

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHIC UNDERSTANDING OF *LUNA*

This thesis inhabits the cross-disciplinary region between the study of dance as art form and dance anthropology. Contemporary dance researchers who cross the disciplinary divide into the field of anthropology are still scant. But the body of literature on dance anthropology and dance-focused ethnographies has been proliferating since the 1970s, and is especially fecund at the moment of this writing.

Researchers in the adjacent fields of arts sociology, aesthetics, as well as critical and cultural studies of dance, have also been producing copious bodies of literature that provided fertile grounds for this contemporary dance ethnography. After sifting through a multitude of texts for over two years, I honed in on a group of authors from whom I extracted particular definitions, models or theories on which to base my research methodology, fieldwork and data interpretation. This review of the literature discusses these authors' contributions to the *Luna* project on three levels: (a) how I have interpreted and applied their ideas to this study (b) the way in which I take issue with, or propose an expansion of, their intellectual proposals, and (c) the way in which this study might be seen as a continuation of their projects.

The first anthology of dance fieldwork techniques was edited in 1999 by Theresa Buckland, just in time to be of use to this research project. With sixteen new essays from as many authors, researchers explored various aspects of theory, methods and issues in dance ethnography, and several are

discussed below. But as mentioned in the introductory chapter, I have only been able to locate three published book-length ethnographies about Western art dance practices -- from Wulff (1998), Novack (1990) and Fisher (2003) -- on which to build my own. In the course of this research process, I have also discovered the largely unpublished work of other artist-researchers around the world who, like myself, have only begun to apply anthropological methods and methodologies to the study of their own contemporary dance communities (e.g. Huang, 1996; Santos, 1999; Suarez, 2005).

My readings also led me through a dense tangle of erudite, interdisciplinary debates and discourses linking the disciplines of aesthetic philosophy, art criticism, dance anthropology, sociology, dance analysis, dance history and the newest areas of critical dance studies and the cultural studies of dance. I even ventured into fields of thought about phenomena such as "tourist art" and the semiotics of expressive movement, eventually set aside because in the end they proved peripheral to the concerns in this study. These interdisciplinary discourses were in turbulent motion during the period of this research project, and sorting through them to capture ideas in flux has been challenging and sometimes elusive. Theoretical grounding for this study and frameworks for analysis of the data were in the end assembled from ideas gathered from several of these fields.

This review of the literature begins on a historical note by locating theoretical propositions from founding mothers (and a few fathers) who contributed to shaping the field of dance anthropology within three distinct cultural contexts and perspectives. The following section fleshes out some of the dynamics of doing anthropology at home. Next, the focus will hone in on certain arts-interested anthropologists and sociologists who have contributed to theorizing the concept of the "dance event" and to analyzing the workings of the Western art world. Then I examine in more detail those texts that are located at the crossroads of art and anthropology, re-examining the Western academic tradition of keeping them separate. Next, the burgeoning field of

critical and cultural dance studies will be looked at for its impact on this research project. In the following section, a diverse set of dancing and non-dancing aesthetic philosophers and analysts of various kinds, who turned their attention to issues of dance, are singled out for the intellectual direction and clarity they provided at specific points in this research process. And finally, I scan a selection of local writing on for its contributions to my understanding of the history and social context of Québécois *nouvelle danse*¹.

2.1 The field of dance anthropology

The discipline of dance anthropology has a relatively short history that can be seen to date back to the 1940s, according to Kurath's overview of the field (1960). But as briefly discussed in Chapter I, it already contains three distinct research communities with their own histories, theories and methodologies, situated in distinct geographic locations: the American dance ethnologists, British social anthropologists of dance and Eastern European ethnochoreologists.

Just as I am entering the field it seems to be coming into maturity, replete with historical accounts and surveys of the discipline (e.g. Kaeppler, 1978; Lange, 1980; Snyder, 1992). A venerable group of academic elders in the mid-1900s gave status to the discipline as a serious field of study and provided its early theoretical underpinnings and continue to develop the field (Franziska Boas, 1944; Giurchescu [on Brailoiu], 2000; Grau [on Blacking], 1993; Hanna, 1979; Kurath, 1960; Kealiinohomoku, 1976; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Spencer, 1985; Williams, 1976).

My initial point of entry into dance anthropology, as recounted in the previous chapter, was by way of Kealiinohomoku's classic essay (1969/1970).

¹ I decided not to widen the scope to include international authors with the exception of newspaper critics because the literature is vast and easily the subject of future study on Montréal dance.

And her dissertation outlined a theory and methods for dance anthropology (Kealiinohomoku, 1976) that I have put to use at numerous points in the research process as a source for working definitions of culture, anthropology, and dance events. Her thesis also offered strategies for the organization of field observation, data analysis and the structure of the final text. It was also in this thesis (1976) that Kealiinohomoku proposed the notion of dance having a useful function in all societies that underlies this thesis: "The fact that dance is found in every society but has no common cultural rationale for its existence [...] makes it seem logical to infer some imperative that causes dance to appear in all human societies" (p. 44). But from long years of struggle for economic survival and social recognition for contemporary choreographers, I had come to believe that our passionate practice held as yet little interest and meaning for the larger community.

Although this study of a Montréal dance event is rooted principally in the views of North American dance ethnologists, insights and theoretical ideas have also been gleaned from the British and Eastern European schools of thought. My sources for this study included texts from each of the three groups of dance anthropologists discussed in the previous chapter. I have come to distinguish their distinct orientations in this way: (a) the dance is seen as a microcosm for understanding social organization among American dance ethnologists (e.g. Browning, 1995; Novack, 1990; Savigliano, 1995; and Taylor, 1998); (b) the British dance anthropologists consider dance as a small but vital branch of the larger discipline of social anthropology, with their focus on the semiology of movement (e.g. Blacking, 1980; Brinson, 1985; Kaeppeler, 1978; Lange, 1975; Spencer, 1985); and finally (c) the Eastern European ethnochoreologists engage in a state-sponsored quest to document, preserve, and theorize their national dance heritages (e.g. Giurchescu, 1999; Nahachewsky, 1997). British dance theorist Williams (1991) has further argued for an even broader field she calls "human movement studies" and for which she developed "semasiology," a theory "intended to

move dance studies [towards] an understanding of human beings as meaning-makers" (in Frosch, 1999, p. 255). The belief among many of the *Luna* participants that contemporary dance is a form of meaning-making, and the kinds of meaning that they articulated, is explored in Chapters VII and IX.

