DANCING ON THE INSIDE
Identification and Dance Appreciation

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of identification in dance appreciation and in understanding dance as dance. What is common to all dance is that its appreciation requires that what the audience attends to is live human beings performing movement (or significantly being still). It is the physical act of dancing which is the art, and to understand the physical act is to understand the art. The act is performed by dancers, and therefore to understand the act of dancing is to understand those dancers as dancers performing a particular piece of art. For the audience to identify with the dancers is for them to imagine having the characteristics of the dancers that are relevant to dancing that piece. This identification is required for understanding that piece of art. Only an audience of people who identify with the dancers can understand the meaning of the piece, and in addition to their understanding of particular instances of dance, they are more appreciative of dance in general. Moreover, an audience member who identifies with the dancers in a piece gets to be involved in a personal way in the creative act of dancing. They imagine that they feel, with the dancers, what it is like to dance, and to express whatever is being expressed. Through identification, the audience can at least have a taste of the self-transformation of being a dancer, and through that taste gain more than an understanding of a particular dance piece. They can gain the possibility of knowing the joy of dancing for themselves.

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Introduction

Motivations

Of all the major art forms, the art of dance has perhaps the most limited audience. The image of the people who go to the ballet, or who make up a regular audience of contemporary interpretive dance, is an image of a particular elite, who have an obscure interest in a strange and mysterious art form. While it is difficult to find a person who has never read a novel and practically impossible to find someone who has never listened to music, it is common to meet someone who has never seen live dance. Even among those who consider themselves art lovers, the experience of having seen dance is not assumed.

The reasons for any given person not to attend dance are many. In a survey commissioned for the Australia Council on " Selling the Performing Arts," people who do not attend dance were asked why this was the case. A sampling of their answers shows that there is no simple answer to why dance's audience is limited. The respondents said that they do not attend dance because it is: too 'way out,' too challenging, not challenging enough, too feminine, infrequent, boring, expensive, poorly advertised, not a good value, lacking the glamour of musicals, too low key, too innocent, always the same old storyline. [1]

Among the reasons given are several which indicate that those who do not

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[1] Woolcott Research Pty Ltd., "Selling The Performing Arts" <http://www.ozco.gov.au/resources/publications/research/selling/index.htm> (1996).

attend dance expect that they would find it strange - that they just wouldn't 'get' dance if they saw it. A person who does not attend dance may assume that they would not understand it, and this is a symptom of the general attitude that dance, as an art form, is very difficult to understand. For many audience members, there seems to be no way to access the meaning in a dance piece, since a dancer does not (in general) employ words or pictures in order to express meaning, nor does she consistently make use of a symbolic vocabulary. The dancer and choreographer rely on the movements of the human body to convey the meaning of a dance piece, and these movements are often abstract and without any reference to a story or representation of the world. This can make dance, particularly modern dance, appear obscure and even meaningless to the audience.

Still, the medium a dancer uses to create art has a basic, universal quality to it. While there is something mysterious about the human body, it is also something very familiar. The dancer moves his body - we, too, move our bodies. A trained dancer can do some things with his body that many audience members would find impossible, but the idea of moving one's body through space is something for which nearly every person has a reference point. The reference point is the fact of having a body and moving that body. If dance just is the movement of bodies, it can be understood by any audience member who also has a body and moves that body.

Dance does not need to be an inscrutable or difficult art form to understand. It is no more necessary to be trained in dance or to have an intimate knowledge of dance conventions in order to understand and appreciate a particular dance piece than it is

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necessary to be a poet or a literature student to understand and be moved by "Ode on a Grecian Urn". There are poems which require a certain level of scholarship to appreciate, and there are others which do not, and dance is more like the latter in that understanding it is possible for audience members with any level of background knowledge. Training and research may or may not help, but it is not necessary. All that is necessary is that the audience member, upon seeing movement on stage, imagines making that movement herself.

One way of approaching that act of imagination is by calling it a form of identification. Identification is a concept which, while usually discussed in relation to emotion, can be expanded to include the physical. Not only can an audience member identify emotionally with a character in a novel, a film, or a play, he can also identify physically with a dancer performing a dance piece. It is only this kind of identification which allows the audience to understand the dance piece. This identification is a remedy, then, to one of the most common reasons for not attending dance. Although greater understanding of dance will not solve all the attendance problems it faces as an art form, it may result in a larger and better audience for all dance.

Chapter One

Dance as Dance

Dance can be understood by nearly anyone. It can be an accessible and enjoyable art form to experience and understand and is not inherently 'difficult' or obscure. Identifying with dancers is what allows nearly all audience members to understand dance, because it allows them to understand dance in a way in which they otherwise could not. An audience must identify with the dancers performing a dance piece in order to understand that piece *as dance*. Understanding dance as dance is understanding it in virtue of *what it is*.

Dance is a wide variety of things. The type of dance which springs to mind most readily for most people is classical ballet, but this is not an accurate representation of the incredible diversity of dance both throughout history and as practiced today. Dance has existed and continues to exist worldwide in a large variety of forms and for different purposes, ranging from social pastime to theatrical performance and religious rite. In the western world alone, the qualities that dominate dance have ranged from the solemnity and formality of 15th-century court dance, to the social etiquette and flirtatiousness of 19th-century social dance, to the playful elements in 1920's dances like the Charleston, to the near hero-worship of celebrity dancers like Fred Astaire in the mid-20th century.

Dance *is* a ballerina pirouetting *en pointe*, and dance is a ten-year-old making intricate patterns with tap shoes. Dance is fifty people in kilts wildly kicking, and dance

is a single person rocking back and forth, curled in a ball in the centre of a stage. There are so many forms of dance that one may not seem to have anything to do with another, other than that they are all called dance. However, there is something that connects them. What dance is, what it *always* is, is movement, and what makes a particular work a work of dance is movement. In all dance, people move their bodies, or are significantly still (which can be considered a movement choice in itself). A dancer may train in acting or mime, or take classes in the history of dance, but these things are not dance training. Dancers train their bodies in order to become more able to perform physical movement, and that training is dance training.

Not only does all dance involve people moving their bodies, but that movement is always meaningful as dance. Francis Sparshott defines dance as "meaningful movement" since "its exclusive field, whether in the theatre or out of it, is the exploration of the possible meaningfulness of body movement as movement."[2] Whatever else it may do, dance explores and demonstrates the meaning in movement in the absence of, or along with, other kinds of meaning. Sparshott describes this quality of being meaningful as movement by explaining that dance is physical movement of the sort which requires, if nothing else, attention. While there are many kinds of meaning which movement could be said to have - narrative meaning, gestural meaning, emotional meaning - 'meaning' as Sparshott uses the term is just the quality of requiring attention. Dance does (or is at least meant to) make people look at dancers and pay attention to

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[2] Francis Sparshott, *Off The Ground* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 151.

their movement as something with significance. This is to say that dance calls attention to itself *as movement* and, in a sense, demands understanding.

Understanding dance as dance, then, is understanding it as movement which requires a certain kind of attention. Understanding dance movement is different from understanding the movement involved in theatre or in day-to-day gesture. Just what is to be understood in a particular dance piece is incredibly difficult to state - as Isadora Duncan famously said to a reporter who wanted to know what one of her pieces meant, "if I knew what it meant, I wouldn't have to dance it." According to Gregory Bateson, Duncan was saying that if the 'message' of dance were the sort of thing that could be communicated in words, there would be no point in dancing it:

> but it is not that sort of message. It is, in fact, precisely the sort of
> message which would be falsified if communicated in words, because the
> use of words (other than poetry) would imply that this is a fully conscious
> and voluntary message, and this would be simply untrue.[3]

It can be granted, however difficult it is to explain what is to be understood in a particular dance piece, that dance can be understood as movement which requires attention. Since dance just is movement which requires attention, understanding it as such is understanding it *as dance*.

Many dance pieces can be understood in ways other than as dance, and understanding it in those ways can be valuable. Some pieces can be understood as stories - the Sleeping Beauty ballet, for instance, is based on a fairy tale by Charles

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[3] Gregory Bateson, "Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art," *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1972 [1967]), p. 83.

Perrault. Other pieces can be understood as political statements - Halifax's Irondale

Theatre often produces dance pieces in response to world events. Some dances can be

understood as expressions of emotion. Still other dances can't be understood in any of

these ways, sometimes resulting in the impression that they can't be understood at all.

It could be argued that in the case of classical ballet (or in some cases the dance pieces

in musical theatre), all of what the audience understands is the story of the piece and

that they don't need to understand anything else. But a ballet is always a dance, and

its story is always expressed through movement, so a ballet can always be understood

as movement. Without the movement which makes the ballet a dance, the story would

be lost, as there would be no piece, and so it is with all dance which can be understood

in any other way besides *as dance*. A dance piece may be understood as narrative, as

symbol, as gesture, or in any other way, and all the ways of understanding dance can

be endlessly tied up together in a particular dance work. However, since the work is

movement and can always be understood as such , it can only be understood in any

other way *in addition to* being understood as dance.

