

Review Essay

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Pegge Vissicaro, *Studying Dance Cultures Around the World: An Introduction to Multicultural Dance Education*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa. 171 pages, including 50 photographs, 8 maps, "Notes" at the end of each chapter and further pages of Discussion Questions/Statements and (suggested) Creative Projects. There is a list of Works Cited (pp. 153-156), and a Selected Bibliography (pp. 157-160), including Online Databases/Libraries and Videos. There are no Indexes. ISBN 0-7575-1352-2. Hardback: none; Paperback; \$ 39.95 (US).

I am convinced that the kinds of ideas and practices that *Studying Dance Cultures* advocates (and will perpetuate) will ultimately do more harm than good to the struggling fields of anthropology of the dance and the anthropology of human movement studies, neither of which are dealt with (or even mentioned) in the text. I am also convinced that the kinds of study proposed by Vissicaro risks misunderstanding and, ultimately, subtle forms of oppression of the peoples represented by the dances chosen for study.

The first criticism consists of the lack of any acknowledgement on the part of the author and the author's mentor (Joann Keali'inohomoku), that there are serious efforts being made to study dances in anthropology, and that an abundance of texts, theories and field studies exist that are ignored in this book, although Vissicaro does present a weak disclaimer about "other scholarship" in the preface: "There are many important scholars whose contributions have provided a strong foundation for dance cultural study. Some of the work by individuals not discussed in the text is compiled in a selected bibliography intended to direct students and teachers towards other excellent research" (page vii). I suggest that the compiled bibliography does *not* do this, and that teachers and students are either going to be overwhelmed by the bibliography as it stands, or (more probably), will ignore it.

The second criticism is voiced by Keali'inohomoku in her Foreword when she describes the plight of university and college teachers who are assigned to teach subjects they know nothing about or "for which the preparation is inadequate" (page x)—a severe indictment of university departments, one would have thought. However, she cites this book as a "lifeline" for such teachers. If the book were about dance *appreciation* on a worldwide basis, one would have fewer reservations, but Vissicaro attempts much more than that. The book is supposed to open "new avenues of thought" regarding "serious studies of dance cultures," providing students with "study tools," that will make "their journey . . . a fascinating and rewarding experience"—instead of teaching them anything about what the study of dances really involves. The superficiality of the whole enterprise is inexcusable, but, in the interests of filling in a gap:

although members of other disciplines (in particular the humanities, aesthetics, and literature) might look down their noses at those of us in anthropology who claim to have devoted more time and thought to this orphan child of human movement studies (Williams 1982), it is we, more than anyone, who, during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, have tried to bring together the vast amount of material on the dance (e.g. Royce 1977). Although we cannot yet arrive at a consensus as to the best theoretical and methodological approaches to take to the study of this most complex of all human activities, we possess among us a growing body of defined and definable subject matter that, however inadequate, has served since the mid-1960s to stimulate further study and examination at a graduate intellectual level and beyond. I have in mind here the impact of the works of Adrienne Kaeppler (1972, 1978, 1985, 1986, 1997[1985], and 2000), Joann Keali'inohomoku (1970a, 1976, 1979, 1980, and 1997[1980]), Judith Lynne Hanna (1965a, 1965b, 1976, 1979), Suzanne Youngerman (1974 and 1998), LeeEllen Friedman (1995), Jill Sweet (1980 and 1985), and myself. It may be that in future our contributions will be found wanting, but they are currently playing their parts in the history of thought about the subject of dance and human movement studies, as are the works of three philosophers: Susanne Langer (1951[1942], 1953, and 1957), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1966 and 1983), and David Best (1974, 1978, 1982, 1985 and 1993). (Williams 2004a: 5).

The above list is offered to give readers some indication of where (and with whom) an "anthropology of the dance" began as an academic discipline in this country. It does not, of course, take account of developments in the field before and after 2000, notably, Williams (1996, 2000, 2004a and 2004b), Farnell (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 1999a and 1999b), Franken (1991, 1996, 2000 and 2002), and Glasser (1996), plus the many authors represented in the *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement* [JASHM], which has now been in print since 1980—twenty five years. The bibliography attached to this review is meant to emphasize some of the "excellent research" that has been undertaken (not as a foundation for studying dance cultures) that does not appear in Vissicaro's book.