These three groups of dance anthropologists are actually intermingling with increasing frequency within each other's conferences and symposiums² and books, giving rise to cross-purposes and shared methodologies. Buckland's anthology (1999a), for instance, created a forum inclusive of all three groups of dance anthropologists.

2.2 Doing anthropology at home

It was by way of the proceedings for a conference of the British Association of Social Anthropologists in 1988 that I unearthed discussion in the discipline towards a recent tendency for doing "anthropology at home." From this collection of research papers (Jackson, 1988) I became aware of a debate about economic and philosophical motives that had resulted in a shift in the attention of a noteworthy group of younger anthropologists away from exotic lands and back to their own communities (as with the Chicago school sociologists before them). But there was no mention at all in of these texts about the arts, pointing to the rarity of studies like this one. Previously unforeseen subjects emerged at that conference such as: (a) how the discipline had been changed by indigenous ethnographers' work and (b) problems that were specific to doing research at home. With this conference in mind, I now understood the *Luna* project to be part of a theoretical movement within the anthropology field itself, but a movement with as yet few contribution by arts anthropologists. Novack's ethnohistory of Contact Improvisation (1990) provided me with a first model of contemporary dance

²Two examples are annual meetings of the Congress on Research in Dance in the U.S. and the Dance Ethnochoreology Study Group of the International Council on Traditional Music based in Europe.

ethnography from which I could begin arguing for the pertinence of Western art dancers doing ethnography at home.

But it was in Buckland's anthology (1999a), published more than a decade later, that I discovered Giurchescu's reflections (1999) about her predicament in Eastern Europe as a dance ethnographer who was native to the dance form she was studying and yet outsider to the social context in which she was working. She wrote about the advantages and handicaps of working in one's own culture as, for instance, the ethnographer's sense of familiarity with the larger social contexts that can lead to overlooking obvious but important details (p. 45). I have found myself in a similar predicament as an insider to the contemporary dance world in general, and yet sometimes excluded as an outsider by some of the power elite of Montréal *nouvelle danse*. And the expressionistic (emotional) temperament of much (but not all) Québécois choreography, even after the 28 years of my residency, still feels foreign to the American body-based formalism and somatic aesthetics I had known from my formative years as a dancer. Giurchescu's text also alerted me to the political predicament of my ambiguous status as both a local dance presenter and fieldworker, and how these dual roles became blurred in relationships with participants. After leaving the field, like Giurchescu, I have inevitably continued to encounter and interact with the protagonists in this study.

I also gained insight on my predicament as insider in the field from an Swiss-born dance anthropologist Grau (1999), in her essay on the dynamics of power in fieldwork and in particular the problems of access and representation in the field. She also called attention to the difficulties in the interpersonal relationships between fieldworker and those who are observed. For instance, she examined the politics of fund-raising and distribution of resources in the pre-fieldwork stage, the tendency to discard

one's own cherished principles in the field, and questions of ownership in the writing-up period afterwards (pp. 169-170). Grau portrayed a perplexing maze of political interactions, many of which I did in fact experience as I sought status and funding as a graduate student, and grappled with my own power-laden position as the director of a dance performance space within the same dance community I was studying. In the end, there were times during the process of the *Luna* study when, for better or for worse, my particular status gave me access to offices and meetings that might otherwise have proved difficult, and other times it oriented the quality of my exchanges with participants. But as a novice doctoral student and ethnographer I felt more like the hopeful (and less powerful) initiate seeking mentorship from more knowledgeable scholars, a role that admittedly gave me a time for recuperation from the responsibilities of my day-to-day work in the dance world.

2.3 Conceiving the dance event framework

The notion of a contemporary dance event has been central to this research project. In this section I examine the contributions to the conception of this concept found in the writings of dance ethnologists and ethnochoreologists Kealiinohomoku (1976), Ronström (1988 and 2000), Royce (1977), Snyder (1988 and 1992) and Nahachewsky (1995), as well as sociologists Becker (1982) and Goffman (1974).

From the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, while the discipline of dance anthropology was still nascent, researchers embraced a wide array of general theoretical models about the nature and function of dancing. Among these, they proposed that (a) dance is a form of human communication (Hanna, 1979); (b) dance is a social or spiritual function of society (Lange, 1975), (c) dance is a kind of “cultural performance” (Schechner, 1977), (d) dance is a

structured system of expressive human movement (Kaeppler, 1985), (e) dance is a societal safety valve (the catharsis theory) and instrument for social solidarity (Spencer, 1985); and (f) the related idea that dance can be a social regulator or agent of change (Brinson, 1985).

Anya Peterson Royce published *The Anthropology of Dance* in 1977, an early book-length discussion of the discipline. In it she raised the question of how to contend with these different conceptions of the meaning of dance, which she suggested might be the result of focusing too narrowly on the dance performance itself. She proposed the “dance event unit” as a way to clarify this splintering of dance views:

[...] part of our difficulty in coming to terms with definitions is our tendency to separate the form of dance from its context, and [...] to use form as the primary basis for definitions. We can resolve much of the difficulty by thinking in terms of *dance events* [...] rather than of dances and dancing [...] taking whole events as units of analysis [...] (Royce, 1977, p. 10)

I understood her here to mean that when dances are considered holistically and as a product of their social and cultural environment, their nature and meaning become a question of indigenous significance. Throughout her book Royce uses “the dance event unit” as a foundation for analysis of particular dance forms, providing in-depth examples from her own and other's fieldwork. As for the difficulty of distinguishing the boundaries of the dance event that separate it from the general flow of social life and from other forms of expressive movement, she invoked once again the necessity of seeking out those indigenous ideas which define the time, space and dynamics of the dance event and are relevant to the dances and societies in question (Royce, 1977, p. 12).

Only one year earlier the dance event concept was elaborated more fully by Kealiinohomoku (1976). Like her contemporary Royce, her ideas were based on the need to determine the participant's viewpoints. But she went further in developing a dance event model and rationale. At first she transposed ideas from the adjacent field of folklore studies and, in particular, discussions about the storytelling event. In her thesis she lays out a general proposal for the structure and range of elements of a dance event, as well as an approach to its study. She argues, among other things, that an adequate analysis of the dance event requires answers to at least the questions of who (concept), what (phenomenon), when (time), where (space), and why (function). Although these journalistic questions are reductive indications of complex phenomena, they served the *Luna* study as a template for field observations, data analysis, and the organization chapters for this ethnography: Who were the various kinds of participants? What kinds of activities were they engaged in? When did these activities occur and what is their duration and sequence? Where did they take place, in what spaces and environments? Why did participants engage in them and what did they mean to those who did?