In the case of modern and interpretive dance, it would often be a stretch to say

that the dance can be understood as anything but pure movement. In these cases, the

only way to understand the dance is as dance. It may be tempting to say that more

abstract dance can be understood as metaphor, but the concept of metaphor is not

appropriate to any dance, even that dance which does have a narrative. Julie Van Camp

argues that metaphor is a device which involves deliberate category-mistakes and that

these mistakes do not occur in watching a dance performance.[4] She quotes Monroe Beardsley's definition of metaphor as "a logical conflict of central meaning."[5] For this conflict to occur, as it does in literary metaphor, there must be a correct, or at least usual, meaning which is abandoned for a time in favour of another meaning - "the room was a beehive of activity" makes a deliberate mistake, substituting the usual meaning of beehive (a bee's home) for another (an unusually crowded and busy room). This sort of mistake, Van Camp argues, can never happen in dance because movements do not have correct meanings. She gives the example of a dancer, the movement of whose hands and feet to some degree represent or resemble the playing of a lyre. To the audience, the movements may *be like* a lyre, but they are not taken to *be* a lyre in a metaphorical sense:

> for there to be a mistake, I would submit, we must first have a standard vocabulary for what a raised arm and pawing feet 'should' mean or 'normally' mean. We have no such standardized rules in dance. A raised arm could be reaching for a cupboard door in the kitchen or it could be stretching in fatigue or it could be signaling a teacher in a classroom that one has something to say. We have no standard vocabulary for what a raised arm 'means' and thus no possibility of mistake for violating the rules of a standard vocabulary.[6]

Dance cannot always be attended to or understood as a story, and it can never be understood as metaphor. Also, although much of what audiences of dance

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4 Julie Van Camp, "Non-Verbal Metaphor: A Non-Explanation of Meaning in Dance," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996), pp. 177-187.

5 Van Camp, "Non-Verbal Metaphor," p. 177.

6 Van Camp, "Non-Verbal Metaphor," p. 181.

experience is taken in visually, it would be wrong to assume that the audience always understands a dance piece in the same way that they might understand a painting - purely as an interesting visual object. Dance is experienced by the audience by means of multiple senses - not only is there visible movement to attend to, there is music (or significant silence) and there is often the sound of the dancers physically interacting with each other, the floor, the walls, or their costumes. The sounds involved in a dance piece are not dance themselves (dance is *movement*, after all) but they are essential to understanding the dance. A performance of hip-hop dance done to classical music would be understood differently from the same piece done to the expected hip-hop music, which would in turn be understood differently from the piece performed with no music at all. Sparshott, while acknowledging that dance is primarily understood by seeing it, points out that "the question of what music a dance is danced to is always legitimate, even though the answer may be 'none.'"[7] These non-visual elements are not part of looking at a picture, even a moving one.

For Sparshott, understanding dance means understand movement in a particular way:

> Not the way the dancer looks in movement, or kinesthetically feels in movement, or can be seen to be moving, but the way the dancer is actually moving and is moving as a dancer.[8]

Since the common thread in all dance is physical movement by people, then what can be

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[7] Sparshott, "Off the Ground," p. 173.

[8] Sparshott, "Off the Ground," p. 280.

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understood in all dance is that movement. Since dance is "meaningful movement," then what is understood in dance is the actual movement a dancer performs. What is to be understood in dance cannot be exhausted by a story, a picture, or a stack of choreographic notes, because dance is also and always movement. Dance as dance is in this way a simple art - it does not need to convey 'layers' of meaning, and it does not need metaphor or allegory. All it needs to be understood as dance is the movement of human bodies, to music or (significantly) not. Describing the story line of a dance piece reduces it to mime, and unless the piece is mime, is nearly impossible. If the dancer performs movements evocative of a temper tantrum, saying 'the girl threw a temper tantrum' doesn't tell the half of it. In a play, the fact that she (the character) throws a temper tantrum is the case, is a fact of the plot. The dancer does not throw a temper tantrum, she may not in fact be angry, and she is not always playing a character who is throwing a temper tantrum. In making the movements often associated with a temper tantrum, she is showing us something, something which is danced because, among other reasons, it can not be expressed in words.

If what is always being expressed by dance is the movement itself, then the way to understand dance as dance is to understand the movement. This does not mean understanding the movement as something separate from the dancer, because the movement exists only as a function of the dancer dancing it. The movement is meaningful only as the movement is performed by a dancer, and in the performance of the movement the dancer gives the audience the opportunity to imagine what it would be like to perform it. Chris Challis makes a comparison between two dance works in

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order to show that the audience's perception of what it would be like to perform

movement has more power to distinguish one movement from another than the actual

mechanics of the movement.[9] In the first work, the audience imagines how difficult the

dance must be, and how skilled the dancer must be to dance it:

> at the end of the male solo... there is a spectacular double turn in the air,
> the dancer finishes on one knee, arm raised in heroic manner.... The idea
> here is that the accomplished performer underlines the difficulty of the
> dance by demonstrating the ease with which he performs it.[10]

In the second, the same movement gives the audience the impression that the dance is

almost done without effort:

> The female dancer begins the work with a double turn in the air, her arms
> and torso are then flung from side to side and she finishes the sequence
> on a cartwheel with bent knees. Rather than displaying the technique, the
> dance makes light of it; it looks as if anyone can perform this sequence.[11]

That the audience successfully understands these dances and perceives their having

very different meanings is dependent on the audience's awareness of the movements *as*

danced. Without this attention on the part of the audience to the fact that there are

people performing the movements they see, both would just be seen as a double turn

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[9] Chris Challis, "Dancing Bodies (Can the Art of Dance be Restored to Dance

Studies?)," *Dance, Education and Philosophy*, ed. Graham McFee (Oxford: Meyer and

Meyer Sport, 1999), pp. 143-155.

[10] Challis, "Dancing Bodies," p. 146.

[11] Challis, "Dancing Bodies," p. 146.

and bent knees. When understood *as dance*, they become their own dances.

Understanding the physical act of dancing is required for understanding dance. As a consequence of this, since the physical act is performed by dancers, to understand those dancers as dancers performing a particular piece of art is to understand the act of dancing. If identification of a particular kind is necessary in order for the audience to understand the dancers as dancers, then without it dance audiences are limited to understanding dance as narrative, mime, visual art - but never as dance.

The audience member who does not understand dance as dance might wonder - why is it important to understand dance as dance? One answer is that it is always desirable to understand art for what it is. Another answer is that although there are some dances which have other meanings than dance meaning, and can be understood in other ways than as dance, there are dances which can only be understood as dance, and to ignore dance *as dance* would ignore these. Perhaps the most motivating reason to understand dance as dance is that it is an enjoyable and accessible way of understanding it. The general public can understand dance as dance, and dance is created for the general public, not only for those trained in dance's history or with an eye for comparing dancers' skill. "First of all," according to Nikolai Tsiskaridze, principal dancer for the Bolshoi Ballet, "we work for the audience and not for those who judge ballet professionally."[12]

Those who judge, study, and teach dance have very different motivations for

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[12] Nikolai Tsiskaridze, Interview with Marina Radina, *CriticalDance.com* <http://www.criticaldance.com/interviews/2002/ntsisk021030.html> (October 2002).

wanting to understand dance than does the general audience. They may have an entirely different way of understanding it, which would be neither enjoyable or useful to the audience member without a professional interest in dance. The professional's way of understanding dance is a separate issue from understanding dance as dance, and they need to be kept separate. Otherwise, watching dance comes to feel like a job, which is not how those whose job it *isn't* want to feel. Consider Mary Stockrocki's instructions on how to understand dance:

> few people will pursue careers as choreographers, performers or dance critics, but most will see dance in at least some of its many forms.... Dance movement may seem very fast and hard to remember at first, but when you have seen many performances and learned more about this art form, it will become easier to think about and discuss. The process outlined here, which involves describing, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating, should enhance appreciation of the art of dance. It is recommended that you watch videotapes rather than live performances at first so that you can view a dance several times.[13]

This technique may be intended to increase appreciation of dance, but it hardly sounds like an enjoyable night out.

In the first place, while watching dance on videotape may prepare the audience for "analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating" dance, it has little of the excitement and immediacy of watching live dance. There is dance which is made for film, and since film and video can capture movement recorded dance can still be understood as dance. However, in taking a dance which is performed live and putting it onto tape or film, there

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[13] Mary Stockrocki, "Learning to Look/Looking to Learn," <http://artswork.asu.edu/arts/teachers/standards/dance.htm>.

is a risk that the piece will not be understood as well as it would be were it seen live. Aaron Meskin, writing about evaluating dance performance, finds that dance must be evaluated as an isolated event, unrepeatable and unrecordable:

> Recordings of musical performances allow us to hear the same performance over and over again. Sound recording is a transparent medium insofar as it allows us to hear what is recorded and not merely hear representations of what is recorded.... The video and film media are not transparent since they do not present us with the first-person spatial information that is essential to vision. With dance this means that important spatial information, and spatial experience (for example, the experience of having the dancers move towards you), is unavailable from recordings. Therefore, even those viewers who do see video or film recordings of dance performances do not see dance performances; they see representations of them[14]

This problem does not apply to dance which is made to be watched on film or video, since in those cases the meaning of the movement is intact. However, Stockrocki's advice concerns live dance which has been recorded, and since some movement is lost between the live performance and the recording, some meaning will be lost. In addition to wanting her students to watch recorded dance in order to become better audiences, she also cautions them that watching dance may seem difficult initially, but will get easier. Again, this gives the impression that understanding dance is more work than play. An audience member could be forgiven for not wanting to bother with dance if understanding it is going to be so difficult and time-consuming.

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[14] Aaron Meskin, "Productions, Performances and their Evaluation," *Dance, Education and Philosophy*, ed. Graham McFee (Oxford: Meyer and Meyer Sport, 1999), pp. 45-63.

