

## SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE ON DANCING

"But whether one deplores or rejoices in the fact, there are still zones in which savage (that is, untamed) thought, like savage species, is relatively protected. This is the case of art, to which our civilization accords the status of a national park, with all the advantages and inconveniences attending so artificial a formula; and it is particularly the case of so many as yet 'uncleared' sectors of social life, where, through indifference or inability, and most often without our knowing why, primitive thought continues to flourish."

Claude Lévi-Strauss  
La pensée sauvage, p. 219

Introductory

To my mind rightly so, Stanner has said that "Contemporary study (of religion, totemism and symbolism) is weakened by the fact that there is so much bias in the old printed record. One cannot turn very hopefully to it for test or confirmation of new insights. Far too much of the information was the product of minds caught up with special pleadings of one kind or another" (1979:123). Exactly the same things could be said about studies of the dance (or dances, or dancing) in Australia. With regard to the dancing of Aboriginal peoples in particular, the above comment is relevant, because a large proportion, although not all, of the dancing referred to in the printed record pertains to religion, totemism or symbolism.

Following Stanner, I would want to ask about studies of dancing, Aboriginal or otherwise, 'What are the present limits of our information and what would constitute a reasonable estimate of the present theoretical position(s) concerning the subject of dancing on this continent?' Secondly, one would want to ask how the answers to these questions would compare with answers which might be given about, say, 'American' dancing, 'British' dancing or any other nation's store of information about the dances and dancers included in its politically-defined borders?

Conclusions formed on the basis of intensive study of written resources upon arrival in Australia on 5 August, 1986, are these: a definitive survey of the state of Australian dancing awaits the possibility of more profound assessment (i) after the separation of the real problems of scholarly dance studies become separated from false, mis-stated or imaginary problems, especially with regard to theoretical and methodological questions, and (ii) development of a level of thinking and scholarship about the dance that is at present comparatively rare,

mainly because of the emphasis at a technical school and college level, on the performance of dancing, i.e. the training of dancers. On the whole, this emphasis exists at that level of education in all English-speaking countries, but in Australia, there are no possibilities at this writing for dancers, teachers, choreographers or directors of companies to pursue further education regarding their subject at University (see Appendix I for a recent government survey comparing educational opportunities and available degrees for the arts).

Moreover, the notion of 'performance' in the tertiary level of education which is available to persons interested in the dance is limited to -- or at present dominated by -- the study of ballet or various forms of western contemporary dancing (e.g. Martha Graham technique, Cunningham, Horton and others). Writing about dances or even thinking about them and the epistemological and ontological issues that such writing and thinking entails; the comparative study of danced forms, their analysis and/or their relations to other movement-based phenomena is rare, although there are some anthropological works of excellent calibre: Kaeppeler on Tonga, Schieffelin on New Guinea, von Sturmer on Cape York dancing, Wild and Clunies-Ross on Walpiri and Arnhem peoples, Goodale on Tiwi dancing -- but they are too few.

For some of the reasons why this situation prevails, we can again turn to Stanner, whose critical comments about those who influenced the study of religion in the past can be brought equally to bear upon studies of dancing (see Stanner, 1979:106-143) with reference to Durkheim, Frazer, Lang, Strehlow, Freud and others). One would only want to add some of the names of those who have dealt specifically not with 'Aboriginal' dancing, but with the notion of the dance on a global scale: Lilly Grove (Lady Frazer) who wrote in 1895, Harrison (1913), Havemeyer (1916), Ridgeway (1915), Havelock Ellis (1920) and later on, Hambly (1926), Sachs (1937), Kurath (1960), Lange (1975) and others too numerous to mention here (see Keali'inohomoku, 1980, and Williams, 1986, for further discussions and citations).

The undertaking of a definitive survey of literature about dancing cannot be made manifest in depth until there exists a cadre of Australian scholars of Aboriginal, English, or other ethnic Australian origins with post-graduate University degrees who will be in a position to contribute authoritative theoretical, historical and ethnographic analyses of the subject. These are simply not available at present since the state of the art in 1987 does not include such scholars. Specifically, I refer to those who, besides anthropological and/or ethnomusicological and linguistic training, have adequate knowledge and experience in structured systems of human movement, including the dance. These scholars would also have to possess requisite literacy skills with regard to human action sign systems.

Of the studies of dancing which presently exist, there are none of which I am aware that emphasize comparative materials or commentary among the many forms of dancing of Aboriginal peoples or between those forms of dancing, signing or rituals and those of the rest of multi-cultural Australia. One would wish to stress that there are no overtones of reproach intended here. The same could be said, with a few notable exceptions,<sup>1</sup> of nearly all American and British studies of dancing as well. Australia does not lag very far behind any other English-speaking country in this way, but the lag which does exist is expressed mainly in the fact that her dancers and composers of dancing do not possess the means to develop scholarship in the subject, except by competing for grants in overseas institutions. Because of the efforts of a few concerned persons<sup>2</sup> this country could be in a position in future to assume leadership in this field, possibly providing adequate models for other countries with regard to the direction that dance and human movement studies might usefully take at University level educational institutions.

The following survey of specific studies of dances are those which anyone would have to cope with in an attempt to discover the limits, potentialities and substance of research in the subject of dancing up to now in Australia. The studies represented have been chosen from a recent bibliographical overview of writings on Aboriginal dances and dancing (see Appendix II, which is a reproduction of Wild, 1986).<sup>3</sup> Two writers and one volume of essays have been added to the listing in Appendix II since Wild's article was completed in 1982: Grau (1983),<sup>4</sup> Dail-Jones (1984)<sup>5</sup> and Songs of Aboriginal Australia (1987).

Before undertaking the survey, however, it seems important to raise a point which Stanner made in a different context that is highly relevant, especially to the items from the bibliography which are anthropologically uninformed:

One of the troubles of course is that concepts like 'society' and 'culture' are being used without technical understanding. One often has the strong impression that 'culture' is used to mean only mythology, bark-painting and dancing. I read recently that one politician would reduce it to bark-painting only (1979:313).

Then, too, we must bear in mind the fact that anthropology has not had much to say about western forms of dancing until recently<sup>6</sup> but then, until recently, it has not had much to say about western forms of anything. It is perhaps understandable that for a long time in the relatively short history of the discipline, anthropology was about 'them', not 'us', although this has changed drastically over the past thirty years (see Crick, 1976, for the shift in British anthropology from 'function' to 'meaning'; Burridge, 1973:43-84, for further clarification of the western notion of Aborigines as 'other' and as 'primitive', and a recent ASA Monograph, The Anthropologist At Home, (see Jackson, 1987) treats some of the developments among British-trained anthropologists since the mid-seventies).

Further to the point, a great deal is laid at anthropology's doors by dance scholars who, wishing for something novel and often, with a view towards marketable goods in the literary field, have turned to 'ethnology' as a source of subject matter and inspiration. The history of thought about dancing in social and cultural anthropology itself, by contrast, bears some striking resemblances to the history of thought about 'primitive religion' (see Williams, forthcoming, and also Williams, 1976, for a criticism of my own pre-anthropological writings). In our own culture, the dance has been regularly stigmatized, applauded, derided and elevated over the years in much the same way as drama and dramatic acting (see Barish, 1981, for further discussion).

The point of all this? It is a mistake to imagine that serious study of the subject of dancing is somehow meant only to preserve the 'Culture'<sup>7</sup> and/or memories of an 'ethnic', a white Australian or an Aboriginal past -- or that the study of dancing in any of its manifestations is the kind of feckless enterprise that public opinion often imagines it to be. Dancers as a group (a sub-culture, perhaps?) in English-speaking societies are in some sense a 'marginal' group, no matter what form of dancing they practise; they are often classified with 'primitives' and indeed, by the middle of the 1950's in the United States, 'primitive dance' had come to refer to

...a kind of pseudo Afro-Caribbean type of dance. This so-called primitive dance has been stylized ... until it has become a kind of contrived tradition in itself. But are Afro-Caribbeans primitive? The answer is that these groups whether or not we can designate them as 'primitive' have their own dance traditions which are totally unlike each other. There is no such thing as 'primitive dance'. The term is meaningless (Keali'inohomoku, 1970:90).

Dancers throughout the world are, on the whole, familiar with stereotypes, phantasies and wrong-headed theories about themselves and their activities because they often have to contend with them on a daily basis. If it is the case that Aborigines in Australia are still labelled 'primitive', for example, then it is equally true that in much popular thinking, dancers are labelled in the same or similar ways. They seem to be regarded as the 'primitives' of the western art world.

There are immense tasks of scholarship awaiting attention in the world of dancing and human movement study. In general, the literature on the subject in the English language is extremely poor. It is important therefore, that these introductory remarks are understood in the spirit in which they are intended: as an over-all critique which is meant to point to the need for a different kind of scholarship with reference to Aboriginal and every other kind of dancing in Australia. To comprehend more specifically what is meant, I refer to scholarship which is not based on the kinds of cosmetic treatments of the subject that are all too familiar (to those of us who have read it all), from even cursory examination of the titles and subject matters of many of the 'dance books' to be found in performing arts sections of the majority of book shops.

I also refer to a genre of professional writing which is not cosmetic, but is equally disappointing for other reasons, e.g. Spencer (1985) and Richard Moyle's contribution to a recently published Festschrift for Alice Moyle (1984). It is to an article in an edited collection by Berndt and Phillips (1973) that we will now turn.

#### Australian Aboriginal Dance (Allen, 1973)

Apart from Allen's article, an MFA thesis appeared in this year, viz. Quisenberry (1973). Allen's article is better than Quisenberry's thesis, partly because, unlike the thesis, Allen's work is neither sentimental nor patronizing, nor does it depend, as the Texan's work does, for its inspiration dance-wise on the outmoded and basically misguided theories of Curt Sachs about dancing (1973:103-104).<sup>8</sup> The dependence on Sachs is a common flaw of many American Dance Education theses on the subject. Anthropologically, it bespeaks a lack of critical discrimination regarding historical and theoretical sources.

Allen's contribution is not crippled by this kind of thing; however, I use her work as a stalking horse to begin this survey because (a) consideration of the kind of work she did raises several important issues with regard to written accounts of dancing; (b) comparison of this kind of dance study with other possibilities of approach can be instructive, and (c) the author is a trained choreologist and dancer whose work is uninformed by anthropological, linguistic or philosophical insights into the study of dancing.

Allen possesses a finely tuned appreciation of the movement aspects of dancing, and she is an experienced notator, thus she brings considerable intuitive understanding to her study, e.g. of the need for separating the constituent (called "important") features of the movement patterns from the contingent (called "incidental") features of the patterns under investigation, but these insights are spoiled when she remarks that

Aboriginal dancing is based to a large extent on spontaneity which means that nothing is done exactly the same way a second time (Allen, 1973:276).

The difficulties with her work are four-fold: (1) innocent of scholarly discourse on the problems implied in the phrase "nothing is done exactly the same way a second time", the author falls into a well-known philosophical trap. That is, if it is the case that nothing is done the same way a second time, then how does she know it is the same dance? Or, given that she means simply that there is a conventionally accepted latitude of performing 'steps' and 'figures' in the dance (a parallel issue in spoken language would involve, e.g. how we recognize the meaning of 'b[a]th' or b[æ]th' when confronted with trans-Atlantic pronunciations), then the statement regarding 'sameness' risks the criticism of falsity.

Although dance spaces are very different in some ways from signing spaces (as in American Sign Language, Plains Indian Sign Languages, etc.), one shared feature of the two kinds of system consists in the fact that there is a conventionally acceptable latitude of performance of any given action sign or stretch of action signs which is of course the real justification for postulating constituent and contingent features of the system in the first instance.