Kealiinohomoku (1976) also distinguished the nature and role of three groups of participants integral to the event: (a) the various non-dancing participants; (b) the dancer assigned to executing the dance itself; and (c) the dance maker (pp. 237-289). Because of the crucial emphasis on the concept of professionalism in the Montréal dance world, I also found it particularly useful to distinguish the vocational dance event participants, like the dancers and dance company personnel, from those who were not dance professionals such as spectators and certain employees. As evidence that dance is indeed a social activity in which many kinds of non-dancing participants also play a crucial role, she contended that participating non-dancers appear in every dance culture, that few dancers dance except at social events (there being only exceptional instances of private dancing), and that dancers thrive on

responses from their peers and other viewers in order to maintain self-concept and ongoing status (pp. 230-240). These proposals about dance event participants convinced me of the critical importance of including not only the audience, but other genres of non-dancing participants as well (funding agent, technical director, dance historian, etc.) in order to tell the story of *Luna* in its full complexity.

Also in the 1970s, a fertile period for dance anthropology, Snyder (1989; 1992) elaborated a diagram of dance event “levels” (see Plate 2.1) which she had originally developed in response to the “overwhelming [...] idea of contextualization” for students in the fledgling Dance Ethnology program at the University of California at Los Angeles. In her schema, the event is seen as a time and space experience, motivated by the intangible variable of energy (p.1). As visually represented in Plate 2.1, Snyder's levels diagram distinguished eight concepts progressing from the widest macro level (world view at the top) to the minutest micro level (the smallest unit of movement towards the bottom). She explained the concept of “level” as a “slice of space.” The seven first seven levels proposed a specific application of time and space and an explanation of its general function within the event. Level 8, added later to the grid (1989), introduced a “fusion of time and space” (1992, p. 9). Each level was a unit of analysis, a system unto itself, and viewed the dance in relationship to both cultural context and individual dancer. The event was displayed here as the core moment when the dance was performed. Structural elements included in the diagram were the event’s performance, the dancers who performed and the movements of the dancing.

STRUCTURE	GENERAL FUNCTION
Event pattern 1—world view event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of maximum ritual <i>time</i> structure: units in year or years • description of maximum ritual <i>space</i> structure: defines total culturally defined spatial parameters 	conceptualizes experientially culture's world view
Event pattern 2—festival, ritual, performance event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charting of total <i>time</i> of festival, ritual, performance-units in days • charting of total <i>space</i> of festival, ritual, performance 	cope with "question mark" situations within culture
Event pattern 3—dance event outside view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of <i>time</i> of dance events within structure of pattern 2 • identification of <i>space</i> of dance events within structure of pattern 2 	socially identifies and defines group
Event pattern 4—dance event inside view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification and charting of personal <i>time</i> (social dynamic) for dance event • identification and charting of personal <i>space</i> (floor plan) for dance event 	socially identifies and defines role
Event pattern 5—"dance symbol" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • viewing of each socially identifiable person in dance in terms of <i>time</i>, for example movement motifs • viewing of each socially identifiable person in dance <i>spatially</i>, for example costume, paraphernalia 	symbolically encodes essential elements of culture
Event pattern 6—movement event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of <i>time</i> effects of movement of individual dancers • description of <i>spatial</i> effects of movement of individual dancers 	conveys kinesthetic experience
Event pattern 7—kinemic event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of smallest unit of movement in <i>space</i> understood within a culture • identification of smallest unit of movement in <i>time</i> understood within a culture 	identifies paralinguistic roots
Event pattern 8—energy event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fusion of time and space in a dynamic whole 	transforms root experience

Figure 2. Levels of event patterns—defined in terms of time and space

Plate 2.1 Allegra Fuller Snyder's "Level of event patterns" diagram (1992, p. 9).
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Snyder explained that her “levels paper” emerged from the need to consolidate the multiple concepts of the dance event in circulation during that formative period of theoretical development:

In this paper I spoke of the need to be both comprehensive and aware of a number of levels of attention or focus, moving from a “Geertzian” attention to world view to Kaeppler’s kinemic attention. [...] Each level of event was framed by time/space factors and described diagrammatically as well as verbally, making it a concrete rather than abstract concept. The total concept was demonstrated through a full display of macro-micro patternings. This approach allowed for maintenance of a holistic awareness of our objectives while acknowledging that many levels of approach were acceptable and possible. All did not have to be included in any one study if the whole remained in focus.
(Snyder, 1992, p. 10)

It was her notion of attending to various distinct levels, micro-and-macro patterns, which informed my fieldwork, interviews and data coding of the *Luna* event. The data for *Luna* did yield material that was incorporated into the final document and that referred to specific aspects of Snyder’s levels: (a) at level 2, Chapter VI is an examination of the time and space of the overall performance event; (b) at level 4, in Chapter V there is a detailed account of the personal identity and event-specific role of the dancers; (c) at levels 5 and 6, in the course of Chapter IV section 4.5, but also in Chapter 8 section 8.3 there are accounts of the dancers’ kinesthetic experience and social understanding of the movement. But the *Luna* study proposed an enlargement Snyder’s diagram by: (a) including activities of preparation and aftermath, (b) embracing the post-positivist perspective of multiple world views and perspectives on time, space, and meaning, and (c) including a large

range of participants beyond only the dancers themselves. Furthermore, this research project reshapes Snyder's ideas to suit the study of professional artistic dance, one whose functions and meanings are not the subject of consensus, but whose meanings are interpreted differently by various event participants.

In 1995 folklore specialist Nahachewsky proposed a typology of four dance genres that challenged the traditional historical categories of dance (ballet, jazz, modern, folk, etc.). His regrouping was particularly useful in view of the dance event concept because it turned attention to the purposes of the dancer and for whom he or she was dancing. His four categories were: (a) presentational dance for an external audience, (b) participatory dance in which dancers paid attention to each other, (c) reflexive dance with attention paid to one's own kinesthetic experience and (d) sacred dance with a "message intended for supernatural beings" (p. 4). This typology was particularly useful in distinguishing *Luna's* theatrical kind of dancing from other kinds of dancing in Montréal, and in terms of the research question of why and for whom *Luna* dancers dance. In Nahachewsky's view, the *Luna* dance event would be classified principally as a presentational one because it was performed on "formal stages and in other locations where the physical and cultural distance between performers and external human audiences was greater than between the participants of participatory dances" (p. 1). *Luna* was clearly not a participatory event because everyone was not "up on their feet" and dancing together, at least not during the public performance itself, as did Montréalers at social and folk dance gatherings for example. But it might also be possible to argue that on certain occasions during the *Luna* event, there were incidents of private reflexive dancing (e.g. when dancers were engaged in a personal movement routine) and even the spiritual sacred genre (I am thinking here for instance of dancer Rodrigue's narrative about why she dances, see pages 317 and 391).