Throughout her Preface, Vissicaro emphasizes self-study, personal experience and interaction, and *movement* interaction, telling us that "Having movement experiences is a fundamental part of learning about dance" (page vii), but she never tells her readers *why* this is the case with reference to studying the dances of other cultures. She seems unaware of the possible negative effects that studying the dances of other people can have—especially attempts to replicate complex ceremonies and rituals—telling us that "People are recognizing and valuing cultural study as a skill that encourages greater acceptance towards those practicing different customs and traditions, which may lead to more benevolent relations between all humans" (page viii).

Students will leave Vissicaro's course with false ideas of the history of combined studies of anthropology and the dance, mainly because her proposed field of "dance cultural studies" is presented as though it is unproblematic and without serious issues attending it. Keali'inohomoku, in her Foreword, mentions one of the problems when she observes, "*But learning new performance forms does not guarantee the understanding and appreciation of the dance cultures that fostered those forms.* That is where courses in dance theory, history and philosophy became especially important" (page x—italics added). Neither does seeing different dance forms on video-tapes or DVDs guarantee

understanding or appreciation, far less trying to perform them, which is more likely to guarantee misconceptions. The Hopi Snake dance is a classic example:

Ethnographers "saved" the Snake dance, in part, by rendering it as a text. To make their texts, ethnographers, the writers of culture, used the tools of [conventional] literacy and image making: paper, pens, pencils, paints, cameras, and phonographs. They published their findings in books and journals, in which Hopi culture appeared as bits of data, artifacts, ruins---collected for study and display (Fabian 1983: 120). But in this textualization, the presence of the Hopis was lost. *Hopis did not exist as subjects but as objects of exchange or as signifiers available for moral and allegorical interpretation* (Clifford 1986: 113 - italics added). By positing a disappearing Indian, the ethnographic representations of the Snake dance seemed to serve the interests of Indian assimilation through "civilization." (Dilworth 1992: 25).

It is important to draw attention to the facts that 1. the "textualization" described in Dilworth's account *loses the Hopi presence* and 2. these people became signifiers for the ethnographers' moral and allegorical interpretations, *not* the Hopi's interpretations of their dances and ceremonies.

Vissicaro will doubtless be shocked and surprised to hear that I think the modes of representation that will be used in her classes, i.e. the attempts to perform unfamiliar dances, the emphases on "personal experience and interaction" and "self study" (*not* study of the dances) will result in various forms of oppression of the peoples whose dances are chosen, i.e.

Caught in the flurry of ethnographic, artistic, literary and touristic interest in the Snake dance, Hopis quickly discovered that the proliferation of representations was just as threatening to their cultural practices as government schools, land allotment, and missionaries. By the early 1920s they had forbidden sketching and taking photographs of the ceremony, and eventually they closed it to outsiders altogether (Dilworth 2002: 454).

Perhaps the greatest objection to Vissicaro's book is that it tends to commodify the dances of other peoples:

At the same time that Hopis began closing the Snake dance to photographers, in Prescott, Arizona, a facsimile of the ceremony was being performed by the Smokis, a secret society of Anglo businessmen and professionals.¹ In 1921 they performed it as part of the city's Way Out West celebration, an exercise in civic boosterism. In 1924 the June Snake dance of the Smokis became an annual event . . . The Smokis are part of a long tradition of American fraternal and sororal organizations engaged in "playing Indian," appropriating and reenacting various Native American cultural practices (Rayna Green 1988; Deloria 1998). The literature the Smokis published about themselves claimed that "shrouded in the anonymity of authentic Indian dress [they] lose their identity and shed their personality of the White Man in faithful interpretations of age-old dances of their Indian neighbors" (Parker 1941: 1, cited in Dilworth 2002: 486).

But the most important part of Dilworth's analysis with reference to Vissicaro's suggested format for studying dance cultures comes after those comments:

As much as the Smoki rhetoric emphasized the authenticity and seriousness of their performances, *they did not show respect for Hopi beliefs or cosmology*, and the performances were, in fact, comic turns; as respectable members of the business elite, the Smokis played at being inferior savages. The Smokis eventually performed other Native American rituals, but that the Snake dance was the first is telling. It was the

most celebrated ritual of the Southwest and also apparently the most primitive, the most *other*. To be able to “be” this most extreme other demonstrated the power of the performer. The Indian became entirely appropriable and controlled by the performer. As if they were bringing an ethnographic exhibit to life, the Smokis literally inhabited the space of the vanished Indian. However, as in minstrelsy, one of the problems with the Smokis’ appropriation and performance was that Hopis had not vanished . . . (Dilworth 2002: 486, italics added).