An understanding that can come immediately upon seeing the dance, which does not take extensive time and effort and the overcoming of obstacles, is the sort of understanding most audience members are looking for. Critics and scholars may be looking for other forms of understanding, but as far as audience members are concerned, appreciation and enjoyment can come from understanding dance as dance.

Assuming that it is desirable that the audience enjoy watching dance, studying the particulars and spending long hours watching videotapes is not going to produce the enjoyment that understanding a dance performance *as dance* will. Understanding dance as a story can be enjoyable, but not all dance can be understood this way. Understanding dance as narrative also gives no way of distinguishing between two dances which tell the same story but are not the same dance. Understanding dance as metaphor doesn't makes sense, since dance does not push the audience into making deliberate category-mistakes. What dance gives the audience, even when it does not give them a story or metaphor or a representation, is dance *as dance*. In the words of Stanko Milov, principal dancer for the Pacific Northwest Ballet,

> That's the most important thing. When the audience gives a good response you get energy. That's what it's all about. That's why you're dancing – to make the audience jump on their seats afterwards.[15]

In short, understanding dance as dance is what will get them on their seats.

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[15] Stanko Milov, interview with Emma Peglar, *CriticalDance.com* <http://www.criticaldance.com/interviews/2002/smilov020921.html> (July 2002).

Chapter Two

Identification and Dance

A successful argument concerning identification and dance audiences must include an account of identification as an audience reaction, and an exploration of how this account relates to other accounts which have been, and still are, used in discussions of philosophy, theatre, film studies, folk psychology, and literature.

There are two major requirements for the account of identification which will be useful for this argument. The first is that it must take ordinary use of the term into consideration, since an argument concerning identification and audiences which ignores how audiences themselves use the term would be a weak argument indeed. It would be open to the objection that whatever it is that is necessary for understanding of dance is not properly called 'identification,' and it would also be open to the protests of audience members who consider themselves to be identifying but not to be doing anything like what it takes to understand dance. The second requirement is that the account be specifically relevant to dance audiences, which is to say that it take into account that dance is physical movement, and that an audience reaction to dance is a reaction to physical movement. An account of identifying with dancers, then, must include an account of an audience reaction which deals only with physical characteristics.

When an audience member uses the phrase "I identified with X," he means something by it. For the purpose of discussing why identification is necessary for

understanding dance, there is no need to pinpoint exactly what any audience member who claims to have identified *actually* means. Every audience member may mean something slightly different, and some may mean vastly different things, and it is not necessary to examine the meaning of every particular instance of audience use of the word. What is necessary in order to discuss identification by dance audiences is that there be at least one account of identification which is relevant to dance as an art form, and which does not ignore ordinary use of the idea.

Audience members, when discussing their reaction to movies, plays, television shows or novels, often discuss it in terms of identifying with people. It would be nearly impossible to notice the wide range of people and characters with whom people claim to identify and not be intrigued, not to wonder what this reaction is which can apply to both watching *Fraggle Rock*[16] and seeing *Hamlet* for the first time.[17] It makes sense to wonder whether Adam Begley means the same thing when he says "I identified with the characters [in *The Great Gatsby*]"[18] as Charles Henderson means when he says that as

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[16] Jan Howell, "Putting the Me in Media," *Baton Elementary School Newsletter* <www.caa.k12.nc.us/bes/howell%20newsletter.htm> (Granite Falls, NC : 2003).

[17] Dotson Rader, "Success? What about Happiness?," *Parade Magazine* <http://www.geocities.com/szerelem96/print/parade0309.htm> (1997).

[18] Adam Begley, "Review of *Trimalchio: An Early Version of 'The Great Gatsby,'*" *New York Observer Online* <http://www.observer.com/pages/story.asp?ID=2877> (2003).

a child he identified with Superman.[19] 'Identification' is a commonly used term and warrants a general account - an explanation of what this commonly experienced reaction amounts to. As identification is also referred to by audiences of dance, those who are interested in audiences of dance have a reason to examine it as well. If there is a general account to be made of identification, and it is to be of interest when discussing dance, it ought to take into account what dance audiences,as well as the audiences of other art forms, mean by it.

Identification, as far as the audience is concerned, is something they already do, and 'identification' is a word they already use. Each audience member who uses it does mean something by it, and there are also some things the audience member decidedly does not mean when he says, "I identified with X." For instance, it is unlikely that he simply means, "I liked X." Identification is not always a positive reaction - someone could note, with chagrin, that in the film *Max* they really identified with Hitler. By saying this, she is certainly not committing herself to saying she liked Hitler. In ordinary use of the word, then, not everything that can be identified with can be liked, so 'liking' and 'identifying' can't be synonymous.

The audience member is also unlikely to mean that he became numerically identical with X - that he became literally the same person as X. This unusual event, while being on a literal level what 'identifying' means, is not an audience reaction. Neither of these interpretations of, "I identified with X" - liking or becoming numerically

[19] Charles Henderson, "Review of 'Batman and Robin,'" *Christian Movie Review* <http:// christianity.about.com/library/weekly/aa062397.htm> (1997).

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identical with X - is what the audience means, and neither is particularly relevant to dance. Neither, therefore, is a useful account for the sake of the argument for the necessity of identification in understanding dance.

Another, perhaps more useful, account of identification is that when the audience member identifies with a character, she takes on the same emotions that X displays - that she finds herself feeling sad when X shows sadness, being afraid when X shows fear and so on. This account has some solid history behind it - just this sort of audience reaction is described in Plato's *Republic*. Plato's arguments concerning drama in the *Republic* are vital to an understanding of audiences and identification - Noel Carroll calls Plato's theory of the way drama engages emotion "the first theory of identification in Western civilization."[20] Plato's theory is exclusively concerned with the audience's emotions, and as such presents some problems for an argument about dance audiences. However, considering Plato's influence on the subject matter, and the influence of theorists who have built upon his theory in their own discussions of audience reaction, Plato's argument is a good place from which to begin building the general account of identification necessary for this argument.

Plato's account of identification is couched in the larger project of his *Republic* - to lay out a plan for a moral, just, and rational society. Plato excludes the reading of dramatic poetry from this society because drama gives the audience an excuse to be irrational. The audience reaction to drama that he describes is one where the characters provoke the audience to primal, irrational displays of emotion, bringing out

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[20] Noel Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 259.

parts of them which, according to Plato, ought to be kept in check by reason: "the poet ministers to the satisfaction of that very part of our nature whose instinctive hunger to have its fill of tears and lamentations is forcibly restrained in the case of our own misfortunes."[21] Because the audience convinces themselves that they are simply admiring art when they are overtaken by a tragic character's grief or a comedic character's buffoonery, they abandon the rational drive to keep such emotions private.

As well as condemning an emotional reaction by the audience, Plato condemns a particular emotional reaction by the actor who reads the part of that character. For Plato, when an actor reads the part of a character, he takes on the emotions, desires and beliefs of that character, becoming the character himself for the time. The danger in this, according to Plato, is that if an actor regularly plays a character with undesirable characteristics, he will eventually have those characteristics all the time, through sheer force of habit: "the reproduction of another person's gestures or tones of voice or states of mind... grows into a habit which becomes second nature."[22] It is significant that the actor not only takes on the words and gestures of his character but also the state of mind, as it is the state of mind of the actor which will be affected. Maintaining reason in the face of good drama is difficult for both the actor and the audience, for according to Plato,

Few... are capable of reflecting that to enter into another's feelings must

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[21] *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis M. Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), X. 605.

[22] Plato, *Republic*, III 394.

have an effect on our own: the emotions of pity our sympathy has strengthened will not be easy to restrain when we are suffering ourselves.[23]

This "entering into another's feelings" is certainly something like what audience members mean when they say that they identified with someone, and is a plausible candidate as an account of identification. If this is an account of identification, then it is one which implies a direct transfer of characteristics from a character to a human being, and the characteristics in question are emotions. Plato is not concerned that an actor will come to adopt evil hand gestures, if such a thing there be. He is concerned with the actor's state of mind. There is nothing particularly interesting about a direct transfer of physical characteristics - if one person raises his arm, and another raises his arm in response, the transaction which has taken place is not a case of identification under any account. However, a transfer of *emotions* from a character to an audience member seems to be a reasonable explanation of what some audience members mean when they use the phrase "I identified," and the idea of sharing emotions is significant for a general account of identification.

Plato is not alone in his account of an audience reaction which consists in the audience becoming emotionally involved in an artwork. Iris Murdoch agrees with Plato that having a strong emotional reaction (what she calls the 'sentimental' reaction) to art is morally problematic.[24] Murdoch suggests that when an audience member's emotions

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[23] Plato, *Republic*, X 605.

[24] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London : Routledge, 1971), p. 64.

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become involved in their reaction to art, the audience member is using the character in order to feel good about herself. Upon experiencing the art, Murdoch says, audiences often fantasize that the art is about *them* rather than being about the world, because of the "almost irresistible human tendency to seek consolation in fantasy."[25] Murdoch clearly takes up Plato's moral project to a large degree, where morality comes from seeing and knowing the truth about the world and avoiding selfishness, deception, and irrationality. For her the alternative to the self-obsessed audience member who takes the art to be about himself is the detached, rational audience member who seeks truth. She writes that art, specifically literature, ought to show us the truth about reality, "without being appropriated into the greedy organism of the self."[26] For Murdoch maintaining reason as an audience involves detachment from the aspects of art which appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect, and when the audience member sees herself in the art she is letting her emotions override her ability to see truth in that art. For the audience member to see herself reflected in art means that the art has been "employed to produce a picture whose purpose is the consolation and aggrandizement of its author and the projection of his personal obsessions and wishes"[27] - a perversion of art's real purpose, which for Murdoch is to cause the audience to "cease to be in order to attend to existence of something else."[28]

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[25] Murdoch, *Sovereignty of Good*, pp. 62-63.

