



# **CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE FIELD OF DANCE STUDIES**

*Dancing Economies*

Photo: "La Boca, Buenos Aires"  
Photo Credit: © Kéline Gotman

**Society of Dance History Scholars Newsletter  
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# Table of Contents

<b>A word from the editor</b>   Vida L Middelow .....	3
<b>Email : InSPIRations Dance Company shifts gear</b>   Philip Boyd .....	4
<b>The Safety Dance</b>   Nadine George-Graves .....	4
<b>How I left academe and tried to earn a living</b>   Elizabeth Zimmer.....	7
<b>Why I still believe in beautiful books... notes on publishing and the recession</b>   Ann Cooper Albright .....	10
<b>MFAs, Masterpieces, and Money: Cultivating Community among Dance Graduate Students through “Economies in Motion”</b>   Asheley B. Smith .....	11
<b>The p.s. (precarious scholar): using the concept of precarity as a creative tool</b>   Roseela Simonari .....	14
<b>Tango Tourism 101: A Photo-Diary, Buenos Aires, April 2009</b>   Kelina Gotman .....	19
<b>The Art of Walking: a construction of runway modelling technique</b>   Manrutt Wongkaew .....	25
<b>News</b>	
2009 SDHS Prize Winners for Outstanding Scholarship...	31
Annual SDHS Awards.....	32
Forthcoming Conference: Dance and Spectacle.....	33
SDHS Board of Directors.....	34
SDHS Dues Notice .....	35

## Dear Reader,

By the end of 2007 the world had started to recognise that financial markets were in a state of crisis and by June 2009, when the sdhs conference took place at Stanford University, the ramifications of this downturn were being felt. During the conference many a conversation could be heard in corridors, around coffee tables and in lecture halls of dance company closures, job cuts, wage reductions and funding shortages. The email enclosed on the next page - like a 'post-it' of our times - announcing the funding cut to InSPIRations Dance Company is typical of such notices that we all see on a regular basis. Given this climate it seemed timely and appropriate to offer the opportunity to the sdhs members to reflect upon the relationships between dance and the economy. The call for this issue asked:

What are the effects of the current economic climate on dance?  
On dance programmes? On universities and other institutions?  
In what ways does dance contribute to the economy?  
What are the intersections between dance and finance?  
What is the marketability of dance?  
How are you sustaining your dance practice?

I was somewhat surprised, not to say disappointed, to find that the initial call gave rise to only a limited number of responses. Are we, as a dance community, really not interested in attending to the issues that are affecting the life's of our dance friends and neighbours? Does the closure of dance companies not exercise us to write, to protest, to reflect? Are we so involved in our own aestheticised, perhaps even esoteric, research that we are not able to focus upon the realities of the economy? Then, I began to think again. With a more generous spirit I considered the possibility that lives may have become so pressured that energies have to be carefully targeted as the practicalities of paying dancers, making a living and searching for limited funding sources, are all consuming in these difficult times. Or conversely, the dance community - long under funded and under supported - has little to loose in the first place! We are, perhaps, so used to financial instability that we, instead of being in crisis, are in fact well placed to capitalise on this current moment.

Such different states of being and personal responses are evident on the pages that follow. The essays in this issue reveal a community that is clearly engaged with, being directly affected by, and that is finding ways to adapt to, the financial issues of the day. Further, the wider relationships between movement practices and the economy are not lost as writers reflect on publishing, tourism and the hired body of runway models.

**Vida L. Midgelow**  
**University of Northampton**

## A word from the Editor

# Email : InSPIRations Dance Company shifts gear

**Philip Boyd**

De : Dance for All [company@danceforall.co.za]  
Date d'envoi : vendredi 4 septembre 2009 08:15  
À : Cordova, Sarah  
Objet : InSPIRations Dance Company shifts gear

Dear Sarah,

InSPIRations Dance Company shifts gear

At the close of Cotton Club Moves at On Broadway on 5 September, The InSPIRations Dance Company, under the umbrella of Dance for All (DFA), will move forward on a project-to-project basis.

The company, so named in honour of the late Phyllis Spira, was started at the beginning of this year as a professional company employing nine dancers on a full-time, salaried basis. This was made possible by an injection of funding from the Department of Arts and Culture, with the understanding that it would be an ongoing commitment for at least three years.

With the change of government however, funds to finance the company from September 2009 onwards have not become available as expected. DFA, under the leadership of CEO Philip Boyd, has decided to release the company dancers so they can secure other work. But we will continue to bring together top-class dancers for future performance seasons under the banner of InSPIRations Dance Company. This is how many dance companies are now operating, both in South Africa and abroad, and it is the best solution for the company at this present time.

Dance for All will continue to lobby for funds for the company. We are positive that the company will secure the necessary capital for future productions, especially considering the public's overwhelming support of the InSPIRations' launch season of Pieces of a Dream at the Green Point Stadium and the acclaimed Cotton Club Moves, choreographed by the company's Artistic Advisor, Adele Blank.

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If you would like to read reviews of the company's productions please visit our Latest News page on [www.danceforall.co.za](http://www.danceforall.co.za)  
<<http://www.danceforall.co.za>>

Dance for All and all its activities, classes and outreach programmes will continue as normal.

Regards,  
Dance for All Team

# The Safety Dance

**Nadine George-Graves**  
(Associate Professor of Theater and Dance,  
University of California, San Diego, USA)

It is Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009. I am sitting in the lobby of the ODC in San Francisco at the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Society of Dance History Scholars conference. We have just witnessed a showcase of performances by local Bay area choreographers. Several days ago I received an email from the president of the University of California (UC) stating that there will likely be an 8% across-the-board salary reduction, as well as furloughs because of the "difficult economic times."

Sixteen years ago, I was a newly minted B.A. in theater and philosophy graduating during a recession, contemplating my future. Having not been born with a silver spoon in my mouth and still waiting for that long lost rich uncle, I chose not to be a starving artist and went into academia. More than just a decision based on economic concerns, it stemmed from my wanting to inspire students the way I had been inspired in college. So I did not pass "Go." I went straight into a PhD program in Theater and Drama. "A doctor of theater? Well, at least you're a doctor," my mother said. As an academic in a performing arts department, I figured I could be creative, stay intellectually challenged, inspire students, battle ignorance and contribute to the greater aesthetic good. And tenure! Job security! A guaranteed paycheck! It seemed too good to be true.

In accepting a position at a state university and moving to California six years ago, it never occurred to me that my salary would be tied to the policy of the state legislature needing a two thirds majority vote to pass a budget. Perhaps I should have stayed at the large private institution where I worked as an Assistant Professor and suffered through their mysterious and long tenure process? But UC San Diego had a great department and offered me tenure—security—a guaranteed paycheck.

So I shouldn't complain. It has been good for the most part. Yes, I've had my share of low stakes/high drama academic politics. But I look at it this way: I worked hard, got tenure, love my students usually, and produce creative and scholarly work. And I appreciate that many of my grad school colleagues are no longer in the biz. Going to conferences like this one fuels my creative and intellectual drive and reminds me of why I do what I do. Perhaps this is why receiving the

news of the furloughs and paycuts was so disconcerting. I have been thankful over the years as friends in other industries have been laid-off and had assumed a likewise safety this go-around.

One of the performances I just saw featured Amara Tabor-Smith and Sherwood Chen. I had met Amara years ago when she was working with and I was researching Urban Bush Women. I remember taking a Capoeira class with her. She emphasized the principal in Capoeira to go *with* the energy when met with an opposing force. In other words, when a force comes towards an individual, one must go with it in order to diffuse it instead of trying to meet it with an opposite force. This of course is an important metaphor for life, we discussed. And this philosophy became part of how I articulate the possibilities for companies like Urban Bush Women to use choreography and dance to articulate / vehiculate and methodologically model conflict resolution and bring about healing.

When she walks into the lobby, I reintroduce myself to Amara. I see the flash of recognition, we hug and she sits down. I ask her about what she has been up to since we last saw each other. And since the economy is weighing heavily on my mind I ask her how she as an artist is coping. She tells me that things are tough, of course, but things are always tough for artists. She pays her dancers for performances but not for rehearsal. She teaches class at UC Berkeley and is still thinking about how far to take her burgeoning company, Deep Waters Dance Theater. In her words, she doesn't know if she is "married to it." She has no website, no marketing. She has not yet become a 501(c)(3).

But she has hope, she says, despite the economy. We agree that something else is created when there is no chance for bells and whistles. There is more risk-taking. Perhaps more site-specific work, perhaps work on a smaller, more intimate scale. This is an opportunity, we agree, for artists, arts organizations and arts departments. It has happened before, certainly. And artists like Grotowski and 60s avant-gardists extol the virtues of poverty in the arts. Perhaps sub-prime lending will lead to a new era in American dance. And I, for one, would welcome it.

For some time now, people have lamented the current state of affairs in American performing arts. People fear that art is being suppressed before it is even created. Conversations are shutting down. Audiences are shrinking or being complacent. There is a general lack of risk-taking. Funding is declining. Artists are giving up.

There is a real threat to free expression. There is a lack of diversity. There is fear about talking about important issues like race and gender. There is a disappointing relationship between the arts and communities. September 11<sup>th</sup> seems to have, in some sense, put us on a metaphorical level 'orange' with respect to the arts. The Bush administration's simultaneous arrogance and incompetence created a depressive national feeling. And these were concerns *before* the "Great Recession."

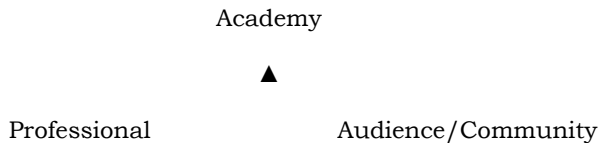
Despite this gloomy picture, I was optimistic before and I am still optimistic for the future of the performing arts. And, importantly, I'm optimistic for the potential of the academy to lead us into that future. The Obama administration promises hope for the future but one wonders just how much hope we have to go around. We know the arts won't be the first in line but sometime after the housing market, the banking industry, the financial sector, auto manufacturing, and a few other yet-to-be-determined areas of the US economy are rebounding, surely the arts won't be too far behind.

Regardless of when things bounce back, professors have an obligation to arm students for the future, no matter the financial climate. We have the constant influx of youthful 'why not' energy. We have tremendous talent from many disciplines within one house. In short, the academic institutions are 'venues' for art that currently have the greatest potential for taking risks, for nurturing experimentation, for sparking great successes and tolerating the grand failures that inevitable precede great successes. And I believe that these opportunities can open up the way to revitalizing the American performing arts.

I am optimistic not only because of the resources available to academic art, but also because of the untapped potential. To explain what I mean, let me back up and ask a couple of questions. What is powerful about doing art in an academic context? What are the possibilities that we haven't fully realized? The "traditional" performing arts relationship is the one between the professional and the audience. There is a newer articulation of the 'audience' that is sometimes termed 'community' and I think it is a useful one.

Professional ----- Audience/Community

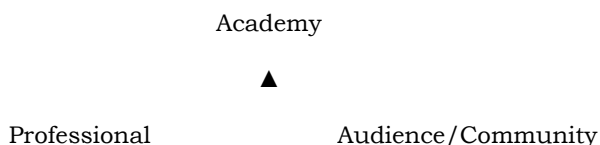
In the context of the performing arts in the academy, two new participants—the scholar and the student—are parts of the geometry, and many new relationships are potentially realized.