(2) The entire focus of Allen's analysis is on gestural data alone. Readers are told nothing about the characteristics of the spaces in which the dancers moved. It is as if any given dance exists solely in the performed actions themselves, bearing no relation to the conceptual features of the spaces in which the patterns of the dance and the dancer(s) exist. For example, there is no information given about referential, directional or locative features of the dances. We may well ask, 'Are these dances based on a notion of cardinal directions, or some schema that represents an 'embedded' space within the geographical directions, or are the dances talked about spatially organized by the paradigmatic features of Dreaming tracks?' Wild's analysis of Walpiri danced spaces (1977) is much more satisfactory from this standpoint.

(3) The writing of movement, regardless of the type of script used (that is, whether it is Benesh, Labanotation or Eshkol-Wachmann -- the three most viable scripts of movement writing extant today -- can be, and with regard to human dances, must be, an entirely different exercise from that of writing human actions because

...an intentional action is not the same as a physical movement since the latter can be described in various ways according to one's point of view and one's beliefs about the person performing it. One cannot specify an action, as opposed to a purely physical movement, without taking into account what the agent intended (Best, 1974:193).

For a more detailed analysis of this problem connected with the writing of Luo danced actions (Africa), see Durr (1981), where the analysis also includes written samples of both modes of writing and the different results obtainable therefrom.

(4) It has been said that Allen's article does not refer to 'Australian Aboriginal Dance' as a whole. Hardly more than mention is made of six dances of four specific peoples in northern Australia: Wogaidj (Delissaville) and the 'Buffalo', 'Crab' and 'birdsong' dances; Maiali (Bamyili) and the 'Fish' and 'Black Crow' dances; Nunggubuyu (Rose River) and the 'Brolga' dance and Wanindilyaugwa (Groote Eylandt) where the author's comments are to the effect that there appears to be the same over-all pattern and sequence for all dances. That may indeed have been the case, but if it is, then readers need to know why this is the case with Groote Eylandt dances and not with the others.

Allen's article would have been greatly improved by changing the title to 'Six Dances of Four North Australian Peoples', because that is what the main dance content of the piece is about. There is no way that a fifteen page article, which includes seven pages of photographic plates, can deliver the promise that the title, 'Australian Aboriginal Dance', implies. For something approaching adequacy in relation to this kind of title, see Wild (forthcoming) in the International Encyclopedia of Dance (publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y.). Wild's article, in conjunction with von Sturmer, Grau, Clunies-Ross and Dail-Jones on specific areas in Australia deliver considerably more of the promise of such a title. In fact, von Sturmer's blunt remark, "The Aboriginal case? There is none -- or in fact not one; only many" (1987:65) is surely apposite here.

I do not deny that popularizations of materials about dances, Aboriginal and otherwise are necessary, nor do I deny that the casual or occasional reader might want generalized information, but I do deny that such materials have to be written in such a way that they mislead readers and create more stereotypes than they dispel. It is all too easy, for example, to assume that 'Aboriginal dancing' is somehow the same. The issue is an old one in anthropology: the relativist's position against various kinds of 'universalist' arguments. Specific to Australia is a homogenization (a kind of universalisation) which leads people to believe that the didjeridu, a musical instrument unique to Arnhem Land and borrowed elsewhere, is (or was) used by all Aboriginal peoples. Generally in the past, the relativist, rather than the universalist arguments had more force, simply because ethnographies have tended to be based on empirically perceivable elaborations of gestural and spatial patterns of a generic form of dancing found in a specific area.

During the past seventeen years, research in other parts of the world has produced evidence that there is just cause to doubt that a broad classification of dancing -- say 'jazz dancing' or 'folk dancing' or 'Aboriginal dancing' -- possesses universal characteristics of need, function, form, meaning, motivation or what-you-will. Forms of body language(s) seem to have developed independently; moreover, they can be shown irrevocably to be tied to the human faculty for language-use. Simply put, Ga, Ewe, Ashanti and Dagomba dancing, and the dances themselves, are very different from one another, although the peoples, who generated the dance forms are all 'Ghanaians' or 'West Africans'. Jazz dancing, ballet dancing, tap dancing and square dancing are all performed by Americans, but they are not the same kinds of dancing. There is no more reason for lumping Aboriginal dancing into one indistinguishable homogeneous mass either, yet, that seems to be done in the literature, where one would never find comparable usages of the term 'American dancing' or 'British dancing'. Why?

### Universals and 'Natural' Dancing

There do exist certain universal features of dancing, whether it is Aboriginal dancing or some other kind of dancing. Furthermore, there is a clearly discernable interface between the spoken (or 'natural' language of any given group of people and their body language(s). These universals are to be found in the locally Euclidean features of the spaces in which any danced action occurs -- and for that matter, any human action at all; they are the dimensions of up/down, right/left, front/back and inside/outside. There are structural universals pertaining to the human body as well which will be mentioned later. These spatial and body-related universals are comparable to the universals of pitch, harmonics and time which cause diverse pieces of music to hang together in important ways, or the phonological universals which cause all human languages to cohere at a meta-theoretical level, but no one imagines that these universals are to be found in their pristine state in specific languages, specific pieces of music or culture-specific dances. The point is that the notion of universal structures of dancing and human movement is at least as recondite and complex as is the notion of harmonics and pitch in music or phonetics or phonology in human spoken language (see Williams, 1976a and 1976b, for further elucidation). The problem, for the serious student of danced forms of human movement is that the structures of human actions are not given the same status as are those which pertain to music and language, but this matter cannot detain us further here.

With regard to the 'interface' alluded to above, one would want to point to recent work in linguistics, specifically to what Fillmore (1983:317), called the "semantics of grammar" of spoken language -- and to what semasiologists<sup>10</sup> refer to as "semantic primitives" (not in the Wierzbicka sense), i.e. certain fixed, closed class and schematized devices within the syntax and morphology of the spoken language of any given people which characterize space, location, position and direction (See Haviland, 1986, for an excellent discussion of these with regard to Guugu Yimidhirr, a local Paman language spoken at the Hopevale Mission in southeastern Cape York Peninsula).

Clearly, a consideration of 'universals' in dancing (or any structured human system of actions whatsoever) leads to questions of great import. Just one of these is the problem of typologies, for it is with an attempt at a typology of dancing that Allen's article on Aboriginal dancing begins. The author lists what she believes to be all of the ways that dancing is used in an Aboriginal context, although just how she arrived at the list and why we should accept it as authoritative is not given. The four peoples to whom the six dances belong that are talked about in the article are characterized as persons to whom art forms, including the dance, come 'naturally'.



It is difficult to imagine what the author means by 'natural' dancing, and it is unclear whether the dancing is 'natural' because it is connected with many life activities -- in which case, all danced forms are 'natural' -- or whether the source of the 'naturalness' lies elsewhere, say, in some form of bodily logos, perhaps, that is universal to dancing but not to any other human action or, perhaps what she implies are any number of 'origins' arguments and theories about dancing which have been postulated over the years. Statements about the 'naturalness' of dancing generally point to unimaginative handling of the dances and to the fact that the investigator did not try to find out how the dances were learned, viewing 'a dance' as an isolated artifact of the culture concerned, as if it existed in a conceptual, linguistic, spatial vacuum.

Anthropologists and linguists have produced evidence that there are complex learning processes that accompany the learning of Aboriginal dancing, e.g. Goodale (1971), Kayberry (1939), Elkin (1972 and 1974). Certainly it is the case that in West Africa (where dancing is also stigmatized as 'natural', 'unfettered' and 'primitive'), I can with confidence state with reference to my own research that often, many years are required for the formation of a 'dancer', as in the case of the seven years of singing, dancing and drumming needed to produce a Kple priestess. It is as if investigators cannot recognize the process of 'learning' if the paraphernalia of learning with which they are familiar is absent. For many years, African peoples were thought to have no law, simply because they had no courts; no government, because they had no rulers of the kind that Europeans were used to. Is it the case that Allen thought that Aboriginal dancing was 'natural' because she saw no ballet barres, studios, mirrors and pianos?

In a thoughtful, perceptive article regarding the problems of ethnomusicological fieldwork in general, Ellis may supply part of the answer:

There is a lack of understanding of the work, a naive belief on the part of some authorities that all that is necessary for successful ethnomusicological work is the mere manipulation of a tape recorder ... (Ellis, 1970:76).

There is a similar lack of understanding of the nature of research into dances; a naive belief on the part of authorities and non-authorities alike that all that is necessary for research into dances is (i) a notator or choreologist who has danced -- often in an idiom totally unrelated to that which is being investigated -- and (ii) a video-camera or a film crew.

One would want to add to this the problem of classification of body parts (see Ardener, 1982, and Williams, 1980a and 1980b). The human body is divided by different criteria in different languages,

thus a human action sign in contrast to a raw bodily movement has to be dealt with simultaneously in terms of classification, conceptualization and action. Simply put, one would have to know what taxonomies of the body existed among the peoples Allen talks about and how the body parts are divided. Then the question of how these affect the performed actions in the dances arises, plus the elements of systems of reference and systems of address and their affects on the dances. Through these kinds of co-relations (their presence and/or absence), part of the significance of the danced figures in relation to the rest of the body language of the community begins to emerge. Fully to explain and develop the many arguments and issues that are relevant to fieldwork problems and the dance would require another article at least as long as Ellis's, which is 136 pages long. Add to this the problems of the use of film in the field and the comprehension of film and video-taping as yet another 'language process' in that it involves selection, and it is easy to see how much writing about dances, including Allen's is perhaps best recognized as a kind of simplistic gloss connected with realities which on the whole remain unexamined.

#### The Notion of Translation

Further to these points, readers would do well to reflect on Chapman's summarization of this kind of problem when he says,

There is not ... any serious popular conception that such things require "translation" from one culture to another. Most people, when faced with an unintelligible foreign language, will recognize the need for "translation"; non-verbal "language" gestures, and generally semantic use of the body, of the person, or of groups of people, are not usually granted the same status as language in this respect. Translation will not be thought necessary. In general, an "English-speaker" will interpret the gestures of, say, a "Breton-speaker", a "French-speaker" or a "Gaelic-speaker", according to an entirely "English" set of rules of interpretation, without feeling any need to go to the bother of "translating" (Chapman, 1982:111).

Field investigators who are going to study the body language of any human group or any sub-set thereof, are well-advised, first, to refrain from taking into the field (in their own culture or that of another) the kinds of prejudices, naïvetés, biases and simple ignorance of the nature of dance research which has consistently been demonstrated by many of their predecessors. If they choose to try to do fieldwork in the 1980's and 1990's carrying this kind of cultural baggage with them, then they will have to expect that savage criticisms will inevitably follow. Again, one turns to Stanner:

Modern anthropologists criticize their nineteenth-century predecessors for many faults, and the force of the criticisms is reflected in many abandoned positions ... But a cardinal fault -- the invincible ignorance about Aboriginal religion -- has not been criticized sufficiently (1979:111).

I am convinced that there is an "invincible ignorance" about human dancing, dances and 'the dance' which has not been sufficiently criticized either. It is simply boring, apart from anything else, to be faced with the same old clichés over and over again with regard to this little known and less understood activity. Since I intend to share some of the more commonly used theories of dancing with readers later on in this essay, I will say no more about the matter here.