[26] Murdoch, *Sovereignty of Good*, p. 64.

[27] Murdoch, *Sovereignty of Good*, p. 63.

[28] Murdoch, *Sovereignty of Good*, p. 58.

The audience reaction that Murdoch is describing is, for her, an indication of immorality and selfishness on the part of the audience. Whether or not this is true, an audience reaction in which the audience members fantasizes that the art is about them is plausible as an account of identification. It is in some ways a more detailed extension of Plato's version of identification, as an audience member who feels the emotions which he sees portrayed in art is putting himself into the art emotionally, and substituting himself (in his own fantasy) for the character with which he identifies. This account of identification, where an audience member acquires the emotions of a character as a result of fantasizing that the character is 'about him' can be termed the *emotion-transfer account.* As in the cases of Plato and Murdoch, it is often this account which is in use when identification is criticized.

The emotion-transfer account of identification is not only used by philosophers and those with a moral agenda, but by artists as well; and within the art world, particularly the theatre world, there are those who agree that identification of this sort is not a desired audience response. The most notable of these was Bertolt Brecht, who shared Murdoch's ideal of art which strips away illusion and gives us a detached, intellectual experience.[29] Although Brecht did not see art as having a moral job to do, his aesthetic principles placed a higher value on the intellectual content of art rather than on art's ability to appeal to the audience's emotions. His aim as a director was to transform theatre from an art which worked on audiences, manipulating and provoking

[29] Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 33-42.

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emotion, into an art which communicated with the audience as human beings, provoking thought and intelligent discussion. For Brecht, having an emotional reaction to a character gets in the way of seeing that character for who they are and what they represent intellectually. Rather than being emotionally involved in the art, Brecht would rather that his audience be made to 'face the art' and respond to it from an intellectual perspective. An audience who is sharing the experience of a character can't be expected to study that character's experiences and learn from them, according to Brecht. The audience reaction which Brecht tries to avoid is the same sort of reaction which Murdoch and Plato criticize - the emotion-transfer type of identification.

Whether or not either Brecht's or Murdoch's desire for a detached audience makes for good art depends on whether art's job is to provoke rational inquiry or make us more moral, respectively. Whether or not the sort of identification suggested by their criticisms is the sort of identification which is necessary in order for dance audiences to understand dance is another matter. The emotion-transfer account satisfies the first requirement that it be what many people mean when they say, "I identified with X." This can be accepted with controversy - it is quite likely that many audience members, when they say, "I identified with X," mean something like, "I fantasized that I was like X, and as a result felt the same feelings as X."

However, this account does not satisfy the requirement that it be relevant to dance as an art form. It is not relevant to dance because it defines 'identification' as involving exclusively the emotions of the audience. Plato's, Murdoch's, and Brecht's criticisms all stem from what they take to be identification's emotional nature, and

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identification being an emotional reaction is vital to their arguments. But the emotion-transfer account presents some problems when discussing dance audiences, since dance does not always involve anything which can properly be called a portrayal of emotion. Although there are always dancers in a dance piece, those dancers are not always portraying characters (who would have characteristics such as emotions). Often they are simply performing movement, and even if the movement evokes emotion, the dancers do not 'show' the emotion to the audience in a way that would facilitate the audiences 'taking on' the emotion from the dancer. Under this account of identification, in many instances of dance performance it would be impossible for the audience to identify with the dancers, since this account does not leave room for the idea that the audience could identify with the physical characteristics of the dancers. Since dancers are not always discernibly portraying mental and emotional states, but are always in a physical state, identifying with a dancer must involve physical characteristics, and not emotions. There are too many instances of dance which could not provoke a response of audience identification to make this account relevant to a discussion of dance audiences.

This could mean that identification as a concept is not appropriate to dance performance that does not involve characters or portrayal of emotion - an advantage for those kinds of dance, from the point of view of Plato, Murdoch and Brecht. However, the use of the term by dance audiences and critics suggests otherwise. In his review of

Needcompany's "Morning Song"[30], Paul Ben-Itzak writes:

> I identified more with Sagna, probably because as a critic... I could relate
> to the visual-physical hook she found in her character.... She moves
> haltingly. Every body part, from her head to her arms, to a hip that
> suddenly, but slowly, gets bent out of joint.[31]

While he is thinking of the dancer as a character, it is obvious that a large part of what

he identifies with in that character is physical movement. This use of 'identification'

involves more than the emotions or values of the character, as does amateur dance

lover Thomas Parsons' use of the word in his "Confessions of a Ballet Junkie."[32] In

describing how he initially fell in love with ballet, Parsons explains that it is the

movement itself, in the absence of character or plot, which compelled him:

> this wasn't narrative ballet; this was Balanchine, and the ballets we saw
> that evening were plotless. So we were spared a lot of tedious mime and
> had nothing but dancing to splendid music. There seem to be two kinds of
> ballet lover; one prefers narrative ballet and the other abstract or plotless
> ballet. As you can see, and as I dimly realized at the time, I belong to the
> second group.[33]

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[30] An experimental dance piece performed in 2000 at the Brooklyn Academy of

Music.

[31] Paul Ben-Itzak, "Review of 'Morning Song,'" *The Dance Insider*

<http://www.danceinsider.com/f1106_2.html> (2000).

[32] Thomas Parsons, "Confessions of a Ballet Junkie"

<www.panix.com/~twp/dance/ballet_1.htm> (1995-1999).

[33] Parsons, "Ballet Junkie," p. 2.

Having established himself as a lover of ballet as pure movement, his use of 'identification' in describing his reaction to another ballet takes on a particular significance:

> I was entranced, as usual, and on the way home, I burbled with enthusiasm over what we had seen--how I had liked the dancing, how much I liked ballet generally, how much I identified with the dancers, and so on.[34]

If what he loves in ballet is simply the physical movement, then his enthusiastic response of identification must be connected to that movement, and not to any emotions portrayed by characters. Dance audiences like these, who use the concept of 'identification' in describing their reactions, are not talking about a transfer of emotions - and yet they do claim to have identified. What they are identifying with in the dancers is clearly not their emotions, but their movements. The concept of 'identification' used by and relevant to dance audiences, then, is something different than the idea suggested by the criticisms of Plato, Murdoch, and Brecht.

Although the emotion-transfer account itself is not relevant to dance, what is significant in the idea of identification as a transfer of emotions is the idea that identification is a kind of audience empathy. For Richard Wollheim, seeing oneself in a character is what any empathic audience member does. He describes three kinds of audiences, and their typical reactions to emotions portrayed by a character. The detached audience is made up of people who note the emotion and, if they pass

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[34] Parsons, "Ballet Junkie," p. 2.

judgment at all, find favour with one character over another, "just so long as favour doesn't escalate into feeling."[35] The sympathetic audience members "respond to [mental] states and respond exactly as [they] would to those of a fellow human being with whom it shared a common life."[36] Finally, there is the empathic audience. This type of audience is made up of people who choose one character and *duplicate* their emotions, "feeling" the performance along with the character. When watching an actor portraying their chosen character as terrified, they will feel terror themselves, rather than pity for the character. This idea of "feeling with" someone onstage is significant for dance audiences, as it has applications beyond the emotion-transfer account of identification. While dance may or may not portray characters, and may or may not portray emotions, there is always the possibility of empathizing with someone on stage because there are always human beings on stage who have emotions. That there be a character to identify with is not necessary for empathy, as it is for the emotion-transfer type of identification. All that is required for empathy is another human being, and this is something which dance does always provide, in the person of the dancer.

While he does not wish to call empathy a kind of identification, Wollheim would not disagree that many audience members do call it just that, since "the ordinary notion

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[35] Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 67.

[36] Wollheim, *Thread of Life*, p. 67.

of identification is particularly loose and unarticulated."[37] It can be granted, then, that there is an interpretation of the audience reaction implied by the phrase, "I identified," which has at its core the idea of empathy. This interpretation still does not take into account an identification which involves only the physical movements of another person, and not their emotions, but perhaps the concept of empathy could be extended to include physical characteristics as well as mental ones. Empathy for another person involves a sharing of emotions between a performer and an audience member, and is certainly *more* relevant to dance than the emotion-transfer account of identification. The less an account of identification deals with the actual transfer of characteristics from one person to another, the more it becomes possible to apply it to physical as well as mental characteristics, and the more it becomes relevant to dance.

Setting aside the notion of empathy, the emotion-transfer account of identification is not relevant to or used by dance audiences. However, this is not its only problem. That this account of identification ought to be in use at all is not assumed among those who concern themselves with audience reactions. Noel Carroll argues against this version of identification in order to save art from the criticisms brought against it by Plato and his successors. He argues that Plato's criticism of drama is based on a false idea of why audiences feel emotions, and that it is misleading to call any audience reaction 'identification,' precisely because of the intimate connection between artist and audience that it implies. For Carroll, identification is not

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[37] Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 73.

how emotions in an audience are elicited - the emotions are the audience member's own, not the character's, and are skillfully brought out by the artist.[38] The emotions an audience feels when two lovers are reunited are not the same emotions as the lovers feel - they couldn't be, since the audience members are not in love with either character:

> we are happy that they have got together, but we are happy in a way similar to onlookers or observers, not participants. Our emotions do not duplicate theirs, although our recognition of what their emotions are and that the lovers' desires have been satisfied are ingredients in our rather different (not identical) emotional states.[39]

Carroll believes that audiences can be sympathetic, and relate to a character's feelings, but that if they believe they actually feel the character's emotions, they are simply mistaken. He also points out that one can share values and morals with someone for reasons other than identification with them, so there is no reason to suppose that since I have the same values as a character in a novel that I am reading, I am identifying with that character. His final criticism is that, since 'to identify' literally means 'to become identical with,' saying, 'I identified,' implies that I have become exactly the same person as the person or character with whom I am identifying. If *this* is identification, then identification is clearly impossible or is at least certainly not what happens to an audience:

> the simple theory of identification lacks the means to say how it is that we may morally endorse only certain of a character's moral attributes and outlooks, but not all of them. Yet, if we did tend to identify ourselves with

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[38] Carroll, *Mass Art*, p. 269.