The lines between performing artist and audience have always been strong and are becoming stronger with community expanding our notions of audience. But even here, there is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship. The dialogue between professionals and the community has traditionally taken place primarily during the 1.5 hours in a darkened room in the traditional model. But there are other models and perhaps these times are just the opportunity to discover them.

The other relationships inherent in the geometry of academic arts are more tenuous and therefore have even greater potential for development. There is tremendous potential to strengthen the lines between scholars and artists and the line linking scholars and audience/community has not been traditionally strong at all. There is also the possibility of viewing these lines/ties as continuums and places of movement. Some of us are deeply grounded and some of us travel. There is something inherent in this enterprise that hasn't been fully realized and the only way to realize it is by crossing boundaries and moving out of our comfort zones, creating dialogues. I've always been excited about the space. Though people fall along different points of the spectrum, that spectrum is how we develop the next generation of visionary artists. I encourage comfort zones that are broad rather than narrow and reaching out to other parts of the spectrums from one's home. Whether we realize the potential of academic theater via greater strengthening of the ties between these nodes or by traversing more across these lines, the end is the same. It is all aiming toward making the space between dynamic. This is the space for the students.

(With Students in the triangle)



The academy can remain fluid and open to new ideas in unique ways that will be both globally-minded and locally intimate and inspiring. It is our privilege and responsibility to make art that matters in the face of those who would deny creative voice. We need to recruit and advocate for the next generation. We need to further community initiatives that expand access and diverse conversations—develop community audiences, bring new people into dialogue without losing others. People need to think of arts spaces as venues for debates between people who are engaged—not just in politics—but also in aesthetics. We need to be global citizens and make international connections and partnerships. To the extent that we build bridges and encourage travelers across this geometry, we will create a more vital arena for our students to realize their full potential as artists. They will have broader conceptions of themselves as artists. They will have a bolder idea of how the performing arts can have an impact on the world. They will have a bigger toolkit to draw on as future professionals. And they will in turn become professionals who disrespect boundaries, build bridges and create dialogues.

This echoes earlier moments when the academy played an important role in shaping national aesthetics and debates. Think of Black Mountain College with the combination of experiment, theory building, artistic, intellectual freedom, and reworking models of collaboration and education. Think of Iowa in the 70s and CalArts in the 80s. Colleges and universities are the places where we can take the risks and create the communities necessary for performance to have impact, make meaning and make us understand ourselves anew.

These are the things I think about sitting in the ODC lobby, talking to Amara. I have no right to complain. I still have a job. But that security I so desired has been rocked. I think about the different choices Amara and I have made and are making. Maybe I should practice what I preach and realize that nothing is totally safe, secure and guaranteed. Maybe I should see the downturn as an opportunity for my own risk-taking. Maybe I/we should take it back to Capoeira and go with the energy.

I don't know where we will be financially by the time this issue of "Conversations" comes out and though I'm concerned about the instability and the reduction in resources, a part of me is, dare I say it, excited about the possibilities.

# How I left academe and tried to earn a living

## Elizabeth Zimmer (Dance writer, freelance)

In the United States, many believe, economic mobility is based on merit. Anything is possible; an ordinary kid, even a kid “of color,” can grow up to be president. The business of America, it’s said, is business, but the occasional brave young person escapes that trajectory to become an artist, a writer, even a choreographer or a dance scholar.

And yet, if you look closely at what actually happens, you see a startling number of people going into their parents’ professions. They take over the family business, or follow Dad into law or medicine. In the rare cases where, 50 years ago or so, Mom was in the workforce, her profession, too, affected the choices kids made.

This is a personal story, but its professional valences may resonate. My working-class parents were depression-bred; my father quit high school to help support his family by working as a clerk in a drugstore, and my mother, who graduated college in 1936, gave up her dream of medical school because she didn’t want to impose on her father’s generosity. When I was coming up, in the ‘50s and ‘60s, my dad was a salesman in a New York department store. My mother, after having three children, began teaching in the city’s public schools. I decided that I wanted to be an actress.

“Do whatever you want,” Mom said, “but get a teaching credential so you have something to fall back on.” Her own ambivalence about her teaching career was clear. “Whatever you do, don’t major in education,” she warned. I graduated from Bennington with a degree in creative writing, and accepted an assistantship at a state university that would pay my way through a Ph.D. in English. The Vietnam War was then at its height, and guys who didn’t want to go were in graduate school. After four years at a woman’s college I wanted to be where the guys were. I quickly realized that writing papers for the academic closet, papers no one except my professor would ever read, was not how I wanted to spend my life.

I married and moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where my husband taught at the local art college and I became, for all practical purposes, its English department. I wanted to write poetry—in those years poets had the status of rock stars, Sylvia Plath’s death made headlines, and

the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y attracted fans of T.S. Eliot and e.e. cummings as well as emerging modern dancers.

But the art college did not renew my husband’s contract; after his second year he was out of a job, and despite holding degrees in physics and sculpture, he never found another one. I scrambled to supplement our income, freelancing for the local alternative weekly and for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, reviewing plays, films, and, eventually, dance.

Bill Bales, who taught the freshman “Period and Style” course I took in my senior year at Bennington, had told me I was a good writer and should think about practicing dance criticism, advice I promptly forgot. But there I was, dredging up my skills, going out to watch other people move, and crafting two-minute reviews to read on the radio.

I also began lusting after dance classes. After a year in Ballet III with the nine-year-olds at a Halifax studio, I bonded with friends to start a dance cooperative where adults could actually find appropriate training. The dance co-op still functions today, and is one of my proudest accomplishments; it originated in an amazing Canadian economic stimulus program that offered young people salaries to run their own projects.

For years, when people asked me how I got into dance writing, I’d say that it paid better than lyric poetry. And for a long time, that was true. At concerts I reviewed, I sometimes made more money than the performers. I felt a little guilty about that.

I left my marriage and moved to Vancouver, B.C., a larger city with better weather and a livelier dance scene; there I studied ballet, modern, yoga and contact improvisation, and taught writing at a community college while continuing to broadcast reviews on CBC radio. These were the years of the “dance boom” in the States, and many companies toured to Seattle, some crossing the border to play Vancouver; I could train my eye and my taste thousands of miles from New York. I read every book about dance in the Vancouver Public Library; if memory serves there were about 80 of them in 1975.

When I returned to New York in 1978, I discovered that public radio here didn’t pay for dance reviews. Luckily I had friends, writers I’d met through my membership in the Dance Critics Association, who helped me find freelance work at the city’s alternative papers. I volunteered as a critic at WBAI, a listener-sponsored radio station, and wrote assessments of dance performances for the New York State Council on the Arts, something I still do 30 years later. Editors who heard me

on the radio offered assignments at *Dance Magazine* and *The Village Voice*. I took jobs in arts management and arts-in-education, which provided office space and enough income to support my writing career.

In 1986 I was offered \$1500 to edit a book, published three years later as *Body Against Body: The Dance and Other Collaborations of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane*. I ran the Bates Dance Festival for two summers, mainly as a way to get out of the city in the hot months. In 1988 I was hired as a dance critic at the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, a Hearst daily. I moved to California and threw myself into covering dance in a sprawling metropolis whose major economic and creative focus was film.

Thirteen months later the paper folded, an opening salvo in the disintegration of print media across the country. Friends in the dance departments of local schools immediately offered me work. Never having studied dance history, I found myself teaching Dance 7, the service course at the University of California at Riverside, driving 65 miles each way twice a week. Later I taught "Writing for the Arts," a class I devised for arts majors in many disciplines, at Loyola Marymount University, slightly closer to home. And once more I donated my services to public radio, driving an hour each way to broadcast on KCRW in Santa Monica. I researched Los Angeles dance archives for the National Endowment for the Arts, earned a pittance managing an epochal conference for the Dance Critics Association in conjunction with the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, flew all over the country as a "site visitor" for the NEA, and visited New Delhi and Havana on other people's money.

Just as my health insurance ran out, I was hired at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum, where my title, which did not fit on my business card, was "Director of Development, Marketing, Membership, Education, and Public Relations." It was a three-quarter-time position, and I shared an office and a computer with the bookkeeper and the office manager. In the quarter-time reserved for myself I got back to ballet class and wrote regularly for the *San Francisco Sentinel*, a free local bar paper.

The SFPALM job lasted nine months, after which my boss announced she couldn't afford me. Two weeks later the dance editor at *The Village Voice*, my dear friend Burt Supree, dropped dead. Colleagues suggested I apply for his job, a process abetted by *Voice* critic Deborah Jowitt, whose editor I would become for the next 14 years. I sold most of my belongings and drove back across the country.

For a while everything was fine; I managed to ratchet up the pay for the position from the \$15,000 I was originally offered to something like a livable salary, covered a great range of dance, employed a number of other writers, and enjoyed the diversity of tasks involved with the job.

While at the *Voice* I made time to edit the text of *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video*, an anthology of essays and video clips, superintended by Judy Mitoma at UCLA and ultimately published by Routledge. And Jeff Weinstein, a *Voice* colleague who got fired and resurfaced as the fine arts editor at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, hired me to cover ballet in Philly, which I did for seven years.

I prepared web copy for PBS productions about Alvin Ailey and Busby Berkeley. The American College Dance Festival Association asked me to adjudicate several of its festivals. I gave speeches in Taiwan and Taormina, wrote program essays for City Center and Lincoln Center, and developed the Kamikaze Dance Writing Workshop, a hit-and-run undertaking that, in two or three days of concentrated study, shows fledgling writers how to write a 500-word dance review in 300 words, the length that has become the "new normal." Currently I teach this workshop several times a year, on campuses all over the country.

About 10 years ago, I earned approximately the same amount of money annually as my youngest brother, a tenured professor of theater at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. (He combined his passion for theater with a teaching credential, earning an MFA and then getting plucked from a doctoral program and given the job he still has, 32 years on.) But the forces of change began to lean on the dance section of the *Voice*. Advertising fled to the Web. We lost a third of our space. Designers made the pages smaller, the white space and the pictures bigger. There was less room for me to earn extra cash writing. My brother's pay kept increasing as mine began to drop.

Dance coverage survived regime changes at the *Voice*, but when the paper was bought by a chain based in Denver and Phoenix, we all sensed that the end was near. Sure enough, one August morning in 2006, a man I'd never seen before announced that my position and nine others had been eliminated in a general restructuring. Because I belonged to a union, I left with a hefty severance package. Deborah Jowitt kept her job, but even that has been reduced to a shadow of its former self.

I'd been contributing to *Dance Magazine* for more than 25 years, but rates there were going down instead of up, and the publication became increasingly staff-written. I finally told the editor I couldn't



afford to write for her any more—days before the current recession eliminated other projects I was anticipating.

Today I juggle work for a free daily newspaper that pays 25 percent less per story than it did four years ago, and offers many fewer assignments. I field requests to write for journals (like this one) that do not pay anything at all, the occasional print or web gig that does pay reasonably well, and invitations to appear on panels and lead workshops for sums ranging from zero to as much as \$1000 a day. I made half the money in 2008 that I did in 2007 (when I still had severance pay), and half as much in 2009 as I made in 2008. I have no pension, and my carefully amassed retirement account took a major hit in last year's stock-market debacle. The good news: I have time for a terrific exercise class at a local Y, taught by Naomi Goldberg, an SAB-trained dancer now specializing in "dances for a variable population" ranging in age from 28 to 78.