Several sociologists also proposed instructive concepts that have proven useful to in guiding finding parameters for the study, field observation, data analysis, and to help structure the coding and interpretative processes as well as the write-up of the final document. The first is Erving Goffman, who in *Frame Analysis* (1974) elaborated his theory about “frames” which he explained as “the principles of organization which govern events -- at least social ones -- and our subjective involvement in them (p. 10).” His ideas were strongly influenced by the theory of symbolic interactionism, in turn rooted in the American philosophy of pragmatism. In the course of my readings, I soon realized that these philosophical beliefs were especially resonant with my own world view. Filmer, Jenks, Seale and Walsh (1998) explained pragmatism as the belief that human behavior is based on a problem-solving adaptation through conscious understanding of the symbolic universe of the social environment (p. 29). In a similar vein, symbolic interactionists argued that social behavior is a matter of human beings interacting and forming social relationships. They did this by communicating through shared symbols that allow them to understand and give meaning to one another's gestures and responses. Updated perspectives on the theory of symbolic interactionism have recently been elaborated in a book length study by Robert Prus (1996) in which he sets this theory in opposition to “both the postivist/structuralist tradition and the postmodernist/ poststructuralist umbrella” (p. 2-4). In Prus’ view, human behavior and lived experience are interpretive, interactive processes based on a community’s acquisition of a common language and collective world view. These “human life-worlds,” as he called them, are then to be studied through the researcher’s interaction with the very people involved in the production of these behaviors and activities (p 11). It is this dialogic world view that motivated my choice of ethnography in the first place, in which interaction with the subjects under scrutiny (albeit sometimes discrete when in the role of participant observer) is at the heart of the matter.

In *Frame Analysis* (1974) Goffman proposed, and I concur, that it is certain principles of organization composing a particular framework which in turn allowed participants to give meaning to events. He characterized these participants (he called them “knowers” and “doers”) as intelligent, live agencies who are subjected to standards and social appraisal (pp. 22-24).

And so Goffman wrote about a “theatrical frame,” in *Frame Analysis* (1974, p. 124-155) in which he identified certain conventions of the Western stage and the interactions between the “figures that people it” (p. 124). Although his analysis referred to the staging of text-based theatrical events with actors, much of his theatrical framework is pertinent to this study of Montréal *nouvelle danse*. For instance, Goffman characterized theatrical performances as a set of conventional agreements that are enacted between audiences and performers:

A performance, in the restricted sense in which I shall now use the term, is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role. (Goffman, 1974, p. 124)

To Goffman's mind, this transformation of actors into stage characters is “some sort of voluntarily supported benign fabrication through which the audience becomes collaborators in unreality” (p. 136). Contemporary dance performances like those of *Luna* also depend on this kind of agreement between performers and audience to suspend reality and enter into a realm of make-believe. In the case of dancers, this transformation appears to give license to a display of extra-ordinary physical movements that would unlikely be seen under ordinary circumstances, the choreography. What these choreographic movements mean precisely is agreed to be a matter of

individual interpretation, as seen in Chapter VIII of this study. Goffman's articulation of the theatrical framework, even though he hadn't described the particularities of a dance performance, strongly tempered my descriptions of *Luna's* dance activities and especially the account of the moment of presentation for a public audience. But I have enlarged his theatrical frame to include the conventions guiding a wider range of participant behaviors, e.g. the goings on backstage and in the lobby, and during creative processes.

Goffman (1984) also made several distinctions within his theatrical framework that I have put to work during fieldwork and analysis. Among them are the differences between the conventions of real life vs. stage performance, the staging area and audience region, audiences and onlookers, and various responses and relationships between performers and audiences. But his analysis is limited to the moment of performance and to the artistic form of text-based theater. With *Luna*, I needed to take his propositions further by transposing them to the specificity of contemporary dance, with its non-verbal movement behaviors and tendency towards artistic abstraction.

I introduce a text by ethnomusicologist Owe Ronström at this juncture because dance event analysis is a direct descendant of Goffman's frame theory. In "The Dance Event: Methodological and Terminological Discussion of the Concept" (1988) Ronström recalled that the term "event" was derived from the Latin "evenire," meaning to happen (p. 22). He suggested that there was a processual aspect in which something would happen and was anticipated, providing a set of basic features for what he terms "a dance evening." He then described it as: (a) a special kind of social occasion; (b) extra-ordinary; (c) limited in time and space; and (d) one in which there is a joint cognitive, visual and kinetic focus (p. 23). I would add that the senses of touch and hearing may also be manifest as a focus of certain dance evenings, and point out that the *Luna* study's framework extends beyond the performance itself to include the preparation and aftermath of the event. Although Ronström (1989) had in mind a Yugoslav folk dance and music

performance when he wrote this research paper, several ideas he introduced have contributed to building my own concept of the *Luna* event. For instance, I formulated the idea that all of the dance events' activities were organized around a common focus, which I designated as "Laurin's choreographic project." Ronström also proposed that the activities of a dance event might be put into a hierarchy, from those that are more or less important to the project, and more or less focused or informal in their organization. During the creative sessions for *Luna*, for example, there were "common doings" each day, some of which were at the center of the creative process, such as choreographic creative sessions in which movement was created and shaped, and informal "time out" activities like stretching, showering, and coffee break chit-chat. In the same vein, during public performance, Ronström differentiates "innermost doings at the center of everyone's attention" from "peripheral doings" (pp. 24-5). At the *Luna* performances, for instance, I considered as innermost doings the dancing, spectating and technical support work. The peripheral doings (those that took place without calling attention to themselves) were then behaviors like spectators conversing informally as they waited, ticket selling, and the dancers' recuperation during their offstage breaks. And yet another of his concepts applied to this study was that of the "expressive specialist" (p. 26) or those who applied their expert knowledge in defining, interpreting and evaluating the dance event for all participants. I eventually determined that in the case of *Luna*, the category of expressive specialist would include its dance presenters, dance writers and researchers, jury members and funding agents.

