these struggles have reached a place where the exploited and oppressed minority class cannot effect its liberation from the dominant majority without a revolutionary transformation of society at large.

It is true what McLaren (1994) charges in his very powerful essay "White Terror and Oppositional Agency" that "Africans have been forcibly placed at the foot of the human ladder" (p, 48). McLaren emphasizes that what is crucial is the open door for the telling of diverse histories, for diverse ethnic interpretations, for making inescapable the diversity of cultures woven into the fabric of society. According to hooks (1994), diversity that constitutes itself as "harmonious ensemble of benign cultural spheres" should be rejected (p, 31).

Multiculturalism education that does not treat all cultures as a form of ethnicity, according to McLaren, is "conservative" and "liberal" and in doing so all cultures in society are not treated equally. According to McLaren, conservative and liberal modes of multiculturalism only give the white Euro-centric elite an excuse to occupy positions of power in order to manipulate Africans at the foot of the human ladder of civilization (p, 45-69).

In Chapter One of "No Ladder To The Sky", Gabriel Moran (1987) contends that the modern Western world is tied to this image of a human ladder. Moran asserts that the

image of the ladder invites human beings to climb upward, in business, government, sport or war, trying to attain success. According to Moran, the image of the human ladder is very limited in the who, what, where, and how it can encompass morality in education. hooks (1994) argues that "success" is intimately linked to self-actualization emphasizing the union of mind, body, and spirit, rather than the separation of these elements (p,18). Historically, the West (Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom) have been the "White man's country" in which institutional and ideological patterns of the supremacy of white over black, and of men over woman, supplemented and reinforced one another trying, in a sense, to climb the "ladder of human civilization."

Canada in Context

Immigrations to Canada now total 250, 000 a year and represent diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The 1991 Statistics Canada census revealed Canada's cultural make-up to be: people with single European origins comprise about 60 percent (20 percent British, 23 percent French, and 15 percent of other European stock). Visible minorities formed 7.5 percent (2.1 percent Chinese, 1.55 percent South Asians, 0.35 percent Caribbean, and 0.31 percent of Latin American background); Native peoples accounted for 1.7 percent of the total population in Canada. Residents claiming multiple origins comprise 28.8 percent.

Ghosh (1994) found two major implications for these statistics. First, the dominant place of the "two founding peoples" is increasingly dropping, and secondly, many people are reporting multiple origins (p, 7). Ghosh concludes that cultural pluralism inevitably will follow this diversity of origins in Canada.

In 1996 Census Canada asked Canadian residents for the first time in Canadian history to identify their racial background. StatsCan gave Canadians a choice of ten categories, from Arab to white, in addition to "other." In an article printed it the Montreal Gazette newspaper entitled "The Question of Race", Peritz (1995) revealed that the StatsCan "question of race" was an explosive issue and was received with "grotesque" and "enormous disgust" from many Canadians.

According to Canadian novelist Neil Bissoondath (in Peritz, 1995) who falls into the East Indian category, argues "the question is divisive and echoes distantly of apartheid." Besides, as immigration grows, and as interracial marriages produce an endless diversity of racially mixed children, dividing Canadians into categories like black, white, Chinese, etc. would not provide a better picture of Canadian society. Lumping Somalis and Haitians and Jamaicans together in the "black" category because they have dark skin is presumptuous. Such simplistic categorizing, according to Bissoondath, only brackets out the rich heritage each distinct culture has to offer.

In the same article, Anthropologist and McGill University Professor Bruce Trigger, contends that the categories are "grotesque". Trigger protests we should be un-labelling ourselves, not labelling ourselves. Trigger argues that classifications by race only produce

oddities by "taking scientifically illegitimate categories and giving them credence by putting them in a census" (Peritz, 1995, p, B1).

To link the 'Question of Race' discussion to the dance perspective, in "An Introduction to Intercultural Differences and Similarities in Nonverbal Communication", Irujo (1988) outlines that body language covers a wide spectrum of non-verbal communication from facial expressions or emotions, to eye contact, kinescis, posture, haptics, proxemics, environment, and paralinguistics. Irujo's analysis determines there are distinct nonverbal cultural differences and similarities. According to Irujo, differences in movement behaviour contributes to wrong distinction making. If such subtle differences among cultures are of such importance, how is it, then, so easy for Statistics Canada to use such simplistic and inappropriate distinction making tactics like, 'some people are white and other people are black'?

Furthermore, Robert Sokolowski (1979) argues that we cannot place something under a class until the category is adequately determined. Making distinctions therefore comes between what Sokolowski calls vagueness and distinct judging, in the most pejorative sense. Sokolowski argues that there are two ways in which distinctions go wrong: (1) we may fail to make a distinction that we ought to make; and (2) we may make a distinction that does not really exist. In the first, he says, we "underdistinguish" and in the second we "overdistinguish" (p, 646- 652).

With a growing number of people and institutions criticizing the Canadian Government for its revival of outdated separation tactics, more and more minority people are identifying

as "other" and specifying "Canadian." This has rendered less accurate the government estimates of visible minorities.

The government is only one institution under attack by critical multiculturalists. As a liberal and democratic country, critical multiculturalists are focussed on social change in all areas of Canadian society to ensure its citizens equality of access to education. Critical multicultural arguments are using legislation such as: the Bill of Rights, the Constitution Act, the Human Rights Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and numerous regional and provincial codes to make their claims to oppose Eurocentrism.

According to Gabriel Moran (1996) we should not try to divide the world into victims and nonvictims. Instead, Moran argues, "we might be better to realize that each person has areas completely under his or her control" (p, 101). However, Moran states clearly that this does not exempt him or her from responsibility for their actions. "Responsibility" according to Moran is a individual and collective force, "without preordained limits, situated at the centre of the human heart" (p, 72). Responsibility, Moran argues, can function as a bridge between what is and what ought to be built into society.

Moran puts forward the notion that the basis of respect for oneself is to discover respect for others. This is learnt through the process of discovery that we are responsible to and responsible for everyone and everything (p, 70). According to Moran this is the simplest way of correcting mistreatment of others in society. An individual without a "grammar of responsibility" could signal a self-centred person cut off from the world. Moran suggests that the discovery of one's responsibility is the result of the "soul ecology" where the human

heart is open to everyone and everything in the universe with the notion of appreciation and relatedness.

In light of Moran's argument, in the next Lesson I will specifically trace museum education, with a view to establishing its role in Eurocentrism. I claim that art museums must take 'responsibility for' the mistreatment of non-Western cultures as art 'objects' in education. Examples highlighted are testimonies that museums are currently contributing to the 'primitive-bias' (Copeland, 1993) of African culture as "static" and "primitive".

Before presenting Lesson #5, I wish to recap briefly the trajectory of this thesis so far. In Lesson #1: I profiled two leading dance artists, Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou, who are both important figures from distinctly different traditions of dance. Maboungou who is African, is often excluded from and/or misrepresented in contemporary dance education, however, due to limited Western definitions of dance. In Lesson #2: I argued for a revision of how we look at and define dance. I did this by examining four commonly accepted definitions of dance, highlighting their flaws. A definition of dance in education I argued should apply cross-culturally. At the end of Lesson #3: I presented my critical definition of dance that applies cross-culturally using John Martin's theory of *metakinesis* as a guide. Beginning with Marxist theory, Lesson#4: Multiculturalism, traced a variety of arguments which show that non-Western cultures are forcibly being placed at the foot of civilization by Eurocentrism.

In preparing this thesis subject on cross-cultural dance education, it has become clear to me that misrepresentation and non-recognition of African culture in art education, from

the critical theory perspective, is born out of an historical colonial context. Inequity and mis-treatment of non-Western dance as "static" and "primitive" 'objects' in schools, universities, and other contexts, must be understood in relation to history. In the following lesson I will attempt to show how one societal institution, museums, view non-Western cultures through their exhibitions. By tracing examples, I will suggest that the museum is, at least in part, responsible for the existing non-recognition and misrepresentation of contemporary African dance in education.

To this end, I will proceed with a discussion of how museum exhibitions can be seen to play a principal role in the historical inequity crisis facing non-Western cultures today.

Let us proceed.

LESSON #5

The 'Objects' of Culture

If we do not know history, we are doomed to repeat it.

(Santayana)[31]

Santayana's is a very powerful aphorism. It suggests to me that the most complex essence of our existence is the notion of time; past, present, and future. This is critically important in any study of culture.