Two years ago I accepted an offer to lead a tour group of Australian dance fans for a week of dance viewing in New York followed by a week at the "Ballet Across America" Festival in Washington D.C., a task described to me by the tour organizer as "75 percent nanny and 25 percent ballet expert." The 2008 version paid reasonably well. The 2009 tour was cancelled due to world economic woes, and for the 2010 trip, scheduled for next June, I've been offered substantially less money for the same work. I'm praying that enough people sign up.

In the back of my mind I hear my mother's voice, at the end of her life, still suggesting that I go back to school and get my Ph.D. The master's degree I collected in 1974 sufficed to teach in community colleges everywhere else on the continent, but in New York City the glut of scholars with doctorates—and of underemployed journalists with impeccable professional pedigrees—makes finding an interesting teaching job incredibly difficult.

As I write, in late 2009, Alastair Macaulay is the only full-time dance critic left on a daily in this country, working at *The New York Times* where he gets plenty of space and editorial freedom. The *Times* also supports three other excellent dance journalists, plus a roster of freelancers who contribute features.

The rolls of the Dance Critics Association, to which I've belonged for more than 30 years, shrink as long-time members lose their jobs and young writers find it increasingly difficult to get a foothold in the field. Dance journalists contribute to several websites that offer lots of space but no money and often very little editing. You can find dance

reviews online if you look for them, but they've become increasingly rare in general interest print outlets where ordinary folks might stumble over them and be inspired to take in a performance.

The professional dance community mourns the disappearance of print media that midwived the dance boom of the '60s and '70s. Companies want attention for their work and reviews they consider essential to obtaining grant funding. Movie companies actually celebrate the eclipse of newspaper film criticism, relying on huge marketing budgets to keep their products in the public eye long enough for word-of-mouth to kick in. But the dance world lacks marketing money, and dance works rarely run long enough to exploit word-of-mouth.

What does the future hold? In a year I'll begin collecting social security payments, and be eligible for senior rates on the local transit system. I'll write for *Ballet Review*, which pays \$25 a page, and for a website about death, *Obitmag.com*, which recently commissioned a piece on Merce Cunningham. If the newspaper in Australia to which I contribute survives, I'll keep writing features. I've trained myself to stop shopping.

The dancers, bless them, will keep emerging from our schools and scrambling for gigs, paying or not, with new and established choreographers. Television will corrupt the taste of those who come to the form by way of *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing with the Stars*, and maybe dance companies can figure out a way to lure fans of those shows into their theaters.

I have become, after a fashion, a "public intellectual," commanding, in print and on the Internet, an audience much larger than I ever dreamed of. And now I actually have the leisure—because of my mother's very frugal habits, and the small bequest she left me—to write poetry, to figure out what I, uniquely, have to say and how to say it. But dance writing, I fear, may be returning to the closet, losing its place in mass media.

# Why I still believe in beautiful books.... notes on publishing and the recession

**Ann Cooper Albright (Professor of Dance and Theatre, Oberlin College, USA)**

This past spring I attended a seminar on “The Future of the Book” sponsored by Oberlin College’s academic resource center (what used to be called a library). Various publishers and scholars came to talk about old technologies (books) and new options (e-books, e-publishing, and internet options for writing such as blogs), suggesting that in a time of recession, electronic formats and the internet were the most economical ways to produce scholarship. We spent the afternoon passing around Kindles and looking at projections of computer screens demonstrating various publishing possibilities. Because it was all screen-based, we were in a room with no windows and very little air circulating. Looking around at the various academics slumped in their chairs with eyes riveted to individual screens, I thought to myself, “Some future – all heads and no bodies.”

Yes, of course I am aware of the global recession and the squeeze that small university presses are feeling at the moment. And yet I still want to go on record as advocating for that magical combination of print and paper. Call me an old fart, but I still believe in books. Books carry a weight and three-dimensionality that is important to me. I believe that I think differently when I work with paper than with screens. Take this late summer afternoon for instance. Right now I am outside with pad and pen, surrounded by trees, crickets and birds -- not to mention a neighbor’s lawn mower. I have a small stack of beautiful books next to me for inspiration as I think about my response to that seminar. There is the catalogue of photographs of early modern dancers in Rodin’s garden (“L’Ornement de la durée”) which H  l  ne Pinet published in the 1980’s, and the amazing collaboration between Ralph Lemon and photographer Phillip Trager entitled *Persephone*, published by Wesleyan University Press in the 1990’s. I contrast this scene of natural light and live distractions with this morning, where I was in my office, slogging through massive

amounts of e-mail, glued to the screen and oblivious to the fact that a rain storm had come and gone.

I recently found out that I had received (in conjunction with Wesleyan University Press) a small grant to help fund the publication of a short, but beautiful, book on Abraham Walkowitz’s watercolors of Isadora Duncan. My book on Loie Fuller (*Traces of Light*, Wesleyan University Press, 2007 -- which was inspired, in part, by H  l  ne Pinet’s book) had color throughout the text, a costly but aesthetically stunning decision that opened up all kinds of design options and allowed me to attend to the reader’s experience by presenting the images right next to their analysis. The Furthermore grant, with help from my university, will allow us to create a small book, complete with 60 color illustrations. This will be one of the first times this amazing archive held in the Dance Collection in Lincoln Center of over 250 Walkowitz watercolors will be available to the public. Once we have paid for their digitization, the public library can add them to their digital archives. I mention this confluence of support to demonstrate that with a little bit of imagination and a small amount of funding (which is still available, albeit in smaller doses), the dance field can continue to publish good quality color books which in turn can be the initial support for online access to these archival materials. I believe that books invite the reader to engage with the images and text differently than the internet or electronic books. Books also last longer than any internet site I have ever seen. Indeed, I believe books create a space of mutual dwelling with the reader. Paradoxically they circulate in long more open pathways, from hand to hand, or lying on a table, propped up on a shelf, and catching the wandering eye rather than always being the point of a search. They have a weight to them and I, for one, believe that that kind of solidity matters.

# MFAs, Masterpieces, and Money: Cultivating Community among Dance Graduate Students through “Economies in Motion”

**Asheley B. Smith (PhD student, UC Riverside, USA)**

## *When is the MFA equal to the MBA?*

One of my favorite websites for free e-cards, someecards.com, regularly creates e-cards that are “somewhat topical,” related to newsworthy items such as the election, tabloid coverage of pop icons, the economy, and the like. On March 23, 2009, the website premiered an e-card that stated, “Sorry your MBA is now worth as much as my MFA.” While the card could have been included in the “somewhat topical” section of the website, it was listed under the “sympathy” category. This tongue-in-cheek e-card expressing sympathy makes clear the relative status of MBA degrees to MFA degrees in popular culture. MFA degrees, and the arts in general, are not as highly esteemed as business in our society. In stating that the MBA and the MFA, in the current economic climate, are equal degrees, the e-card implicitly makes the case that, under “normal” circumstances, an individual earning an MFA degree will never have the wealth or the prestige of one earning an MBA. The joke in the card depends upon the reader’s awareness of the current environment being poor for business in addition to the MFA degree being laughable. The e-card, however, does not address the status of the MFA degree in the current recession. As arts programs are typically the first to be cut in tough economic times across the country, does the MFA candidate now have as good of a shot at gainful employment as the MBA candidate? What about the PhD candidate in Dance or Performance Studies versus the doctoral candidate in Economics?

## *Obama, Bush, and the UC System*

Although President Obama’s election signified an important cultural shift from the arts and cultural policies of President Bush, the current

state of the economy does not bode well (despite money for the NEA included as part of the stimulus package) for increasing funding for and attention to dance and the arts in general. At the American Ballet Theater’s spring 2009 gala, first lady Michelle Obama gave a speech noting the importance of arts education in encouraging innovative thinking. Alastair Macaulay covered this event for *The New York Times* observing that Mrs. Obama’s comments about new and innovative thinkers was not reflected in the choreography presented over the course of the evening: “Ballet Theater’s spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House tends to be ballet at its most conformist, nowhere more so than in its opening-night jamboree.”<sup>1</sup> This conformist, mainstream dance was championed by the previous administration.

During an election year, just prior to the 40th anniversary year of the NEA, Laura Bush announced the largest increase in funds for the NEA in two decades—\$18 million. All but \$3 million of this increase was to go to a new initiative of the NEA, “American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.” This initiative was launched in 2005 “to acquaint Americans with the best of their cultural and artistic legacy.”<sup>2</sup> Grants are available to dancemakers for the “[r]econstruction or restaging of works that are artistically, historically, and culturally significant,” the touring of these works, and recreation and documentation of significant works by university dance departments.<sup>3</sup> A side effect of this initiative, intentional or not, was to draw funds away from the support of innovative, experimental artistic work. In an editorial to *The New York Times* in 2004 following the announcement of the “American Masterpieces” granting program, Irving Sandler, former chairman of the NEA’s Overview Committee of the Visual Arts, reminded readers that the NEA’s original mandate was to “foster artistic creation” and went on to lament the “endowment’s abandonment of living American artists.”<sup>4</sup>

In the current recession, possible depression, do we have to fear institutional abandonment of living artists both within and outside of the academy? What about scholars studying artists both living and dead? The current economic situation has hit California hard—the state faces a deficit of \$26.3 billion (as of July 1, 2009)—thus, it has hit state institutions and universities, including the University of California system, hard as well. As Governor Schwarzenegger battles with the state legislature, educational programs are being cut and arts programs, the same ones Mrs. Obama was touting, slashed. The UC system has to compensate for an \$800 million funding shortfall for the 2009-2010 academic and fiscal year. While approximately one-half of this will be accomplished through furloughs, pay reductions,

and increasing student fees, the other half must be accounted for by campuses affecting course offerings, class size, student services, and other aspects of the educational system.

At UC Riverside, Chancellor Timothy White presented proposed budget cuts at the end of May 2009 of \$19 million for the 2009-2010 school year, with a worst-case scenario of \$26 million worth of cuts. By June 5, these figures were revised—the new budget cuts approached \$40 million. While the UC Regents and boards of trustees around the country decide how best to meet the new fiscal constraints at colleges and universities, those of us currently in the midst of our studies are left to contemplate what classes might not be available, if library and online resources will be readily accessible, how we will afford the next year with higher fees and with fewer teaching assistantships. We wonder whether travel grants and research fellowships will be available and, if so, how much more competitive they will become. And, always looming in the back of our minds, we want to know if there will be jobs for us when we graduate.

### ***An Aside: ODC at SDHS***

At the SDHS conference in June 2009, I asked the “ODC Cartographies” panel what enabled ODC’s survival through difficult economic climates, while so many other dance organizations founded during the same time period have floundered and are now defunct. The response by the founders of ODC was that the strength of the community they belonged to brought them through. ODC had the good fortune of felicitous timing. The students at Oberlin College, later ODC members, benefitted from funds through the NEA’s Dance Touring Program that brought Grand Union, among other standout artists, to Oberlin, Ohio. In addition, when the Collective was formed, there was a relative great deal of money available for the arts. At SDHS, the panelists noted that during more difficult times, the amount of activity and people involved in the organization may have been smaller, but there still was a critical mass that supported ODC as active participants. ODC remained visible. It is this sense of community, offering support and continuing to participate that is essential for an organization to thrive and, indeed, be more than the sum of its parts. This is especially true when the organization is tested in times of economic hardship.