Another determining influence in the development of the *Luna* dance event concept were the writings of sociologist Howard Becker, introduced to me through the introduction and first chapter of *Art Worlds* (1982). Becker used the term "art world" to denote "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional

means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for" (p. x). His stated intention was to shift the center of attention away from the artist and the artwork (the predominant view of his day in the sociology of art) towards the network of cooperation engaged in producing an artwork (p. xi). In a similar spirit, this study describes the network of participants who acted cooperatively to make manifest the *Luna* event. Becker's lucid descriptions of the functioning of art worlds led me to consider a much wider range of participants as stakeholders in *Luna* than I would have previously. As for the question of meaning in dance events, Becker proposed that artworks (and the events in which they are displayed) bear the signs of the cooperative network engaged in their making. It was this notion from Becker that led to the conceptualization of the schematic representation in Figure 9.1, in which various participants groups are seen in terms of their role and impact on the *Luna* choreography, performance and event.

So many of Becker's contentions in *Art Worlds* (1982) about how art is produced and evaluated have resonated with my findings about *Luna*. Many of his distinctions and explanations about participant roles have been put to use in this study (e.g. dance-goers, personnel, funding agents). He might have been describing the Montréal contemporary dance world when he observed a prominent current of thought (not shared by all) that art-making requires special gifts that few have, and that those known as gifted are given special rights and privileges for which society is rewarded with works of great importance. He goes on to say that society has mechanisms to sort out artists from non-artists, which led me to include in this study the criteria by which funding agencies and juries make this determination (pp. 14-17). And like Goffman, he contends that art-making is governed by conventions. Becker was later criticized by Marcus and Myers (1995, p. 2) for his commitment to descriptive interpretation and failure to engage in the kind of cultural critique in which political ideologies are revealed and criticized. It is

true that Becker's politics don't seem aligned with the current day attention of cultural critics aimed at ferreting out the political negotiations of gender, cultural identity, class and sexual preference. But Becker's political agenda is close to my own, a "politics sympathetic to [...] the underdog in society" (Filmer, Jenks, Seale and Walsh, 1998, (p. 30) or, in his own words "a congenital anti-elitism" (1982, p. ix). Also like Becker, I am less inclined towards the pressing issues of power advanced by cultural critics, but in this study have articulated an avowed empathy with the marginal status and low income of contemporary dancers in Montréal society. I am certainly hoping that this study will serve to create new kinds of awareness and knowledge about the "usefulness" of contemporary dance practices and so influence the thinking of dance policy-makers and practitioners.

2.4 Anthropologists and arts researchers

Until recently there has been limited dialogue between Western aesthetic dance researchers and dance anthropologists. This division is particularly striking in light of the fact that many of these dance-focused anthropologists have trained in the art dance techniques of their own cultures, and to my knowledge are often ardent spectators of artistic dance performances in their home cities and towns. So why haven't they chosen these kinds of dances as subjects for their ethnographic research? Marcus and Myers (1995) suggested that one answer lies in anthropologists' "long-held sympathy for outsiders, for cultural relativism and for life as lived" that has resulted in an "academic division of labor between the study of 'primitive' small-scale societies and complex contemporary Western ones, [and so] the enterprise of studying artistic practices was left to art historians, sociologists and 'cultural critics' " (p. 8).

On the other hand, Western dance artists have long been fascinated by far-away cultures, but unlike ethnographers their engagement has for the most part been limited to an interest in those aspects of culture that might serve as “material” for their art making³. Western dance historians and critics for the most part have chosen to depict artistic dance through analysis of the choreography itself and historical studies of choreographers' lives and work, leaving the psycho-sociological terrain of audience response (reception theory) to theatrical and literary critics (see Bennett, 1997). By and large, scholars of artistic dance have rarely, until recently, adopted the ethnographic methods of anthropologists by doing long-term fieldwork as participant observers in the natural settings of their subjects of study, seeking out the “native viewpoint.” There are of course exceptions, notably the dance education research of Fortin (1994) and Green in the early '90s. Bearing witness to the continuing rift between arts and anthropology researchers, there are currently few university courses in dance anthropology in dance departments, and still few university dance anthropology programs.

In this study I have strived to distinguish Montréal *nouvelle danse* as a genre as distinguished from that of other local non-art dances (folk, recreational, and social dance for instance). My personal sense of what sets this kind of artistic contemporary dance apart from the “non-art” (non-professional) dance forms in Montréal is in the process of mutation, under the influence of the theorists and participants who have filled my mind in the course of studying the *Luna* event. I share with most of them the belief that to be a professional dancer requires at least special skills and training, and a vocational commitment to the practice. The multitude of testimonies in the chapter on *Luna* participants exposes various individual views on what might constitute professionalism. Among them were a few common beliefs such as passionate commitment, solid training, professional conditions for dancing,

³I am thinking here of choreographers like American modernists Ruth St-Denis and Ted Shawn, European modernist Mats Ek, and québécoise *nouvelle danse* artist Marie Chouinard.

and integration into publicly recognized dance companies and theaters. But in the wake of this study I no longer feel that there is a clear-cut line between artistic dance and other forms such as social and folk dance. Although it seems axiomatic to say so, it is good anthropology to affirm that the *Luna* dance event can be seen as an artistic one because it is recognized as such by its participants: other artists, peer juries, funding bodies, audiences, presenters, dance writers, researchers and so on.

Marcus and Myers' landmark anthology (1995) exerted a strong influence on my perceptions of the *Luna* event, and was provocatively titled *The Traffic in Culture: Reconfiguring Art and Anthropology*. I came to see this dissertation as one such reconfiguration, but one that built a case for contemporary dance. The book was concerned mainly with issues in the visual arts, with only one essay devoted to the performing arts, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's in-depth critical analysis (1998) of the tension between anthropological principles and the avant-garde arts programming mandate of the 1990 Los Angeles Festival. In her account, during this massive festival event, little-known traditional performance forms from around the world were featured with little or no interpretation or explanation to contemporary arts audiences. As it turns out, I was in attendance there as a delegate at the Dance Critics Conference, and witnessed the events she discusses. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett critiqued the manner in which anthropological frameworks were rejected by festival organizer Peter Sellars in favor of a particular contemporary art ethos, one that championed the benefits of the strangeness of new and unfamiliar forms (pp. 224-254). Unlike the directors of this festival, the *Luna* study embraces an anthropological perspective in order to give context to contemporary dance practices, voice to its practitioners, and reveals that "strangeness and unfamiliarity" were not in fact the dominant benefits for *Luna's* spectators (see Chapter VII, section 7.6).