Vincent Lanier (1989) suggests that the future of art education is rooted in history, not as a consequence but rather as a discernable option for the future. Lanier suggests that any examination of art education would be would greatly assisted if art educators had some kind of template. According to Lanier, this template would serve us to change the way we interpret and look at art.

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[31]*See* Lanier (1989).

In light of Lanier's proposition of a template, the contemporary saint of Kashmir Shavism, Muktananda Paramhamsa (1994) states, "People talk about innovation and reform. . . Yet there is only one thing we need, and that is the true understanding of humanity. Yet that is exactly what we lack" (p, 3). According to Muktananda, we must know our past and where we stand in the present to have true understanding of our future.

Lesson #4 underscored the central theoretical position of multiculturalism which grew from political strategies, in order to promote unity, diversity and equality in education and society at large. Ethnicity was shown to have emerged as an important component in educational issues in Canada.

The definition of what constitutes legitimate education, or what counts as knowledge, and the debate over how far institutions should go to adopt cultural diversity and ethnic needs have brought various groups into debate (McAndrew, 1994). Indeed, a society that defines itself as democratic and egalitarian, McAndrew argues, must address the issue of equality of access and results for all groups in the schools and in society at large (p, 164).

The thesis of multiculturalism, according to Taylor (1994), is that our identity[32] is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by non-recognition of others. As such, a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror-back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Taylor goes on to contend that nonrecognition or misrecognition of a culture in education

[32]Taylor (1994) describes identity as "who we are, where we are coming from." As such it is the background, he argues, against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense (p, 80).

"can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (p, 75).

Elliot Eisner (1987) maintains that, to understand art and culture, one needs to understand its manifestations in art, and, to understand art, one needs to understand how culture is expressed through its content and form. It is worth citing Eisner at length here:

> The austerity of a Shaker chair or table is reflection of the religious convictions of the Shakers and how they thought life should be lived. The aggressive force and movement of futurist artists in early 20th century Italy reflect powerful ideological beliefs about what Italian society should become. The pristine and lean qualities of the steel glass skyscraper embody a view of the optimal relationship of man and machine. Such art forms in each period, each location, each culture mutually influence each other. Just as culture shapes art, art shapes culture. Our convictions, our technology, and our imagination shape our images, and our images, in turn, shape our perception of the world. One major aim of disciplined-based art education is to help students understand these relationships by examining the interaction between art and culture over time. (p, 20)

Because of their important role as "mirrors" of societies, art institutions are called as never before to be sensitive in the ways in which they educate students on issues specific to culture.

Barbara Lawson (1994) explains that before the advent of popular music, dance, theatre, film and photography, museum artifacts as "objects" provided an important means of representing "exotic places" and peoples visited by explorers, traders, missionaries, and a variety of travellers (p, ix). According to Lawson, the way in which museums exhibit cultures

as 'objects' contributes largely to the misrepresentation and exoticizing of non-Western cultures in museum education.

Museums, according to Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (1991), are never just spaces for social relationships. A museum is a "contested terrain" (p, 1), a process, as well as structure; it is a creative agency. Karp states that museums are privileged places for displaying images of "self" and "other" (p, 15).

Sharon Macdonald (1996) notes that museums are socially and historically located; and, as such, they inevitably bear the imprint of social relations beyond their walls and beyond the present. According to MacDonald, literally, physical objects in exhibitions constituted as representation of a culture are capable of turning culture into an 'object' by way of materializing it. Macdonald argues that the role of museums is significant in the sense that they present to the world a modern way of seeing culture. For this reason, Macdonald says museums are challenged by minority groups who are marginalized by museums.

Tokenism[33]

Ancestral artifact collecting for museum cabinet exhibitions offers insight into the often scant concessions payed to non-Western dance, drama, and visual arts present in schools

[33]The principle practice of granting minimal consideration to appease radical demands of minority groups. *See* hooks (1994).

today. Art education in schools and universities often takes on a museum 'object' approach to viewing non-Western cultural studies, meaning a "drawing room anthropology," or ethnographic approach to learning about non-Western cultures. This involves frugal cultural days in school programming designed to promote entertainment or extra-curricular activity.

bell hooks (1994) points out that students want knowledge that is meaningful. hooks agrees that students rightfully expect teachers to offer knowledge that addresses what their overall life experiences are. In Women's Studies, for example, hooks notices that white teachers will often focus on women of colour at the end of the term by lumping any course content on race into one section.

According to hooks, this approach to culture is a form of "tokenism" (p, 38). She asserts that this is not multicultural education and negates cultural transformation. It is obvious to hooks, and critical multiculturalists alike, that the unwillingness to teach from the standpoint of the other is rooted in the fear that classrooms will be uncontrollable, and emotions and passions will not be controlled. hooks argues that there is need to include cultural material in pedagogy in order to effectively teach social transformation, and cultivate a shared feeling of community and common good among students.

Furthermore, "tokenism," hooks states, clearly prevails in settings where professors still teach in classrooms that are exclusively white students. Affirmation of multiculturalism in such settings must still be present whether or not non-white students are present to remove a biased perspective of inclusion. According to hooks, students are demanding a democratic unbiased liberal arts education that can teach ways that transform consciousness, creating

an environment of free expression. Transforming the biased classroom is a great challenge for educators learning how to teach in a multicultural setting.

Viewed from the perspective of McLaren (1994), in the case of tokenism, ethnic groups are reduced to "add-ons" to the dominant white culture. McLaren suggests that teachers and cultural workers need to take up the issue of "difference" in ways that do not repeat the monocultural essentialism of the "centrisms." McLaren goes on to assert that teachers need to build a politics of alliance-building, of dreaming together, of solidarity that moves beyond the condescension of, say, "race awareness week," which actually serves to keep forms of institutionalized racism intact (p, 49).

McLaren concludes by suggesting that teachers who introduce nonliterary cultural materials into classrooms need to provide a critical means of understanding their role in the production of subjectivity and agency. "Teachers need to avoid approaches that disconnect students from the lives of real people who suffer and from issues of power and justice that directly affect the oppressed" (p, 68-69).

As in museum exhibitions, nonliterary cultural materials used in the classroom linked to curriculum as artifacts can produce misrepresentation. To make a parallel with dance education, the Bhairava (a dancer's headpiece, or mask) is a powerful symbol used in Indian dances, yet it is often misunderstood by most Western dance educators. The headpiece in India, or the mask in Africa, has the power to raise itself, and because a serpent sheds its

skin, it is a symbol of generation and regeneration and the renewal of life.[34] Most of the masks displayed in museums were not made to be put on public display as 'objects'. Western culture has appropriated African art and attributed to it meanings that are overwhelmingly Western. We are aware that the meanings we give to these 'objects' in museums are not necessarily those that inspired their creators. We may be less clear about what the original status and meaning might have been.

Giroux (1983) argues that teachers must learn how to decode the messages inscribed in both the form and content of artifacts and material collected from non-Western cultures. In Giroux's opinion, this becomes all the more important for those students who experience daily the pain of humiliation and powerlessness because their own lived experiences and sedimented histories are at odds with the dominant school culture (p, 68).

Many educators recognize the value of cultural studies, yet the very way in which non-Western cultures are treated in schools is similar to the museum "object" or "visible craft" (Alperes, 1991, p, 26). Being a manifestation of culture, art is both intentionally and unintentionally a carrier of culturally significant meaning, encoded in an affecting sensuous medium.

A museum exhibition on non-Western cultures, such as Africa, for example, during a cultural day in school, or annual visit to a local artifact exhibition, is often one of the first and, in some cases, the only experience young students will have of an "other" ethnic art

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[34]*See* Indira Gandhi, Eternal India: New York, 1980, p, 166, for an example of dancer wearing a similar monumental wooden headpiece,

other than their own. When these events occur, as rare as they do, they are exotic encounters treated as entertaining representations of colonized or primitive peoples of a "paradise lost." According to Anderson (1995), this results in the creation of logico-meaningful systems of symbolic relationships which define social structures, mythical systems, religion, and so on. Art is one of the most important logico-meaningful systems of communication. Thus it can be seen as communication about something between one human being and another, often cross-culturally.

The 'Other' Context

Since struggles in the postmodern era are impacted and enhanced by mass culture, it is essential to look at the media and the way in which it is related to the issue of multiculturalism. Many multiculturalists say the media is at the very core of identity production with its colonial power to exoticize and "otherize" cultures as "objects" for viewing. For example, according to Stam and Shohat (1994) "the dominant European/American form of cinema has not only inherited and disseminated a hegemonic colonial discourse, but also created a powerful hegemony of its own through monopolistic control of film distribution and exhibition in much of Asia, Africa, and the Americas" (p, 303). Eurocentric cinema, then, did not only pave the way for colonial powers and their own viewing, but for the entire world to gaze at and be influenced by.