### ***Dance Under Construction***

In the spring of 2010, UC Riverside will host the 12th annual Dance Under Construction (DUC) Conference. DUC is an interdisciplinary forum for presenting graduate student work on dance, the body, and performance. It originated as an initiative of the graduate students of UCLA’s Department of World Arts and Cultures and has been hosted by various UC campuses over the years. DUC has grown to an annual student-run event for dance and performance scholars, as well as those in related disciplines, and is an invaluable opportunity to receive constructive feedback among peers who are also new to the field. Designed for the development of intellectual inquiry in a supportive and rigorous environment, the conference offers students a chance to explore through experimental modes of research and performance. This interdisciplinary event provides a rare and important discursive space for the stimulation and presentation of cutting-edge research in topics related to the body as a site of cultural identification. Previous conferences have addressed artistic and intellectual exploration of themes such as the Politics of Choreography, Black Aesthetics, Technology and Dance, Globalization, Transnational Bodies, Gender and Sexuality, Dance and Popular culture, and Postcolonialism and Performance. This year, inspired by the recession, we will explore “Economies in Motion.”

Indeed, the economy is very much on the minds of DUC’s organizing committee this year, not only because it inspired our theme, but also because we have the (fortunate? auspicious? inconvenient? disastrous?) experience of organizing and fundraising for a conference during an unprecedented time of budget cuts at our university and across the UC system. We hope to address economies not only during panels presenting choreography and papers, but also through workshops geared toward students at different stages of their graduate career. Workshop topics might include reading strategies, tips for dissertation writing, how to construct a syllabus, and what to put on a CV. Through these, we wish to touch on some of the fears (and benefits) of attending school during this recession and foster a community and network of support for dancers and scholars who are all going through the same trials and tribulations, in different programs, at different schools.

Upon hearing the word “economy,” most people leap to thinking about finances and money or the production, distribution, and consumption of goods. This is the territory of that MBA student and that doctoral

candidate in Economics mentioned at the beginning of the article. But the economy and economies are also terrains of exploration for choreographers, performers, and dance scholars, the MFA student and the doctoral candidate in Dance or Performance Studies. The traditional definition of economy obviously greatly impacts dance and the study of dance in a university setting, but there are so many other economies at play, in motion. Economy also refers to the organization of something, a system of exchange and interaction. Choreographers necessarily have to account for these economies (of space, sexuality, gender, politics, power...the list goes on and on) when creating work and these encounters and systems of organization are ripe for the picking by dance scholars. Our DUC conference theme, "Economies in Motion," sets out to at least approach some of these varied economies in dance, the body, performance, and perhaps a few other sites.

Despite the recession and difficulty in acquiring funds for the conference, we are very excited to be hosting DUC at UC Riverside this spring. DUC is an opportunity for graduate students in dance and related fields to come together as a community and present experimental, innovative work. The support network that DUC provides and encourages, we hope, like the community surrounding ODC, will make it just a little bit easier getting through these times of economic uncertainty that we all feel within academia and as active participants in the arts. Through our rigorous inquiry into the interdisciplinary fields of dance, the body, and performance, we will challenge the unwarranted inferior place of MFA degrees in society; remember "American Masterpieces," but also break boundaries, innovate, and create new masterpieces (and some failures along the way); and interrogate economies, fiscal and otherwise.

The Dance Under Construction Conference will be held on Friday & Saturday, April 16 & 17, 2010, hosted by the Department of Dance at UC Riverside. For more information or to be added to the DUC email list, please contact [dance\\_under\\_construction@yahoo.com](mailto:dance_under_construction@yahoo.com). Also, please join the "Dance Under Construction" Facebook group for regular updates.

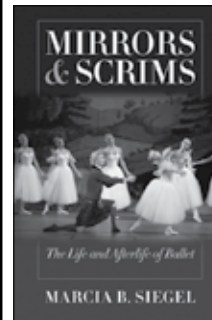
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# The p.s. (precarious scholar): using the concept of precarity as a creative tool<sup>1</sup>

**Rosella Simonari (PhD student, University of Essex, UK)**

I am a PhD student at the University of Essex, UK. I am undertaking this study as a long distance student as, for family reasons, I live and work in Italy. During the past seven years I have been financing my research (an MA and the PhD) with the help of my family and through temporary jobs. Now that I am towards the end of my study, the persistent lack of financial stability, together with the global crisis, have brought me to think about my 'condition' in a creative way. My condition, so to speak, can be defined by the word 'precarity', which has to do with insecurity both in terms of psychological and material expectations. Such insecurity has been the constant background for my research and it has, in a way, shaped and transformed it. Even though this is a condition shared by European and other international students, in Italy it has specific connotations in that it can become a permanent state of existence and it constantly clashes with rigid institutional systems.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, if you aim for an academic career, you can easily find yourself in a kafkian situation where merit almost does not exist. (Figure 1)

The global economic crisis is turning a condition that was already very difficult to handle, into an unbearable condition. That is why I found it resourceful to focus on the concept of precarity applied to my situation in order for me to subvert its alienating and depressing significance. In the summer 2009 I began to define myself as a "precarious scholar" in my blog, [www.dancescriber.blogspot.com](http://www.dancescriber.blogspot.com). This blog is a space I created in 2008 to talk about my experience and, at the same time, experiment with new forms of communication on dance and other matters. My nickname as a blogger is roz and, by using different formats to get my messages across, I incorporate poetry and microstories (that I call snapshots), cartoons, photographs, articles, comments on events and so on. One of my cartoon characters, the 'danzcriber', is a little girl who mainly analyses dance from the perspective of writing about it. For this reason, she always has a notebook and a pen/cil with her. Here are two examples shown in Figure 2.

This character, as well as other experiments I made and am making as a blogger, has helped me to reflect on my research in a new way. One of the problems that emerges when you are a distance PhD student is a sense of isolation from academia. Your temporary jobs usually do not deal with your studies and your friends are often people outside the academic world. With the economic crisis, it has become harder and harder to finance my own participation at conferences and other academic events, so the internet and, in particular, blogging, has become a precious and sometimes liberating tool to overcome isolation.

Working on my identity as a precarious scholar, has recently taken an ironic shift, with the creation of a cartoon character named 'the p.s.' and a strip through which she communicates her paradoxical condition. The choice of a strip is functional and has an immediate and visual impact that a written story would not have. The strip is drawn in English with Italian subtitles to reach an international audience and began to be published on June 30, 2009 in my blog [www.dancescriber.blogspot.com](http://www.dancescriber.blogspot.com). It is not strictly autobiographic, but it perfectly expresses the sense of instability and of delegitimation I often go through. 'The p.s.' works as a temp prof (professore a contratto) in an Italian University and as a waitress / barwoman in a café because her wage as temp prof is ridiculously low.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 3)

Her name, the p.s., plays with the expressions 'post scriptum' and 'precarious scholar' and has to do with the attitude of the Italian academic and cultural system towards many emerging scholars. They are a 'post scriptum' they neglect and often forget about. Her name is a no-name precisely because her condition is unstable and requires the ability to adapt to different situations. However, it also gives her the possibility to develop and experiment multiple identities, as Laura Fantone has highlighted (Fantone, 2008). (Figure 4)

Precarity, according to Fantone, can be seen a way to question established notions of family, work and society and it can be particularly interesting for women who, in Italy, are still very much tied to the traditional role of mothers and wives. The p.s. "lives with her 'unconsciously' misogynist father and brother" (roz, 2009), both of whom represent the average Italian man.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 5)

After a few months I realised that this character needed more space and, on October 2009, I created a blog specifically for her, [www.theps09.blogspot.com](http://www.theps09.blogspot.com). There, I was able to organise the strips according to various sections, like 'the p.s. and colleagues', 'the p.s. and family', 'the p.s. and research'. I also inserted a section called 'manifesto' where I put a brief description and intent of the strip already present in the previous blog. I also decided to add three other sections with comments on the situation of the Italian university

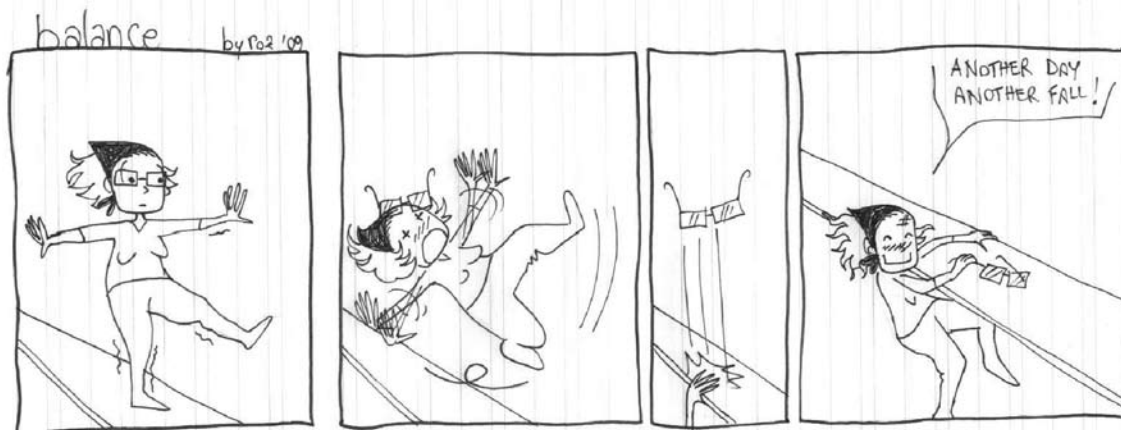


Figure 1:  
 "Balance" was the first strip on the p.s. that I drew and published in my blog.

© 2009 by roz.

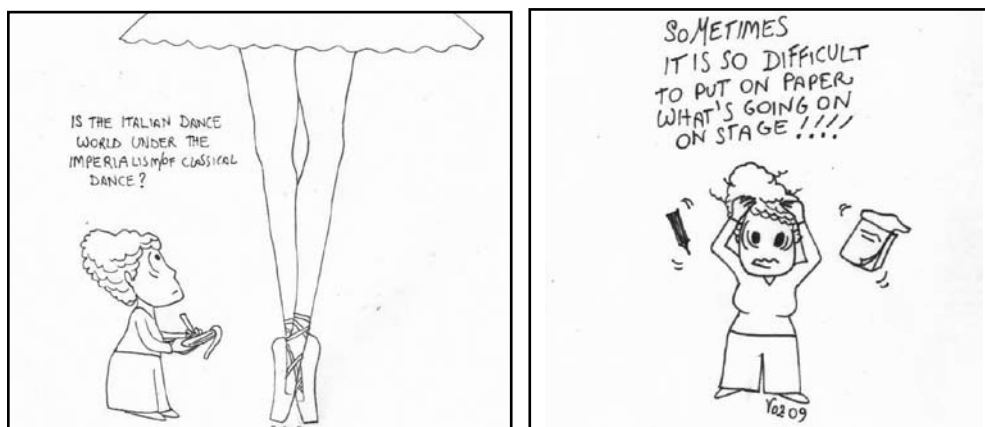


Figure 2:  
 "The Imperialism of Classical Dance" was made to ironically comment on the fact that on Italian television, on the few occasions when a talent show dedicated or partially dedicated to dance is presented, the absolute superiority of classical dance over other dance techniques or styles, is constantly underlined.

"Putting it Down in Words" is a cartoon on the crisis I sometimes have in writing on performance when I review for [www.ballet-dance.com](http://www.ballet-dance.com) (which I have been collaborating with since 2001) or for other articles or essays I write.

© 2009 by roz.



Figure 3 :  
 "Tem Prof" unveils how humiliating it is to work for a University which pays you a yearly wage of 2000 euros. As you can see from this cartoon, I do not use quality paper, but any kind of paper to draw so that precarity emerges in the tools I use and not just the content.