Instead, I would want to draw attention to some sentences, chosen at random from von Sturmer (forthcoming) to illustrate the point I am trying to make: he says, "...all dances, even those now secular, took root in the religious life". There is no awareness of this, hence no mention of it in Allen's article and in many others of the same genre. It cannot be overstressed either, that the very language used to describe a dance either reveals or obscures the investigator's knowledge of the subjects of investigation. For example, talking about Cape York, von Sturmer says,

...individuals represent themselves in more or less heightened ways. They are not bonefish, taipan, blue-tongued lizards; they are Bonefish Man, Taipan Man, Blue-tongued Lizard Man. While they may exhibit some of the features of their eponymous animal species, they dance as men -- or, perhaps more accurately, as spirits, or as revealing their own spiritual essence. These dances (which are fairly typical) bear little mimetic or even narrative load: they are representational in a highly formalised way, but of human activities and responses, personal identity, social relations, not animal behaviours (forthcoming).

Allen, together with many other writers on Aboriginal dancing, when faced with 'Brolga', 'Buffalo', 'Fish' or other 'totemic' dances merely says that the dancers are mimicking the creatures. Someone is wrong. Either what von Sturmer says about the nature of these dances hits the mark, or it is wide of the mark and an imitation theory of human dancing is the more accurate. Thus, we are led to consideration of the nature of the human act of dancing -- and a great deal hangs on these considerations, not only for Aborigines, but for ourselves. Yet many dance researchers will say, in Australia and abroad, 'All I want to do is to describe the dances, I am not interested in all that theoretical stuff'.<sup>11</sup> They seem to imagine that one can produce an ethnographic description that is void of theory -- an impossibility, as we have seen. The fact is that the pitfalls inherent in alleged 'simple description' are legion!

In any case, it simply does not do to talk of any form of Aboriginal dancing, whether it seems to the investigator to be a 'fun' dance or a 'ceremony', solely in terms of metaphors drawn from the western stage. Allen refers to bushes and trees in the physical spaces of the dances she saw as 'set pieces', as if the dances were taking place on a stage in Sydney or Melbourne, and of objects used in the dance by the dancers as 'props'; a blatant case of an overlay of the conceptual spaces of Allen's familiar forms of dancing onto the conceptual spaces of dancers and dances to whom these notions are completely alien.

In spite of the fact that movement notators, especially, are aware of the rules of the game in their own idioms of dancing and in the exercise of writing movement itself, they seem able to develop acute myopia when they are faced with idioms of dancing with which they are not familiar. It is as if they see no need for translation; no need for working out the rules of the body language games of the dances under investigation. Clearly, there is no point in working out the rules of the game if the dances under investigation are thought to be 'spontaneous' and 'natural' (whatever that may mean). It is the case that dancing is learned, and there are far better theoretical and methodological frameworks for the study of it than a kind of woolly unilinear evolutionism or the pure, untouched romanticism of early functionalism, i.e. 'they have such a marvelous sense of rhythm' syndrome.

### Universals Again

At this point, I shall briefly sketch some of the universal features of dances, and, indeed, of all human actions, anywhere in the world, so that readers might more readily comprehend the theoretical underpinnings of a different anthropological approach to the study of dances. It seemed reasonable to assume that it would be useful (a) to know what is in fact universal regarding the phenomenon of human movement and dancing in order that (b) we might possess an objective, scientifically valid foundation for cross-cultural generalization and (c) a useful set of open structures which are not initially data-laden, on a basis of which we might better understand how and in what ways the enormous variety of semantic elaborations of these structures has developed and been utilized by different peoples of the world.

In other words, in order to talk about 'Z' (specific dances of any culture(s) in any historical period anywhere in the world), one has to know something about 'X' and 'Y'; that is, the structural characteristics of the expressive human body (X) and the space(s) in which it moves (Y). These structures are not the dances themselves, but consist of axiomatic statements about the human body and the space/time in which it moves, e.g. 'the elbow has only one degree of freedom', or 'the human semasiological body (semasiological = expressive or semantically-laden) is a ninety-dimensional, self-activating, mobile object which operates in a locally Euclidean four-dimensional space/time' (see Williams, 1975, for full discussion).

These structures constitute, as it were, the rules of the rules of dancing and human actions. They are necessary for investigators to know, but do not necessarily enter explicitly into the ethnographic description of any given danced form encountered in the field. They are encountered, however, at the 'interface' between the spoken language of a people and in the notion of semantic primitives of up/down, right/left, front/back and inside/outside. For example, about Guugu Yimidhirr, Haviland says that this language

seems to concern itself deeply with location, not only in the frequent practise of describing where things are, or in the universal need to locate referents ... (1986:1),

but with regard to features of motion, position, spatial relations and direction. He also points to other significant semasiological features of this spoken language when he says

There are some specific locational words as well. Hopevale people use a familiar contrast in two deictic roots (yi- 'here', 'this', and nha- 'there', 'that') along with the roots bada 'down', 'below', and wangaar 'up', 'above', to locate and identify things. There are two further complex deictic words, both typically requiring a gesture to specify their meanings (underline supplied): yarrba 'thus', 'in this way' a kind of demonstrative word), and yarra 'there', 'that', whose use implies: 'Have a look at that', or 'There it is' ... (Haviland, 1986:2).

Later, we are told that Guugu Yimidhirr's "repertoire of distinct locational or deictic roots is actually somewhat meagre and under-specified: a simple proximate/distal deictic contrast, supplemented by a basic, if hardworking, vertical opposition, and two further demonstratives which, as I say, typically require gestural supplementation" (Haviland, 1986:2).

To a semasiologist, the locational, directional, demonstrative and deictic features of a spoken language are some of the indices which, combined with ostensive evidentials (that scheme of deictics which places distances relative to an actor) plus all the empirically observable actions which accompany them, are the 'stuff' so to speak, of which dances, rituals, rites, signing systems or what-you-will are made. The point of this sketchy overview of some of the relations between empirically perceivable (transitive) structures and intransitive structures (non-empirically perceivable 'givens') is simply this: dances do not exist within a conceptual, a spatio-linguistic or a cultural vacuum. It is, in our view, impossible to carry out effective, validatable cross-cultural comparison and to avoid a total relativist's position with reference to the study of Aboriginal or any other kind of dancing, without a sufficiently sophisticated theoretical structure with which to begin (see Williams, 1980C, for further discussion).

Moreover, without such knowledges, plus certain other features of each individual culture (as I have tried to indicate above) which includes taxonomies of the body, deictic contrasts and coordinates which are culture-specific, including systems of address, pronominal systems of reference and such, we are ill-placed to comprehend specifically human movement as it manifests itself in semantically laden actions -- in contrast, say, to the movements of animals and birds or the sign functions of machines (see Williams, 1987). Because of this, one proceeds from the axiom that human spatial points of reference are points of application for linguistic predicates, a summation of perceptions gained through reading Hampshire (1959). Boiled down further, the statement is meant to imply one of the significant differences between the human use of space as against the use of space by other sensate creatures: in the human instance, there is an irrevocable connection between spatial points of reference and the use of language. Simple examples are those explicated by Haviland (1986), the cardinal directions and any permutations of them, spatial metaphors -- which abound in any human language -- and the canonical coordinate system in which all human actions take place. As in physics, certain relationships between human bodies and the spaces in which they move must be known in advance.

Such universals as I have pointed to are the 'gear', so to speak, that (a) all moving human beings possess, and (b) any investigator needs to know in order to elaborate in any way -- or to describe the elaborations which exist -- with regard to any dance, sign system or other structured system of meanings of an alleged 'non-verbal' nature. The reason why these are structural, not semantic universals is that, for example, there are no grounds for saying that dancing is done for the same reasons everywhere in the world -- or anywhere. One is not saying that movements have not been found that people use for various purposes everywhere in the world (pace Fast, 1970, Morris *et al.*, 1979, and others).

One can legitimately postulate certain structural and semantic primitives<sup>12</sup> which are universal to every manifestation of body language anywhere in the world; indeed, Haviland implies (1986:fn. 16, p. 26) that McNeill (1979), and McNeill and Levy (1982), "...seem to suggest that the conceptual structure that underlies gestural production is in some ways also the deepest structure that underlies spoken language as well". If that is the case, then the conceptual structures of human actions postulated by semasiology are those to which McNeill and Levy could be seen to refer. It is gratifying to know that colleagues in a sister discipline may have arrived, through independent types of investigation, at one or two of the same conclusions reached in Williams's doctoral work (1975) pertaining to dances and human actions, although I would not want this statement to be misconstrued as a dogmatic assertion that the conclusions are the same.

There are certain similarities of approach to the notion of universals referred to as 'etic' features of body languages (with specific cultural manifestations being the 'emic' characteristics), and this is roughly the theoretical approach taken by Kaepler (1972), following the intellectual developments of American ethnoscientists and the linguistic researches of Kenneth Pike. In my own frame of reference, we talk of 'intransitive' and 'transitive' aspects of human action sign systems. Dances, in this context, are seen as extremely powerful, generally very dense encapsulations of the semantic primitives mentioned above simply because they are conventionalized forms of body language(s) which depend for their very existence on implicit knowledges of these universals. It is thus not the case, as Grau would lead us to believe, that

The distinction between dance and non-dance must be equivocal, because it depends upon culturally shaped as well as universally objective components. At this stage, we do not know what these universally objective components are, but it is possible to find out the culturally relative answers by isolating the appropriate ethno-domains (1983:32, underline supplied).

Whilst one would agree with Grau that dances "depend upon culturally shaped as well as universally objective components", her assertion that we do not know what these universal components are is based on a narrow and incomplete reading of currently used theories of human actions and the dance.<sup>13</sup>

Grau's positive contribution to the study of Tiwi dancing lies in the excellence of her data, in the meticulous manner in which it was handled, and in the insights she achieved which led her towards the study of the taxonomy of Tiwi bodies and their relation to the danced actions they perform. It is unfortunate that this author's doctoral dissertation lacks in theoretical underpinnings and orientation because the data is extraordinary -- but it seems to lack organization into anything. We have yet to hear from Grau about the real design of Tiwi dancing and signing systems, and it is to be hoped that we are not kept too long in suspense, for she is in an admirably placed position, having freed herself from the strictures of a too-limiting supervision, to extend and further discipline her work into major post-doctoral contributions.

In contrast, Dail-Jones's M.A. thesis has a theoretical framework; she advances an argument and follows it through, but her choice of theory leaves much to be desired, as it stems from hard-core functionalism and behaviourism (perhaps reflecting what her supervisors deemed to be 'scientific'), leading to statements like this:

For Walpiri women, dance as a whole consists predominantly of adaptors and illustrators interspersed with regulators; it often results in affect displays ... (1984:369).

One can be sure that "for Walpiri women" dancing does not consist of anything of the kind.<sup>14</sup> There is a disastrous confusion here among the investigator's home-made models of events (which generally get totally amended or completely discarded over the period of fieldwork), her analytical models and the folk-models of the events being described. Inevitably, this kind of confusion results in nonsensical statements of the kind quoted above. Fortunately, Dail-Jones has an opportunity to redeem herself through work at a doctoral level where she could acquaint herself with more modern, certainly more rigorous, self-reflexive theorizing and with more anthropologically orientated approaches to the study of movement rather than Behaviouristic ones. She was hampered by supervision which came from outside the discipline, and this would not be important except for the fact that the scientific theorizing she does use tends to obscure and obfuscate her data. This is unfortunate, because Dail-Jones tried to see relationships of other types of Walpiri patterned movement and the danced movements, and no one but Dail-Jones has, up to now, tried to grasp the organization, specifically of women's dances.