[39] Carroll, *Mass Art*, p. 260.

a character, wouldn't we take on all of their moral attributes? Isn't that what *identity* means?[40]

Since this is not what an audience member means when she says, "I identified," then she must be misnaming her experience. By "simple theory of identification" Carroll means Plato's theory and those theories which developed from Plato's ideas about art - essentially the emotion-transfer account, but including a transfer of mental characteristic other than emotions (like values and morals). He accepts the possibility of a more complex view of identification, citing the common use of, "I identified with that character," and saying that we must mean something by the statement. He just thinks that, given the literal meaning and given Plato's ideas, identification isn't a good name to use for any audience reaction.

This characterization by Carroll of identification as either a useless notion or an utterly impossible one is largely based on the inability of the emotion-transfer account of identification to explain complex audience reactions. As soon as an audience member only partly identifies with someone, or identifies with two different people simultaneously, or identifies with someone wildly different from herself, the reaction no longer fits into this account. Unlike the problems with its relevance to dance, this is not a fault of the account's emphasis on the emotions, but rather of the idea that the audience member takes on actual characteristics through identification. If an audience member actually takes on all of a character's characteristics, then she has become that character, and whether or not she is still herself can be called into question. If she is still

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[40] Carroll, *Mass Art*, p. 315.

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herself, and the character with whom she identifies has characteristics contrary to hers, contradictions are bound to arise. If the audience member is a pacifist and the character a warmonger, does she (the identifying audience member) simultaneously endorse and oppose war?

These problems only occur because of the idea that the audience acquires characteristics when they identify. In Gregory Currie's discussion of identification in film, he proposes that identification is an *imagining* of characteristics, rather than an acquisition of them.

> What is required in order to engage in that kind of imaginative identification? At a minimum, the viewer must imagine that what is (fictionally) happening to that character is happening to him or her, and that he or she has the most obvious and dramatically salient attributes of the character at that time.[41]

He makes the distinction between personal imagining, where the audience imagines that they see what a character sees, and impersonal imagining, where the audience does not imagine anything about themselves. In the case of impersonal imagining, no identification occurs, as the audience imagines that an event occurs without imagining observing that event. To imagine seeing something, though - to imagine having someone else's perspective on the world - is what it is for a film audience to identify with a character.[42] For the audience to actually *have* a character's perspective isn't required for identification in Currie's view. All that is required is that they *imagine*

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[41] Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.175.

[42] Currie, *Image and Mind*, p.166.

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having that perspective, and this distinction makes his account of identification less problematic in many ways than the emotion-transfer account.

Under Currie's view, the pacifist audience member who identifies with the warmonger is only *imagining* that she endorses war, which does not create a contradiction with her actual values. Currie's account effectively answers most of Carroll's objections to the emotion-transfer account of identification. Since the audience does not take on the audience's characteristics but only imagines having them, Carroll's assertion that the audience's emotions can only come from themselves is no longer an objection to identification. Since imagining having someone else's values is very different from actually having those values, Carroll's objection that two people with the same values could be said to be identifying with one another no longer applies. And since imagining having someone else's characteristics (even all of them) does not imply literally becoming someone else, his final criticism loses any force it had.

Currie's account is still exclusively about mental characteristics, not physical ones. For him, identification is necessarily tied into an audience member's personality:

> identification, if it is a notion with any content at all, would seem to require the one who identifies to have, or to imagine having, some concern with and sympathy for the values and projects of the one with whom she identifies.[43]

For Currie identification concerns more than the emotions, as it concerns the whole range of things that make up a person's mental workings - their feelings indeed, but also their values, beliefs, morals, fears, and everything else that combine to make up the

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[43] Currie, *Image and Mind*, p.175.

personality of a human being. The only thing it does not concern about a person is his body. This is because Currie's account has the audience taking on the character's point of view, which for him is not only the state of literally seeing from a particular standpoint, but in the case of identification is having a perspective based on mental characteristics.[44] Identification in this view is "taking someone's part" and imagining enough of their mental characteristics to reproduce their point of view. Since the idea of having someone else's point of view is an intrinsic part of Currie's account if identification, and for him "point of view" is based on mental rather than physical characteristics, Currie's account doesn't take into account identification which involves imagining only physical characteristics.

It is possible that his account could be modified to be more relevant to dance - the audience would need to imagine having some of the physical characteristics (as opposed to the 'values and projects') of the person with whom she identifies. Whatever the physical equivalent of Currie's "point of view" is, then, the dance audience would imagine having it. Since Currie distinguishes the "point of view" he is using from a physical interpretation by emphasizing that it is not a "place of physical observation,"[45] making this modification would be a significant change to Currie's account. Currie's idea of imagining characteristics is important for an account of identification which is relevant to dance, but his account, unless significantly modified, is still problematic for this discussion.

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[44] Currie, *Image and Mind*, p.176.

[45] Currie, *Image and Mind*, p.175, note 16.

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The problems for a discussion of dance which are presented by many accounts of identification indicate that, to a great extent, identification is a concept more commonly used in reference to theater, film, and literature than it is to dance. In order for identification to be relevant to dance, accounts of identification meant for discussions of other art forms must be modified, but the basic elements can remain - and must remain, otherwise there would be no reason to call the modified idea 'identification' at all. It seems reasonable to say that identification is, if nothing else, an act of imagination, involving something like empathy, which comes about in response to a piece of art, and generally to a person in a work of art. Within this framework there are many possibilities for what could count as identification. Perhaps identifying with someone can involve the emotions, but does not need to do so. Perhaps one can identify with multiple people simultaneously. Perhaps one could partly identify with someone. While empathy and imagination play an important role in identification, perhaps it is in a broader way than Currie's or Wollheim's ideas take into account.

Berys Gaut gives an account of identification which is broad enough to be relevant to dance, while being specific enough to avoid encompassing all audience experience. He agrees that identification exists, as demonstrated by the 'folk wisdom' of actual audiences, and that the notion merits examination.[46]

> [The] suspicion of the notion of identification by theorists of a cognitivist
> stripe is striking given the widespread use of it in ordinary viewer's
> reports... and indeed of the use of the notion more generally in ordinary

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[46] Berys Gaut, "Identification and Emotion in Narrative Film," *Passionate Views*, ed. Karl Plantinga (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 200.

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life.[47]

Gaut characterizes identification as a complex, empathic audience response involving imagination and emotion. He makes note of the etymological problem which prompts one of Carroll's criticisms - that the root of identification is "to make identical," and that this is far from a usable account of the concept. As "etymology is a bad guide to meaning,"[48] however, there is no reason to consider this a real problem for identification. The real substance of Carroll's objection, though, is that taking on all of someone's characteristics is not at all like what happens when an audience experiences a performance. But if identification is to be a usable concept in discussing audience reaction, it must be something fairly ordinary and common, and less open to the criticism of irrationality.

> Psychoanalytic and Brechtian theories... might naturally hold that just as the viewer is somehow under the illusion that the cinematic events are real, so she is somehow under the illusion that she is the character with whom she identifies. But that would credit the viewer of a film with an extraordinary degree of irrationality.[49]

It is not the irrational audience member who makes the claim to have identified - it is the ordinary viewer, who does not take herself to have made an extraordinary claim. Gaut responds to Carroll's objections by defining identification, like Currie, as an act of imagination. While an audience member who believes herself to actually be a character

[47] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 201.

[48] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 202.

[49] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 202.

is irrational, imagining being that character is a perfectly sane thing to do. Gaut goes

farther to establish identification as an ordinary, rational act but saying that, in

identifying, the audience member is not even imagining that he *is* a character, but rather

imagining himself to be in the character's position.[50]

Defining identification as "imagining being in someone else's situation" still

poses some of the problems suggested by Carroll. 'Someone's situation' could include

a huge amount of information - "not just his contingent properties, but his modal

properties."[51]   If this is the case, identification still seems unlikely to be as common an

audience reaction as use of the phrase 'I identified' implies. The key to Gaut's account,

and what ultimately makes it useful as a general account and also relevant to dance, is

that he introduces the idea that identification is aspectual. He proposes that, since a

person's situation encompasses an unwieldy number of characteristics, and since not

all of someone's characteristics are relevant to the particular situation which prompts

identification, the audience need not imagine having all of them.

It is at this point in his argument that Gaut's account of identification becomes

clearly useful for understanding audiences of dance. Although Gaut is specifically

addressing identification in film, his account needs no significant modification in order

to be relevant to dance. He takes his account to a certain extent from Currie's, agreeing

that imagination can be properly construed as an imagination of another person's

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[50] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 203.