In their introduction to the anthology (1995), Marcus and Meyers claimed that the traditional field of the anthropology of art "which considers

art traditions and aesthetics cross-culturally” has in the past been either critical of Western categories of art or has used Western arts concepts in its evaluation of non-Western art (p. 4). This study of *Luna* is another attempt to bridge that divide by bringing ethnographic methods and theories to bear on contemporary Western dance events. Because doing anthropology at home, a Western artistic dancer studying her own kind, categories and concepts of researcher and dance event participants are more easily in accord.

Marcus and Myers (1995) further faulted anthropologists for their “suspicion [...] of the commonsense category of art as an autonomous and special domain in their *own* culture.” They claimed that anthropologists dismiss the category of “high art” in general, and that this might belie a discomfort with elites in general. This attitude is currently changing, as some anthropologists begin study artistic dance forms. As for artists, the problem as they saw it stems from “Kant's (1951) philosophical demarcation of [art as] an autonomous aesthetic domain of human judgment.” They suggest that for many artists in the Western world art making is in fact actually associated in a “commonsense way” with spirituality or creativity. But they claim that the Kantian view of art as a domain separate from “means-end calculations [and] moral judgment” has predominated (p. 8). In the course of the *Luna* study, this dialectic of aesthetic views among dancers will be seen as co-existing alongside yet others, such as dance-making as a form of social contribution and performance as a means to fit into society.

Many more of the ideas in Marcus and Meyers' introductory chapter bear relevance to this study, but there is one in particular that lies at the core of my research problem. After discussing some of the recent art criticism that challenges the boundaries between high art and mass culture, they pointed to an unacknowledged tension embedded in the debates which is caused by the necessary survival of the category of art despite its critiques. “Why, after all,

be an artist?" they ask. Their answer helped to spark this research project: that choosing to be an artist was indeed a question of genuine anthropological interest (p. 9).

An early example of this rift between dance anthropologists and Western art dancers is to be found in the proceedings of a seminar called "The function of dance in human society" (Boas, 1944). Dancer Franziska Boas, daughter of the seminal anthropologist Franz Boas, organized this (and a second consequent) gathering for anthropologists and dancers in her New York City dance studio. (Montréal choreographer Françoise Sullivan, with whom choreographer Laurin had danced, was in attendance.) In her introductory notes to the proceedings Boas explained that in conceiving the seminar, "[p]rimitive and exotic cultures were turned to, because in them the dance has a *really vital function*, and its meaning is accepted by the community" (my italics) (pp. 5-6). She then called for modern dancers⁴ (in the New York milieu of the 1940s) to reconsider their dance as a kind of communal activity with a constructive social influence on the individual -- as a mental therapy, physical training and a broadening educational medium -- as did so-called "exotic" and "primitive"⁵ peoples. She faulted modern dances for being directed exclusively towards an artistic and social elite and for fostering meanings that were not accepted by the entire community (p. 5). Boas was speaking for modern dancers in general in the period of World War II, but was clearly not accounting for those socially-minded modern dancers of that era who danced for social change and protested war and social injustice and to whom an entire conference of dance researchers in New York City was dedicated called "Of, For and By the People" (Tomko, 1993). The concept of the "primitive" in general, and in the art world in particular, was

⁴ For purposes of clarity, I propose that both "modern dance" and "Modern Dance" are synonymous in this text. But I will use "modernist dance" when indicating dance of a modernist aesthetic, rather than the historical dance category of Modern Dance.

⁵ See Kealiinohomoku (1969/70) for a discussion of these two concepts, and a challenge to the misunderstandings in the commonsense use of these terms by dance writers.

later explained by Marcus and Myers (1995) as a “long tradition [in anthropology] of [...] a critical romance with the ‘primitive’ [which] historically provided a critical distance on Western practices and ethnocentrism, and alter/native to what existed as seemingly natural and inevitable in our own societies” (p. 17).

The disciplinary divide between art and anthropology also surfaced in Buckland’s anthology (1999a), which discussed theory and methods in dance ethnography. In this landmark collection there is almost no mention of artistic dance forms. She personally demonstrated this bias in her introduction when writing that she hoped her book might serve as a corrective to the “dominant focus upon Western theatre art dance, with its accompanying methodologies and theoretical outlooks [which] has tended towards the exclusion of more fruitful dialogues taking place between other dance and movement specialists and dance ethnographers” (p.2). In Buckland’s assessment of Wulff’s study on ballet dancers (1999b), she referred to Classical Ballet as “a genre which operates within highly literate and technologically oriented societies and which comes with its own tradition of scholarship and critical response [...] ” (p. 10). But it is also true that ballet schools and companies have in fact been established, albeit sometimes by outsiders with colonialist attitudes, in countries with a low level of literacy and with limited access to technology.

Buckland (1999b) did pose a question crucial to this research project: what *new* knowledge might be gained by applying anthropological methodologies to the understanding of contemporary art dances about which so much has already been written? This study of *Luna* seeks to demonstrate that a contextually-situated ethnography, benefiting from long-term fieldwork and a multitude of insider’s viewpoints, can indeed offer a more complex portrait of the nature and function of contemporary dance than has previously been possible from more deductive outsider approaches with lesser contributions from the subjects of the study. Her question led me to

another central one in terms of my methodology: can anthropologists study these cosmopolitan art dances in the same way as they have been studying other kinds of dances societies which, as Buckland puts it, don't have a "tradition of scholarship and critical response"? My answer by way of this study is "Yes!" because it is axiomatic that every dance can in fact be situated culturally by any researcher who desires to do so, as Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970) set out to demonstrate. As the *Luna* study illustrates, rather than impeding anthropological studies of these kinds of dances, the scholars, critics and literature of these art dances can actually be considered as part of the ethnographic artifacts and data, their particular points of view of the dance cohabiting the data with those of other kinds of participants.

At academic dance conferences over the last decade, I have become increasingly aware of a growing body of researchers who are in fact turning their attention to Western dance forms. The three ethnographies of Western dance forms by Fisher (2003), Novak (1990) and Wulff (2000), discussed briefly in Chapter I, were among the first of this kind. But I have also discovered more than a dozen dance-experienced researchers from various countries and continents that have chosen to integrate anthropology's theories and methods into thinking about their own Western artistic dance practices. These scholars are examining artistic dance practices at home, in their own dance communities. A few examples I have so far discovered are Brazilians Eluza Santos (1999) and Monica Dantas who are looking at "the Brazilian dancing body," Juanita Suarez (2005) researching the field of Chicana dance-making in the U.S., and Yin Ying Huang (1996) from Taiwan who investigates cultural identity in choreography by using the choreographer's personal histories and identities as vehicles (as she states it). Together with this study, I propose that this body of research can be seen to constitute a new current of thought within the dance research community, belonging at once to the field of dance studies and to dance anthropology.