© 2009 by roz.

identity by roz 09



Figure 4: "Identity" is about the difficulty of being a p.s.. She has it clear in her mind what she is, but her complexity (and potential richness) is misunderstood most of the times. © 2009 by roz.

lunch by roz 09



Figure 5: "Lunch" is about the culinary expectations of a father, expectations which are usually deluded by her p.s. daughter. © 2009 by roz.

moby-dick by roz 09



Figure 6: "Moby-Dick" is about how obsessive can research be. © 2009 by roz.



system, updates on manifestations or documents published by other researchers and other material on the condition of p.s.es. The titles are: 'articles documents news', 'reflections' and 'call for ideas'. The last one is a way to transform the strip into an interactive and dialogic experiment, as it asks other scholars and people who might be interested, to send their experience on what it means for them to be scholars or to deal with them. (Figure 6)

I first presented a 'call for ideas' at the University of Calabria, during a two days conference, Ricerca e precarietà, on the thorny debate on precarity and research in Italian Universities. My idea was well welcomed, but, so far, I have not received any written response to my p.s. email: theps09@gmail.com, only some oral ones. With the ideas from the 'call for papers', I intend to draw other strips to make the p.s.'s world richer and more complex.

This multifaced reflection has to do with my need to talk and think of a condition which does not favour the development of research as it used to be and that, for this reason, needs new tools (like the comic strip or cartoon) to elaborate a strategy of resistance. This need is also fed by the debates and consultations I have been having with two Italian online discussion lists, prec@s and fiorelle, which mainly reflect on the problems of precarity from a gender perspective. As Fantone has highlighted, the movements of precarious people in Italy and around the world have taken a taboo term like 'precarity' and turned it into "an element of unifying political identity" (Fantone, 2008). Bringing the problematic question of precarity out, makes it a site of interest, transforming it into a shareable issue, empowering those who are involved.

1 Part of this brief article was presented in my paper "Sulle tracce di *Letter to the World*: lo studio di una coreografia di Martha Graham fra ricostruzione e precarietà" (2009).

2 For an overview of precarity in Italy, see Andrea Tiddi (2002).

3 The idea for my strip mainly came from two other very different strips, one is PhD (Piled Higher & Deeper) Comics by Jorge Cham ([www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)) and the other is Inkspinstar, by Deco ([www.inkspinstar.com](http://www.inkspinstar.com)), an Italian strip on a very funny single girl.

4 The figure of the temp prof is a relatively recent acquisition in the Italian University system, it was established with a 1998 decree law by the then Minister of Education Luigi Berlinguer and is part of a new approach to University based on its 'savage' privatisation. See Gigi Roggero (2005, 2009).

5 In Italy, in recent years, there has been a tragic resurgence of sexism which has resulted in a reification of the female figure on television and the increase in violence against women. To find out more on the former see the online documentary *Il corpo delle donne* (available with English subtitles and titled 'Women Bodies') by Lorella Zanardo and Marco Malfi Chindemi (2009), on the latter see the book *La paura degli uomini. Maschi e femmine nella crisi della politica* by Letizia Paolozzi and Alberto Leiss (2009)

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# Tango Tourism 101: A Photo-Diary, Buenos Aires, April 2009

Kéline Gotman (Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies, King's College London, UK)



*"La Boca, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman*

These reflections – on a “dance tourism” of sorts, or “tango tourism” – are born from a three-week trip to Argentina in April, 2009. The photos are drawn mostly from a half-day city tour, which my friend, who runs <http://www.batangoportal.com>, had arranged. The tour included a stop in “La Boca,” one of the two self-styled birthplaces of tango in Buenos Aires (the other is the old barrio of San Telmo), and an area still very much run-down, very much a shanty-town, in spite of the excessively commercialized “tango” centre. ATM machines and currency exchanges, a post office, zillions of postcards, gift shop arcades, and the famous Caminito passage – renowned for being the first street to feature vendors offering their art for sale – made this a lively spot, for a few hours, although zanily colourful walls and costumed performers contrasted a bit too much with the rampant poverty all around. La Boca, unlike San Telmo, was dependent on a “real” tourist economy. Buses, such as the one we were on, stopped to give tourists a taste of the tango experience, after a stop at the world-famous La Boca football stadium. Here, for a few blocks, dozens of restaurants vied with one another to lure tourists in for a lunchtime *parilla* (Argentinean barbecue), and a tango or a *folklore* show. Gouaches, oil paintings, sculptures, and drawings depicting passionate tango dancers fulfilled every souvenir need; and scantily-clad dancers in fishnet tights and perfectly-tilted fedoras offered to pose with tourists in a “real” tango embrace.

Tango is a widely recognized form of Argentinean culture. As such, it is not surprising that it made its way onto the tourist map. What struck me - was the degree to which this universe of cultural tourism paralleled another, equally commercially viable one, if somewhat less flashy: the tango tourist industry geared towards dancers. That was the one I had come to Argentina to experience; I had been dancing tango for a few years, and it had come time to go to the source, and make my pilgrimage to ‘BA’. (‘BA’ is the “insider’s” term for Buenos Aires, as I learned - I had heard it in New York, and found its usage here to be *de rigueur* among dancers all over the capital city.)

What I had not expected was the density and intensity of the offerings. I knew that dancers go to BA all year round, every year, or a few times a year, or every few years, depending on financial ability..) And I knew that these dancers were catered to – there were classes, *prácticas*, *milongas*. It wasn’t even so much for the stage shows (I didn’t see a single one while I was there, nor do I know anyone who goes to these, although I’m sure the dancing is good). Nor was it for the tours. What surprised me was the degree to which a whole other economy of tango tourism geared towards the international tango “community”

was taking over parts of BA. This was a new wave; after the 1950s and the 1980s, tango reemerged with vigour, with older dancers still on the dance floors (or returning after years away), and younger dancers training in universities, and tango academies, performing virtuosic, hip-hop-worthy moves, spearheading new branches of “tango nuevo.” Many of the younger dancers also practised old-style “tango de salon”; whatever the style, locals and internationals were feeding an extraordinary revival. International tango tourists were of every sort, as I found: elderly professionals, young bohemians, students, business men and women on a break, or to recover spiritually and financially from the crisis (BA is still relatively cheap); whole tango schools taking a road trip to learn from the maestros. The live music was unparalleled: many of the big bands – Sexteto Milonguero, Los Reyes del Tango, Color Tango – perform at the *milongas*, usually at ungodly hours of the morning, and are extraordinary to listen and dance to. Yet, it was all a bit overwhelming: thousands of dancers crowding small studios, exchanging information, cramming as much into a day of dancing as anyone’s legs could hold. I decided I had to return to study this phenomenon more closely. The revival of flamenco in Spain has come with a massive boom in shows in the capital and smaller cities of Andalucía, and dozens of new flamenco schools. This was all that, plus the dozens of clubs packing in locals and visitors until the very small hours of the morning. These were shows, and classes, and clubs, all day, every day. For now, here are a few preliminary thoughts on this quite unparalleled dancing economy, and



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"La Boca, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman



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a bit more of the story of my journey to its capital. The final section of this essay is a reflection on some of the politics – and the affective politics – of this tango tourism machine.

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Argentina had gotten me down. It was the mecca, the hub, the place to which all tangueros go for a taste of “authenticity,” to connect with the dance, to learn from the maestros, and come back home from and say “I was just in BA.” I couldn’t believe how many times I had been asked, when dancing in New York and London, whether I had “been to BA.” No, I hadn’t. I had only been dancing tango for a couple of years and, although I was something of a traveller, the thought of going all the way to Argentina to dance had not seriously crossed my mind. I couldn’t really afford it. I had work to do. Responsibilities. Teaching. When the opportunity finally arose a few months ago to take the trip (a friend from New York was living there, so I had a place to stay), I did.

I arrived tired. I had just finished an intense semester, and needed some rest. Twenty-four hours of travel didn’t help. The next few weeks involved classes, medialunas (a mini croissant), café con leche, empanadas, maestros, more maestros, walks around town; , a fair in the chic barrio of Recoleta; Maipú, and El Beso, long-time hubs of the traditional milongas (both are small, upstairs joints you would walk by a hundred times before knowing there was anything inside); classes; more classes; ; coffee breaks; DNI, the centre of tango nuevo, and a multilingual world of MC Hammer pants, electronica, hip-hop-style virtuosity, and teachers averaging about nineteen; re-learning to ‘walk’ with Carlos y Alejandra; relearning the *cabeceo*, i.e., the gaze, which must carefully *not be* averted, in spite of everything big-city living will teach you (the *cabeceo* is the most mysterious, and powerful, of all tango codes: it involves interlocking eyes with a potential dance partner, long enough for them, if they are a leader, to get up and come over to your table to ask you to dance, if you are a follower); dressing well, to show you’re there to dance seriously; Villa Malcóm, where the young, punky dancers hang out, and you go in your jeans and a t-shirt; the post-punk tango band El Afronte, in San Telmo, with skull t-shirts and dyed red hair and big glasses and traditional songs and *bandoneones*; Sexteto Milonguero, at Salon Canning; Los Reyes del Tango, at Salon Canning; the Museo Mundial del Tango, above the splendid, if museumified, Gran Café Tortoni; the Confeitería Ideal with its *fin de siècle grandeur*; San Telmo on Sundays, where El Indio

runs his outdoor milonga, after a decade of fighting with municipal authorities (it's now a famous tourist attraction); Palermo, with its cafes and fashion; a tour to a nearby gaucho ranch (with a big *asado* and undrinkable wine and 'traditional' dances, as well as a horse ride and reconstructed *pulperia* with 'free' beer); the Escuela Argentina de Tango, with great classes, including a stellar lady's technique class with Gabriela Elías; other master classes, with tango stars including Jorge Dispari and his extraordinary daughter, and wife, La Turca; seating arrangements, involving careful manoeuvring with the hosts not to be seated in a corner where there is no chance to get a dance all night because the sightlines are bad, and it's impossible to engage in proper *cabeceo*; and it went on and on. This was BA 101 and it was blurring before my eyes before I could even realize I was half-way across the world dancing tango. There were tango hotels, tango cruises, the tango website my friend and host was running, with dozens of classes and hundreds of milongas listed for any given day. Tango maps showing milongas and *prácticas*. Shows. Shoes to buy. Red sparkly ones, gold ones, sneaker ones for practice. Slinky dresses. Jump suits. Change to keep handy because the buses don't accept bills; so people horde their change, to avoid taking taxis, as happened to us on my first night out because we were missing three cents.