[51] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 204.

situation.[52] However, instead of requiring that the imagination be of the entirety of another person's point of view, Gaut emphasizes that imagining another person's situation only consists in imagining having those characteristics that are relevant to that *particular* situation. It is this emphasis that opens the door to the idea of imagining having physical characteristics. He does not limit identification to the emotional or cognitive: "we should construe the situation of the character in terms of what properties she possesses. Her physical properties include her size, physical position, the physical aspects of her actions, and so on."[53] If the audience who identifies only imagines having the relevant properties of the person with whom he is identifying, then any dance performance is an opportunity for identification. Even in the absence of narrative, characters, or portrayed mental characteristics such as emotions or values, dancers always have physical characteristics. For Gaut, an audience member who says "I identified with X" is saying "I found myself imagining that I was in X's situation." 'Imagining being in X's situation,' then, means 'I imagined that I had some of the characteristics of X, specifically the characteristics relevant to the situation in which I observed X.'

This account of identification has the advantage of adhering quite closely to the common notion used by audiences. Gaut characterizes common use of the term by audiences as a description of them "putting oneself in the character's shoes."[54] His

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[52] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 204.

[53] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 205.

[54] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 202.

account of identification takes that characterization into consideration, and could be summarized by saying that identification is putting (imagining) oneself in the particular pair of shoes the character is wearing at the time identification takes place. Aside from taking into account how audience members use the term, Gaut's account also avoids Carroll's problems with the emotion-transfer account. Most importantly for the argument that it is necessary for an audience member to identify with dancers in order to understand dance, Gaut's account fully includes the imagination of physical and well as mental characteristics, and is not limited by genre of art, as long as the art involves characteristics which the audience can imagine having. It is Gaut's account of identification, therefore, which accompanies the argument that identification is necessary for understanding dance.

Chapter Three

Understanding Meaningful Movement

Dance audiences want to understand the dance they see. The desire to understand dance is no different from the desire to understand any art, and as with any art, there are people who understand it. There are also people who do not understand dance, and those are generally the people who avoid going to see dance works. This is the kind of reaction which creates an atmosphere of elitism and, to a certain extent disdain, for dance - and rightly so. Any audience member who regularly finds that they do not understand an art form would be justified in avoiding it. The audience who does not understand dance is not the audience for whom dancers create their art, and is not an audience who can meaningfully be said to have experienced dance. Sparshott writes that "when, at a dance performance, what I see has no meaning for me - when I can make no sense of it as a dance - then I have not seen a dance."[55] Audience members who understand the dance they see are the ones who will leave actually having seen one.

The difference between those who seek out dance and those who avoid it is mainly a difference in understanding. Dance may have a limited audience, but it does have an audience, and a wildly devoted and appreciative one. While there are those who enjoy dance only as spectacle, many people who are appreciative members of

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[55] Sparshott, *Off the Ground*, p. 364.

dance audiences understand dance.⁵⁶   What, then, is the difference between those who understand dance and those who don't? It is not necessarily true that those who understand dance know more about dance history, or have more dance training themselves. There are those who understand the first dance piece they see, and there are those who after being dragged to their fifteenth ballet still don't see what all the fuss is about. What makes the difference for those who understand dance is that they identify with the dancers as they watch.

Based on Berys Gaut's account of identification and on common themes in various discussions of identification, identification is an empathic imagining, by an audience, of some of another person's characteristics, in particular those aspects of another person which are specific to the piece of art in which they are involved. To imagine having a characteristic is not to actually come to have that characteristic, and is also not to imagine that someone else has it. For a person to imagine a characteristic is for them to imagine having it themselves. This imagining could be a reader's imagining having Tess's despair in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In reading the novel, the reader comes to imagine having the feeling of despair, based on what she has read about Tess's despair - in imagination, she feels despair.   In the same way, a viewer of *Sunset Boulevard* might imagine having Norma's delight at the chance to renew her career - in her imagination, she feels delight.

In identifying with Tess, the reader need not imagine having *all* of Tess's

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⁵⁶ The idea of understanding dance throughout this chapter can be assumed to mean understanding it *as dance.*

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characteristics - for instance, she need not imagine having Tess's sensation of being itchy behind the ears, because that characteristic is not portrayed in the novel. Neither does the film viewer who identifies with Norma Desmond imagine having Norma's midnight anxiety that someone had broken into her home, because this anxiety is not portrayed in the film.

It could be argued that in both of these cases the irrelevant characteristics are not imagined by the audience because they don't exist at all - since the stories are fictional, all of the characteristics portrayed in the story are exactly all of the characteristics specific to the art. This is true, but it is important to note that the irrelevant characteristics are not imagined by the audience. That some characteristics are not mentioned in the work is the reason that they are not relevant. Even if the characters could have characteristics not portrayed in the art (and this could be the case with a character who appears in a series of novels, of which the reader has only read one) those need not be imagined by the reader in order for the reader to have identified with the character.

Identification does not need to involve imagining having every single one of another person's characteristics. This particularly applies to dance, because the dancers are not fictional. They are people outside of being dancers, and they are dancers outside of the particular piece, and they have countless characteristics which are irrelevant to their dancing a particular piece. The only characteristics of a dancer which are relevant to their dancing a particular piece of dance are those movements she is performing in the piece. It is those movements, and nothing else, which the audience

is presumed to imagine making when they identify with the dancer. The audience member might imagine performing Coppelia's mechanical arm movements, but will not imagine having the dancer's worry about finding her children a babysitter for Saturday night.

Identification with a dancer takes place only when an audience member imagines making the movements which the dancer is performing. He may not identify through the whole piece, but he might. He may identify with only one dancer, or with several, although identifying with more than one dancer performing different movements is a problematic idea. Whether or not he can simultaneously imagine making more than one different movement, he can certainly imagine making many movements in extremely quick succession - which may be how he sees the dance piece in any event. Which movements and how many movements the audience member can imagine making is not limited by his actual physical abilities. It is even possible that he could identify with a dancer after the piece is over, imagining making the movements from memory.

In contrast to Plato, Murdoch and Brecht's portrayal of identification as deceptive, selfish and indulgent, Gaut argues that it can be a way of going beyond one's self. For Gaut, coming to a better understanding of other people through identification can be a way of learning from them.

> to learn what it is appropriate to feel, the audience has to be prepared to detect the existence of a counter-perspective to that of the character. But identification functions to drive the lesson home, to show that the values and attitudes under attack are the audience's own, and thus to create the possibility of a real, lived change in their basic commitments. As this possibility illustrates, the Brechtian idea that identification must always function so as to render the audience uncritically receptive to

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conventional values is false.[57]

Gaut's idea that identifying with a character gives the audience a better critical perspective on their own situation certainly shows identification to be more than self-indulgent hero worship. However, gaining this critical perspective is not the only form of learning with which identification can provide an audience. While imagining someone else's characteristics can lead us to see ourselves differently, the most immediate effect is that we see the character differently - and with greater understanding.

This idea that identification can help us to understand others is not limited to art, but has a place in folk psychology as well. In describing the explanation of folk psychology called *simulation theory*, Robert Gordon says that imagining (or simulating) another person's situation is the way to predict his behavior, because simulation can provide knowledge of his beliefs and desires.[58] According to simulation theory, a way to answer the question "what will he do now?" is to ask "in his position, what would I do now?" By asking the question, one prompts a simulation of the other person's situation, and draws conclusions about the other person's intentions for the future:

> for example, chess players report that, playing against a human opponent
> or even against a computer, they visualize the board from the other side,

[57] Gaut, "Identification and Emotion," p. 216.

[58] Robert M. Gordon, "Folk Psychology as Simulation", *Folk Psychology*, eds. Davies and Stone (Oxford : Blackwell, 1995), pp. 60-73.

taking the opposing pieces for their own and vice versa. Further, they pretend that their reasons for action have shifted accordingly... thus transported in imagination, they 'make up their mind what to do.'[59]

There is nothing strange or magical about this process - the chess player is not trying to read his opponent's mind, but is simply using his own mind as a stand-in, and putting himself 'in the other's shoes.' According to simulation theory, there are different levels at which this can be done - I can imagine what I would do if I were in someone else's physical situation, his emotional situation, if I had his memories, his desires, and so on. The chess player, in order to more accurately predict his opponent's moves, might simulate more than just the physical perspective of facing the board from the opposite direction. He would "make not only the imaginative shifts required for predicting 'what I would do in his shoes,' but the further shifts required for predicting what he will do in his shoes."[60] These shifts might involve simulating his opponent's ability, experience, or style of play. The more relevant simulations the chess player performs, the more accurate his predictions will be.

Like Gaut's notion identification, simulation is not an exact process of reproducing someone else's situation *in toto*. While it could be argued that everything about a chess player affects his game, the player who wishes to predict his opponent's moves will not simulate all of these characteristics. For practical reasons, he will simulate those that are the most relevant to chess. There is a significant degree of

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[59] Gordon, Folk Psychology," p. 63.

[60] Gordon, Folk Psychology," p. 70.

fallibility in this process, of course - the opponent may have recently developed new techniques, or be particularly aggressive because of traffic on the way to the game. Simulation theory is not a way to perfectly predict behavior, and because it is limited by what one person can simulate about another, it can't be a way of fully understanding anyone. It can be a way, however, of understanding someone else *in the particular situation in which one is simulating them.* Martin may not really know Jane any better after the chess game, even though he was using simulation to predict her moves. However, he knows her much better *as a chess player.* If a tenant simulates her landlord's situation when deciding whether or not to drill holes in the wall for a new bookshelf, she might imagine that she has a building to look after, and that she pays for the needed repairs, and also she also might imagine that she has the impatience and love of power she has seen her landlord display. She then (while not having any more insight into the landlord as a human being, perhaps) might have a better knowledge of him *as a landlord,* and might choose not to drill the holes.