I would want Vissicaro carefully to read the Appendix, entitled “An Exercise in Applied Personal Anthropology,” of my recent book:

The desire to study social anthropology crystallized because, while in Ghana [in the late ‘60s], *I realized that what I did was amateur anthropology*; that is, the study of dances on their own, conceived of as isolated social phenomena or conceived as “special” activities having a privileged place in the total scheme of things . . . While in Ghana my main concern was with learning some Ghanaian dances and attempting to absorb, insofar as I was then capable, elements of societies quite different from my own. The interest in West African dancing had been awakened some years before, through intensive study with Pearl Primus and Percival Borde in New York City between 1956 and 1961. I arrived in Ghana having had extensive study and performing experience in four idioms of dancing, three years of undergraduate philosophy and aesthetics, many years of teaching experience—and boundless energy and enthusiasm . . . *It would be difficult to assess, now, which was the greater: the enthusiasm or my naiveté.* Fortunately, both were exceeded by the patience generosity and hospitality of my many teachers in several parts of Ghana and the Ivory Coast. If truth in communication had depended entirely on their good will, there would be no need to write this essay. If the accuracy of verbal reports of dance events and experience depended solely on the desire to learn or the willingness to teach, there would be few, if any, problems of communication. But as I tried to learn from them and tried to record the dance events in which I had participated, I slowly realized that *I did not know how to translate any of the experience—my own or theirs—into any other terms or any other system or mode of expression* (Williams 2004a: 233-34—italics added).

It is difficult for me to assess the extent of Vissicaro’s naiveté, which seems to parallel my own years ago (in which case, her naiveté is enormous), as I know from my own experience.

While I can understand Vissicaro’s situation and her desire to help teachers and students live in a multicultural world, I know there are other ways of approaching the subject that would be more beneficial and lead to far fewer misconceptions. For example, in a semester-long course, it would be possible to begin by acquainting students with a few “home truths” such as Kaepler points out:

Current anthropological concerns include ritual, genes, the body, cognition, identity, the negotiation of tradition, performance, aesthetics and turning the anthropological eye to our own society—concerns often addressed by dance and human movement researchers. Those studying movement systems in the field can contribute to these anthropological concerns, but only if they have the theoretical background and knowledge about fieldwork methods before becoming a stranger abroad looking for systems (Kaepler 1999: 24).

In addition, students might be encouraged, with Farnell, to recognize the *limits* of observation and experience:

Let us start from the semasiological premise that human bodily movement, or ‘action-sign systems’,ⁱⁱ in addition to providing the physical means for embodied activity in

the world, are simultaneously a dynamic expressive medium used by embodied persons for the construction and negotiation of meaning. From an anthropological perspective, the meanings of perceivable actions involve complex intersections of personal and cultural values, beliefs and intentions, as well as numerous features of social organization.

It is social taxonomies of the body and the semantics attached to space and time, as they emerge in specific cultural contexts and historical moments, that create, and are created by, the signifying person (Farnell 1995b: 2).

Such culture-specific resources are 'invisible' in the sense that they cannot be ascertained or understood simply by watching people move.

Neither can they simply be 'experienced' through active participation. Since action-signs require translation from one culture to another, two important points emerge: (i) actions that might look the same will not mean the same across cultural and linguistic borders, unless borrowed, and (ii) what will be experienced through participation is necessarily filtered through the semantics and structure of the bodily language(s) one already knows, one's general cultural and linguistic background, and one's imagination. Attempts to perform unfamiliar action signs—a new idiom of dance, say, or a martial art—will, at first, be crude imitations without comprehension, not unlike pronouncing the words of a spoken language one does not understand. However skillfully copied, without understanding the concepts of the body and space/time specific to that system, such imitations remain devoid of their intended meaning and so cannot provide the 'same' experience for an outsider as they do for a knowledgeable insider (Farnell 1999a: 148).

Such insights as those already documented would direct a "beginner's text" in studies of the dances of the world into a definite "appreciation mode" instead of a "beginning research" mode. Students will find that they will have to relearn and/or *unlearn* nearly everything they have "experienced" via Vissicaro's book if they attempt to go into anthropology from there. See Kaeppler (1999: 20-21), for specific reasons why anthropological participant-observation, for example, is completely different from the sorts of observation of tapes, videos and DVDs and participation in classes that Vissicaro suggests.