My host and his friends were talking about running a new business, a spin-off, from the tango BA website. It would run on a subscription basis, with a small yearly fee. Tangueros coming to BA could learn Spanish; visit the city, on special walking tours, and city bus trips (we took one, on a promotional basis, and discovered the stadium, the expensive Puerto Madero neighbourhood with its exclusive CCTV circuit, etc.); connect; date; rent flats; drink together; dance together; it was endless, these economic opportunities. And the figures were there to prove it. [Http://www.batangoportal.com](http://www.batangoportal.com) alone hosts hundreds of teachers, and receives thousands of hits in any given month. Anyone can advertise, from teachers to shops to tour operators. And this site only just 'opened' half a year ago. The boutique tango hotels, another great business idea, are cropping up all over the 'cool' tango scenes, from Palermo Soho and Palermo Alto and Palermo Hollywood to Recoleta, San Telmo, and the rest. They offer classes, milongas, *prácticas*, wine, socializing,, visits. The tango dance scene is social, and many dancers don't come in pairs; although you can go to a milonga or a class on your own, it's always nice to find partners with whom to exchange tips, and go out. This is not tango tourism for the casual visitor to Argentina. Those tend to go see the big shows, in proscenium theatres: *Tango Pasión*, and the like, shows that perform 'real' tango with fishnet tights and gelled-back hair... not that there



"La Boca, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman



"Gran Café Tortoni, Avenida de Mayo, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman



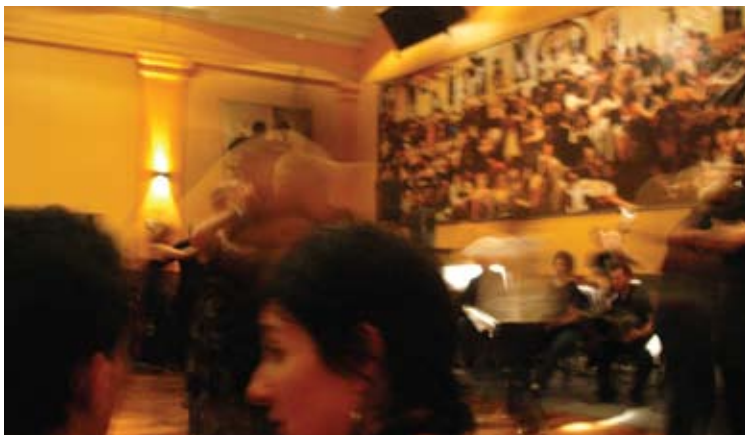
"La Boca, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman



"Museo Mundial del Tango, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman



"Folklore show, Gaucho ranch, San Juan de Areco", © Kéline Gotman



"Salon Canning, Buenos Aires", © Kéline Gotman

are not fishnet tights in the milongas; but they tend to stand out. Most people wear subdued dress, with fancier garb in the traditional places, and laid-back styles in the dingier haunts. But the styles came as varied as the dancers, *i.e.* nearly infinite. This was a microcosm of the world of aficionados making their pilgrimage to 'BA': dancers from every walk of life consuming classes, clubs, and an ineffable tango 'BA' experience. I ran into New York dancing friends who had decided to camp out there for half a year (I think they're still there); Germans; Israelis; a Londoner; Italians; it went on and on. The first question anyone asks in a milonga, unless you're a regular, is where you're from. And how long you're in town. The question is casual, offered as a matter of course during the obligatory few seconds of chat observed in milongas adhering to the routine *tanda* structure: three songs, a break (or *cortina*), and, if you are a follower, you are accompanied back to your seat; then another *tanda*. The chat mostly happens after the first song. More chatting happens between songs, and en route back to the seat. The pleasantries, in my experience, are standard: foreigners compare notes; a local and a visitor might exchange pleasantries about the city. None of it is said with any judgment, or real interest. There is too much circulation in BA for anyone really to care; it offers fodder for small talk. But it also offers a glimpse into the traditional tango world, when elderly dancers proudly share a fragment of their history. What strikes me now, reflecting back on the experience, is the degree to which this is heritage tourism of another sort: these octogenarian milongueros, dancing in the old style, commenting casually on their past, or on the new mores. I danced with one elderly man who had been a florist, and started to dance at fifteen. He stopped, and came back to dancing some twenty years ago; he was easily eighty now. In dance, coming into that sort of contact with living embodied history offers a *frisson* to anyone interested in the history and sources of the genre – and the transmission of dance styles. There is nothing for learning a dance than dancing with the older generations... the ones who forged it in the dance halls not so long ago.

The other thing that was noticeable in BA milongas was the non-tango dancing visitors; these were rare, and could often be spotted within a few seconds: usually a group, a bit drunk (tango dancers tend to drink relatively little), and talking too loudly. No dancing shoes were a give-away, and no quiet, studied attempt to scan the crowd for potential dance partners. They had read in their guidebooks that you could go to a milonga and watch; it was true. I spoke casually to a couple of guys I had seen in one of the milongas, and who were sitting at a nearby table in a cafe the next day. What had struck them, they said, were the older men and younger women dancing together. And the

other way around as well (though perhaps less often). It was the mixture of generations that had surprised them. Of course, I hadn't really thought of it that way; and it may be one of the more evident aspects of the dance to non-dancers. All of our carefully studied codes and micro virtuosités were swept away in the broader demographic disparity so visible to outsiders; but, they were right, this was something one would never see in a bar or different sort of club, and certainly never on a *Tango Pasión* stage.

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There was something in tango that my visit to BA failed to enable me to put my finger on. It wasn't quite 'passion', although there is a lot of 'passion' there. Bordering on obsession, really. Holding and being held. Improvising. Listening. Learning to listen corporeally. But I lost some of the magic tango had held for me. Perhaps because it was so... much, in BA. There was so much running around to classes and *prácticas* and *milongas*, for hours, so much pressure to cram it in, such codes, such politics, such hierarchies, so many experts, so much expertise, so many flyers, and offers, and cruises, and events, and teachers, and shows, and private or group lessons, that it actually turned me off. A little bit. It was a craze. Too much of a good thing can spoil it. Too much consumption can dampen the pleasure; one good dance, as I learned from a young dancer at one of the dingier clubs one evening, is all you need in a night. Once you've had that, it's enough to let you go home happy. And one can suffer from tango fatigue. But I also learned. Tango, more than anything, requires listening. It's virtuosic and showy in the big shows, and many of the hip *milongas*, where legs fly high and lifts and turns and such wow anyone who cares to ogle. But, and the old-school *milongueros* know this, as do all the best younger dancers, it also requires silence, and quiet, and listening. Really leading, like really following, is extremely difficult. Egos need to disappear, and a community of two is formed for the length of a *tanda*. It's the community of two that is the most baffling. When it happens, it's chemical. What it makes me think of is Arendt's concept of politics being exterior to the individual as such. For her, politics is situated in the space between people. It's that "between" that is so hard to find, and negotiate. It requires strength as well as practice; it's a muscle to exercise and to stretch like any other; tango teaches us the degree to which it can be toned. When the connection is there, change, movement, improvisation, happens. A leg slipped out one way invites the partner to slip his or hers out with it; total listening means any route forward, back, or to the side is possible. If the follower wishes or feels a different move than the one

the leader imagined or intended, and the leader hears this, and shifts his or her weight to carry the new move through, the community of two is alive and well. It is active. And this has emerged in barely the length of a *tanda*.

What comes of this is a quiet, restful, centred three minutes, performed entirely in the subjunctive, never in the indicative; sometimes in the conditional (if I did this... you might do that). Although the two perform different roles (leader and follower), this is a tacit agreement, which can be reversed at any time (but especially right before a forward ocho). More surprisingly, a harmonious dance – a real partnership – involves, conjures, performs what Zeami in his treatise on the *Nō* calls the 'flower'. In the *Nō*, a mad character must be played with a 'flower' of sanity, like an elderly character must be played with a 'flower' of youth. Similarly, in tango, a leader can, may and should lead with a 'flower' of following, like a follower can and may and should follow with a 'flower' of a lead. This is rarely practised, but this delicate negotiation teaches us the more difficult world of community, and politics, in the space between two, first and foremost, in spite of the temptation to perform for a watching audience, for the outward glance, haunted by the ghosts of other dancers past... coming in quietly to trip the dance up with comparisons and judgments (other voices offering a "you should have," "you would have" done this, or that, if you were like the other one before... or over there...).

We live, ostensibly, in an 'individual' and an 'individualistic' age. We talk about communities, and we have many we belong to (online ones, political ones, professional associations such as this one, etc.). But, when it comes to negotiating what happens between two, we find ourselves surprisingly challenged. We have to find a 'centre of gravity' not quite inside ourselves, although we have to be grounded, with feet firmly rooted in the ground, if agile; and it's not in the partner, either; it hovers, rather, in a chest space between, a place of trust. Giving like taking, and listening, in silence, and in turn. All couple dances require this, to some extent. Contact improvisation teaches us to balance our weight, and shift our centre of gravity. Tango, in its legg-y way, requires a particular negotiation at the level of the chest, which offers a real high when it is 'struck'. And maintained. I'm not sure why El Indio, the street *tanguero*, and anarchist, when I spoke to him, made me think of all this. Perhaps I hadn't made the connection or articulated it exactly in this way until I danced with him and he showed me a couple of things, simple ones: how to lift my hips just a bit and extend my leg just a bit, and somehow the perfect balance fell right into place. For that, just that, the trip to BA was golden.

A few notes for anyone wishing to make a “pilgrimage” to BA to dance: 1) don’t put valuables in your suitcase. 2) Don’t carry a nice-looking suitcase, it will be opened and “taxed” (I lost a silk blouse and a silk dress, which I’m still mourning). 3) Don’t carry cash, or not in significant quantities, no matter what anyone tells you. 4) Don’t buy “archaeological” objects – in case you had that intention – I learned, quite randomly, from a fairly reliable source that vendors sell “authentic” objects to tourists; report the tourists to the police; the police fine the tourists, and recapture the object; then split the spoils with the vendors, who proceed to re-sell the object, ad infinitum (or ad nauseum). 5) No matter how assiduous a dancer you may be, plan time outside BA if you can, up north around Salta (the World Heritage-listed Quebrada de Humahuaca, and the red mountains around Cafayate, are breathtaking); or down south into Patagonia. Argentina is vast, and stunning, and these are natural wonders which will match an all-night milonga any day. 6) Gaucho culture is alive and well, in spite of what some of the cheesier “gaucho” tours may lead one to believe. Taking a couple of days to visit a ranch is time well-spent; although I went on a touristy “gaucho tour” in San Antonio de Areco, the village itself is lovely, and horse-back riding is offered in “gaucho” settings all over the country. I would recommend ATURS for anyone seeking independent, ecologically-minded accommodation, and urge anyone seeking to plan some of these alternate routes to bargain. Because no, you will not catch dengue; and yes, the dengue scare is bringing prices down. 7) Learn to dance the chacarera and the chamamé. As with any folk dances, the basic steps are straightforward, and these dances have become a staple of milongas all over BA. They’re danced in pairs, with a pañuelo (a handkerchief), which the man usually waves to seduce the woman. Young and old dance this. And the spirit of euphoria, and playfulness, that emerge, are infectious. You can learn the folklore in almost any of the schools, and probably one class or two will suffice; if you’re a good watcher, you might not even need a class. DNI offers regular folklore, in trendy settings, remixed with hiphop, electronica, etc. The Escuela Argentina de Tango offers a more sober set of classes, with largely the same results. The little cafe down the street from my flat was offering classes, though I never went in to learn details. 8) Don’t overdo it, especially if you care to maintain some semblance of a pair of legs and an ability eventually to walk home. It’s possible in BA to train from 10AM to 12AM, with classes costing on average four or five dollars a pop, and prácticas and milongas lasting until 4 or 6AM, with medialunas and a cafe con leche served up to get your day started again (at the very hip La Viruta). If you do that, you’re dancing on the order of twenty hours a day. Just a

thought. Then again... may as well support the tango tourist economy. I heard from a friend out there it has quieted down for a bit.



“La Boca, Buenos Aires”, © Kéline Gotman



# The Art of Walking: a construction of runway modelling technique

**Manrutt Wongkaew**  
(PhD student, University of Surrey, UK)

Nothing entertains me more than diving into a fantasy world of fashion runway shows. It is not only the garments that attract me, but also the appearance of the models, how they move, and other visual spectacles in the show that always guarantee my satisfaction.