Having said that, it is necessary to digress a moment in order to recognize the admirable work of Diane Bell, whose ethnography Daughters of the Dreaming points to important features of the dances and ceremonies of women, although not in a specific sense. That work is reserved for another dimension of this anthropologist's applied approach to the study of central desert women. Unfortunately, much of Bell's work that is specific to the dance is restricted material, and is contained in evidence which she helped women to present -- in the form of dances and ceremonies -- pertaining to land claims and rights. I can therefore cite only two pieces of unrestricted material in this essay and suggest that for further information, the author herself be contacted for anything else which may be available (see Bell, 1982 and 1983-4).

With regard to the two theses mentioned above, it can be said that Grau's and Dail-Jones's work represents the first attempts in Australia scientifically to study human movement and the dance -- with the exception of Kendon's work on sign languages (see Kendon, 1983, for a good discussion of the kind of work it is, and see also Haviland, 1986, for his comments on Kendon's theoretical stance). Grau's and Dail-Jones's theses represent a giant step forward from that which one can only call 'pre-scientific' writers, e.g. Allen (1973), Qisenberry (1973), Morse (1968), Dean (1955 and 1955a) and Jones (1980). Dean is quoted by Morse as saying, "...research dancers using an accredited dance notation ... are also needed" (Morse, 1968:3), and while it is true that people who have danced who use an accredited notation system are needed, it is equally true that dance expertise alone is not enough, nor is the fact that dancers can usually learn the movements of other danced forms enough.



The reasons for this are two-fold: (1) idioms of dancing are analogous to spoken languages in important ways. The matter of learning a language other than one's own is a complex affair with regard to spoken language(s) and body language(s) alike. A fluent grasp of the phonological characteristics of one's native spoken language does not provide a sufficient basis for the understanding of a different language. Similarly, a fluent grasp of the kinological characteristics of, say, ballet dancing, does not provide a sufficient basis for the understanding and performance of a different danced idiom of body language.

(2) Whether we like it or not, those of us who deal with so-called 'non-verbal' materials are faced at the outset with major problems of translation, transliteration and transcription; those of a space/time system, whether it is a dance, a rite, a ceremony, a system of greetings or what-you-will, into spoken, and more accurately, into written language. These space/time systems occupy geographical spaces which are at once physical, social, semantic and conceptual. We must use written language to communicate to others about the system, as we use spoken language to express the system, but we also know that spoken or written language introduces other things into the system. As Ardener has pointed out, conventional language intrudes itself into the system (1975) and it is simply a nonsense to imagine that it does not -- or worse, attempt to ignore the fact that it does, perhaps underlining Wittgenstein's observation that it is easier to bury a problem than to solve it.

The description of the danced actions of another people, whether in our own or another culture, is such a delicate affair, requiring such developed sensibilities of numerous kinds, that it is difficult to know where to begin to explain just what is needed for adequate preparation for the task. Suffice it to say here that one can, at least, in 1987, now point to the works of better educated and trained professionals for guidelines (see Note 1 for list of references).

#### Process and/or Preservation

Morse's article documents an interesting and important period in the thinking about dancing (dances and 'the' dance) in Australia: she was one of three people who carried out a project in the Northern Territory in the second half of the 'sixties which was meant to test the efficacy of notating Aboriginal dances in the field. The project was endorsed by several distinguished scholars in the ethnomusicological and anthropological fields, among them Alice Moyle (1977, 1977a and 1978) and McCarthy (1957, 1964 and 1978), who was principal of the A.I.A.S. at the time. Morse says,

Our aim can be described simply: to obtain a precise record of Aboriginal dances in the form of a written score of both the dance movements and the music to which the dances are performed (1968:3-4).

This kind of aim is heavily 'preservation' oriented and there are many parallels to be seen with attempts which have been made over the past thirty years in China to preserve minority dances in that country. Space prevents teasing out the issues involved, but we possess an excellent account of the issues and the consequences of the approach in the Chinese context by Fairbank (1985 and 1986). With all due respect to the project in which Morse participated, it must be said that 'totemic' dances show themselves to the modern investigator, not as simple-minded mimed images of the physical environments of the peoples who generate them. If what von Sturmer says about Cape York dances is true (see *supra*, p.209) then we can assume that the following statement is simply dead wrong:

...the dances we saw were mainly concerned with mimed description of everyday events, such as a buffalo hunt, the catching of crabs and of fish. Some dances simply mimicked the activities of creatures such as birds, without human characters at all ... (Morse, 1968:6).

Stanner puts the matter in more generalized terms about as succinctly as possible:

...a 'totemic' system shows itself as a link between cosmogony, cosmology, and ontology; between Aboriginal intuitions of the beginnings of things and resulting relevances for men's individual and social being, and a continuously meaningful life ... Aboriginal totemic groups were thus sacred corporations in perpetuity. The yearly round of rites let the Aborigines renew both the sources and the bonds of life constituted in that way (1979:143).

Surely, 'totemic dances', wherever they may take place in Australia partake of all this, and dances that use an imagery that is based on vital and significant features of the environment (whether sacred or not) should command enough respect, one would have thought, for us to attempt to look beyond the signifier to the signified. 'Preservation' of our own, or Aboriginal, culture may be a desirable aim, but it is neither the most important (taken in its 'museum' sense) with regard to dances nor is it the most fruitful, seen from the standpoint of a semantic anthropology (see Williams, 1982).

Dances provide us with encapsulations of ontological facts. Recognition of this is difficult if too much stress is laid on historicist or functionalist approaches. This is why it is so important to see human action sign systems, including dances, as kinds of 'languages': they can be notated, they possess syntax, 'grammars' and all the rest. They are reflexive, referential and relational. They structure space. Their 'vocabularies' and the degrees of freedom of their executants' bodies

may be more or less articulate. Perhaps it is necessary to make the effort to see human action sign systems as 'linguaging processes' which occur, not in the medium of sound, but in the medium of movement.

The danger in an unenlightened 'preservationist' approach is of course that it focuses almost entirely on the 'vehicles' -- on the 'products', as it were, tending to disregard the content. It is possible to focus only on the movements and the ritual form in the event such that the meanings and substance of what the ritual or dance is about is entirely forgotten. There is an unconscious separation of the signifier/signified unity, with a resulting distortion of the whole. This is why it is so important to stress the distinction between notating 'movement' as against 'actions'. It is why it is so important to know why one is undertaking any given investigation in the first instance.

### Early Studies of Dancing

The first publication about dance that had any real relevance to anthropology was Curt Sachs's Eine Weltgeschichte des Tanzes, published in 1933 and translated into English in 1937 as World History of the Dance. This book has been widely used, and indeed is still used today, as a definitive anthropological study of dance. Although this book certainly has a place today in the study of anthropological theory, it has no place in the study of dance in anthropological perspective (underline supplied). Its theoretical stance is derived from the German Kulturkreis school of Schmidt and Graebner in which worldwide diffusion resulted in a form of unilineal evolution. But just as modern non-Western peoples do not represent earlier stages of Western cultural evolution, there is no reason to believe that non-Western dance represents earlier stages of Western dance. Yet some anthropologists find it impossible to accept the latter without accepting the former (see Youngerman, 1974, for more detailed discussion, and Williams, 1976c, for a review of Lange (1975) which is a modern version of Sachs's theories).

Much more important for the study of dance in anthropological perspective, although he did not really address himself to the subject, was Franz Boas, whose orientation offers scope for analyzing dance as culture rather than using dance data to fit theories and generalizations. 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 background of which it is a part, is not yet dead, especially among artists and dancers (Kaepler, 1978:33).

Just as Boas did not really address himself to the subject, neither did E.B. Tylor or Sir James Frazer address themselves directly to the subject. Students today are sometimes offended when they discover that Tylor referred to dancing as "frivolous and meaningless", and they find it difficult to understand why he was pessimistic about the future of dancing in modern civilization; why he thought that what remnants there were in England of folk dancing were dying out, that sportive dancing was falling off, and that although sacred music was flourishing, civilization had mostly cast off sacred dance. "At low levels in civilization", he said, "dancing and play-acting are one" (1898:15).

Tylor's real interest in symbolic movement did not lie in its manifestations in dancing, rather in the language of gestures and in deaf signing. Tylor's work in gesture language is a rich and original source of linguistically based movement theory in anthropology (see Henson, 1974, for fuller discussion and see Farnell, 1984, for recent work on Plains Indian Sign Language and American Sign Language). It requires much more than superficial handling, then, to accommodate his theories of gesture and movement to the dance as we understand it today without risking distortion, either of Tylor's thought or of the dance. But Tylor's name carries with it a cautionary tale: his thinking was in many ways a true reflection of the general evolutionary bias of 19th century anthropology. Most of the writings about dancing during the period 1850-1900, whether contained in works on other subjects or whether they are solely about dancing, or in the case of Lilly Grove (Sir James Frazer's wife), the emphasis is on 'primitive' dancing.

For Frazer, dancing fitted into a scheme of stages of an assumed human intellectual development: at the lowest end of the evolutionary continuum, the dance was placed as an exemplar of magic. Frazer thought that 'primitives' called on magic when their capacity to deal with situations realistically was exhausted. Magic thus provided a substitute reality: if a tribe could not really make war on a neighbouring village, then it could at least do a dance about it. In the Frazerian scheme of things dancing was classified as sympathetic magic, and magic of course was wrong-headed science. The point here is that in the intellectual battles that Frazer was really interested in fighting, he opposed both magic and science to religion. Although social anthropologists no longer accept Frazer's theory of stages of evolution or his assessments of dancing today, many artists, dancers, dance critics and others still use these ideas. It is difficult to understand why. Keali'inohomoku states the problem succinctly:

Despite all [modern] anthropological evidence to the contrary, however, Western dance scholars set themselves up as authorities on the characteristics of primitive dance. Sorell (1967) combines most of these so-called characteristics of the primitive stereotype. He tells us that primitive dancers have no technique and no artistry, but that they are "unfailing masters of their bodies"! He states that their dances are disorganized and frenzied, but that they are able to translate all their feelings and emotions into movement. Primitive dances, he tells us, are serious but social. He claims that they have "complete freedom" but that men and women can't dance together [a 'fact' of sorts which Sorell may have gleaned from reading about central desert peoples in Australia]. He qualifies this statement by saying that men and women dance together after the dance degenerates into an orgy! Sorell also asserts that primitives cannot distinguish between the concrete and symbolic, that they dance for every occasion, and that they stamp around a lot! Further, Sorell asserts that dance in primitive societies is a special prerogative of males, especially chieftains, shamans and witch doctors. Kirstein also characterizes the dances of "natural unfettered societies" (whatever that means) (Keali'inohomoku, 1980/1969:84).

Similar criticism could be levelled at most of the genre of 'dance books' that are commonly read and used throughout the English-speaking and European dance worlds: cf. Haskell (1960 and 1969), Kirstein (1924), DeMille (1963), Terry (1956 and 1967), Martin (1939 and 1963), and the many entries in dance encyclopedias under the headings 'ethnic dance', 'primitive dance', and 'ethnologic dance'. - There are doubtless parallels in Australian literature on dancing; I have not yet read everything which has been written here, but I have seen the above-mentioned books on the shelves of bookstores, so one can fairly assume that they are there because people read them and swallow them, as it were, book, line and thinker.

Fortunately, anthropology has come a long way since the end of the 19th century:

Descriptions, brief as they are, of the dances are given from time to time to show that choreography is a real art with the Aborigines. Music, rhythm, actions and steps of both men and women dancers are worked out by the composer and master. It is not random or free activity. Directions are given by a leader, if details are not known. Behind each action is meaning. The pattern, however, does allow the virtuoso some latitude for improvising (Elkin, 1972:275 -- originally written 1949).