To draw on one example from Stam's and Shohot's analysis, the "Indiana Jones" series is a classical example of the hegemonic colonial discourse in popular cinema. The series presents the Hollywood resurrection of the colonial mobility of power over the exotic life of Asian cultures. "Indy," the archeologist, operates with ease only in the colonized countries, portrayed as ontologically corrupt, where he sets out to "rescue" artifacts from the colonized world for greater benefit of Western civilization. In the world of Indiana Jones, Asian cultures are synopized as theme-park stereotypes drawn from the orientalist repertoire: India is all dreamy spirituality; Shanghai is all gongs and rickshaws, non-Western adult characters are evil while children are eager, innocent, and pro-Western. In a Eurocentric image, according to Stam and Shohat, "Indiana Jones" represents the civilized West threatened by the "exotic" savage East.

McLaren (1994) argues that it is no secret that the "white controlled media" has exoticized and sensationalized African-American communities into subjugation. As well, they have ignored Latin-Asians, "polemicizing against their value systems and representing them as teleological, poised to explode into a swelter of rioting and destruction" (p, 46). Such community groups have been characterized by the Eurocentric media, McLaren contents, as an "anarcho-voluntaristic frenzy." Futhermore, the white media has generated terms like "wilding" which was made relevant to only the African-Americans. Thus the postmodern image white people now have of African-Americans is based, at least in part, on media representations of violent and abhorrent youths who roam the streets of the urban perimeter "randomly hunting whites." The white supremacist capitalist patriarchy are forces so strong

that black people are always having to renew a commitment to a decolonizing process that should be fundamental to our lives and is not (hooks, 1994, p, 47).

In relation to dance, the media also perpetuates "tokenistic" representations. I find it disconcerting, for example, to see television presentations of the visits of royalty, presidents, or other distinguished personages to African countries, or even certain "Discovery" programs, that portray natives performing ritual dances gazed at by observers from abroad rendering them televised anthropological "exotic" excursions. Whose world does it represent, one might ask, that of the "wild other" or that of their "guests"?

Within postmodern media, Stam and Shohot (1994) argues that, "the media not only set agendas and frame debates but also inflect desire, memory, and phantasy. By controlling popular memory, they can contain or stimulate dynamism" (p, 318). The challenge, then, is for art educators to engage in the struggle to move non-Western cultures from 'object' or what hooks (1994) calls "native informants"[35], and into a position involving critical thought and transformative, emancipatory praxis. According to hooks, it is not enough, however, to only change how we think; this must be joined by meaningful praxis. Many political movements fail, hooks argues, because "there is not enough understanding of praxis" (p, 48). In other words, in day to day life we must live out examples of our emancipatory views in order to bring about change in the world.

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[35] "Native informants" refer to students of non-Western cultures who are expected by their teachers to provide critical discourse on the students' particular culture. In this instance, the student is then expected to assume the role of "cultural ambassador", and the teacher is now no longer responsible for including material on that student's particular culture in classroom discussions.

Mis - "praxis" in Museum Education

Will museums be on the forefront of cultivating new kinds of "praxis" relating to non-Western cultures and educating the world about them? Should they be a force for social change in the world? Such questions, difficult though they are, are inevitable. Decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgements of power and authority and can, indeed, be seen as claims regarding what a nation is or ought to be, as well as how citizens should relate to one another.

Several recent African museum exhibitions have attempted to represent minority arts in different ways. All renounced the authoritative voice by encouraging viewers to look critically at works of African art and, at the same time, to heighten awareness of the degree to which what we see in African art is a reflection of ourselves (Vogel, 1991, p, 193).

I would like to further investigate the ideas forwarded by hooks (1994) and McLaren (1994) by considering two examples from the what I view as the mis -"praxis" of museum education, specifically examples of misrepresentation.

From 1989 - 1990 the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) hosted an African exhibition entitled: "Into the Heart of Africa" (originally entitled "Into the Heart of Darkness"). Anthropologist Jeanne Cannizza curated the exhibit. Shortly after the exhibition opened it

catalysed heated debates and protests. Riegel (1996) explains "the exhibition was one of the most controversial exhibits ever hosted in Canada"(p, 89).

Riegel states that the exhibition, consisting of African artifacts, was to be a "self-reflexive" critique of the colonial practices. According to Riegel, the exhibition was attacked by African lobby groups as "racist". The controversy stemmed from the ironic strategy used to explore the colonial underpinnings of the collection. Riegel adds that the exhibition deliberately decided to concentrate the exhibit on the history of Canadian soldiers and missionaries who collected the materials as "trophies and souvenirs of their experiences in Africa".

The problem here is simple. These artifacts were not trophies, nor created to be appropriated as souvenirs. Many of these objects represent an ancestral history of a culture that was colonized, and whose artifacts were appropriated forcibly. Moreover, despite the struggles facing contemporary African artists, curators are still exhibiting "ethnic" struggles with re-mantled artifacts. Is this the way to understanding the struggles of contemporary African artists in the late-Twentieth century world?

In my view, recognizing the struggles of the real "Into the Heart of Africa" would be better achieved by being "responsible to" transforming colonial notions of Africa by presenting contemporary African art works as well as the traditional works. According to hooks (1994), entering into the struggles must be transformative. hooks argues that the struggle must be critical and "we must enter the struggle as objects in order to become subjects" (p, 46).

History' approach to museum education, for example, focuses on places to observe photographs of colonized peoples, re-mantled artifacts collected in earlier times, projected images of "ethnic" struggles, silent audio-visual recordings, and hands-on multisensory experiences as a stimulus to cultivating an understanding of the late 20th century. Yet one might ask, are these strategies addressing the questions of "true" representations, or what critical theorists referred to as "self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of age" (Marx and Engels, 1968, p, 41).

The question here is whether museum curators are going beyond the "primitive" and "exotic" and the "tokenism" to teach students to respect the contributions of the particular culture displayed. It is worth citing at length here anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) who took particular exception to the non-scientific nature of most museum objects and described the failure of museum education as follows:

> A canoe is an item of material culture, and as such it can be described, photographed, and even bodily transported into a museum. But - and this is truth too often overlooked - the ethnographic reality of the canoe would not be brought much nearer to a student at home, even by placing a perfect specimen right next to him.
>
> The canoe is made of a certain use, and with a definitive purpose; it is a means to an end, and we, who study native life, must not reverse this relation, and make a fetish for which a canoe is made, of the various uses to which it is submitted, we find the first approach to a deeper ethnographic treatment.
>
> Further sociological data, referring to its ownership, accounts of who sails in it, and how it is done; information regarding the ceremonies and customs of its construction, a sort of

> typical life history of a native craft - all that brings us nearer still to the understanding of what his canoe is truly means to the native. (p, 105)

Local examples of the problems considered in this Lesson also illustrates the issue well. Montreal, for example, is home to three important museum institutions occupied with exhibiting natural phenomena; The Natural History Society (1827), the Geological Survey of Canada (1843), and McGill University's Redpath Museum (1882). Only the latter will be considered here, due to space limitation. The Redpath's natural history gallery is curated by Barbara Lawson, whom I interviewed for this study.

Lawson rejects, at least theoretically, the once universal assumption that ethnological collections are objective reflections of the cultures of so-called "primitive" peoples. In her published thesis "Collected Curios: Missionary Tales From the South Seas", Lawson (1994) specified that the artifacts and specimens exhibited in the early anthropological displays at the Redpath reflected topics that dealt with the unity and eternal nature of the human species, and was characterized by a denial of "human biological and cultural evolution" (p, 35).

According to Lawson (1994) John Dawson, McGill University's fifth principal and first director of the Redpath Museum envisioned "God as the only creator" (p, 26). She argued that, under his direction, early ethnologic education at Redapth supported a general theory of cultural homogeneity in the New World. Dawson maintained the fallacy in human biological evolution, and argued that there was no evidence that cultures at different levels

of complexity had not existed throughout human history.[36] Let us consider here some of the recent work at the Redpath, under Lawson's direction.