Simulation theory, then, has three important parallels with Gaut's identification: both simulation and identification involve imagining another person's situation; both simulation and identification are aspectual (not all aspects of the situation are imagined, but only the relevant ones); and both simulation and identification, while inexact and fallible, are acts of imagination which provide an understanding of a person with those particular characteristics. The difference is that while Gaut's concern is how identification can help us to learn about our own situation, simulation theory demonstrates how a very similar process can lead us to better understand someone

else's situation.

Equating identification with simulation makes sense when considering that even Plato takes the audience to be 'reproducing' an actor's state of mind. That identification is a kind of simulation is certainly Currie's view - after all, for him identifying is a 'personal imagining' of another person's situation. Susan Feagin considers empathy for a character to be connected with simulation,[61] and since Gaut calls empathy a type of identification, it becomes clearer that empathy, simulation and identification are very similar concepts. Taking her cue to a certain extent from simulation theory, Feagin considers simulation to be a key to determining whether empathy has given an audience a better understanding of others.[62] For her, understanding involves knowledge, and she believes empathy can sometimes provide that knowledge, and not only because it can be an emotional response.

> Certainly, not all of the emotional and affective responses one has when reading fictional literature count as coming to know what it's like to be or to experience something or other.... But the simulation account at least provides the beginning of a structure for distinguishing cases when one has such knowledge and when one does not.[63]

For Feagin, the knowledge that can be gained through empathy is experiential rather than propositional knowledge. Unlike propositional knowledge, which is knowledge of matters of fact (British Columbia is a province of Canada, 2+2=4), experiential knowledge is knowledge of what it's like to have a particular experience (what it's like to swim, what

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[61] Susan Feagin, *Reading With Feeling* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[62] Feagin, *Reading With Feeling,* p. 85, note 4.

[63] Feagin, *Reading With Feeling,* p. 110.

it's like to be very old). If the knowledge which empathy provides is experiential, this means that it can only be gained through experience. The test for whether or not this knowledge has been gained, then, is whether or not the person who is empathizing is, in fact, simulating another person's experience. If empathy involves simulation, then it can provide knowledge, and since she is in agreement with Gaut that the simulation of another person's characteristics happens by degrees, then this knowledge which is gained through simulation exists by degrees.

> The simulation account thus accommodates the fact that experiential knowledge, unlike propositional knowledge, will be a matter of degree, depending on how closely one simulates the relevant mental processes. To the extent that one's experience is due to the character of the mental processes that do simulate what it is to be such a person or to be in a certain kind of situation, one has knowledge of what it is like.[64]

While on Feagin's account empathy can give the audience knowledge of what it's like to dance, her argument also shows how identification can give them understanding of the dancer's movements. This is because these simulated experiences, which for her are sometimes part of empathizing with a fictional character, are always a part of empathizing with a real person. Feagin believes there is a difference between empathizing with an actual person and empathizing with a fictional character, and that empathizing with a real person always involves simulation. In the case of dance, then, since audience is always empathizing with real people, simulation is always involved in empathy.

Still, there is a difference between simulating a real person's mental or emotional

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[64] Feagin, *Reading With Feeling*, p. 112.

characteristics and simulating their physical ones. Empathy deals strictly with a sharing of emotional experience, and can result in knowledge about feelings - like the knowledge of what it's like to be the person feeling them. While there is no word which corresponds to 'empathy' which deals with a similar sharing of physical experience, there is no reason that such a phenomenon wouldn't have the same effect on understanding physical experiences. Identification and simulation both involve simulating characteristics, but they can be any characteristics, emotional or physical. It is the latter kind of simulation which occurs when an audience identifies with a dancer, since in identifying with a dancer, one simulates those characteristics relevant to their being a dancer, and those characteristics are their physical movements. Gaining understanding of movements through simulating those movements is as straightforward as knowing how someone feels through empathy, although saying 'I understand your feelings' comes much more naturally than saying 'I understand your physical characteristics.' This second kind of understanding must happen in order for the audience to understand dance as dance, and it can happen, as long as the audience is willing to imagine dancing.

When an audience member at a dance performance identifies with one or more dancers, she is responding to the dance as Feagin describes the response of the appreciative literary audience - "experimentation and 'trying things out,' letting the imagination wander, letting the mind shift and slide into different 'gears,' is an essential part of the appreciative process."[65] The audience member lets her imagination take her

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[65] Feagin, *Reading With Feeling*, p. 94.

to a situation in which she is dancing. In doing this, she is simulating characteristics which another person has , characteristics which are specific to the person's being a dancer performing a dance piece. Since any dance piece is, at bottom, physical movements performed by dancers, it is necessary to understand those physical movements as performed by dancers in order to understand the dance. The more an audience member understands the movement in a piece, the more she understands the piece. The movements and the dance are one and the same, and since movement can only be understood through experience, the audience member must have an experience of the movement in order to understand the dance. The only way to understand movement, other than by actually being the person performing the movement, is to imagine performing it. In a way, it would be wrong to say that identification is the only way to understand dance - being the dancer works just as well. However, assuming the dancer isn't considered a member of the audience of his own dance, identification is the only way for a member of the audience to understand it, because it is only through imagination that they can have an experience of dancing.

An interesting objection to the idea that identification has anything at all to do with understanding dance is that identification of this sort is actually a common, purely physical, neurological reaction. Barbara Montero argues, based on the idea of 'mirror neurons,' that a dance audience experiences a dancer's movement proprioceptively, and thus to a certain extent 'feel' the dance as well as seeing and hearing it.[66] Mirror

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[66] Barbara Montero, "Proprioception as an Aesthetic Sense" (unpublished manuscript, 2001).

neurons, discovered in research monkeys, are neurons which are activated in monkeys who observe physical actions, and are the same neurons which would be activated if the monkey itself performed the action. This phenomenon, according to Montero, also happens in dance audiences. She presents the claim that "Proprioception... may enable us to perceive, via the activation of mirror neurons, aesthetic qualities of the movements of others."[67]

While not a simulation of another person's emotional or psychological position, proprioceptively feeling a dancer's movements could be described as simulating the dancer's physical position, which would be the same thing as physical identification on Gaut's account. Montero's idea that proprioception is a function of mirror neuron activity implies that proprioception happens to everyone when they see another person moving, and the problem is that this would imply that all dance audiences identify with dancers. This, then, would imply that *everyone* understands dance as dance. Since *this* is certainly not true, this could mean that understanding of dance does not come from identification alone.

However, just because seeing movement performed activates the same neurons as performing those movements one's self, the conclusion cannot be drawn that the activation of those neurons constitutes the kind of simulation required for identification. Identification requires that the audience member imagine that he is performing the movement he sees, not just that he imagine the movement being performed. The mirror-neurons which are activated in the audience are presumably

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[67] Montero, "Proprioception," page 11.

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activated when they imagine *anyone* performing movement, so there must be something besides mirror-neuron activation which distinguishes imagining performing movement one's self from imagining the movement performed by someone else. While identification may involve or provoke the activation of mirror neurons, there is no reason to conclude that all mirror neuron activity indicates identification. Identification does *not* happen to all audience members, because one audience member may imagine herself dancing while another does not. As a result, not everyone understands dance.

There are three other objections which can be made to the claim that identification is required for an audience to understand dance as dance. First, it might be claimed that there is another, more straightforward way for the dancer to tell the audience the meaning of the dance piece. Perhaps the dancer could simply tell them what it is like - if he understands the dance, and wants the audience to understand it, why not tell them what it means instead of having them go through an imprecise and seemingly complex process of simulation? In response to this objection, an appeal could be made to the very nature of art and its content. The content of art is expressed through art because it is the best (and perhaps the only) way of expressing that content. No work of art can be summed up by description, as this would eliminate the value of actually experiencing the art. The real reason this objection fails, however, is that it forgets what the meaning of dance is. The meaning of dance is not only expressed through movement, it is movement. The audience does not see through the movement to the meaning, nor does the movement unveil the meaning hidden behind it. The movement *is* the meaning - put crudely, the gesture of an arm raised means 'the

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gesture of an arm raised.' To ask the dancer to explain the meaning is to ask them to perform the movement. In fact, if asked, this is what a dancer might do, in the same way as Schumann once responded to young musicians who wanted him to explain the meaning of a piece:[68]

> Schumann had played a difficult, difficult étude, and some of the younger
> people who were working with him and some of his friends who had heard
> it said 'look, this is terribly difficult. Can you explain it?', and he said 'Oh
> yes, oh yes I can." And he sat down and played it again.[69]

If understanding a dance piece requires understanding the movements performed by the dancer dancing that piece, then another objection arises - why isn't the best means of understanding a dance piece to actually dance those movements? Why bother with imagining a dancer's physical movements when one could actually do the movements and thus understand them? First of all, because one often can't. Dancers' bodies are trained to a degree beyond those of most audience members, and as a result much of the physical movement in a dance piece could not be achieved by the audience. A trained dancer might find this a good way of understanding a piece - and dancers do, after seeing a piece, often go back to their studios and dance the movements they saw - quite possibly in an effort to better understand those movements. However, most audience members can only experience the movement of

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[68] This implies, of course, that in the case of music the meaning is the sounds. This seems completely plausible to me.