Although the kinds of description which could be carried out today are far more rigorous than those used by Elkin, he nevertheless recognized the importance of the dances and music of the peoples he visited and the central place they hold as significant repositories of knowledge

and mediators of meanings. The problem is that the writings of anthropologists like Elkin are rarely read by dance scholars or the general public, and it is to another such writer that we will now turn.

Goodale's section of the book Tiwi Wives headed 'Songs and Dances -- The Yoi' (1971:290-317) is one of the best I have read by an anthropologist who is a non-dance and movement specialist. Part of the reason it is so good is that Goodale does not attempt to describe the movements of the dances as they occur -- an enterprise that is fraught with difficulties, producing results which are generally unsatisfactory either because the investigator is forced to use unsuitable metaphors, or because the process simply becomes unbearably tedious. So many parts of the body can move at the same time, that a verbal description (which by its very nature erases the simultaneity that is characteristic of danced movement) is rarely accurate in any case; hence the need for a script which can handle human actions.

Instead, Goodale talks about the forms of dancing which occur in the Pukamani ceremony (the burial, the ilanea or final grave rituals) and the kulama ceremony. Her work yields many insights with regard to Tiwi dancing: "Songs and dances are not only forms of creative art among the Tiwi, but they are perhaps the most important for gaining prestige" (1971:290); "The culture hero, Purakapali, told the Tiwi 'to sing the things around them', and so, like the kulama songs, the pukamani songs are about every subject imaginable to the Tiwi and are not traditional but individual compositions" (1971:292-3); "... but the singers and dancers were in fact 'marking' a particular animal ~~because the associated dance was their yoi~~, their inherited dance form (see p. 302). In other words, the subject of some of the verses in the song of the flying foxes dictated the singers' dance form" (1971:296); and finally,

The dances or yoi are as full of social implications as are the songs and are just as original and entertaining. I have in the preceding discussion of songs used the verb "to mark" in order to describe the symbolism of action or words referring to a particular subject. The Tiwi used this English word exclusively to describe what it was they were symbolizing in a song or dance, and I prefer to continue using this word (rather than 'imitate' or 'mimic') in order to emphasize the symbolic nature of these actions. What has been "marked" has been "emphasized", not merely imitated (1971:303).

Just one of the more puzzling features of Australian anthropology upon first encounter as an outsider is the varying usages of the terms 'totem' and 'totemic', the meanings of which are, to say the least, elusive.<sup>15</sup> These terms crop up, as we have seen, with great regularity with regard to dances (see Burridge, 1973:176-187 for a thoughtful discussion). One of the more interesting and potentially significant doctoral theses which could be undertaken in an anthropology of dance and human movement consists of an analysis of the concept of 'totem' in relation to the dances of one or more aboriginal peoples.

### The Notion of 'Theory' Again

There are other significant topics that also await investigation: some of them turn around obvious problems in the literature on dancing with the notion of 'imitation' or 'mimicry' regarding dances. The imitation theory of dancing has had a long life in the intellectual history of western civilization both with reference to visual, graphic art and dancing. Attempts at real analysis and the teasing out of an ideology of creativity seems to be lacking,<sup>16</sup> yet we do not lack starting points, one of which might be found in the controversial writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1934, 1948 and 1957). Although he writes about the dances and arts of India, he nevertheless presents powerful arguments which were meant to stimulate thought and research on the transformational processes involved in the creation of symbolic forms.

Perhaps it is the case that there is more similarity between Aboriginal creative processes and those of other historic periods in our own -- or Indian -- history? Maybe the painters of religious icons in pre-Renaissance times more closely approximated the kinds of processes involved in the development of dances and rituals from the basis of the Dreaming? It would be worth looking into not because it would necessarily assist Aborigines in the shortrun in this case, but such an exercise might go some way towards assisting us better to understand (and therefore to appreciate and respect) what is uniquely a feature of their different orientations to cosmology and religion.

Western art has not always -- or even for very long -- been dominated by its present tendencies towards a cult of the individual, 'pop' art and various forms of deconstructionism. I would venture to guess that it would be extremely difficult to comprehend the significance of much traditional art in Australia or in the rest of the world in terms of these itinerant, relatively superficial and generally short-lived schools of thought.

...a fifteenth century painting is the deposit of a social relationship. On the one side there was a painter who made the picture, or at least supervised its making. On the other side there was somebody else who asked him to make it, provided funds for him to make it and, after he had made it, reckoned on using it in some way or other. Both parties worked within institutions and conventions -- commercial, religious, perceptual, in the widest sense social -- that were different from ours and influenced the forms of what they together made (Baxandall, 1972:1).

The elements of body language -- gestures, postures and such -- that are depicted in the paintings Baxandall discusses are very different indeed from those to which we are accustomed. It requires equal efforts of understanding to comprehend these as it does to work out the elements of body language(s) of other cultural groups in whatever form they appear. Body language, in whatever form it may be depicted, is not a

static, universally understood set of gestural or danced meanings which somehow remain constant while everything else in a culture moves and changes. Although it will come as a shock to some, there is no universally understood 'Esperanto' of gesture and meaning.

Since the fifteenth century in western cultures a large number of notation systems for movement have appeared and disappeared (over 87 notation systems for dance alone). Many of these have been little used because they were devised to meet the needs of one particular movement system, dance style, or research project and could not be generalised. It is only in the twentieth century that movement writing systems have emerged which can serve a great variety of applications. The problem has been one of developing a script that will preserve the identity of the movement, make possible accurate reproduction and maintain semantic content.

These observations, written by Farnell (forthcoming) for an International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics and Social Sciences, indicate in a closely action-oriented fashion, what some of the problems of notation, preservation and recording of dancing and sign languages amounts to. And there is more: Farnell also says that "Definitions of human movement necessarily affect definitions of what being human amounts to -- and these have changed considerably in Western cultures according to disciplinary and theoretical perspectives and as a result of historical changes in general intellectual climate".

I cite the above work to draw attention to the fact that the biggest single 'obstacle', if it can be so characterized, to the notion of serious work in the field of anthropology of dance and human movement lies in the long-held premises about mind/body relationships in western cultures: the institutionalization of Christianity, and even more important, the Cartesian split between mind and body, and therefore, of the body and the movements it makes. Some of the most deeply held prejudices in English-speaking cultures about these matters manifest themselves in relation to the subject of dancing and in the defining categories into which all dancing is classified. A lesser, but no less aggravating problem for the serious researcher, is the insistence by many on a final appeal to 'commonsense' thinking about dancing. Yet, it is commonsense thinking which labels Aboriginal dancing 'stone-age dancing'; it is commonsense to see all dancing as a stronghold of uncontrolled emotion, sinful desires, corrupting appetites and private irrationalities of an astonishing variety. The fact that these commonsensical conclusions are based (maybe) on one or two kinds of dancing, or that they stem from little exposure to the richness and variety of the danced forms of body languages throughout the world is ignored. It is from 'commonsense' that the notion that dancing is 'primitive' grew -- and still grows.

If Stanner is to be believed, that "It would be helpful to stop thinking of Aborigines as a 'primitive' people" (1979:59), then we are also going to have to convince ourselves that it would be helpful to stop thinking of dancing as 'primitive' too: not just their dancing,



but ours. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the only form of western dancing which has consistently escaped the primitive stereotype is classical ballet. The relevant question is not why this is so, but what in the history of various segments of western civilization has caused this idiom of dancing to escape the classifications that all other forms of western dancing and 'ethnic' dancing have been subjected to.<sup>17</sup> A rather simplistic explanation but one which has some element of truth in it turns around the notions of an 'academy', a 'syllabus' and a more or less universalised technique and practise structure for the idiom. Because other forms of dancing lack these, they are thought to be more 'primitive', hence less 'advanced' or 'developed' than the ballet. Insufficient attention has been paid to the historical development of the ballet and the reasons why it holds the privileged status that it does in English-speaking societies.

There is a sense in which I am suggesting that our understanding of 'the dance' is (and must be) relational; that is, what we think we know is always contingent upon that which we do not know. This raises several questions, some of which have been previously discussed, like the question of whether or not a choreologist who is solely trained in the idiom of ballet can adequately notate the dances of an unfamiliar idiom of dancing. There is no discussion of such questions in available literature at all. It has been my experience through the teaching of an anthropology of dance and human movement that we know very little about western forms of dancing or why we view them the way we do, thus the task of raising our collective consciousness about Aboriginal, or any other form of dancing than our own is necessarily going to involve considerable effort towards understanding our own forms of dancing as well. Without this dual, self-reflexive process, we are going to be in a poor position to make any generalizations that are worthy of attention about the act of dancing in any culture, far less the entire world. And 'dance researchers' or 'dance scholars' whether they are conscious of it or not, are going to continue to offer 'analyses' or commentaries on the dances of other peoples solely in terms of the defining categories of the dominant culture, simply because without education and training, they cannot do anything else.

### Questions

Familiarity, gained through a life-time's reading of most of the significant writings about the dance in English-speaking societies (which represents merely a segment of a notional world literature on the subject) has yielded evidence that there are a set of stock answers to the often-asked question 'why do people dance?'. Stated in minimal terms, they are these:

1. They dance because they want to have fun and relax -- 'the dance' is basically a vehicle for leisure and entertainment;

2. They dance because of biological, organic or instinctive needs of some kind -- 'the dance' as a precursor to spoken language, or as an atavistic, 'primitive' expression of the animal side of human nature;
3. They dance because they want to 'express' themselves -- 'the dance' as a symbolic activity divorced from 'real life';
4. They dance because they feel sexy, happy or sad or something -- 'the dance' as a prime repository of emotions (and in a world of logical positivism, these emotions have very little to do with rationality or with the human capacity for language-use);
5. They dance to show off or to relieve their overburdened feelings -- 'the dance' as catharsis or as one of the governors on a 'steam-valve' theory of human emotions;
6. They dance because it is an innate, genetically-programmed activity and because they refuse to give up that which represents a 'throw-back' to their ape-like ancestors;
7. They dance because they cannot speak or write very well -- 'the dance' as a pre-literate phenomenon which carries the implication that learning to speak and write is going to put a stop to the dancing;
8. They dance because they are dedicated to some notion of 'bodily praxis' -- as against a dedication to some notion of 'verbal praxis' -- 'the dance' as a more truthful, more integrated, more honest way of life;
9. They dance because dancing is really a form of 'play' -- 'the dance' as an activity belonging to the species 'homo ludens';
10. They dance because they are performing some 'social function' which contributes to the larger society (although just what this is is rarely ever explained except in terms such as 'harmony' or some such term);
11. They dance because they are really magicians or escapists of some kind -- 'the dance' as illusion, along with the rest of the theatrical professions;
12. They dance because a spirit has possessed them, whether 'good' or 'evil' -- 'the dance' as an hysterical, neurotic or quasi-religious manifestation;
13. They dance because of an over-accumulation of sex hormones.

All of the above can be documented (see Williams, forthcoming), and the list I have given is by no means complete. However, a baker's dozen of them by way of illustration is enough to permit us to get on with the discussion.

To that end, it is necessary to examine two difficulties with the old printed record: (1) all of the above answers are inadequate, not only with reference to the nature of something as mind-boggling as the notion of 'the dance' on a global scale, but with reference to the extent to which local definitions, reasons, motivations and such are applied in the literature to the notion of 'the dance' on a worldwide scale. The fact is that 'why do people dance?' as a viable question at this point in history is an exhausted question because it has prevented us from finding out about other aspects of the subject. If it is true that a legitimate response to the Kantian challenges of 'what can we know?' lies in the prior question, 'what can we ask?', then what can be known by any of us about the dance has an intimate relation with what is asked.