The Redpath's exhibition in celebration of *Vues d'Afrique* (1998) "African Life" was mounted by Lawson. The central feature as the viewer mounts the steps to the art/artifact African exhibit is of a stuffed "Silverback" mountain gorilla. The gorilla was captured in 1938 during the McGill-Congo Expedition. According to Lawson, the "Silverback" has now been on display at Redpath for over forty years.

The exhibit cabinets consist of: some impressive ancestral musical instruments, ancestral hair combs, ancestral wigs, a few tiny black and white photos of ancestral tribes people, a few stray baskets, and ancestral agricultural instruments. Nearly all the artifacts are from Congo and West Africa (Cameroon). In addition, a permanent display of Egyptian "mummie" tombs are on display. The gorilla, the ancestral artifacts, and the tombs make up this "representation" of African life.

An interesting contradiction appears here, however, in terms of the contrast between Lawson's views and the actual practices at Redpath. Lawson did inform me in our interview that she is well aware of the hazards of misrepresentation produced by displaying cultures as "static" and "fixed" 'objects'. The stereotypical and damaging messages associated with a "stuffed" gorilla displayed as part of a semi-permanent exhibit on African life is also apparent to her. Lawson further emphasized the fact that the crucial educational value in

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[36]For general discussion on Dawson's philosophical position in relation to anthropological issues, *see* Trigger (1966; 1989, 102-3); for an overview of Dawson's discussions in broader context, see O'Brien (1977).

linking ancestral artifacts to their contemporary context is nearly impossible due to lack of economic resources. In her 1994 thesis study, Lawson addresses the relation between ethnographic collecting and cultural representation. Her thesis supposedly presented a balanced understanding of both the people who made these artifacts and of the circumstances under which their creations were gathered and incorporated in the Redpath.

I would argue, however, that exhibitions on African life such as that sponsored by the Redpath Museum do not go far enough to challenge notions of colonization and misrepresentation of African artists. The gorilla on display at the Redpath reminds one of Christian imperialism and its result of the legacy of white supremacy which biologized Africans as "creatures" by equating them with the earliest stages of human development.

According to McLaren (1994), this attitude continues right up to the present time. For instance, he uses as an example the fact that, in the United States, under the Bush Administration, the Secretary of Health and Human Services appointed Frederick A Goodwin, a research psychiatrist and career federal scientist, as Director of the National Institute for Mental Health. McLaren points out that Goodwin used animal research findings to compare youth gangs to groups of "hyperaggressive" and "hypersexual" monkeys and commented that "maybe it isn't just the careless use of word when people call certain areas of certain cities jungles" [37] (p, 48).

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[37]Interestingly, there are two predominantly "black" neighbourhoods in North York Toronto: the "Jungle" and the "Village".

Returning to the Redpath example, it is ironic that Lawson falls short of doing what she claimed needs to be done. Lawson (1994) argued that museums must be true representation of non-Western cultures as not "primitive" and "static" curios. What is called for, in Lawson's view, is that we "study to grasp these specific cultural and historical threads and unravel the fabric of collected 'reality' represented in a given museum collection" (p, 5). In Lawson's opinion, the way out of the problem with "cabinets of curiosities"[38] is other than revolutionizing museum exhibitions. Lawson believes it will take a "global" education revolution and the contributions of "living" people, and more financial resources together with museum curators, in the struggle to abolish the colonization mentality still reflected in the Redpath and other museums.

However true this may be, I would suggest that the Redpath and museums like it should take responsibility. Museums must locate artifacts in relation to their contemporary context by showing how ancestral artifacts have transformed into new modes of being. Students must be taught how different styles develop out of the dynamics of a particular era. From my perspective, what museum education lacks is freedom from the urge to control, and the courage to let go of colonization and absorb new perspectives and multiple perspectives on African culture. Only from a new critical praxis may we realize a model of coalescence in education that teaches students to realize their self identity within the present rapidly changing and multicultural world. That is the goal of the next Lesson.

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[38]Objects gathered and placed in museum cabinets is in direct connection with the large-scale historical processes of economic development and nationalism in Europe and North America, especially those relating to colonial domination.

Having thus established in Lesson #5 the fulcrum of critical multiculturalism, Lesson #6: The Self in Dance Education will frame a cross-cultural model for dance education, one that is committed to teaching students to works towards realizing true humanity, being at-one-ness with the entire universe; past, present, and future.

Let us move on.

LESSON: #6

The Self in Dance Education

Your entire body must become the temple, it must become the place where the deity abides.

Swami Chidvilasananda[39]

On one level, the previous Lesson has highlighted the misrepresentation of African culture as static 'objects' for observation in art museums and other contexts. On another level, I have suggested that the role of education is to carry forward legitimization of all cultural perspectives in education. Now I wish to further this thesis study towards a conceptualization of dance education. My focus is not to claim the falsehood of any one tradition, however, for the purposes of this thesis, my focus in this lesson, is primarily on contemporary African dance, in order to consider the value of empowering contemporary African dance in education.

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[39]Chidvilasananda. G. (1997). Every Single Act Is Worship. In *Darshan*, 129 , 44.

To accomplish this, I will expand on the praxis of Zab Maboungou's contemporary African dance. Recall that *rhythm* is intrinsic to my definition of dance. Maboungou's contemporary dance praxis is specifically linked with the ancestral African rhythms.

The Role of Education

In today's postmodern, post-industrial multicultural society, education is complex and critical. According to Ghosh (1995), education is a significant force for social change. And the purpose of education today is largely seen as empowerment (McLaren, 1994; Giroux, 1989; hooks, 1994) . Emerging critical pedagogy provides students with skills to recognize that identity is constructed socially. The schooling process is seen as part of the process of the general social formation of human beings. The focus is on raising consciousness and the attainment of social justice for all groups.

Education in this Lesson, then, is defined in terms of the three categories clearly outlined by Ghosh in her eloquent paper entitled "Social Change and Education in Canada": (1) *Formal* education in institutions such as kindergartens, schools, colleges, and universities; (2) *Non-formal* education in organizations such as clubs, associations (I would add including dance studios); and (3) *Informal* education in all other social and cultural contexts (I would add including live stage performances).

How can education be an agent for social change? Simply put, the Canadian government officials and professionals must create programs that are responsible for preparing individuals to participate in a multicultural society, as they will play a significant role in reformative initiatives. In addition, teachers must educate students to be critical citizens for maintaining a critical and democratic discourse. The purpose of education then becomes empowerment, with coalescence as the goal.

Ghosh (1995) in her essay on social change, identifies one of the most important notions of evolutionary theorists like Hegel, Compte, and Spencer. These thinkers developed theories that saw social change as "survival of the fittest" (p, 4) where various groups saw themselves at the top because of their socio-economic positions. Likewise, colonialism, which attempted to advance "primitive" or non-industrialized cultures to a more developed rung on the evolutionary ladder, instead exploited and denigrated non-Western cultures.

In the 1950s modernization meant that education was to overcome the injustices of exploited peoples. From the 1970s, conflict theorists, based on the theories of Marx, radically contested the role of education, claiming that it was to address societal conflict. For Marx, as noted earlier, class struggle meant a conflict between those who own the means and those who do not, and who are therefore exploited. Marxist philosophy focussed on the redistribution of the riches, rather than creating more. This, he argued, would ultimately lead to a classless society.

Neo-Marxists theorists, like multiculturalists today, are concerned with education to strengthen exploited groups; to overcome the injustices in society, whether racism, sexism, or class discrimination. Habermas is only the most recent in a long line of thinkers who recognized the critical potential of education.[40] Young (1990) notes that Klaus Mollenhauer was the first to apply Habermas' emancipation theory to education by emphasizing the interplay between the individual and the social limitations on education. According to Young, Mollenhauer defined emancipation as follows, "Emancipation means freeing of the subject - in our case those growing up in our society - from conditions which limit their rationality and the social actions connected with it" (p, 57).

Recall that today, the emancipatory potential of critical pedagogy draws on the democratic elements of modernization to emphasize "the politics of difference" (Freire and Giroux, 1989, p, xxi) and the "the politics of recognition" (Taylor, 1994, p, 1) by rejecting philosophies that view culture as 'objects' and not subjects.

During the last decade we have witnessed numerous changes in education, for example, increased technology such as computers in classrooms. However, the rhetoric of postmodern discourse has changed very little in terms of how professional institutions view the presence of African culture, in this case dance in particular, in contemporary education. Still, Canada faces a tremendous challenge to redress the historical inequity concerning African culture in Canadian society. Martha Graham (1991), I believe, would agree with my

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[40]*See* Lesson #4: Critical Theory.

contention that elitist Euro-centric dance institutions, and education, must be born to the instant - change.