Certain dance-specialized anthropologists have in the past included Western art dances, and in particular ballet, in their discussions about dance and culture (e.g. Brinson, 1985; Kealiinohomoku, 1976; Kurath, 1985; Lange, 1975; Royce, 1977; Spencer, 1985). Their sporadic references to Western art dancing have most often been employed to clarify definitions and boundaries of non-art and non-Western concepts of dance, and they rarely undertaken fieldwork among art dancers. One of the more extended anthropological discussions of Western art dance in the period before the '90s was offered by Gertrude Kurath, a founder of American dance anthropology and mentor to Kealiinohomoku. In her 1965 essay "Dance in Modern Culture," she elucidated how form and content in modernist dance reflect specific themes and beliefs in American culture (Kurath, 1985, pp. 383-406). She sketched a portrait of this dance form from a social standpoint, asking who dances, why they dance, how they dance, and describing a range of topics drawn specifically from American culture from which it shapes its themes and aesthetics. Of more than historical interest to my study, Kurath's text suggested an attitude of attention to the social issues which she discovered both to be embedded in the modernist choreographies of which she speaks and arising from its position and aims in American society.

It wasn't until twenty-five years after Kurath's essay that her project to identify American culture through its contemporary dance was carried forward by dancer and dance researcher Cynthia Novack. Novack completed a doctoral dissertation (1990) within a university anthropology department, a study for which I was an informant. She characterized her project as an ethnohistory of the postmodern dance form Contact Improvisation, seen as a microcosm of American counter-culture of the 1960s. Eight years after Novack, Swedish researcher Wulff decided to do fieldwork among dancers in the backstage and dressing rooms of three large-scale classical ballet companies. Doing research within three ballet companies in London, New York and her home city of Stockholm, she elaborated

propositions about “transnational culture-building” in the ballet world for which latter-day communication and transportation technologies have increased mobility and created “an active and a hidden web [...] of transnational experiences and connections” (Wulff, 1998, p. 18). And finally, in 2003, Fisher completed published her research on two case studies – the Loudon ballet company in Leesburg, Virginia and the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto, Ontario – for her socio-historical critique of the *Nutcracker*’s significance as an American “seasonal ritual.”

The ethnographies of Novak (1990) and Wulff (1998) contained distinct research problems, respectively “how does Contact Improvisation embody aspects of American alternative culture?” and “is the culture of ballet dancers a transnational one?”. As for that of Fisher (2003), a pervasive dance tradition is reviewed as a narrative of American cultural mores.

All three studies provide research models that have informed the *Luna* ethnographic undertaking, and in particular by elucidating certain motivations, advantages and difficulties of a dancer-ethnographer doing fieldwork among dancers in her home city. Like Wulff (1998), I ventured backstage and went on tour with a dance company and befriended dancers. In a similar vein to Novack (1995), I observed and interviewed the participants in my study as if a kind of socially marginalized subculture, one that forms “a community of experience” and whose boundaries are defined by common experiences (p. 15). And as did Fisher (2003), I considered the dance performance as a social event, and so interviewed not only artists and audiences, but also sought the views of production staff and others. But the framework through which I have organized this study is distinct from theirs. I did not confine my field to the “backstage life of the dancers” as tightly as did Wulff, or extend my research boundaries as widely as did Novack to encompass the historical development of an entire dance form. Nor did I, like Fisher, follow the longitudinal itinerary of a single iconic choreography in its many manifestations over decades. The time and space parameters of this

ethnography have been drawn through the notion of a single dance event in the sense of a choreographic project, envisioned by a contemporary choreographer and carried out through a cooperative network of participants. My aims were also distinct from theirs. In contrast to that of Wulff, my own ethnographic study aimed to extend the usual Western frame of reference for an art dance performance (choreography, artists, audience, critics) to include the widest possible range of activities and participants who contributed to the dance event in order to understand how these art dance practices and choreographies become meaningful to all manner of dancing and non-dancing practitioners. Fisher's methodology, like my own, did frame the dance performance as a social event. But rather than analyzing the implications of cultural identity embedded in a choreography, I set out to discover, within the lifespan of a choreographic project, a cluster of values and practices that portray the state of international dance presentation in the 21st century.

2.5 The field widens: dance and cultural studies

This study cannot remain indifferent to the influential, current intellectual movements driven by literary theorists (postmodernists) and French philosophers (poststructuralists), who have recently captivated a growing group of researchers. This surge of interest in political analysis and neo-Marxist critique of Western artistic dance from the standpoint of gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and class, is brought together in an ideologically engaged discipline currently called Dance Studies, but also the Cultural Studies of Dance and Critical Dance Studies. As Desmond (1997) recounts in an anthology for which she was editor, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, it was in the mid-1980s that a group of dance scholars "began to respond to the wave of influential transformations that had been reconfiguring the humanities during the preceding ten to fifteen years [...]"

and underwent a important shift in perspective under the auspices of what was generally called postmodern theory (p. 3).

As many (but not all) dance scholars embark on this postmodern journey, the range of dance and expressive movement forms receiving their attention continues to widen as they peer into previously neglected corners of the world's dance studios and performance spaces. Questions of cultural identity and the dynamics of power are currently in the foreground. A scan of presentations at the 1999 conference of the Congress on Research in Dance, for instance, includes a feminist analysis of male ballerinas in the Ballet Trocadero, a critical assessment of eroticism in the dance sequences of Hindu cinema, and an account of cultural identity in a North American salsa dance milieu (LaPointe-Crump, 1999).

Also in her introduction to her anthology, Desmond (1997) explained the theoretical shift towards poststructuralist strategies for the interpretation of meaning as one that moved from “the search for foundations promised by structuralism to intense engagement with the conditions of production and reception” (p. 3). And American dance researcher Thomas (1995; 2003), whose project is to lay grounds for a sociology of dance, has also examined how “dance becomes a means of reflecting on the problems associated with the ways in which the body has been conceptualized generally in social and cultural theory [...]” (2003, p. 3). As I have come to understand it, the structuralist project to uncover an orderly meaning believed to be found deeply buried within the structure of the dance (or dance event) itself, has (for many but not all) now given way to a politically engaged imperative to reveal how, by and for whom dance is produced, perceived and valued. All phenomena studied are scrutinized to uncover those who are disempowered by those who dominate, and so to advocate for social change (as I remember we American students did in the 1960s). These critical scholars have also adopted a deep belief in the subjective and in the ever-changing nature of

human behavior and consciousness, and so have fostered an understanding of events that is contingent on personal, social and historical contexts.