To complete this part of the criticism, I have singled out one "Note" from chapter 12 ("Dance Descriptors") as an example of the theoretical muddles that *Studying Dance Cultures* represents:

10. Movement research is mostly the domain of anthropologists, ethnochoreologists, sociologists, psychologists, physiologists, and other scientists/scholars. A few of the major contributors not mentioned in the text book but whose work informs the use of techniques for understanding and describing movement are Ray Birdwhistell, F. Matthias Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Gertrude Kurath, Lulu Sweigard, Mabel Todd, and Barbara Clark (Vissicaro 2004: 145).

This mixture of people, explanatory theories, practices and approaches to the study of human movement is mind-boggling! One or several books could be written about them, but some books *have* been written (significantly, not cited), so that students can learn what these people had to say for themselves, but lumped together as "illustrious names" leaving their real contributions to readers' and students' imaginations. Some examples are Birdwhistell (1970), discussed in Williams (2004a: 152-53 and 187); Kurath (1960), discussed in Williams (2004a: 112-13, 131, 139-143), Sweigard (1974), to be discussed in depth in a forthcoming book by Williams *Ideokinesis and Dancing*, (Human

Kinetics, Urbana Illinois), along with the works of Mabel Todd and Barbara Clark (see Matt 1993). Suffice to say here that Sweigard's biological, anatomical approach to the human body does not (because it cannot) explain human *actions* and their significance.

The point of Vissicaro's Note 10, we find, is to illustrate the comment: "We launch our discussion about micro features [of dance events] by recognizing Laban, as well as other pioneers of nonverbal behaviour and communication research. The collective insight of these individuals provides a conceptual model and taxonomy from which to describe dance" (followed by Note 10), but Laban himself is not cited in "Works Cited" or in the "Selected Bibliography"—nor is Anne Hutchinson's textbook about learning Labanotation cited.

As Alice said about the looking glass, "curiouser and curiouser," yet, in the works of serious scholars, e.g., Durr (1981a), Durr and Farnell (1981b), and Farnell (1985, 1989, 1994, 1996b) movement writing and its implications for movement and dance research is discussed in depth (not, by the way, as "nonverbal behavior," outdated terms that betray the author's lack of theoretical sophistication).

Readers may well wonder about the form, contents and purpose of *Studying Dance Cultures*. The book is divided into four parts, 1. "Dance as Orientation" has three chapters: (1) "Multicultural Dance Education;" (2) "Humanities and the Dance;" and (3) "The Comparative Framework" together comprising 34 pages of the text. Each chapter in each section is divided into smaller parts. For example, Chapter 2 has an "Introduction" (page 13), followed by "Minimal Definitions" (page 13), "Humanities" (page 13), "Anthropology" (page 14) and "Dance" (page 15); "Summary" (page 16); "Notes" (page 16); "Discussion Questions/Statements" (page 17), and "Creative Projects" (page 19). It may be worth examining some of the sections, thus answering the question, "What kind of information is given in this book?"

In general, each page of the book has two columns of print, thus the three photographs of Franz Boas, Gertrude Kurath and Joanne Keali'inohomoku (pages 14-15), take up approximately one and a half columns of text that starts with a simplistic dictionary definition of "anthropology," saying that "Franz Boas . . . provided the elemental components for building a theoretical foundation for cultural anthropological study" (page 14). Most histories of anthropology attribute "elemental components," such as a definition of "culture" and the scope of the study to E. B. Tylor (1878). We are also told that Boas's work "situated dance research in the social sciences, as a serious academic study" and that "in a lecture presented at a 1942 seminar, directed by Boas's daughter Franziska, he elaborated on ideas in which he observed . . . "every aspect of Kwakiutl life is accompanied by some form of dance, from the cradle to the grave" (Franziska Boas (1972[1944], cited in Vissicaro 2004: 14). On the other hand, why aren't students told that

Kaeppler offers an assessment of Franz Boas's work, which is more important for the study of dance in an anthropological perspective [than the work of Curt Sachs 1937], "although he did not really address himself to the subject." Boas's theoretical

orientation offers scope for analyzing the dance as culture, rather than using the dance to “fit theories and generalizations” which is what we have seen so many authors do so far.

Boas felt that man had a basic need for order and rhythm—a need which Boas used to help explain the universal existence of art. By refusing to accept sweeping generalizations that did not account for cultural variability, he laid a foundation for the possibility of examining dance and responses to it in terms of one’s own culture rather than as a universal language. In spite of Boas and others, however, the idea that dance (or art) can be understood cross-culturally without understanding an individual dance tradition in terms of the cultural [and linguistic] background of which it is a part, is not yet dead, especially among artists and dancers (Kaeppler 1978: 33, cited in Williams 2004a: 81).