How can contemporary African dance be an effective instrument in social change? To address the notion of contemporary African dance in education I draw support primarily from Homi Bhabha's "The Third Space" theory (Rutherford & Bhabha, 1990). His theory will help establish the pedagogy of Maboungou's contemporary African dance method, "Rhythms and Movement", as an agent for social change.

Ultimately, I will present Maboungou's dance praxis as an educational model that should be included in education. I will suggest a focus on the principles of Maboungou's dance, to state again, in order to attempt to integrate contemporary African dance in contemporary education in Canada. Graham's modern American dance is not excluded from this theory for dance education, though her work is already rightfully recognized in contemporary arts education in Canada and around the world today. Notwithstanding, I do refer to Graham's philosophy as necessary to strengthen the thesis argument.

"The Third Space" Theory

Bhabha (1990) states clearly that different cultural traditions cannot be easily established within a "universalist framework" (p, 206). Thus if there are no absolutes, only concepts and states relative to where the different cultures stand in the world at any

moment, and if different dances have no special dwelling place, then there is what we might call a cross-cultural coalescence, an at-one-ness, a unity and attunement of artistic activity, idea, and material endeavour with the universe and all its inhabitants.

The central tenet of Bhabha's 'third space' theory is that different cultures and the individuals within a culture have no fixed or predetermined essence. Not only do they have no definite dwelling place but they can choose to be what they will as they are free to do so.

This can be seen as reminiscent of Christianity which, in one sense, alleges that God is love and Christ insists that all who follow him should love their neighbours as themselves; act and by so doing make the unholy holy, the unlovable loveable. In "Brother Sun, Sister Moon", a film by Franco Zeffirelli (1973), the focus is on the early years of St. Francis of Assisi, and his renouncing of material possessions to seek union with the natural world. At the climax, renouncing his family's riches, Suso d'Amico's interprets St. Francis' declaring:

> I want to be happy.
> I want to live like the birds in the sky.
> I want to experience the freedom and the purity
> that they experience.
> The rest is of no use to me . . .
> if the purpose of life is this loveless toil we fill our
> days with, then it is not for me.
> There must be something better
> there has to be.
> Man is a spirit, he has a soul.
> And that is what I want
> to recapture my soul.

Such a mode of existence demands a willingness to let go of one's previous motivations, and adopt a willingness to be liberated or enlightened. This may mean to become holy perhaps, loveable perhaps, but in any case to become free. Kant spoke of the courage to free oneself from one's self-imposed lack of freedom, arguing that we should become responsible not only for actively educating our self but also for improving the social group to which we belonged. Those who would be enlightened had to have the courage to fight for the light. As Kant argued, the failure of emancipation was due not to a lack of intelligence, but to lack of courage and determination to use one's intelligence without the help of a teacher.[41]

Daisetz Suzuki (1948) explicitly relates art and religion on this very point. Suzuki insists that, "To be free from all conditioning rules or concepts is the essences of religious life. When we are conscious of any purpose whatever in our movements, we are not free. When purpose is too much in evidence in a work of art, so called, art is no longer there, it becomes a machine . . ." (p, 38).

Even if enlightenment is not attained, however, an attempt at freedom may move us in the direction, at least, of love, and respect for all the different 'world dances' as dances of the Self. In a paper entitled "Dancing Before The Lord", Minister Judy McArthur (1998) suggests that dancing is one way of worshipping the Self. McArthur's opening statement is that part of our purpose, courtesy and joy in life is to worship the Lord in the dance, regardless of where we are in the world for "dancing before the Lord is an individual gift for those who are called to dance". McArthur charges, however, that " . . .each person has

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[41] *See* Young (1990, p, 45 - 65).

his/her unique way of dancing. Some styles are lovingly towards God, and other styles are aggressive warfare, designed to trample down God's enemy. . . no one should be allowed to dance in any way that is sexually suggestive" (p, 2). From McArthur's statement, the point I am trying to make is that it is obvious that not everyone is open to all forms of dance. War dance, rain dance, joy dance, love dance, death dances, dances of sexuality; in my view are, all part of our 'world dance'.

As Bhabha (1990) points out, different cultures, the difference between cultural practices, the difference in the construction of cultures within different groups, very often sets up among and between themselves an incommensurability (p, 210). Bhabha alleges that not even rationalist ideology can fit together different forms of culture and pretend that they can easily coexist. Cultures, nonetheless, have within them a self-alienating limit. Meaning is constructed of difference and separation. In order to objectify cultural meaning, there always has to be what Bhabha calls, "a process of alienation and of secondariness in relation to itself" (p, 210). This follows that no culture is plenitudinous primarily because they are always subject to inherent forms of interpretation. In fact, what this really means is that cultural identity is constructed in relation to otherness.

The notion of hybridity is concerned with the fact that in any political struggle, new sites are always opened up. It is not two original instances which form a third. Bhabha clarifies that the 'third space' enables new sites to open up, that are referred to by new directives as opposed to old, to allow for full cooperation in the will to be constructive and creative. Effective 'third space' dance education is about reciprocity and willingness to

merge cultural boundaries, or the reverse by respecting cultural differences. Ghosh (1995) tells us that the essence of the 'third space' is not merely equality. Rather the essence is an agreement based on what Charles Taylor calls a "fusion of horizons" (p, 236). To clarify, "fusion" does not mean homogenization, nor does it "difference-blindness", which is evidently not conceivable nor appealing. Rather the 'third space' is a re-negotiation of cultural space based on new established values. Difference is emphasised because individuals are different and have a right to be different. Indeed, this makes their experiences dialectical.

The best example of this is my own dance training. Since I have come to study contemporary African dance with Zab Maboungou, after studying Martha Graham's modern dance method for several years, I did not forget my modern dance vocabulary. Rather I used it to enrich my new knowledge of the differences between African dance and modern dance.

The importance in locating dance education cross-culturally in a 'third space' is that it displaces histories that compose it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are understood through what Unger (1984) calls "the realm of face to face relationships" (p, 107). The process of 'third space' hybridity gives rise to something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation, what John Dewey (1954) called "the Great Community" (p, 143ff).

Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1991) writes that "the challenge facing America in the next century will be the shaping, at long last, of a truly common public culture, one responsive to the long-silenced cultures of colour." Education, Gates implies, might be an invitation

into the art of conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, each conditioned by a different perception of the world (p, 712). Thus, dance education must speak with terms and definitions that speak to, and of, all dancing bodies, and not just to the culture of the spoken. Gates adds that "we do not bracket out 90% of the world's cultural heritage if we really want to learn about the world." Of primary concern to the 'third space', of course, is recognition and inclusion of different cultural perspectives in education. Bhabha's theory unveils the positive aspects of cross-cultural education in schools, universities, and other contexts; 'unity in diversity'.

The concept of unity in diversity is not easily comprehended. By way of a metaphor, I will frame it in relation to the human body as such: The human body is one inseparable unit with different parts, with separate functions. For example, we do not walk on our heads, nor do we wear wool hats on our feet. Each part of the body carries out a specific task and treats things differently for the sake of practicality. Nonetheless, we still see oneness, a coalescence, or unity; the body. It is the same principle in dance education. Each dance tradition must be seen with equal vision as part of divine Consciousness. Deference must be paid to all. The unity of 'One' in the apparent diversity of the world dances is similar to the way in which a mother sees her various children, and their children, as all belonging to her own self.

The 'third space' is appropriate to dance education for it engages a space of interaction where two or more traditions can exist and the culture of one is not deemed subordinate or superior to another. In the case of this thesis, contemporary African dance

and modern American dance could innovatively coexist equally in cross-cultural education in Canada.

Coalescence

Developing this notion in dance education is really an attempt to call for recognition of the critical potential for contemporary dance in the West, of contemporary African dance, from a post-colonial perspective. This is not to establish another 'fundamentalist' position, which would occur if African were to usurp modern dance, but rather to say that a new site needs to be created, one in which contemporary African dance is no longer considered "primitive" and "naturalistic".

Maboungou clarifies that contemporary dance was born out of a social, political, economical, and religious struggle with all forms of dance. Maboungou (1996) articulates; "The ideology, movement and aesthetic choices are the result of this struggle." Maboungou's contemporary African dance emerged from her own struggle with Eurocentric selfishness and self-centeredness. Graham's modern dance in America, and other American contemporary dances, also emerged from a struggle against the classical ballet.