I am aware that fashion shows may not be everybody's form of entertainment. In the business where beauty and body images are glorified, fashion modelling has been criticised for its hauteur, superficiality, ageism and narcissistic body-fascism said to provoke eating disorders. These comments are reinforced by images and tales of fashion parties, and thus perceived as a flourishing sexual and narcotic playground. The reputation of the modelling industry gets worse, as stories like Kate Moss and her affair with cocaine and Naomi Campbell's tantrums have caught media interest, which has further "handcuffed" this business.

In response to these negative critiques, I have a counter-question which is the starting point for this paper. Can values in fashion models be reduced to starkly superficial corporeal bodies, hired for fashion advertising, with neither a sense of decorum nor evidence of intelligence?

On this note, I investigate the female fashion body and its performance practice in order to construct a runway modelling technique, particularly for the haute couture and global luxury ready-to-wear fashion segment in the twenty-first century and explore the connection between performance and body in relation to political economy of fashion advertising and its events.

Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative approach in the interdisciplinary sense between cultural studies, political economy, semiotics, fashion studies, dance/performance studies, and kinesiology. Data is collected by employing theoretical sampling strategies through the use of texts, interviews, and visuals. Runway master classes for female models<sup>1</sup> and the television programme *America's Next Top Model* are observed. Data is also collected through photos and video clips of non brand-oriented runway shows ranging from New York to London, Milan and Paris fashion week.

These samplings are incorporated with knowledge in kinesiology to explain how the body operates, in terms of musculature, bodily alignment, effort, and balance.

## The body of technique

By looking at the scholarly work which has close proximity to the theme "Dancing Economies," Susan Foster (1997) introduces the concept of the "hired" body whereby a dance body is "a body for hire: it trains in order to make a living at dancing" (Foster 1997: 255). This is a process where the body advances in several dance techniques and fitness schemes in order to manufacture a multitaled body ready for employment opportunities. Within this training, Foster constructs the notion of "the body of dance techniques" in which corporeal bodies are transformed into the "body-of-ideas" and in response to choreographic or aesthetic demands. In Foster's own words: "Each technique creates a body that is unique in how it looks and what it can do" (Foster 1997: 241).

By threading Foster's notion of the dance body tailored by commercial realities to the female runway model, to a large extent, fashion bodies share similarities to dancing bodies. Located at the intersection between performance and finance, this competent corporeality is purposefully constructed to be technically, intellectually and aesthetically desirable and responsive to demands from its "hired" status in exchange for its talent in displaying fashion merchandise. Through a construction of runway modelling technique, the notion of model's talent and its hired condition can be explained.

## The fashion ideal body

Foster suggests that studio dance pedagogy creates two significant types of bodies: perceived and ideal. The perceived body develops from "sensory information" (e.g. watching teachers) whereby the ideal body "combines with fantasised visual or kinaesthetic images of body" which has been prescribed with "specific size, shape, and proportion...as well as expertise at executing specific movements" (Foster 1997: 237). In relation to a female fashion body for the haute couture and global luxury ready-to-wear market, a model has to be tall and thin<sup>2</sup>. They do not have to be overtly beautiful but a unique facial structure or a "quirky" look is desirable.

Once subscribed into the fashion ideal body, a model has to undertake the process of training in order to construct the technique which transforms the corporeal body into a highly-skilled body, that is ready to be hired with excellences in featuring fashion merchandise to its fullest potential whilst capturing the brand's essence and alluring its aesthetics and desirable images in mannequin parades<sup>3</sup>. Within

vocational training, certain techniques will be taught. This is the place where runway modelling technique is formulated and transferred.

Runway modelling technique can be divided into three compartments: posture<sup>4</sup>, movement and characteristic.

### Posture

A runway model has a distinctive body alignment. The head and the neck are elegantly erected whilst the chin is levelled in relation to the floor. Along the neckline, as shown in figure 1, the model's shoulders are "pulled back" yet naturally dropped. According to my observation, this "pull back" can be obtained by either directing the shoulders backward or drawing the shoulder blades together. One way of reading this posture is that it creates the expansion across the chest in order to "project" or to be present. This is akin to the bodily aesthetic in classical ballet.

However, the "pull back" in the model posture exceeds the dance one. From a bird's eye view in ballet posture, shoulders are reserved in the same alignment with the pelvis and the ball of the feet which results in distributing the dancer's body weight forward. In contrast, by farther executing the shoulders backward in modelling posture, it inverts the curve on the middle spine. As a result, it visually magnifies the bust, a distinctive identification of female anatomy, and enhances the silhouette of the female body when viewing from profile.



**Figure 1**  
**Alexander McQueen Fall 2003 Ready-to-Wear Collection;**  
**Paris Fashion Week, March 8, 2003**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

This silhouette is further reinforced as, continuing downward, a model's spine is kept extruded yet her upper body is arched. By doing so, it heightens the curve in the lower spine which accentuates a female contour in the lateral view. To some extent, as most fashion show audience sit alongside the catwalk, the posture which is catered for this specific spectatorship seems appropriate. Besides, as the

model's torso is arched, it maximises the space between the ribcage and the pelvis allowing the abdominal muscle to be elongated. While keeping the abdomen tight, this spinal posture enhances the fashion ideal body, to be tall and thin.

In terms of the upper limbs, model's fingers are relaxed but restored together while the thumb is folded. Shown in figure 2, model's arms are hung naturally alongside the body.



**Figure 2:**  
**Emporio Armani Spring 2010 Ready-to-Wear Collection;**  
**Milan Fashion Week, September 26, 2009**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

Occasionally, as shown in figure 3, a runway model rests single or both of her hands on the hip and directs her elbow outward in order to create a triangular shape by the arms. This posture is often struck to enhance a nipped-waist silhouette, reinforce geometric forms of the garments, accentuate a voluminous skirt, or overcome a restriction of the crinoline.



**Figure 3:**  
**Viktor & Rolf Spring 2010 Ready-to-Wear Collection;**  
**Paris Fashion Week, October 3, 2009**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira.**

Finally, for the lower limbs, the knees are pulled, the legs are extended, the feet are parallel and the bodyweight rests over the ball of the feet.

### **Movement**

Once obtained the prescribed posture, the fashion body has to perform a series of movements which enhance the design and materials of the garments, yet correspond to the mood of the collection and designers' image for the marketing and promotional purposes.

Walking is considered a core technique required in fashion modelling. When walking, the head is extruded, levelled and still. The eye-line is horizontally parallel above the audience's head. The shoulders are pulled back and the chest is expanded<sup>5</sup>. The arms are relaxed yet "controlled"<sup>6</sup>.

According to my observation, this "control" is achieved when the arms are extended and elongated whilst the muscles around the posterior deltoid and latissimus dorsi are clenched. By doing so, a model can allow her arms to hang and swing naturally according to the gravity and the automatic bodily coordination of the walk as shown in figure 4.



**Figure 4:**  
**Diane von Furstenberg Spring 2010 Ready-to-Wear Collection;**  
**New York Fashion Week, September 13, 2009**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

Continuing downwards, to some degrees, a model sways her hip from side to side whilst the legs are extended and the inner thighs are magnetised. Significantly, whilst the upper body is held, a runway model releases the bodyweight through her legs in each stride. Moreover, in comparison to the pedestrian walk, a model has to maximise the length of each step and accelerate the pace. This is because not only does it create the dynamic, accent and enthusiasm within the walk, this technique responds to the issues concerning

time limitation, length of the runway and numbers of outfits in the collection. Quite often, the stage is long. Once buyers, editors and press recorded the "look" and the details of the garment, they focus onto the next.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, by lengthening each stride, the leading leg will stretch the garment which results in emphasising the movements in its fabrics and details as shown in figure 5. In some cases, pleats, ruffles, or loose fringes and sequins will be enhanced.



**Figure 5:**  
**Alexander McQueen Fall 2003 Ready-to-Wear; Paris Fashion Week,**  
**March 8, 2003 (left); Alexander McQueen Fall 2006 Ready-to-Wear**  
**Collection; Paris Fashion Week, March 3, 2006 (right)**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

In the basic walk, a runway model distinctively places one foot before another. According to this technique, several purposes can be distilled. First, this movement obscures the female genitalia which preserves modesty. Second, as shown in figure 6, this technique gradually narrows the line of the legs and emphasises the contours of the hip when viewing from the anterior perspective.



**Figure 6:**  
**Paul Smith Women Spring 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; London**  
**Fashion Week, September 15, 2008**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

Finally, as shown in figure 7, it concurrently encourages the hip to tilt and sway which enhances movements in the garments especially a full volume skirt.



**Figure 7:**  
**John Galliano Spring 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, October 4, 2008 (left); Gareth Pugh Fall 2008 Ready-to-Wear Collection; London Fashion Week, February 13, 2008 (right)**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

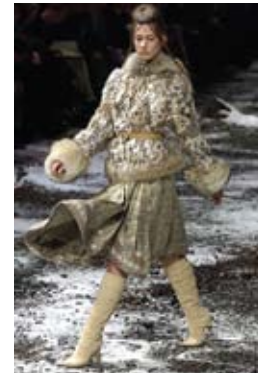
It is noticeable that there are variations within the basic walk. In the “cross-over” style, a model exaggerates a degree of crossing between her legs. Mary (2009) suggests that this style is suitable for a fitted garment such as a pencil skirt or fishtailed gown shown in figure 8, as it allows the model to overcome the restriction and increases the hip movement whilst maintaining her rhythm and pace.



**Figure 8:**  
**Dolce & Gabbana Fall 2009 Ready-To-Wear Collection; Milan Fashion Week, March 2, 2009**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

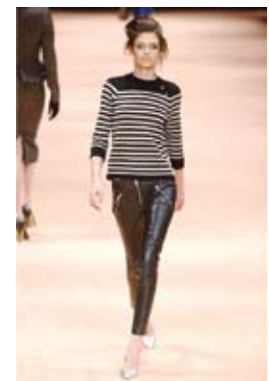
In the “Clydesdale” walk<sup>8</sup>, a model elevates her knees to a higher degree in each stride. It thenceforth amplifies the impact between

the landing foot and the floor. This impact ricochets throughout the model’s body which produces the “bouncy” effect to the garment. Simultaneously, as shown in figure 9, the lifted knee strikes the fabric and its details into a full pendulous motion.



**Figure 9:**  
**Alexander McQueen Fall 2003 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, March 8, 2003**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

Finally, in the “grunge” walk, the style focuses on hip movements. It suggests a model should sway her hip and swagger along the runway. Some schools posit that this style is suitable for a younger target market; casual garments such as denims; or a fetishistic wear (e.g. leather, rubber, and lingerie). Another hint to execute this walk would be the aural codes (e.g. electronic or rock music).



**Figure 10:**  
**Stella McCartney Spring 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, October 2, 2008 (left); Alexander McQueen Fall 2005 Ready-to-Wear Collection; Paris Fashion Week, March 4, 2005 (right)**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

It is important to note here that these variations are by no means a restricted consecration for a model to conduct. Instead, these are aiding templates which response to specific fashion commodities and other performative elements such as motifs, themes and musical codes.