In the end, Boas tended toward the idea that music and dancing had to be looked for in situations (notably connected with war and religion) that were highly emotional (Boas 1938: 607). However, his approach

stressed the learned, culture-specific nature of body movement. He recognized that artistic form and cultural patterning were present not only in Native American dances, but also in the complex hand gestures and other body movements that accompanies song, oratory, and the performance of oral literature. Despite this, Boas chose to exclude “gesture-language” from his influential Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, limiting his consideration to “communication by groups of sounds produced by the articulating organs [of mouth and tongue].” Boas thus inadvertently set the pattern for the exclusion of body movement from American linguistic anthropology. Subsequent research became focused on a rather narrow conception of spoken language structure (Farnell 1996a: 536, cited in Williams 2004a: 81).

Next, from a citation of Allegra Fuller Snyder (1992), we learn that Gertrude Kurath began her career as a dance ethnologist in 1946, and that she coined the term “ethnochoreology,” making it synonymous with “dance ethnology” (Kurath 1960). Students are not told that Kurath’s theory was functionalist (see Williams 2004a: 105-113, including a section on dance ethnology), nor are they referred to Buckland (1995) for current views on ethnochoreology by European and east European ethnographers.

But, having been treated to one-dimensional definitions of anthropology (page 14) and dance ethnology (page 15), Chapter 2 (“Humanities and Dance”) finishes with an old definition of “dance” taken from Keali’inohomoku’s doctoral thesis that “provides us with [a] definition, which we will refer to through our text because of its universal application to all forms of dance” (page 14). The problem is that *no definition of “dance” enjoys universal application.*

There is little anthropological reason for classing together the Japanese cultural form called *mikagura* performed in Shinto shrines, the cultural form called *buyo* performed within (or separated from) a Kabuki drama, and the cultural form commonly known as *bon*, performed to honor the dead. The only logical reason I can see for categorizing them together is that from an outsider’s point of view, all three cultural forms use the body in ways that to Westerners would be considered dance. But from a [Japanese] cultural point of view either of movement or activity there is little reason to class them together. Indeed, as far as I have been able to discover, there is no Japanese word that will class these three cultural forms together that will not also include much of what from a Western point of view would not be considered “dance” (Kaeppler 1978: 46, cited in Williams 2004a: 56).

The Summary for Chapter 2 is in four sentences: "There is tremendous rationale for including multicultural dance education within humanities curricula. First, it focuses on understanding dance as human phenomenon, which reveals the human condition. Humanities studies also provide a link to cultural anthropology, emphasizing shared knowledge systems that guide behavior, such as dance. Finally, anthropological theory informs the development of a universal definition that offers a holistic view for understanding all dance" (page 16). Sad to say, Vissicaro did not do her homework, and because she didn't, her students cannot reasonably be expected to do more or better.

Each chapter in Vissicaro's book ends with Discussion Questions/Statements. It is important, perhaps, to look at three questions for Chapter 2:

1. Do you agree with Keali'inohomoku's statement suggesting that dance is only a human phenomenon? Why or why not?

Comment: This is an extremely difficult question that brings up long-standing, on-going arguments in anthropology and other disciplines, mainly about the "science-religion" debates that accompanied evolutionary controversies at the turn of the 20th century (see Williams 2004: 87-89). It opens a "tin of worms" that has no foundation, guidance or preparation in the text that precedes (or follows) it, so, one wonders what students are meant to do with the question?

2. In your own words, how would you describe the field of humanities to an 8th grade student? To a 3rd grade student? To a peer? Compare the words and approach you use to explain what humanities is to these different people.

Comment: The definition of humanities given "broadly refers to discovering knowledge about human nature. Humanities study explores traits, qualities, feelings, thoughts, actions, interests, and values of people as well as their interrelations. From the Latin, *humanus*, humanities are clearly rooted in understanding the human condition" (page 13). Following this, the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act is quoted, and the next paragraph talks about the National Endowment for the Humanities.

As for the question itself, one wonders why one would want to produce descriptions of the field of humanities for 3rd graders or 8th graders, unless one were asked by specific children in specific contexts for such descriptions.

6. Design your own definition of dance. Compare your ideas with one or two other students and discuss what is or is not dance. Then collectively construct a definition of dance that reveals your shared understanding.

Comment: The objectionable nature of this question is that it assumes that attempts to create universal definitions of "dance" are both possible and desirable.