And education as we know, has always been shaped by economic, social, political, cultural, and historical forces, both globally and locally, as Ghosh (1995) argues "because of the competing demands of various groups . . . for social change and the progressive

modernist ideals of freedom, justice, and equality" (p, 3). This is so in Canada and America because education is tied to a Euro-centric elite, which is influenced by global events. Education contributes to all these areas.

There is a great diversity of rhythms which constitute our life as human beings, which tell us how and where we stand in the world, and these should be explored and expressed. Hamblem (1986) states that the majority of arts educators suggest that art curricula should incorporate the study of cross-cultural and historic art forms. Hamblem also proposes that a cross-cultural study of art can serve to reveal basic similarities among all people as well as striking variations that result from different cultural shapes or consciousness.

From the impetus of the all the previous Lessons, I now introduce aspects of contemporary dance in the context of education. These aspects are considered important to the method and philosophy for cross-cultural dance in *Formal*, *Non-formal*, and *Informal* education. They are aspects from the teachings Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou.

First, I will present four principal aspects of modern American dance, which I have drawn from Graham's dance philosophy. These are: sexuality, *Kundalini*, courage, and discipline. Following that is an overview of Maboungou's contemporary African dance, aspects of which I propose should be included in standard dance curriculum. My intent should not be confused with the attempt to fuse contemporary African dance and modern American dance into one curriculum. Rather, the goal is education that focusses on the importance of one environment and one humanity, as the fundamentals of learning dance cross-culturally.

Aspects of Graham Philosophy

SEXUALITY - In Dance

First and foremost, there is a certain beauty about the human body that Graham believed could be expressed only through sexuality, or eroticism. For anyone familiar with Graham's work, they would agree her technique is deeply sexual. Graham claimed, "Sexuality is still the most powerful lure and manipulation" (Graham, 1991, p, 30).

For Graham, only hidden things are obscene, hence onstage she placed what most people hide in their deepest thoughts. Dancers in her company were not virgins. McDonagh (1973) tells us Graham was firm with the simple fact that she did not want virgins in her company. Graham did not care if a dancer had to stand on a street corner to get a man, they must just get a man. According to McDonagh, often Graham would spread a dancer's legs apart if she was unable to do it herself and cruelly state, "Some day a man will do this to you and you'll remember it" (p. 225). Graham herself was torn between two lovers before she eventually married Erick Hawkins in 1948, who later became the first male and principal dancer in her company.

To make her point of sexuality clear, Graham urged that a dancer represented extreme desire in some way. While studying Graham technique, I too learned to sit on the floor with my legs spread apart in a wide open 'V' shape, followed by a sudden thrust or "contraction"

in my pelvis. Inspired by yoga, Graham's floor exercises, particularly with the thrust, are linked to contacting the *manipurna chakra*[42], between the sex organ and the navel, and the *muladhara chakra*, at the base of the spine, near the anus.

A striking image of the 'V' shape is well represented in Graham's 1947 work "Errand into the Maze". In this choreography Graham follows a white tape-line lying tangled on stage which leads her into a maze, and, ultimately, to a large bony 'V' shape opening where she escapes the Creature of Fear, a menacing half-man half-beast.

KUNDALINI [43] - The Creative Energy

Graham's technique, emphasizing a dancer's powerful "contraction" in the centre of the body is not just moving the sexual organs. It is a powerful *sparsha diksha*, or touch, with the potential to awaken *Kundalini*, the creative energy. In Hindu philosophy, *Kundalini* travels up and down the spinal column between the genitals and the top of the brain, and the most potent of the forces that can be unleashed in the human being. According to McDonagh (1973) Graham worshipped *Kundalini* (p, 196, 210).

Kundalini, in one form or another, exists in all traditions. In Japanese it is called *ki;* in Chinese, *chi;* the scriptures of Christianity call it the *Holy Spirit*. *Kundalini* is the power

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[42] A chakra is a subtle centre of creative, or psychic, energy lying in the *sushumna*, the central nerve, and the feet. The piercing of this affords unusual powers and experiences. There are seven chakras in the human body.

[43]Meditation is also meant of awakening this power. Meditation is the worship of the creative energy. *See* Muktananda, P.(1994) *Kundalini: The Secret of Life*, for a complete discussion of *kundalini* as Martha Graham practised.

of the Self, the power of Consciousness. *Kundalini* is Shakti, a supreme energy, whom the sages of India worship as the Mother of the universe. Shakti is the consort of Lord Siva, King of Dancers; therefore, *Kundalini* is also called *Shaiva-Kundalini* because it is the supreme creative energy of dance.

Another name for this power is *chiti* because it illuminates the entire cosmic universe, bestowing it with pure consciousness. When *chiti* is combined with movements of the body, it makes the physical body conscious. When it is united with the senses, all the sense organs are conscious. When combined with thoughts, it makes the mind conscious. Though it may seem limited and small, the energy of *Kundalini-Shakti* is enough for all the purposes of life, creation. From a very young age, Graham's love for Eastern philosophy taught her to worship her inner *Kundalini,* and this is highly pervasive in her dance philosophy.

COURAGE

Wake up to your inner courage and become steeped in divine contentment.[44]

Swami Chidvilasananda

Can any man be courageous who has the fear of death in him?[45]

Plato

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[44]This is the message to the world from the Hindu philosophers. For more *see* Epstein, M. (1997). From the Sanskrit. In *Darshan* 129 (p, 29).

[45]*Cited in,* Plato (1976). ***Philosophies of Art and Beauty.***

According to Plato, certainly not. Awakening *Kundalini* requires tremendous courage which is the third principle element of Graham's philosophy. Graham believed a dancer's journey was life and death. We experience little deaths each day. Graham herself explained, "With anything artistic one must die to be reborn" (McDonagh, 1973, p. 300). Coming to dance, a dancer could not have a fear of death. As part of the dancer's creative process, she must accept life and death as it surges through one's body.

Rollo May (1975) explains " . . . creative courage is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built" (p, 21). In other words, every creative encounter is a new assertion of courage. According to May, the artist is concerned only with expressing her own inner being. This is why dance is so difficult. It is a forging of one's soul. And authentic creativity is even more difficult, according to May, because it is an active battle with the gods (1975).

Dancers use courage to portray meaning in the form of images. It is with courage that they are able to live out their imaginations, that they express things that are mostly dreamt about by most human beings. Dancers portray their imaginations because they express the "collective unconscious". May defines this unconscious dimension as "the potentialities for awareness or action which the individual cannot or will not actualize" (p, 55). The collective unconscious is the source of creativity which is the spiritual element of their culture. It is this sense that Graham is concerned with the dancer's courage.

Graham was firm about a dancer's courage to journey into the 'collective unconsciousness', the 'unknown'. A dancer must be fearless and ready to enter the depths of her interior landscapes to bring out a movement not imposed from the outside, but an inner reality. In an interview published in *Dance Magazine* (1989) Graham affirms, " . . . there has to be courage, a willingness to explore unknown feelings and daring to feel them and let them become part of your being. It's scary. Terrifying. But you [the dancer] do it because you have no choice" (p, 52).

In the world of Graham's imagery, 'landscape' was a vast abstraction, full of indefinable distances. The inner landscape of the dancer is besieged by what Graham called 'blood memory' and, by the powers of imagination, the dancer gets in touch with the very sinews of life. A dancer's courage is what she uses to confront the past in its true mythic dimensions and to accept the consequences of love and of brutality and violence - madness to sanity, roughness to tenderness, lust to love, ecstasy to contrition, sin to rejoicing, spirituality to intense sensuality. All of these are explored in Graham's work. It is with courage that a dancer's movement achieves its full force and amplitude, like an organic force seeking its proper form.

In "Errand into the Maze", for instance, Graham crosses a dangerous area, and is menaced by a man wearing a bull's head, whose hands are held in a yoke[46] that lies across his shoulders. The man's dominating, but not overpowering, energy came under control

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[46]The yoke was an unusual device to harness the man's menacing energy. This device was used in Africa during slavery to bar black men for whippings, and to prevent sexual intimacy.

only when the woman exercised her own strength of character, her own courage to dominate it. In "Errand" Graham emphatically indicates that a dancer's real enemy is fear, the 'fear of the unknown' which can be vanquished only by facing it. There, Graham conceived, were the roots of the dancer, there, in timeless memory, were hidden the symbols of our own reality where rational limits and moralities are cast aside.