[69] George Steiner, quoting Schumann in an interview with Eleanor Wachtel for CBC Radio, *Original Minds* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2003), pp. 97-127.

dance by way of their imaginations, and this is why the audience must identify with the dancers in order to understand the piece. The objection that actually dancing is a better way to understand dance than identification does not fail completely, then, but it is not applicable to most audience members.

The power of imagination to produce understanding is important in answering the third objection, which is that those who have no background in dance cannot possibly imagine the movements that a trained dancer performs. This is only true if imagination is simply a form of memory and has no creative function. If a woman on a cold winter day who imagines being on a beach in Spain is only drawing on her past experiences of being on a beach in Spain, then she is limited to imagining only things she has already experienced - and if she's never been to Spain, she has no way of going there in her imagination.

This is not how imagination works, though - imagination is just that faculty which gives a person access to experiences he has never had. Geraldine Silk, a dancer and dance educator, describes imagining difficult dance long before she could actually perform it:

> My earliest memory of experiencing a ballet probably occurred at the age
> of four, watching Balanchine's New York City Ballet... When I saw their
> rippling muscles, I felt every nuance of movement: the triple *fouetées*
> (turns), the *arabesque penchée* (high leg extension), the leaps through
> space, being caught on her partner's shoulder, I identified with the
> movement. Even though I had not yet danced these steps or danced *en
> pointe*, my kinesthetic awareness was so acute as to imagine and feel the
> dancer flying through the air, landing on her partner's shoulder, raising
> her leg in a stylish *attitude*, even though my legs were not as long or
> highly trained as hers, nor did I then have the same technical skill. To this

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day, I am still able to *feel* that dance.[70]

What Silk calls 'kinesthetic awareness' is not skill or training, but a willingness to imagine her body to be a creative force. In this same way, an audience member at a dance performance who has never danced may have a wonderfully vivid imagination of making the movements he sees, especially if the dance inspires him. Because identification is an act of imagination, it opens the door for anyone to identify with dancers, just so long as they are willing to imagine dancing. Even those who have been paralyzed from birth may imagine dancing, as they are free in their imaginations to be as graceful and skillful as the most highly-trained ballerina.

The only barrier facing those who do not have dance training or who are physically incapable of dance is that, because they have no memories of actually performing the movements they are imagining, they may not know whether they understand those movements or not. But for identification to be necessary for understanding does not require that the audience know that they understands; it only requires that they understand. There is no reason why the non-dancer can't imagine dancing, and imagine it well. They may very well imagine performing something very close to the dance they see, and the closer they come, the better they understand the dance. Imagining performing the dance she sees is all that is needed for an audience member to understand dance as dance - knowing that she understands is an entirely

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[70] Geraldine Silk, "Dance, the Imagination, and Three-Dimensional Learning" <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/books/SILK.pdf>.

different thing. If everyone who understood art knew that they understood it, there might be more irritatingly smug people in galleries and theatres, but there would be no increase in genuinely appreciative audience members.

One of the goals of those who pursue art is to understand it. Understanding art can be interpreted as coming to a better understanding art, whatever that understanding may mean. Understanding dance *as dance* is understanding physical movement as performed by dancers. Since understanding movement is experiential understanding, simulating the experience of dancing through their imaginations is the only way for the audience to understand the dance. Assuming Sparshott's definition of dance as a creative physical act whose meaning is movement, and assuming Gaut's account of identification as a simulation, through imagination, of some of another person's characteristics, only an audience who identifies with the dancers can understand the meaning of the piece *as dance*.

Conclusion

Consequences for Dancers, Choreographers, and the Audience

Only an audience member who identifies with the dancers performing a dance piece can understand that piece *as dance*. Understanding dance as dance is possible for all dance audiences, and is something it is in every dance audience member's interest to do. It is possible for every one of them because identification is accessible to everyone who possesses an imagination. It is in the interest of audience members because it not only gives them a better understanding of particular dance pieces, but also opens up the possibility of seeing more dance, understanding more dance, and having the opportunity to enjoy more dance, more deeply. Understanding dance is an enjoyable and rewarding experience, as an audience who identifies with dancers gets to be involved in a personal way in the creative act of dancing. As they imagine that they feel, with the dancers, what it is like to create dance, and to express whatever is being expressed, they get a glimpse of the joy of dancing.

If a person finds dance rewarding because they have understood it as dance, then they will seek out that understanding again and again. In addition to their understanding of particular instances of dance, they will also be more appreciative of dance in general. This feeling of being involved in a creative act applies equally to people with a variety of dance backgrounds. For those who have trained as dancers, identifying with dancers in performance is a reminder of the possibility of creativity and expression opened up by dance. If they have loved dancing, they may find that love

renewed, and if they have had an unpleasant or unfulfilling experience as a dancer, they may find themselves recognizing the creative power of dance despite the past. If the audience has never danced, they may find something entirely new - a glimpse of what Sparshott calls the self-transformation of being a dancer.[71] Imagining the movement of the dancers she sees is the only way that the audience member who has never danced can have this glimpse of self-transformation, and it is this that makes her the sort of audience member who pursues and loves dance performances.

Sparshott doesn't think this self-transformation can be experienced by the untrained audience,[72] but his objection doesn't take into account the experiences which imagination can provide even for those who do not dance themselves. Although he says that for a person who is not trained in dance "to imagine himself doing such things [is] painful and ludicrous", he admits that his objection may be based on "literal crudities," and that the idea of audience members experiencing the self-transformation of dance "remains at the wings of the theatre of the mind, awaiting its cue."[73] By tying understanding dance to identifying with dancers, this idea is brought out from the wings and gives dance audiences a remarkable opportunity. Through identification, the audience *can* have a taste of dancing, and through that taste gain more than an understanding of a particular dance piece. They can gain the possibility of knowing the joy of dancing for themselves.

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[71] Sparshott, Off the Ground, pp. 204-208.

[72] Sparshott, Off the Ground, p. 356.

[73] Sparshott, Off the Ground, p. 356.

This possibility gives dance audiences a reason to want to understand dance as dance (and therefore to identify with dancers) and after having understood some dance it may motivate them to attend more dance. But for the audience to want to understand dance does not, in itself, promote understanding. The blame for the notion that dance is difficult to understand and not enjoyable to watch ought not to be placed entirely in the hands of dance audiences, but also in the hands of dancers and choreographers. After all, identification is not entirely a choice - it would be unusual for someone to actively choose to identify with a character in a book or film, and it would be strange to expect dancers to choose to identify with dancers. In other art forms, identification is assumed to be a spontaneous reaction - if a member of a theatre audience goes to the theatre intending to imagine Oedipus' grief, then even if he does identify, his identification will most likely be superficial and not add to his experience of watching the play. When an audience member finds herself identifying with someone, it is when that someone does something for her, sparks her imagination somehow, and dancers can do that for dance audiences - even (or especially) when the audience doesn't expect them to.

If identification is to be part of understanding and appreciating dance, it is important that the identification happen *to* the audience, putting the onus on the artists to provoke it. This doesn't mean that dancers and choreographers need to do anything that they aren't already doing, for the most part. Any dance which has meaning *as dance* has the potential to be understood *as dance*, and meaningful movement is the sort of movement which inspires the imagination. This is, after all, what Sparshott

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means when he calls dance meaningful movement - he means that it is movement that attracts a certain kind of attention. For movement to be meaningful means that it has properties that provoke and sustain imagination, which is what dance needs to do in order to inspire identification. Since according to Sparshott, if it isn't meaningful, it isn't dance, then all dance can inspire the audience to identify with the dancers. One wonders, then, why more dance audiences don't identify with dancers. Even if some audience members don't want to understand dance, if dance by its very nature provokes the imagination, why aren't those audience members identifying in spite of themselves?

An audience member who truly doesn't care to understand a dance piece can't be made to understand it, no matter how inspiring the movement may be. Still, there are countless audience members who are somewhere in between being bewildered and appreciative, and they may very well want to understand dance but do not find themselves identifying with dancers. Perhaps the key to fostering understanding of dance as dance is to separate meaningful movement from that which masquerades as dance but has no meaning as dance. Audience members may be going to see what they expect to be dance, but what they actually attend turns out to be movement without meaning, and they find themselves disappointed, and certainly not inspired to identify with the dancers they see. It would be unfair to list shows which may be considered dance but have no dance meaning, but shows of this sort certainly exist and stand in the way of audiences becoming genuinely appreciative of dance.

The responsibility for creating a wide and appreciative audience for dance is

twofold. The audience must be willing to identify with dancers, and this may be a stretch for those who not only do not think of themselves as dancers, but think of themselves as distinctly non-dancers. Still, only dance which has meaning as dance, sparks the imagination, and leads the audience to imagine dancing, can be understood as dance. This is not a difficult task for dance which does have meaning as dance, but dance whose purpose is to emphasize skill may be more likely to point out to the audience that they do not have that skill than they are to inspire them to imagine dancing. Many a dance audience member leaves a performance with the impression of having seen a particularly impressive athletic event - and thinking 'I could never do that.' While athleticism has its place in dance, and there can be elements of skill-emphasizing in wonderful dance, impressing the audience should not be the point of dancing. The audience who walks away from a great painting feeling like he is a bad painter has missed the point, and so it is with dance. Dance can expand its limited audience as long as that which is dancelike but not dance doesn't turn audiences away from meaningful movement, and as long as dancers and choreographers maintain a commitment to producing art and not athletics. On the part of the audience member, all that is required is that she arrive at a performance with a mind open to seeing herself as a dancer, if only on the inside.

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