Under "Creative Projects" for this chapter, there are three suggestions, one pertaining to "Role Playing, one to "Grant Design," and one to "Curriculum Awareness," where (with regard to role-playing) the student is meant to imagine him or herself as a choreologist who has received a grant to study dance "among one group of people somewhere in the world. However you do not speak their language and will need to hire an interpreter to interview the

group's leader. What would be the first question that you ask and why? If you could ask only three questions, what would they be? Explain."

All the chapters in *Studying Dance Cultures* follow the same format. The content of the chapters is consistently a hodge-podge of ideas, most of them taken from anthropology, many of them misrepresented. For example, in Chapter 3 ("The Comparative Framework") we find an attempt to deal with theory, in that the author tells us what she has learned about "cross-cultural study," "emic perspectives," "personal emic," and "etic perspectives." Bypassing the dictionary definitions of words such as "comparative," we find that

The term "emic," coined by linguist Kenneth Pike in the late 1940s, became an appropriate word to describe the view of someone "inside" a cultural system. He drew from the concept of phonemics, and specifically phoneme, which is the minimum distinctive sound or the smallest sound unit distinguishing meaning in a particular language (taken from Lett 1996, cited by Vissicaro 2004: 28). The significance of this idea, which he [Pike? Lett?] realized when trying to study languages radically different than his own, was that only those who shared the language knew or understood the phonemes. Criteria for understanding came from within the cultural system. That principle supported the rationale for spending in-depth extended period of time working and living with a community of people to study in context how behaviors and specifically language use revealed meaning (page 24).

Speakers of a language do *not* "know or understand the phonemes" as Vissicaro would have us believe. They know how to *use* what linguists call "phonemes"—that is, speakers are able to recognize those distinctions between vocal sounds in their language that make differences in the meanings of words, while not recognizing differences in pronunciation that don't affect meaning. Sapir (1949) referred to this as the psychological reality of the phoneme. It is not something about which speakers have explicit knowledge, unless they have studied linguistics. In Gilbert Ryle's terms (1949), phonemic recognition is a "knowing how" rather than a "knowing that."

Apart from the ambiguities inherent in the author's writing style (i.e. Pike? Lett?), I was amazed that Kaeppler's work in Tonga (1972), based on an emic style of analysis, is never mentioned. She was, after all, a pioneer in using emic/etic theory in analyzing dances, but Vissicaro seems intent upon recreating "dance cultural study" in terms of her own limited understanding of anthropological and linguistic theory, not what has been accomplished in the field by others.

The above definition of "emic" is followed by a long paragraph on "fieldwork," which is in turn followed by three paragraphs on "personal emic," which I suspect is some kind of crib on the idea of a personal anthropology (see Williams 1994; Pocock 1994 and Varela 1994). In any case, the notion of a "personal emic" is by definition a contradiction in terms, since the concept "emic" is intended to represent a shared cultural system. The end of the chapter is taken up with "Etic Perspectives," where we are told that

Another type of interaction that begins with the personal emic involves comparing information by using a framework derived from outside a specific cultural system. This is referred to as an etic approach. From the word, phonetic, it is a strategy that

scientists, scholars, and others use that relies on extrinsic concepts and categories for distinguishing and comparing aspects of multiple cultural systems. "Through the etic lens the analyst views the data in tacit reference to a perspective oriented to all comparable events (whether sounds, ceremonies, activities) of all peoples, of all parts of the earth" (Pike 1954, cited in Vissicaro 2004: 28). Etic perspectives emerge from theories and concepts that have a universal application. In other words, it is possible for a researcher or student to use an etic frame to examine any cultural system and draw parallels between different systems. A specific example of an etic approach for language study is the International Phonetic Alphabet, which provides the academic community worldwide with a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages in order to correctly reproduce sounds for word pronunciation. . . . There is a similar system to record and study human movement called Labanotation, developed by Rudolph von Laban. Labanotators around the world use this system, based on graphical representations, to document as well as analyze dance and other movement in space and time. . . . It is essential to remember that an etic view is usually a stepping stone for gaining access to emic perspectives or understandings (taken from 1990). This reinforces the idea that both positions are necessary for holistic comparisons. Labanotation, for example, is an important tool for studying and comparing movement from different cultural systems. However, critical details about personal motivations for doing the movement, as well as the meaning, history, and other contextual information, also must be obtained (pages 25-26).