Virginia Woolf (1929), is helpful to us in further probing this, asks and answers the question "What is meant by reality?" in *A Room of One's Own*, where she reveals her sensitivity to the relationship between life and dance.

> It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable - now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech - and then there it is again in an omnibus in the roar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of the past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, *like the dancer*,..has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and communicate it to the rest of us [Italics added].(p,191)[47]

Yet courage is needed to face such a challenging reality. In yoga, the Sanskrit word is *virya*, means the act of stepping beyond the obstacles that impede the hero, the courageous one, from moving forward. It is *virya*, courage,

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[47]*See* Martland, T. (1981).

that leads us to the discovery of our own Self. The *Kena Upanisad* (III:2.4), another Hindu scripture says: "The Self cannot be attained without strength." It is with great courage that we struggle to change the mind to become better human beings. Only then can we experience divine contentment.

Of Graham's philosophy, courage can be as arduous as the blacksmith's task of bending red-hot iron to make a horse's shoe. Indeed, exploring sexuality takes courage. So then, the third element, discipline, might just be the path to nourishing courage in the dancer.

DISCIPLINE

For Graham, a polished dancer must know discipline. Discipline is not drill, nor something imposed from without, but rather is an order imposed by the dancer herself. Discipline consists of endless training, sorrow and joy, to obtain freedom of the body's expression. This requires years and years of training. In fact, Graham believed it required ten years (Graham, 1991).

McDonagh (1973) explains that Graham "insisted there was no freedom except that which one earned through discipline" (p, 280). McDonagh discloses the fact that Graham worked her dancers relentlessly in an attempt to match her own restless energy. Rehearsals would sometimes last until midnight, and were never called off on the Christmas and New Years holidays. What was obviously

driving the dancers was a dedication to an ideal and a belief that Graham was "divinely touched" (p, 55).

A dancer must be committed to the aesthetic and able to endure the demands the choreographer makes upon her. McDonagh explains that it was through arduous training that Eastern philosophy Graham encouraged each student to become an "acrobat of God" (p, 234).

According to spiritual Master and philosopher Swami Muktananda Paramhamsa (1994), it is only through discipline that our *Kundalini* is awakened, and that we come to know our true nature: we not only belong to God, but we are God.

Praxis of Contemporary African Dance

METHOD AND PHILOSOPHY

I believe that dance speaks a universal language, and transcends the exigencies of time and space that binds humanity together, as one with in the entire universe. This is the primary aspect of Maboungou's method of contemporary African dance which I find fitting to this thesis and suitable to education.

In my view, and I write from personal experience, the method Maboungou pioneered, which she has been teaching for the past sixteen years, is born out of the polyrhythmic musical tradition of Africa. Her method is based on the philosophy of the 'circle' of dance, as in traditional African culture.

Inspired by a wealth of life rhythms (specifically the rhythms of Congo, Central Africa) Maboungou's method promotes social, personal, and perceptual and conceptual development, and awakens us to understand and appreciate feelings, ideas, and values expressed. Maboungou's teaching philosophy is that regardless of our culture and socio-political and economic background, beyond age and gender, dance is the vehicle to expressing one's inner self. 'Unity in

diversity' is not its direct goal; but rather for her dance affirms diversity within a politics of cultural criticism and commitment to social justice and solidarity.

The following is an example of the 'third space' negotiation that takes place in Maboungou's method. If there is effective negotiation on an agreed-upon rhythm between the dancer and the musician, a way to behave, a ritualized set of rhythms and movement will be achieved. Acknowledging participants, in this case the musician and the dancer, as both "insiders" and "outsiders" of our own culture, the views of both simply offer a multiplicity of different, but equally meaningful perspectives. This is an essential component for what Maboungou refers to as 'continuous dance', that which inevitably takes the dancer out of breath.

THE 'CIRCLE' OF DANCE

Maboungou applies the 'circle' as the symbol of life, or the universe, by which our intelligence and sensitivity can link the ancestral with the present. The 'circle' is a unifying place. This unification comes from respecting a code of freedom. This freedom comes only from knowing how to enter a rhythm. Maboungou (1997) asserts that rhythm "is not fixed in nature", rather it is constantly changing and moves as it is being built, like a "mind-body architecture" (p, 4). As I have noted earlier (in Lesson #1) discipline brings about knowing how to enter a rhythm, which requires years of training. Participation

is Maboungou's unifying space which opens the student's awareness of different bodies, or states of consciousness - the waking state, as well as the super-conscious state.

In the *Abhangas* (v.84)[48] Saint Jnaneshwar Maharaj tells us the experience of the Self can be attained in all the bodies and states of consciousness. The harmony of the different states of consciousness, or bodies, are unified in the 'circle' of dance. Thus, entering the 'circle' requires "responsibility". As I mentioned earlier (in Lesson #4), Gabriel Moran (1996) contends in his book "A Grammar of Responsibility", that 'responsibility' is the mark of the human being and the basis for respecting others - both people and things. Moran claims we are responsible to "everything and everyone" (p, 71).

Responsible only to oneself would signal self-centeredness and a person therefore removed from others. The philosophy of 'responsibility' in Maboungou's method, however teaches the dancer a much broader responsibility. The 'circle' is concerned directly with the individual, society, and things. By serving the 'circle' the dancer learns that the 'circle' in turn serves the dancer, thereby, uniting the dance and the dancer. Similarly the music and dances are inseparable, they are in perpetual interaction with each other. In addition, through the interactivity of music and dance, Maboungou teaches dancers unification and respect for the musician.

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[48]*See* Ranade, R.D. (1994, p, 196).

BREATH[49]

Maboungou's method is concerned with the global effort of dance, to touch and inform, or communicate. It is from the evolutionary process of the 'circle' that the dance student learns 'responsibility' and how to communicate with the world around. The function of the 'circle', however, is not only a physical entity maintaining order among the participants. As well, it is a force, an energy that has a continuous relationship with the progression of the dance. This energy is breath, the vital force of life.

Energy is the "thing" that sustains the world and the universe. In Hinduism it is *prana*, the vital force of the body and the universe, which makes everything move. *Prana* and *apana*, is the incoming and outgoing breath. In the *Vijnana Bhairava* (v.24)[50], a supreme scripture of Kashmir Shaivism, we are told that the

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[49]Similarly, Martha Graham's technique strictly starts at *pranayama*; the beginning exercises are about breath. Graham recognized early in her life that movement begins with breath. Graham's emphasis on breath inspired her technique that starts with the contraction at the centre of the body. Graham (1991) stated clearly, "I have based everything that I have done on the pulsation of life, which is, to me, the pulsation of breath. Every time you breathe life in or expel it, it is a release or a contraction. It is that basic to the body" (p, 46). From studying Eastern philosophy, Graham mastered the principles of *prana*.

[50]*Vijnana Bhairava* means "the wisdom of Bhairava". In India it is one of the highest scriptures that comes from the mouth of the supreme Principle of the universe, Siva, who is known as Shankara or Bhairava. The scriptures describes how your own inner Self can be attained. It does not belong to India for it deals with Consciousness.

supreme Shakti, whose nature (I mentioned earlier) is to create, constantly expresses Herself upward in the form of prana, exhalation, and downward in the form of apana, inhalation.

Maboungou has mastered the principles of the vital force which is basic to her "Rhythms and Movement" courses. Her entire approach to dance is based on the principles of the vital force, breath, and, rhythm, the cyclical pulsation of the heart. Her courses, then, are in depth explorations of what she calls the "rhythmics of breath".

For Maboungou, breath is a whirling wind which propels itself within the body and the mind. This is why "rhythmics of breath" are taught. By studying Maboungou's method, I have learned that breathing enhances the expression of the entire body. Deep rhythmic breathing adjusts to the tempo of the dance. It sustains an intake of air to lighten the body for a jump, or it releases with the body for an expert isolation of body parts.

Whether the artist is Martha Graham or Zab Maboungou, breath is a fundamental unifying aspect of dance regardless of tradition. Primarily, the breath leads to the fundamental states of consciousness. Breathing actively and effectively assists the harmony of mind-body-soul, regardless of what action or expression one undertakes.

Both Graham and Maboungou contend that the soul is the inner landscape of the dancer. What is the soul? According to Hinduism, there is nothing to

which the soul can be compared. The soul is simply the soul. According to Muktananada Paramhamsa(1973) "The soul is that which activates the inner psychic organs and the outer sense organs. The soul is the witness, the watcher, the seer of all the activities of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The soul exists at the junction between the incoming and outgoing breaths" (p, 30).