In order to select a walking style, specific frameworks, poses and movement vocabularies directed by a designer, a choreographer, or a runway trainer are imposed to a model in a rehearsal. Yet, some of them allow creative freedom or demand a choreographic input from a model. In John Galliano's ready-to-wear collection for Autumn/Winter 2009, Raquel Zimmermann, a renowned fashion model, reports that the designer asks her to "work" the skirt which is the first design in this collection (Zimmermann interviewed by Blanks, 2009). In its silhouette, this knee-length, pannier-hipped, bias-cut skirt is made of layers of fabric that fall and flare to its full volume. In order to "work" this skirt, as shown in figure 11, Zimmermann exaggerates the cross-over whilst discretely striking her arms and flicking her hands behind this voluminous skirt in order to make it swing. Furthermore, at the pivot point, she forcefully swirls her hip to the right before crisply reversing its direction. In a split second, she sharply initiates a full-body rotation before disappearing into the dark backdrop of the hall. These are recorded movements Zimmermann executes in order to create a ripple effect in the garment. Thus, in this very precise sense, movements in runway modelling technique are constructed and re-appropriated according to fashion merchandise.



**Figure 11:**  
**John Galliano Fall 2009 Ready-to-Wear Collection;**  
**Paris Fashion Week, March 11, 2009**  
**Photo: Marcio Madeira**

### Characteristic

Quite often, a fashion model engages in a specific characteristic (i.e. a theatrical role play) according to the theme of the collection or

presentation.<sup>9</sup> In the finale of *America's Next Top Model*, cycle 7, the show sets a theme of a ghost's bride.<sup>10</sup> In the last section, the models erratically dash along the hall with piercing screams of total horror. However, despite this frantic role play, a responsibility to feature the garments remains. Caridee English, one of the final contestants, receives negative comments from the judging panels who condemn her for folding the dress and completely abandoning the technique. In contrast, the panels appraise Melrose Bickerstaff, English's rival, for maintaining her posture and presenting her ruffled voluminous gown through elevations and a series of pivot turns whilst losing herself in a frenzy.

### Conclusion

By looking at how the fashion body is constructed, how the modelling technique is formulated (i.e. body alignment and the basic walk), and how the specific choreography is executed (e.g. the cross-over, the Clydesdale, the grunge, and other theatrical role plays), a fashion runway model is a cultivated body prescribed with a certain technique and aesthetic and cannot be reduced to a starkly superficial corporeality. Located at the intersection between performance and finance (i.e. dancing economies), it is trained to make a living at modelling in exchange for its talent in displaying fashion merchandise to its fullest potential whilst capturing the brand's essence and alluring its desirable images in response to political economy of fashion advertising in mannequin parades.

.....  
1. The observed runway master classes are conducted by Jay Alexander, a former model with a significant role in the television programme *America's Next Top Model*; Mac Folkes, a freelance runway trainer and choreographer; and Mary, a runway trainer from the modelling agency Wilhelmina UTG who runs "the Development Programme" to prepare inexperienced models for the business.'

2. By looking at the model portfolios from *Models 1* and *Storm*, the two leading model agencies in the UK, the minimum height of 5 foot 9 and the maximum dress-size of 8 or 10 can be identified (even though the average dress-size for these models are between size 4 and 6).

3. In *Model 1's* section on 'Becoming a Model: Training and Getting Prepared,' the company demand models to enter a training period which can be of varying length. The company will give advice on grooming, self-presentation, dress, exercise, diet, health and every other aspect of a model's personal maintenance while producing portfolio and arranging castings (Model 1 2009).

4. Posture in this sense is a static body alignment prepared prior to the 'walk'. This is by no mean referred to the poses a runway model strikes in front of the camera or at the pivot point

5. Some schools prefer the model's shoulders to be symmetrical and squared. Others prefer it to be soft and smooth allowing them to lift slightly balancing with the hip movement whilst walking.

6. Folkes (2008b) inserts instruction like "let it brushes the outside of your thigh".

7. Mary Quant, a British fashion designer who opened her first shop, Bazaar, in 1955, has imprinted a rapid-fire record of presentation by having the models dash down the stairs and feature 40 garments in 14 minutes (Quant cited in Evans 2001: 297).
8. This term derived from the Clydesdale horse which has been extensively bred for pulling heavy loads in rural, industrial and urban setting. However, aesthetically, the Clydesdale horses are noted for grace and versatility and often used in exhibition and parades.
9. Nigel Baker, a fashion photographer and a judging panel of *America's Next Top Model*, entitles this type of fashion show as "theatrical catwalk" (Barker in ANTM 2006).
10. This episode, broadcasted in December 2006, features a collection of the bridal gowns from Victorio and Lucchino.
- .....

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# 2009 SDHS Prize Winners for Outstanding Scholarship

## ***de la Torre Bueno Prize®***

**Carrie Lambert-Beatty**, Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Culture at Harvard, is the winner of the 2009 de la Torre Bueno Prize®. The Bueno Prize has been awarded annually since 1973 to the year's most distinguished book of dance scholarship. Named after José Rollins de la Torre Bueno, the first university press editor to develop a list in dance studies, the Bueno Prize has set the standard for scholarly excellence in the field for more than thirty years.

Lambert-Beatty's book *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (MIT Press, 2008), was commended by the judges as "a major contribution Dance scholarship of this period."

**Anthea Kraut**, Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of California, Riverside, is winner of the 2009 de la Torre Bueno Special Citation for her book, *Choreographing the Folk: the Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Minnesota University Press, 2008). The judges commented that Kraut's work "helps create an interdisciplinary dance history" that is "quite daring."

## ***Selma Jeanne Cohen***

In recognition of Selma Jeanne Cohen's great contributions to dance history, the Society of Dance History Scholars inaugurated an award in her name at its 1995 conference. The Selma Jeanne Cohen Award aims to encourage graduate student members by recognizing excellence in dance scholarship. The winners of the Selma Jeanne Cohen Award are invited to present papers at the annual conference, and awarded a grant to help defray costs of attending the conference. The papers are based on unpublished research or interpretation.

There are two recipients of the 2009 Selma Jeanne Cohen award.

**Anusha Kedhar** from the University of California, Riverside for her submission entitled "The Specter of the Devadasi: Bharata Natyam and Indian Ethnicity in the U.S.". The judging committee found Kedhar's work to be "a finely argued, persuasive essay regarding the effects of the global migration of dance forms." Also receiving the award is **Hannah J. Kosstrin** from Ohio State University for her paper "Of Dreams and Prayers: Topographies of Anna Sokolow's Holocaust Work During and After World War II." The awards panel

## News

explained Kosstrin's essay as one that "skillfully brings together insightful movement analysis with strong cultural and social-political analysis."

### **Gertrude Lippincott Award**

The Gertrude Lippincott Award is awarded annually to the best English-language article published in dance studies. Named in honor of its donor, a devoted teacher of modern dance in the Midwest and mentor to many students, it was established to recognize excellence in the field of dance scholarship. The award carries a cash purse of \$500. **Cindy Garcia**, Assistant Professor in Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Minnesota, is the 2009 winner of the Gertrude Lippincott Award for her article "Don't leave me Celia: Salsera homosociality and pan-Latina corporealities" published in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 18:3, 199-213. The selection committee felt Garcia's essay stood out for "integrating a solid theoretical approach with ethnographic methods." The 2009 judges also felt compelled to recognize two honorable mentions for the Lippincott: **Victoria Phillips Geduld**, a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University for "Performing Communism in the American Dance: Culture, Politics, and the New Dance Group" published in *American Communist History* 7:1, 2008 39-65 and **Melissa Blanco Borelli**, a Lecturer in Dance Studies at the University of Surrey for "Yahora que vas a hacer, mulata? Hip choreographies in the Mexican cabaretera film 'Mulata'" which was published in *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory*, 18:3, 215-233.

### **Graduate Student Travel Grants**

In 2006 the Society of Dance History Scholars first offered Graduate Student Travel Grants, aimed at encouraging broad graduate student participation in its annual conference. Each year three grants are made to graduate students to help defray the costs of attending the annual conference. Any student member of SDHS enrolled in a graduate degree program and engaged in dance research is eligible. Students need not have a paper accepted for presentation at the conference in order to apply. The 2009 grants have been awarded to three students. **Cecile Guedon** of Birkbeck College, University of London, for what the judges noted as "an extremely well articulated and theoretically grounded research proposal." **Megan Nicely** of New York University, a longstanding practitioner experience who has a professional affiliation with the bay area explained the judges. Thirdly, **Aoife McGrath** of Trinity College Dublin whose "proposal demonstrates a distinctive research area" to the selection committee.

## **Annual Awards**

The Society of Dance History Scholars is proud to offer awards for scholarship in the field of dance studies: the de la Torre Bueno Prize®, the Gertrude Lippincott Award, the Selma Jeanne Cohen Award, and the Graduate Student Travel Grant. Winners are announced at the SDHS annual conference.

- **de la Torre Bueno Prize®**, Awarded Annually to the Best Book in the Field
- **Gertrude Lippincott Award**, Awarded Annually to the Best Article in the Field
- **Selma Jeanne Cohen Award**, Awarded to up to Three Students for Exemplary Conference Papers
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Society of Dance History Scholars Annual Conference, 2010

# Dance & Spectacle

8th-11th July 2010

University of Surrey, Guildford & The Place, London, UK

## **Dance & Spectacle Society of Dance History Scholars Annual Conference**

**University of Surrey, Guildford and The Place, London, UK  
8-11 July 2010**

Dance and spectacle exist in tension with each other. This conference invites discussion of their related histories, aesthetics and politics. From movement choirs in ancient Greece to the forms of spectacle in modern Olympic ceremonies; from the Baroque ballets de cour to indigenous corroboree; from protest sit-ins to Yvonne Rainer's "no to spectacle," the moving body exhibits meaning through choreographies of the visual.

The conference marks a collaboration between the University of Surrey, Guildford and The Place, London. The Place is one of the leading training and performance centers for contemporary dance in the United Kingdom and during 2010 it celebrates its 40th anniversary as an instrumental institution in the development of British modern dance. The Place has also acted as a host institution for University of Surrey students in their professional training placements and, in view of this long and close professional relationship, the Saturday of the conference will be sited at The Place and papers and performances will be co-curated by its Artistic Director Eddie Nixon. In addition, the University will host a series of events by leading British artists engaged in explorations of vertical, aerial and site-specific dance on campus and in Guildford town centre and, since the conference falls over the Big Dance week in London, performances will be taking place in and around the capital that conclude with a dance extravaganza at Trafalgar Square.

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University of California, San Diego  
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**Jens Richard Giersdorf**  
Marymount Manhattan College  
[jgiersdorf@mmm.edu](mailto:jgiersdorf@mmm.edu)

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Stockholm University  
[Lena.Hammergren@teater.su.se](mailto:Lena.Hammergren@teater.su.se)

**Anthea Kraut**  
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**Yatin Lin**  
Taipei National University of the Arts  
[yati\\_lin@yahoo.com](mailto:yati_lin@yahoo.com)

**Vida Midgelow**  
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University of Northampton  
[vidamidgelow@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:vidamidgelow@ukonline.co.uk)  
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Passeig de la Bonanova,  
[dansart@dansart.e.telefonica.net](mailto:dansart@dansart.e.telefonica.net)

**Terry Monaghan**  
Goldsmiths College  
[terrymonaghan@yahoo.com](mailto:terrymonaghan@yahoo.com)

**Ken Pierce**  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
[kpierce@mit.edu](mailto:kpierce@mit.edu)

**Patricia Rader**  
New York Public Library for the  
Performing Arts  
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**Yutian Wong**  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
[yuti@uiuc.edu](mailto:yuti@uiuc.edu)

**SDHS Business Office**  
3416 Primm Lane  
Birmingham, AL 35216  
USA  
Ph: 205-978-1404  
Fax: 205-823-2760  
[info@sdhs.org](mailto:info@sdhs.org)

**Web Content Editor**  
Hannah Kosstrin  
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