Unfortunately for Vissicaro, Pike's application of the emic/etic distinction is a model for cultural analysis that was long ago discredited in American cultural anthropology, which is why Kaeppler dropped it after 1972. Investigators soon realized 1. that linguistic models were not usefully applied to non-linguistic aspects of culture and 2. that a supposed "etic lens" and subsequent categories and classifications are necessarily a product of the emic categories of the investigators. While it is true that the International Phonetic Alphabet *does* provide a standard notational system for the phonetic representation of all known languages, it remains a classification according to Western understandings of sound patterns in conventional languages. Vissicaro clearly does not consider *her own cultural understanding* to be a problem, but it is.

No less is Labanotation a classification of the body and space/time according to Western understanding. This does not negate its value as a flexible notational resource for documentation and comparison across action sign systems, *but it does not ensure, for example, that the notator is writing the text from the point of view of the users of the system* (see Durr 1981a for complete discussion). However, since Laban texts are necessarily written from the mover's perspective, a Laban "score" seeks to employ the wide range of available graphic symbols and their flexibility in combination to document the mover's concepts of the body and space/time.

I, and my colleagues, find it misleading to think of all of this as necessary for an "holistic perspective"—an over-used, ambiguous term that has dropped out of current anthropological discourse, because it bifurcates the process of understanding into an "us-them" division that distorts what should become a report on our relationship and shared understanding.

Finally, one would want to say that *Studying Dance Cultures* is an interesting "picture book." That is, there are photographs of dancers frozen in moments of time from all over the world, many of which were taken in Arizona, such as

"Sudanese drummers performing at the City of Phoenix Heritage and Science Park African Festival (page 25); Phoenix Irish *Ceili* Dancers (page 49); Hula dancers, City of Phoenix Heritage and Science Park Aloha Festival (page 60); Traditional dance of Mexico performed by Primavera Folklorico Dance Company, Phoenix, Arizona (page 62); Bharatanatyam performer with Asha Gopal's Arathi School of India Dance, Phoenix, Arizona and Waltzing, Boston MA 1980s-1990s (page 89); Flamenco dancer, Bernadette Gaxiola, Calo Flamenco: Ballet de Martin Gaxiola, Phoenix, Arizona (page 102); *Te Whanau*, Mesa, Arizona performing a *haka* at the city of Phoenix Heritage and Science Park Aloha Festival (page 115); and Intertribal Pow Wow Fancy Shawl dancer, Melissa Maldonado, at Avondale, Arizona. A few of the photographs were taken in their countries of origin, but most are from dance festivals in Arizona. Why is this important? Because one has no idea how the dance forms were changed to suit the venue or the audiences at the festivals. Problems of cultural appropriation are common in anthropology:

Bateson and Mead were captivated with the *barong* and, in collaboration with the Balinese, commissioned new forms of the *barong* dance. The famous Bateson-Mead 1937 film, *Trance and Dance in Bali*, which is usually regarded as an early photographic record of a Balinese ritual, was actually a film of a tourist performance for foreigners commissioned and paid for by Bateson and Mead. . . the *barong* ritual filmed by Bateson and Mead was not ancient but had been recently created during the period of their fieldwork, and the story performed had been changed from the *Calon Arang* to the *Kunti Sraya*, a less dangerous form. . . . *Bateson and Mead changed the dance* [these italics added] . . . and they commissioned the dance during the day, when the light was good for photography, rather than having the performance in the evening (Bruner 1996: 168).

Bateson and Mead changed the *Calon Arang* to suit their own purposes. As we shall see, a deputy headmistress from Botswana changed an important traditional Ju|'hoan dance to the extent that Ju|'hoansi elders will no longer have anything to do with it, but in her eyes she "perfected" it. An Ashanti dance director at the University of Ghana altered an Ewe dance so that the only recognizable connection it has with the original is the music and singing, which he did not change. An Aboriginal elder "killed" the Chivaree tradition in Cape York, because "it has no place in this world." Why? (Williams 2000: 346).

There are several reasons why alleged traditional dances and dancing are suspect in terms of authenticity, intent and identity, but the main challenge for some time now has been tourism in some form or another:

What I wish to emphasize here is that the tourists voluntarily surrender control . . . They become passive and dependent, and this is what gives them the feeling of relaxation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines surrender as 'to give oneself up into the power of another', as a prisoner, and this expresses my meaning in that tourists relinquish power over their actions for the duration of the tour (Bruner 1995: 237, cited in Williams 2000: 347).