Breathing problems in the dancer are not only a manifestation of mental disturbances, such as, stress, anxiety, nervousness, fear. A dancer who finds herself "out of breath" might be experiencing difficulties synchronizing her breathing with the rhythm of the physical and emotional states of the body.

RHYTHM[51]

Maboungou's movement research is an exploration of rhythm; not the "objective" rhythm, nor the "general" rhythm, but the living rhythm within the body. Maboungou (1997) explains that, "These rhythms are the vectors which unceasingly create time, literally forging the existence of beings. . . Each individual is merely expressing his or her own sensitivity [rhythm]. Knowledge of rhythm is . . not just a simple measure of time, but a coded expression of life cycles" (p, 50).

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[51]Martha Graham too was firm in her conviction that learning rhythm was intrinsic to dance. She wanted dancers to know rhythm. Graham (1991) stated clearly, "I want students, above all, to be in rhythm" (p, 265).

For Maboungou, rhythm is the soul of the dancer and the dance, and she confirms that it is this which dancers must learn. Plato writes, ". . . musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul" (1976, p, 28). In this sense, we can say all the dances call for rhythm and breath. Contrary to what it may seem, the apprenticeship of contemporary African dance offers students a powerful and supra-social knowledge of individual freedom and at-one-ness with their mind, body, and soul.

"Rhythms and Movement" classes are rooted in Maboungou's philosophy of the "rhythmics of breath". Beyond an apprenticeship of dance technique, Maboungou teaches the student to know dance and the dancer. Furthermore, she teaches the student to know what it means to be human.

Rhythm then, integrates everyday activities while transmuting them into rhythmically articulated movements. In this process, dance students experience the participatory, celebratory, and healing aspects of dance.

To conclude this Lesson, Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou are two dancers who have pioneered distinct methods and philosophies of dance that teach openness, courage, freedom, responsibility, discipline, harmony, truth, sexuality, and at-one-ness. Literally, they have pioneered dance education. Respectively, what modern American dance does, contemporary African dance does; they invoke a coalescence between the dancer and the dance.

LESSON #7

THE CONCLUSION

Who Is The Dancer?

In the title of this thesis, I claimed: the Self is the Dancer. In pulling together the ideas developed thus far, I would like now to further explain this idea.

In Hinduism, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1924) confirms that our Lord Siva, in fact, is the Lord of Dancers. At the root of all dancers is the primal rhythmic energy of Siva, and cosmic activity is the central motif of the dance. Of his many activities of the Supreme Self, overlooking, creation, evolution, destruction, veiling, embodiment, illusion, giving rest, release, salvation and grace are performed:

> . . . all this universe is strung upon me, as rows of gems upon a thread I am the taste in water . . . I am the light in the Ether, manhood in men. The pure scent in earth am I, and the light in fire; the life in all born beings am I, and the mortification of them that mortify the flesh.. . . I am the understanding of them that understand the splendour of the splendid. The mighty of the mighty am I.
>
> (*Bhagavadgita* VII. 7-11)

This quote is a theological example of a dialectical philosophy of a God beyond god. Whatever the origins of Siva's dance, it is the clearest activity of God. Distinguished from the other modes of Siva's dance is the *anandatandava*, (*ananda*), bliss and (*tandava*), fierce. It is the dance of the King of Dancers, called the dance of bliss. As Sri Nataraja, Siva dances the cosmos into and out of existence. How does he do this? Stella Kramrisch (1981) explains:

> from the first vibration that the movement of the drum in his right hand sends out into space to the last flicker of the flame that he holds in his left hand. Such is the span of his raised upper hands into which his dancing limbs end the freedom that his grace assures throughout the cosmos. From head to foot, the figure in its torsions, a fulguration of movement, strikes the ground and rises as the axis of the image within its enclosing arch of flames above the prostrate demon of ignorance, forgetful of all that had happened in the beginning. (p, xxiii)

Over and above, Siva dwells in all places, in the human body as Consciousness. The first aphorism of the Siva Sutra[52], Paramhamsa Muktananda (1997) discloses to us that it is *caitanyam atma*, inner Consciousness is the Self.

What is the connection of Siva Sutra to Martha Graham and Zab Maboungou? From Lesson #1 it was shown that Graham's feeling of being more Asian than American is inspired or at least paralleled by her love of Eastern yoga philosophy and its worship of Kundalini-Shakti, Siva's Consort. In terms of Maboungou, though I have not traced any direct link between her ideas and Eastern philosophy, it is clear that her method is rooted in the universal life-force, *prana*, as it is known in Hinduism. Kashmir Shavism explains that when the divine Consciousness, Siva, begins to descend into manifestation, it first transforms itself into *prana*, Consciousness. It assumes the form of inhalation and exhalation, *prana* and *apana*. In a more practical sense, it is the essence of all living beings. Maboungou's method the 'rhythmics of breath' is clearly aligned with Siva's dance, with the King of Dancers.

I would like to propose, then in preparation for the *Reprise* of this thesis, that Graham and Maboungou are not only 'pioneers' of dance, but also are educators. They are both committed to teaching dancers to realize that true knowledge is being-at-one-ness with the universe that dwells within the body.

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[52]The *Siva Sutra* ("The Aphorisms of Siva"), is a Hindu scripture belonging to the nondualistic Saivism of Kashmir, what we know as Kashmir Shavism. This scripture emerged before the end of the eighth century near the city of Shrinagar, in Kashmir.

Educational institutions promote specific notions of knowledge by rewarding certain forms of expression. But, if truth, according to Ghosh (1995), "is based on different ways of knowing" (p. 234), then each dancer's experience - social, cultural, and historical - (which I have outlined) I believe, should be viewed from the primary notion of self, so that the dancer can be an active participant in the middle of constructing what counts as legitimate education, or *knowledge*. From Ghosh's notion of truth, it seems to me that a cross-cultural conceptualization of dance education, with the notion of 'the *Self* is the Dancer' is not only an appropriate *overture*, but also an important end to this thesis.

At this time, I strongly recommend you, the reader, to view the video entitled: *I am the two in One,* which accompanies this thesis. The video is an integral part to the conclusion of Lesson #7, and to the thesis in general.

REPRISE[53]

The Blue Pearl shimmers and vibrates all the time, and its vibrations produce melodious music which fills the meditator with rapture until she begins to dance. That pearl is called the inner Self.[54]

Muktananda Paramhamsa

To conclude, then, it is vital to recapitulate the elements of the structure that has evolved in the building of this thesis. In the preceding lessons I have suggested that what Martha Graham's American modern dance does, Zab Maboungou's contemporary African dance does; both are concerned with the expression of the Self. More specifically, this thesis, *The Self is the Dancer,* has argued that education in Canada must include contemporary African dance, in the same way in which modern American dance is recognized and represented.

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[53]In the sense of recapitulation or possibly reiteration.

[54]Zweig. P. (1976). Muktananda: Selected Essays. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Lesson #1 profiled Graham and Maboungou, in order to situate their contributions to the world of dance. While Lesson #2 demonstrated how and why existing definitions are not applicable to cross-cultural education, Lesson #3 concluded with my formulation of a definition, equally applicable to and inclusive of American and African dance. Lesson #4 concluded that the crisis facing contemporary African dance is due at least in part, to existing Eurocentrism in education. Lesson #5 examined museum education as a primary contributor (by treating cultures as 'objects') to the misrepresentation and nonrecognition of contemporary African culture today. Lesson #6 framed contemporary dance in the context of education. And finally, Lesson #7 proposes a solution to the crisis in dance education: the *Self* is the Dancer.

If the *Self* is the Dancer, as I have shown, then the voice, the dancer of each traditions, is of utmost value. If, as I have shown, there are mechanisms - museums, or educational institutions, and the media - which inhibit a just sounding of those voices, then we must work, through critical pedagogy, to alleviate the un-earned privilege which silences. In this way, when all voices are recognized, that which we share - as dancers of life - will form a coalescence.

I look forward to change.

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Miller. P. (Producer) (1997). *Les Revenants*. A film of Zab Maboungou's lastest group choreography.

Nuridsany, C. & Perennou, M. (Directors)(1996). *Microcosmos*. A film about the insect ritualizations around the world.

Pomerance, E. (Director) (1996). *TABALA*. The manuscript interview with Zab Maboungou. (Available from Cercle d'Expression Artistique Nyata Nyata).

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