There are so many unanswered questions: 'what are people doing when they dance?'; 'how is that dance put together so that it accomplishes the teleological ends for which it is designed?'; 'what is the conceptual space of that dance and how far does it compare with the conceptual spaces of 'X' dance (sign system or whatever)?; in how far is gesture and human action influenced by taxonomies of the body, whether it is danced or non-danced human action?'; 'what is the relationship of the danced actions of 'X' people with the pronominal systems of reference and the gestures of greeting in the same society?'; 'what are the implications and consequences of the proposition, 'movement is a literate medium of human expression?'; 'is there a difference between actions described as "signal", those described as "symbolic" and those described as "symptomatic"?'; 'what are the effects of the tourist industry on "traditional" dancing?'; 'what is meant by "artificializing" a dance if the people who own the dance do not have a defining category of "art"?'.

(2) As I have said elsewhere (Williams, 1980), the difficulty is that where we pre-suppose a real level of 'language' with regard to speaking, we do not tend to pre-suppose a similar level of abstraction when we speak of dancing or any other system of body language. The result is that the whole area of movement study is vitiated by generalizations that stem from comparatively limited notions about specific and minor uses of the medium of movement. Then too, we often seem to be the unconscious victims of our own defining categories, definitions and models of the role of movement in human societies. We divide actions (but not words) into 'symbolic' and 'instrumental' categories. Where we are familiar with polysemy, homonymy and synonymy with reference to words, we seem to want to regard gestures as if they are in some sense semantically 'universal', even in the face of evidence that this is not at all the case. But it is to some different questions about dances and human movement that we will now turn, because there are examples in the Australian literature of attempts to enlarge the theoretical and methodological horizons of the field somewhat -- or to undertake a different mode of analysis entirely.

### Different Questions

Borsboom (1978) was concerned with the apparent shift of a major rite of passage, the Maradjiri, in Arnhem Land. The ceremony he investigated looked as if it had brought about a break with former Maradjiri rites, causing the new rite to be an exact opposite of the old one (Borsboom, 1978:172). Through extended fieldwork, this was proved not to be the case. Instead, it was found that (a) the internal structures of the rite remained, and (b) elaborations were introduced of already existing features of the rite. There was also evidence of a rearrangement of existing symbolic elements of the rite, i.e. the Dreaming 'cluster' to which it belonged (1978:172).

The refreshing thing about Borsboom's work is that we see dances discussed in an over-all context of a total Aboriginal cycle of life in the area; a singularly van Gennepian approach which in my view is a definite 'plus'. The major positive contribution of Borsboom's work, specifically with regard to dances is the attention paid to over-all patterns of the dances (1978:90-129). These insights are offered: (a) "By means of traditionally stylized dances the actors re-enact the important Dreamtime exploits of their clan heroes, thus following up the instructions of what they usually call 'our Dreaming' (Sugar Bag). This Being showed how to sing and dance and in this way created the natural species and phenomena which now belong to the Wurgigandijar clan" (1978:90); (b) "A series of dances of a particular Wurgigandijar ceremony, however, does not comprise all the dreamings of the cluster but consist of a carefully selected group of dreamings which differs for every ceremony, and it is from such a selection of a certain number of dreamings -- and the omission of others -- that a clan ceremony such as the Maradjiri derives its definite character" (Ibid.).

There are eight dreamings in the Maradjiri dance cycle, and instead of falling into the trap of trying to give a blow-by-blow description of the movements done by the dancers, Borsboom gives a detailed analysis of the spatial patterns thereof, the kin relations involved and such. The author is straightforward about his own limitations -- a feature of his work that is greatly to be admired. He says, for example, "No special attention will be paid to the dancing patterns of the women as I have found it impossible to observe properly their complicated and very stylized movements of feet, legs, arms, hands and head. They perform certain subtle variations for every dreaming, which will be mentioned in so far as possible ..." (1978:95).

Borsboom's conclusions are interesting: rite and myth, he tells us, "have the capacity to absorb history, but at the same time history intrudes upon rite and myth and brings about changes in composition and content" (1978:183). He quotes Pouwer, whose article on signification and fieldwork (1973) is a standard reference for anthropologists of human movement. His work might have benefited by consultation of Pocock (1967), as he is concerned with apperceptions of time; however, his work offers an intriguing and well-documented basis for further work by a trained anthropologist of human movement who might well begin by asking, 'what is the relationship of the missing women's movements to the Maradjiri dance cycle as a whole?' It would be useful to possess

notated scores of this dance cycle as well (both men's and women's parts) but that must await the developments to which I alluded at the beginning of this essay.

Very different questions are being asked by two other researchers with regard to field studies already carried out in Arnhem Land: Stephen Wild and Margaret Clunies-Ross. Their current research seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the rules governing the sequences of melodic and textual phrases in Djambidj songs?
2. What are the rules governing the sequences of dance movement performed with the Djambidj songs?
3. What effect does the presence or absence of dancing have on the rules for melodic and textual elements of performance?
4. How are clap-stick patterns, didjeridu patterns and dance calls integrated with song performances and dance performances?
5. How are all of these elements (melody, text, dancing, stick patterns, didjeridu patterns and dance calls) coordinated in a performance?
6. To what extent are the dreaming subjects of Djambidj differentiated by the elements of performance?
7. To what extent do the contexts or occasions of performance determine the nature of performance?

Wild's and Clunies-Ross's research is being conducted by notating all of the elements of a performance, classifying and coding the musical and textual phrases, danced movements, homogeneous stretches of stick beats and didjeridu sounds and discrete 'bands' of ritual calls, and entering these coded sequences into a computer for analysis of syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterns. Notations are being made from audio and video recordings of performances spanning about twenty-five years. The recorded data is complemented by extensive field observations and discussions with performers.

The specific results which may be obtained from this research are not predictable at this stage, but whatever results may accrue, the project will be invaluable, especially from a kinological point of view, for no work of this kind has been undertaken before in Australia. Answers to the above questions will establish that Djambidj songs and dances have rules for a start. I think that the research will help to implant the idea, too, that the notion of 'performance' is sufficiently complex that it demands a different approach to fieldwork from the traditional anthropological approach consisting of one ethnographer to one people. Any approach to the notion of a 'performance' which is based on considerations of music only, dancing only, language only is a reductionist's

approach which fails to see the notion of performance as an integrated whole. Clunies-Ross and Wild seek to re-integrate their data at a different level in the hope that doing so will make possible different kinds of generalizations.

There can be little doubt that different kinds of generalizations and fresh approaches to the Australian material are needed, both with regard to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal dancing, sign languages and non-vocalised systems of human actions of all kinds. It has been argued that not enough attention has been (or is being) paid to performances (see von Sturmer, 1987:74) which go beyond conventional social scientific styles of analyses -- an appeal, one assumes, for a recognition of dances as le fait totale in the classic Maussian sense -- and one can only agree that the meaning of any given performance of dancing cannot be reduced to the mechanical playing out of sign-systems, because one can exhaust the signs and yet know that there is something "over and above" (von Sturmer, 1987:74). But it is just this notion of "over and above" which has been very difficult to deal with in the past. Perhaps it is the case that excellent scholarship can only hope to point the finger (as in the Zen saying), restraining itself from the arrogance of confusing the finger with the moon and accepting the fact of mysteries and beauties that cannot be captured in words in any case, but only in silence.

On a more mundane level, it can be said that Behaviourism, for example, has demonstrably failed to produce insights into dances considered as 'behaviours'; phenomenology (as welcome as it was as a reaction against radical Behaviourism and hard-core empiricism) still denies the dance any ontological existence in time (see Sheets, 1966). The existence of 'spirit' can be no more successfully 'proved' than the existence of 'psyche' in the tradition of post-Kantian metaphysics, thus it has been off-shoots of the recent linguistic revolution in the sciences to which some modern researchers have turned -- with precisely what results it is as yet too early to say. At least the shift in philosophical thinking, best represented in the work of Best (1978 and 1985) has opened new possibilities of theoretical and methodological approach, just as 'ethnoscience' did in the American anthropological tradition (see Kaeppler, 1972, 1985 and 1986).

### Conclusion

I should like to finish this essay by making three things about the scholarly study of dancing in Australia as plain as possible. Up to now, it is not the case that people have looked at dancing, Aboriginal or otherwise, without being able to see it. As I have tried to illustrate, through a balanced presentation of criticism and commendation, there are several writers who have 'seen' and they have described, analyzed and discussed their particular areas of interest very well. There are also those who have seen the need in a multi-cultural context for establishing scholarly studies of the dance in an hospitable academic atmosphere; making out of such study a legitimate area for serious research. Many friends of the subject have worked for many years, both within and

outside of universities, to change the perspective on the subject in several different ways.

Internationally, the printed record, with regard to the anthropology of the dance and human movement has improved remarkably in the past two decades. Australia has a unique contribution to make, but cannot make it unless the subject is able to take its place along with music, theatre and the visual arts in higher educational institutions. No one seems adequately to be able to explain the obvious disparities between the lack of available University qualifications in this country for the subject of the dance and the richness of opportunities of this kind available in connection with other art forms. It has been tentatively suggested that there is not sufficient literature to bear the weight of full-scale intellectual scrutiny. I hope that I have indicated by this writing that this is not the case.

Second, it is as clear to me now as it was in 1970 when I commenced the study of social anthropology, that intimate knowledge of one, two, three or more idioms of dancing does not automatically produce the ability to write about (or notate) the known idioms of dancing, far less those which may be unknown (see Williams, 1976). If any of us who have persisted with the subject through doctoral levels of study could have foreseen the extraordinary confusions which existed (and still do exist) about the subject of dancing in English-speaking societies, we might have felt despair and have never undertaken further study at all. Our personal odysseys, taken together, seem somewhat less radical now than they did, because the issues that were so vital then (circa 1965) have been replaced by others. The real problems to which I alluded at the beginning of this essay pertain not to whether the subject is viable, but how the subject is to be incorporated into a University context in Australia. Nearly a decade has passed since the idea of a graduate degree in the anthropology of dance and human movement came into anyone's mind, and began to be implemented through A.I.A.S. 'Real' problems now consist of educating and training young Australians of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent to the task of coping with the literature, the theoretical and methodological problems that they inherit in an Australian context, and of encouraging them to contribute to the field at local, national and international levels.

Third, a new volume of essays on Songs of Aboriginal Australia (1987) has just been released which contains discussions about dancing, because the two phenomena of singing and dancing are very closely if not irrevocably linked in that context. In this collection of works by reputable scholars, I have already found clues to some possible answers to the question, 'what is a reasonable estimate of the present theoretical position(s) concerning the subject of dancing in Aboriginal Australia?' Whatever else may be said of this book by its future reviewers, it represents a significant contribution to the Australian literature on dancing because of its theoretical content and the clarity with which its authors and editors address some of these issues. It is a provocative and interesting set of essays which will provide future students with an invaluable intellectual foil as they attempt to sharpen their wits in

preparation for their entry into an arena of discourse that is often contentious, certainly stimulating and rarely without genuine interest and satisfying rewards.