Bruner draws attention to the fact that "Tourism is primarily visual, ethnography verbal. Tourists surrender, ethnographers struggle" (Bruner 1995: 238). He draws attention to the fact that all of us may be faced with the choices with which he grappled: do we "fight the system, and even [try] to change it" (*Ibid.* 238), or do we surrender to economics, expedience and misconceived notions about what others want to see?

It does not seem to have occurred to the author of *Studying Dance Cultures* that she has “surrendered,” but it is hard to believe she has done anything else when we read (following a simplistic definition of the word “authentic”), that

The question of how one knows whether dance is authentic or not is difficult to answer. This issue also is highly contested since there are so many ways to interpret the word “authentic.”

From an individual’s perspective, the activity of dancing is real, not imagined. It exists within an actual time and space. Through dance, we extend thought to represent understandings that are credibly our own. Moving validates and legitimizes the embodiment of these ideas, which reflects the author’s or dancer’s personal knowledge system and world view. When we “try on” another person’s movement, we translate that “data” into ways that make sense. Our bodies move to produce what we believe is a true, sincere representation of the information. We may not look the same while doing the movement; however the experience is genuine or authentic (Vissicaro 2004: 103).

A couple of paragraphs later, the author says, “On the negative side, people may exploit dance cultural knowledge by stereotyping certain elements (movement, costume, music, etc.) and presenting information that is not authentic. The victims are usually schools and communities looking to promote diversity and hire dance and music performance groups or teachers that state they represent specific areas of the world. Sometimes the institutions are limited to a small pool of applicants, which is further constrained by availability and budget. Fortunately, this is changing since criteria for selecting culturally responsible groups and individuals are being established as the field of multicultural education matures” (*Ibid.* 104). Is it indeed?

What do international dance festivals cater for, whether they are held in Brisbane (Australia), London, Paris, Tempe (Arizona), or Honolulu? Most tourists live in a world apart – in a time/space defined by a total lack of political or moral responsibility. Lippard says it very well:

By definition, tourism is about going “away”; time is as good a destination as space. Islands in particular, but also isolated villages, mountains, and peninsulas anywhere, maintain the mysterious aura of Brigadoon; your travel through a foggy night ends on a bumpy dirt road, and in the morning you awake in a different world. There are those who feel that in certain places they pass through a gateway into the past – an intense psychic experience only distantly related to superficial nostalgia (Lippard 1999: 159-60).

Tourists, whether at home or abroad, are relaxed, they are entertained and they spend money. This is what any form of tourism, at home or abroad, is about: entertainment and economics. It certainly has nothing to do with preserving traditions or cultural identity, regardless of what is advertised – a major issue regarding dances of the world. I believe that we are all faced with the issues that Bruner describes, and I think we should keep in mind what Crick says, i.e.

Some owners of the more luxurious private hotels [in Sri Lanka] were fairly candid about their original intentions simply to make money from the foreigner. Consequently they were quite prepared to state that Tourist Board rhetoric about preserving Sri Lankan culture was nonsense, because one either kept one’s own culture or promoted international tourism, but certainly not both (Crick 1994: 89).

One suspects that Vissicaro's approach to multicultural education will reduce students to the level of tourists – or keep them there.

Endnotes

ⁱ [Dilworth's Note 24, p. 489]: The Smokis (pronounced "smoke-eyes") is an elite organization that has claimed President Coolidge and Barry Goldwater as initiates. It also has an auxiliary "Squaw" organization. A Smoki museum in Prescott opened in 1935 and has a collection of southwest Indian material culture and art. Two anonymous articles in the *Santa Fe Magazine*, "Weird Snake Dance of the Smoki People" (1923) and "Arizona will be Host to Thousands of Visitors in June" (1929), indicate that the Smoki ceremonials were important tourist attractions. For a fuller discussion of the Smokis and other "Indian hobbyists," see Deloria (1994: 335-95).

ⁱⁱ [Farnell's Note 9, p. 158]: 'Action-sign' (Williams 1982, 1991) marks a fundamental theoretical shift from movement seen as 'behaviour' to movement seen as 'action'. It also provides a much needed hypernym, that is, a classificatory term that refers to any and all kinds of human movement systems. Without it we must resort to lists at a lower level of classification using terms such as dances, sign languages, martial arts, gestures, ritual and ceremonial action and so on. Names such as 'dance' and 'sign language' are derived from western classifications of movement systems, and so become problematic for anthropological investigations when they mask important classificatory differences in other cultures. See Kaepler (1978) and Williams (1997).

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