Drid Williams  
University of Sydney

#### NOTES

1. For more up-to-date approaches to the subject and work which would be usable by present-day anthropologists and linguists, see Durr (1984), Farnell (1984), Freedman (1986), Dixon-Stowell (1986), Friedland (1986), Hart-Johnson (1983), Fairbank (1985), Novack (1986), Adra (1986), Puri (1983), Volland (1986), Jablonko (1986), Blakely (1986), Grau (1983) and Dail-Jones (1984).
2. Those who for several years worked at, and finally succeeded in getting a dance lectureship in Australia were Stephen Wild, Margaret Clunies-Ross and Allen Marette.
3. For further bibliographic information of a more general anthropological nature, see Burridge, 1973:56-57.
4. The citation is of a published work of Grau's. Restrictions placed on her doctoral thesis, available for reading only at A.I.A.S., prevent more than the most general of comments.
5. Dail-Jones's work is seriously flawed because of the heavy Behaviouristic overtones of the theoretical models she imposed, but if those can be disregarded, there are sections of great value.
6. See Williams (1986) for further discussion.
7. Inverted commas and a capital 'C' are meant to mark the difference between a technical definition of the term 'culture' in anthropology (which stemmed from Tylor) and a popular conception of 'Culture', which tends towards ethnocentric bias, elitism and connotations of 'superior' and 'inferior' cultural behaviours and artifacts.
8. Quisenberry's fieldwork was carried out in Australia, but the thesis was written in the United States and the degree was granted at Southern Methodist University. Although she consulted several Australian anthropologists, their work seemed to have little or no impact on her study seen as a theoretical or methodological work. The anthropologists enter into the discussion only with regard to 'ethnographic' matters. The point is this: Quisenberry's work is a classic example of the notion that 'theory' and 'description' (or ethnography) are somehow separable. Furthermore, her work displays extraordinary epistemological confusions, i.e. she seemed to have no



clear idea of what the task of a field anthropologist consisted, nor did she have a clear idea of the parameters of that which she could comment upon. This could be simply the result of poor supervision; one does not know. Unfortunately, there is only the completed document to consult. Lest I appear to be biased, see Kaeppler, 1978:33, for further criticism of Curt Sachs.

9. It is a well-known fact that political and national boundaries do not often coincide well with the linguistic realities of usage among a people, thus it becomes necessary to stress the point here: terms of national or political reference rarely do justice to the cultural realities that they attempt to encompass, including, for example, the present 'mixtures' of traditions, even on one Aboriginal reserve where one finds (for example) the Wanam and Apalech traditions co-existing in Aurukun.
10. The term 'semasiology' is from a Greek source and can be defined as 'signification' in the sense of 'meaning' + 'logy'. In the late 19th century the word was used to refer to that branch of philology which dealt with the meanings of words. It was used by R. Martineau in 1877 with reference to 'the semasiology of Arabic words'. In 1884, a reference appeared in the Athenaeum, 27 September 395/1 as follows:

Philology is now advancing towards a new branch having intimate relations with psychology, the so-called semasiology of Abel and others.

The next recorded use of the term occurs in 1889, where F. Haverfield (Academy 7 December 374/2) uses it to raise doubt about the phonetic connections of words. That is, where two words may seem to be phonetically linked, semasiologically their connection might be improbable. In 1880, a linguistic entity, the 'semasiological solecism' was apparently known and understood, as the phrase occurs in the Athenaeum. In that publication (5 August 185) this phrase occurs:

The semasiologist ... has to trace the vicissitudes which the history of forms, words and phrases presents with respect to signification.

Usage of this term has consistently pointed towards the semantic aspects of linguistic signification and the term is used throughout the texts of my work and that of my students in that sense, only, as it applies to human action sign signification. In anthropology, it is a neologism, and for the reasons why it arises, see Williams (1987).

11. I have tried, using von Sturmer's words, to illustrate exactly what is meant here: this anthropologist's 'description' is an informed description, one which rests not only on intuition and experience

- of dancing with his informants in the field, but on years of scholarly study as well. This is why he can form the sentences in his description the way he does. He understands what the dancing means. His locutions are not simply 'accidents' or the results of a better knowledge of the English language. Should colleagues think that I overstress the relation of theory and description, I would ask that they consult Williams (1980) and then reflect on the value of tutored as against untutored field observations.
12. I have used a term 'semantic primitives' here which is well-known in linguistic literature through the work of Anna Wierzbicka (1980, 1985). I first encountered the phrase, not in her books, but in Haviland (1986), where he does an extensive analysis of deictic categories, words and roots with reference to Guugo Ymidihirr (a local Paman language of the Hopevale people) in the southeastern part of the Cape York Peninsula. My understanding of the notion of 'semantic primitives' is closer to Haviland's usage than it is to its originator's usage.
  13. By this, I mean that the only references to theorists of anthropology and the dance that are present in Grau's work are Kaeppler, Keali'inohomoku and Blacking. This would be all right if we were offered an explanation of the 'muted group', i.e. Birdwhistell, Kendon, Williams, Royce, Hall and others. As it is, the one theoretical framework which includes the notion of universals -- worked out in great detail -- is ignored: semasiology.
  14. There is no available space to spell out what is meant here, as the problem would require at least one lecture. Suffice it to say that an anthropologist's relation to his or her informants, to the data, to colleagues and to the folk-model of events is complex and quite unlike the relations between a so-called 'hard' scientist and his or her work. One starts by teasing out the differences by studying Winch (1958), who stressed these relations and discussed the differences in detail and with great sagacity.
  15. One is aware of the history of -- and current debates over -- this term in anthropology. Elsewhere, I have expressed perplexity over Kurath's statement, for example, that "...clan totemism produces complex rituals, as in Australia ..." (1960:237). There are those who are convinced that 'totemism' in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties was suffering from its death throes as a major explanatory category in social anthropology; however, these arguments cannot detain us here. The term is commonly used with regard to dances, and stringent and critical examination needs to be made of such usages, as there is virtually no agreement among writers as to the reality to which the term is supposed to refer.
  16. I here refer to collections of essays such as those of Otten (1971) and Belo (1970), where a good deal of ethnographic 'fact' is elucidated, but these facts are unaccompanied by discussions of what the processes are which generate the facts.

17. The ideological basis for the label 'primitive' in connection with Aboriginal peoples has existed in Australia since the mid-18th century at least. It still exists today. Mere mention of the matter is all that is possible here; however, I will deal with the subject in greater detail in an article in preparation following a recent field trip to the Cape York Peninsula (May - August, 1987). The notion of 'primitiveness' is connected with a concept of 'Terra Nullius' which was accompanied by the idea that there were people who had not advanced beyond "a state of nature" (see Frost, 1981, for more thorough discussions).

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# CHAPTER 6

## PRESENT PROVISIONS

6.0 This chapter provides information on the present provisions for arts education and training in each art form and a set of recommendations and suggestions designed to overcome deficiencies.

### PROVISION BY ART FORM

6.1 Higher education provision in each of the major art forms, including where appropriate the level and nature of provision in specialisations or concentrations within each art form, is set out in the following paragraphs. All tables and the text reflect the position in relation to provision in 1984 unless otherwise indicated. Because course structures typically provide for students to undertake specialisations in more than one area, it has not been possible to identify student numbers reliably by specific art form areas.

### PROVISION IN CREATIVE WRITING

6.2 The creative writing of poetry or fiction is the field of the arts where the least emphasis is placed on formal vocational training. Units or subjects are offered in these areas in journalism, communication and media studies in a number of higher education institutions, but due to lack of time and the fact that the emphasis from course to course varied considerably, no attempt was made to look into them. Visits were made and brief discussions were held with staff at the Western Australian Institute of Technology, the New South Wales Institute of Technology, Deakin University and Mitchell College of Advanced Education. Also, discussions were held with a number of writers, many of whom suggested that workshops and short courses, where aspiring writers could share their experiences, were the most valuable means of training. There were, on the other hand, a few ardent advocates of more formal courses. However, without a more comprehensive and systematic investigation of all the programs offered in all institutions in this area, no firm conclusions can be drawn other than to suggest that institutions test the market demand that is alleged to exist by offering short courses in this area.

### PROVISION IN CRAFTS

6.3 Crafts are one of the major areas of provision in the arts and are offered by some twenty-eight higher education institutions. Table 1 shows the distribution of institutions with offerings in crafts by State, level of course and type of institution.

FROM: Review of Arts Education and Training, October, 1985.  
Australian Government Public Service, Canberra.

Table 1: CRAFTS — Distribution by State, Level of Course, and Type of Institution\* in 1984

State	Higher Degree		Post-graduate Diploma		Bachelor Degree		Diploma		Associate Diploma	
	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI
NSW	2	1	3	—	5	1	—	—	5	1
VICTORIA	1	—	5	—	6	—	5	—	1	—
QUEENSLAND	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	1	—
WA	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	2	—
SA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
TASMANIA	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	1	1	1
ACT	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
NT	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
TOTAL	3	2	11	—	14	2	9	1	13	2

\*CAE includes advanced education courses offered in TAFE and Other institutions

As can be seen from the table, crafts courses are available throughout Australia although the extent of provision, in terms of the percentage of institutions involved and the levels of courses offered, varies between the regions.

6.4 Craft courses are offered by a majority of arts institutions in New South Wales and Victoria, and by both higher education institutions in Tasmania. There is a high proportion of associate diplomas in crafts.

6.5 Courses are available at both under-graduate and post-graduate levels in most States and the Australian Capital Territory although the provision of higher degree courses is limited at present to New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, with three of the five institutions involved located in New South Wales.

6.6 Higher degree courses are proposed by institutions in Western Australia and South Australia, and institutions in Queensland and the Northern Territory envisage the introduction of post-graduate diplomas. A further degree course has been approved for introduction in Queensland.

6.7 Provision of crafts courses has historically been concentrated in the advanced education sector; the two universities which offer courses in crafts, the University of Wollongong and the University of Tasmania, assumed responsibility for the conduct of courses previously offered by colleges of advanced education. Specific craft areas are offered in the institutions and at the course level shown in the table below.

Table 2: Provision of Crafts Courses

	<i>Assoc Diploma</i>	<i>Diploma</i>	<i>Bachelor Degree</i>	<i>Graduate Diploma</i>	<i>Higher Degree</i>
<b>Ceramics</b>					
Uni Wollongong	X		X		X
Macarthur IHE	X				
Mitchell CAE	X				
Nepean CAE	X		X		
Newcastle CAE	X		X	X	
Northern Rivers CAE	X				
Riverina-Murray IHE			X		
Sydney CAE			X	X	X
Sydney Coll. Arts			X	X	X
Balarat CAE		X		X	
Bendigo CAE		X	X		
Chisholm IT	X		X	X	
Gippsland IAE		X		X	
Phillip IT		X	X	X	
Royal Melbourne IT			X	X	X
Victoria College Warrnambool IAE		X			
Brisbane CAE	X				
Darling Downs IAE		X			
Old Coll. Art		X			
Townsville Coll. of TAFE		X			
WA Inst Technology	X		X	X	
South Aust CAE	X		X		
Uni Tasmania	X	X	X		X
Tasmanian SIT	X	X			X
Canberra School of Art	X		X	X	
Darwin IT	X		X		
<b>Glass</b>					
Nepean CAE	X		X		
Sydney Coll. Arts			X	X	X
Chisholm IT			X	X	
South Aust CAE	X				
Canberra School of Art	X		X	X	

	<i>Assoc. Diploma</i>	<i>Diploma</i>	<i>Bachelor Degree</i>	<i>Graduate Diploma</i>	<i>Higher Degree</i>
<b>Jewellery/Gold &amp; Silversmithing</b>					
Mitchell CAE	X				
Riverina-Murray IHE			X		
Sydney Coll. Arts			X	X	X
Sydney CAE			X	X	X
Chisholm IT			X		
Royal Melb IT			X	X	X
Brisbane CAE	X				
Qld Coll. Art		X			
Townsville Coll. of TAFE		X			
WA Inst. Technology	X		X	X	
South Aust CAE	X		X		
Tasmanian SIT	X	X		X	
Canberra School of Art	X		X	X	
<b>Textiles/Weaving</b>					
Uni Wollongong	X		X		X
Mitchell CAE	X				
Newcastle CAE	X		X	X	
Northern Rivers CAE	X				
Riverina-Murray IHE	X		X		
Sydney CAE			X	X	X
Brisbane CAE	X				
Darling Downs IAE		X			
WA Inst. Technology	X		X	X	
Uni Tasmania	X				
Tasmanian SIT	X	X		X	
Canberra School of Art	X		X	X	
<b>Other Crafts</b>					
Mitchell CAE	X				
Brisbane CAE	X				
South Aust CAE	X		X		
Uni Tasmania	X	X	X		X
Canberra School of Art	X		X	X	

### \* PROVISION IN DANCE

6.9 There is comparatively little tertiary provision in dance. Table 3 sets out the distribution of institutions with offerings in dance by State, level, and type of institution.



Table 3: DANCE — Distribution by State, Level of Course, and Type of Institution in 1984

State	Higher Degree		Post-graduate Diploma		Bachelor Degree		Diploma		Associate Diploma	
	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI
NSW	—	—	—	—	1**	—	—	—	3	1**
VICTORIA	—	1*	—	—	1	1*	1	—	—	—
QUEENSLAND	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
WA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
SA	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
TASMANIA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ACT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	1	—	—	3	1	1	—	6	1

\*This is a research based Masters degree in the Performing Arts. It is not a discrete dance course, nor is the degree course marked #.

\*\*Minor strand only offered.

6.9. There is only one course in dance at diploma level and four at degree level although in one only a minor strand in dance is offered. For the most part courses are only available at the associate diploma level. Courses are offered by a total of six colleges of advanced education: two in New South Wales and one each in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. Dance is available as a minor study within an associate diploma course offered by the University of Wollongong and as an element within courses in the performing arts offered by Deakin University.

6.10 A number of institutions are proposing to expand their offerings in dance during the next few years. The Victorian College of the Arts proposes to introduce a post-graduate diploma course in 1986 and degree courses are planned for introduction in Queensland, Western Australia and New South Wales.

#### PROVISION IN MUSIC

6.11 Music is offered by some twenty-three higher education institutions. Table 4 shows the distribution of provision in music by State, level of course and type of institution.

Table 4: MUSIC — Distribution by State, Level of Course, and Type of Institution in 1984

State	Higher Degree		Post-graduate Diploma		Bachelor Degree		Diploma		Associate Diploma	
	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI
NSW	—	3	2	1	2	3	1	—	4	1
VICTORIA	—	4	2	—	1	4	1	—	1	—
QUEENSLAND	—	1	1	—	1	1	2	—	1	—
WA	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
SA	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	—
TASMANIA	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	1
ACT	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	11	7	2	6	11	5	1	9	2

Courses are offered by one or more institutions throughout Australia, other than in the Northern Territory, and are available from higher degree down to associate diploma level in most.

### Specialisations

6.12 **Church Music.** The New South Wales State Conservatorium offers an Associate Diploma in Church Music and the Institute of Catholic Education, Victoria, introduced a degree in Church Music in 1985.

6.13 **Conducting.** The Victorian College of the Arts and the Queensland Conservatorium both offer a Graduate Diploma in Conducting, and the Queensland Conservatorium also offers a diploma in this area.

6.14 **Jazz.** The Victorian College of the Arts is the only institution offering a three year diploma course in Jazz. They also offer a Graduate Diploma in the area. Six institutions, the Queensland Conservatorium, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, the South Australian CAE, the Tasmanian SIT, the Victorian College of the Arts and the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music offer an associate diploma in this area.

6.15 **Opera and Music Theatre.** Graduate Diplomas are offered at the New South Wales Conservatorium and the Queensland Conservatorium where both a diploma and a degree in this area are also available. The Victorian College of the Arts offers an Associate Diploma in Opera and Music Theatre.

6.16 **Repetiteur.** The New South Wales Conservatorium and the Queensland Conservatorium offer Graduate Diplomas in this area, with the latter also offering a diploma course.

### Concentrations and Specialisations

6.17 The term 'concentration' is used to distinguish those courses which offer specific specialisations from those that offer the opportunity to choose a major area of study within a more general degree. This is defined as a major area of study within a degree. For example, many music degrees offer the student



6.20 **Musicology.** Musicology may be described as a major concentration in the degree programs offered by seven universities, the New South Wales State Conservatorium and the Canberra School of Music. The University of Queensland and Sydney, Monash and Adelaide Universities all offer higher degrees in this area.

6.21 **Composition.** As Table 6 shows, there are fourteen institutions which offer concentrations in composition. This may at first appear excessive, but in fact only a very small proportion of the students who study how a composition is created and try to create modest little pieces as a part of their training could be classified as being trained or educated to be a composer. To put this point another way would be to stress that studying composition and composing are two quite distinct operations, just as studying literature and writing a novel or a play are discrete activities. On the other hand, perhaps some of the university degree programs and certainly the three institutions offering post-graduate diplomas can be assumed to be designed to produce composers as would the eight universities offering higher degrees in this area.

Table 6: Provision of Music (Composition) Courses

	<i>Assoc. Diploma</i>	<i>Diploma</i>	<i>Bachelor Degree</i>	<i>Graduate Diploma</i>	<i>Higher Degree</i>
Uni New England			X		X
Uni Sydney			X	X	X
Uni Wollongong			X		X
NSW Conservatorium			X		
LaTrobe Uni			X		
Uni Melbourne			X		
Vic. Coll. Arts		X	X	X	
Uni Queensland Old Conservatorium		X	X	X	X
Uni Western Australia			X		X
Uni Adelaide			X		X
Uni Tasmania	X		X		X
Canberra School Music			X		

6.22 It is again emphasised that the concentrations shown in these tables are not discrete. The course in music offered at bachelor's degree level in the University of Melbourne, for example, can be taken in a number of combinations and for this reason it may appear more than once in these tables. Courses described as general courses in Music are offered in the institutions listed in Table 7. Note that Macarthur Institute of Higher Education introduced a degree program in 1985.

Table 7: Provision of Music (General) Courses

	<i>Assoc. Diploma</i>	<i>Diploma</i>	<i>Bachelor Degree</i>	<i>Graduate Diploma</i>	<i>Higher Degree</i>
Uni Sydney			X		X
Uni Wollongong	X		X		
Macarthur IHE	X				
Mitchell CAE	X				
Deakin Uni			X		X
LaTrobe Uni			X		X
Monash Uni			X		
Uni Melbourne			X		X
Uni Queensland			X		X
Old Conservatorium			X		
Uni Western Aust			X		X
Uni Adelaide			X		
South Aust CAE	X		X		
Uni Tasmania	X		X		

## PROVISION IN THEATRE

6.23 Courses in theatre and drama were offered by some twenty-two institutions in 1984 and were available in all States and Territories other than Tasmania where an associate diploma course was introduced in 1985. Table 8 shows the distribution of provision by State, level of course and type of institution.

Table 8: THEATRE — Distribution by State, Level of Course, and Type of Institution\* in 1984

State	<i>Higher Degree</i>		<i>Post- graduate Diploma</i>		<i>Bachelor Degree</i>		<i>Diploma</i>		<i>Associate Diploma</i>	
	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI
NSW	—	3	2	1	2	4	1	—	5	1
VICTORIA	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	—	1	—
QUEENSLAND	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	1
WA	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
SA	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	—
TASMANIA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ACT	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
TOTAL	1	6	3	1	5	8	3	—	10	2

\*CAE includes advanced education courses offered in TAFE and Other Institutions

The table shows that the majority of post-graduate courses are offered by universities where the programs offered tend to be academic and literary rather than practical.

6.24 A number of new courses are proposed including degree courses in colleges of advanced education in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.

6.25 A broad division between courses having to do with the theatre and drama would see the courses which are predominantly literary and theoretical, but where theory is illumined by some practice, grouped under the heading drama studies, and the more practically oriented courses designated as theatre courses. A further division of theatre courses would then see a very few institutions classified as offering vocational courses, as such courses have been defined elsewhere in this Review, while the rest, though practical, would be classified as non-vocational. In general all or most of the courses offered in universities are drama studies (although there are special cases such as Flinders and Newcastle universities) and this group probably should include the courses offered at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. The only fully vocational courses are those offered at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, the Victorian College of the Arts, the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, Academy of Performing Arts, Nepean College of Advanced Education and, to a lesser degree, the concentrations offered at Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education in Queensland and Mitchell College of Advanced Education in New South Wales. Also another feature of the provision in theatre studies is the comparatively large number of institutions offering associate diplomas in theatre studies, six of them in New South Wales. The University of Wollongong, the Western Australian Institute of Technology and the South Australian College of Advanced Education all offer theatre concentrations within a more general degree.

#### PROVISION IN THE VISUAL ARTS (INCLUDING FINE ARTS)

6.26 The visual arts constitute the largest area of provision within the arts. Table 9 shows the distribution of institutions by State, level of course and type of institution.

Table 9: VISUAL ARTS — Distribution by State, Level of Course, and Type of Institution\* in 1984

State	Higher Degree		Post-graduate Diploma		Bachelor Degree		Diploma		Associate Diploma	
	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI	CAE	UNI
NSW	2	2	3	1	5	2	—	—	6	1
VICTORIA	1	4	6	—	8	4	5	—	—	—
QUEENSLAND	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	—	1	—
WA	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	2	—
SA	—	—	2	—	1	1	—	—	1	—
TASMANIA	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	1	1	1
ACT	1	—	1	—	2	1	—	—	2	—
NT	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	4	6	14	1	18	11	9	1	13	2

\*CAE includes advanced education courses offered in TAFE and Other institutions

**6.27 Fine Arts.** In the main the academic study of the visual arts is carried out in departments of fine arts in universities. All four universities in Victoria offer courses in the fine arts and three of them have established chairs in this discipline. Also in Victoria, there is a post-graduate diploma in fine arts offered at the Phillip Institute of Technology. The University of Sydney offers fine arts and courses are offered within the general arts/humanities degree program at Flinders University and the Australian National University. The University of Queensland offers the opportunity for students to take a double major in fine arts. Its course appears to be more practically oriented than other such programs. The University of Western Australia has established a centre for the fine arts and is presently considering establishing a department in this area. Finally, the universities of Sydney and Melbourne and LaTrobe, Monash and Deakin all offer higher degrees in fine arts.

### Specialisations and Concentrations

**6.28 Illustration.** Newcastle College of Advanced Education, the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, the Queensland College of Art and the Townsville College of Technical and Further Education offer courses in illustration with Newcastle also offering a highly regarded course at the post-graduate diploma level.

**6.29 Animation.** The Queensland College of Art and the Townsville College of TAFE both offer courses in animation within their diploma programs.

**6.30 Museum and Conservation Studies.** The University of Sydney and Victoria College both offer post-graduate diplomas in museum studies at associate diploma level and a degree course in conservation is offered at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. Graduate diplomas and material anthropology and museum curatorship are offered by James Cook University of North Queensland. The Canberra College of Advanced Education also offers a higher degree in conservation studies.

**6.31 Painting.** Over twenty higher education institutions offer concentrations in painting at degree or diploma level. A total of eleven associate diploma courses is offered, all but two of them in institutions which also offer a degree or a diploma in painting. Fourteen institutions offer graduate diplomas in painting and five institutions offer higher degrees. The only universities involved in painting are the University of Wollongong and the University of Tasmania. Both these institutions offer higher degrees together with the Sydney College of the Arts, the Sydney College of Advanced Education, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Offerings in this area are displayed by institution and level of course in Table 10.

## APPENDIX II

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