Although this study is committed to describing and interpreting the production of a dance event within the framework of its social context, it does not venture deeply into a critical, political analysis. But under the influence of cultural and critical studies of dance scholarship, I have paid particular attention to what Desmond (2000) has called the politics of knowledge, in other words how I gained access to *Luna's* sites, spoke with participants (inscribing into the text their own voices), chose my home dance community as my field, and so on. And it is true that my personal political agenda remains one of improving the social standing and economic stability of contemporary dancers and dancing in Montréal society-at-large. I am striving to do this by contributing new perspectives about the social significance of one Montréal contemporary dance event by way of this ethnography. And I intend to propagate the ideas here within and even more widely beyond the dance research community, as I have already begun to do (Davida 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b). I am hopeful that this study bears the potential to change at least local perceptions, in the wider artistic community and among the dancers themselves, of contemporary dance in Montréal as a marginal and elitist practice.

But my intentions for this study were not political in the sense of creating a central focus on the dynamics of power among dance event participants, nor are they intended as a prescription for a more just dance event practice. I have consciously tried to avoid political imperatives because it is my belief (and aren't all these theories after all but belief systems?) that the readers of this study need to be left free to interpret and employ the findings for their own purposes. I don't see my role as academic researcher, ethnographer and dance programmer, as that of the authoritative expressive specialist. I prefer to relinquish at least some of this power to the readers and dance participants themselves.

How then have postmodernist and poststructuralist thinking influenced this ethnography? Barrett (1997) distinguished eight characteristics of postmodern anthropology: (a) it poses a challenge to anthropological authority, (b) it acknowledges a complex dialogue between ethnographer and participants (a “dialogic” approach), (c) it considers ethnography as a type of writing (a literary text), (d) it focuses on procedures to interpret cultural meanings (culture functioning as if a language or text), (e) it creates an image of social life as fragmented and incomplete and a rejection of all-embracing theories (no more “grand narratives”); (f) it places an emphasis on understanding through cultural contexts (“relativism”), (g) it introduces the self-conscious presence of the ethnographer in their texts (“self-reflexivity”); and (h) it posits postmodernism as a response to a changing post-colonial world (p. 151-155). Put into these terms, I find my own ideological leanings aligned with some, but not all, these aspects of postmodernism. I have always resisted authoritarian views and explanations from any and all parties, and have long perceived the contemporary world as fragmented and in continual flux. And so in the end, I embraced the relativist position, with its fragmented narratives for which understanding requires cultural contexts. My past writing has consistently assumed a self-conscious first person point of view in which my own thoughts and beliefs were made explicit within the narrative. And my attitude throughout the interviews, and even in fieldnotes, was that of holding conversations, dialoguing with participants rather than “gathering information on them” or “asking questions to them.”

But there are two aspects of Barrett’s postmodern anthropology (1997) to which I haven’t subscribed. First, I have not been decisively convinced by the literary metaphor in which all things are considered as if texts to be decoded, and so part of a language-like structure. Dance might resemble language in some ways (in the sense that it is a system of communication, it has an intrinsic syntax, etc.), but certainly doesn’t function in the same way

(meaning of movements is less precise and concrete, etc.). And secondly, I am wary of claims by some (but certainly not all) postmodern philosophers and theorists, who hold special socio-economic status and articulate authoritative specialized discourses, to be able to provide solutions to political inequity when their ideas often never reach the ears and minds of those they intend to liberate.

2.6 Reception theorists, movement analysts, aesthetic philosophers and “sensual scholars”⁶

Several other categories of researchers contributed to this study. Their influence on this study furthers its interdisciplinary character. They come from the fields of reception (and perception) theory, movement analysis, aesthetic philosophy and from among the “sensual scholars.”

It was by way of Bennett’s critical account (1997) of the history of “reception theory” in the theatre world, that I became acutely conscious of the complex layers of human relationships at play during the moment of performance among performers spectators in their own realm and between them. To these layers of interaction I have added, by way of this study, the backstage technicians. Her historical study of the discipline was nourished by both theoretical texts about audience reception and sociological studies about audience attitudes. In Bennett’s writing, the audience is seen and treated as a willing and active participant in the performance, a point of view that I have adopted for this ethnography. But she admits to advocacy for a socially relevant and non-elitist genre of performance, and condemned the separation between audience and performer. These are politics that I share in my personal artistic practice, but found too narrow in scope to be useful to the project of an ethnographic study of a dance event, and especially in the case of *Luna*, which was often performed in opera houses.

⁶This expression is borrowed from Stoller’s book of the same title: *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997).

Aesthetic philosopher Sparshott published two volumes about dance philosophy (1985 and 1995), encyclopedic resources for debates about definitions. Working within the confines of Western philosophical traditions, he sought to define and explain dance phenomena in the largest sense in his first book (1985), and narrowed into a focus on theatrical performance forms of dance in the second (1995). His well-reasoned explanations provided provocative ideas to nourish my own efforts at defining the nature of *Luna* phenomena, like improvisation and choreography. But Western philosophy like Sparshott's is less concerned with cultural contexts, more committed to creating general terms of agreement and so of limited use to ethnography that must account for specific cases.

Over the course of this study I have also developed a marked affinity for the theories of aesthetic philosopher Shustermann, whose pragmatist orientation and concept of "somaesthetics" lays ground for a new branch of aesthetics that springs from bodily experiences (2000 and 2002). His discussions of pragmatist aesthetics seem to me to lie at the root of symbolic interactionism. I have integrated into this study, particularly when interpreting the ideas expressed by the specialist *Luna* participants, some of Shustermann's proposals about aesthetic perception and analysis (2002, pp. 34-52). One of these is his proposition of three distinct critical approaches to art that he calls descriptivism, prescriptivism and performativism. In each of the three, proponents assumed either a subjective stance ("this is just my own point of view") or a desire for a more objective account ("this is how it is"). The first category he called descriptivist and are those who give descriptive impressions of the artwork, seeking to provide the "true meaning" according to their own or artists' point of view, or then again provide an "explanatory hypothesis" about the artwork. His second prescriptivist category was reserved for those who offer decisions or recommendations about how one might regard an artwork, or provide a single authoritative "right" method to everyone. In the third category are the performativists who consider their

interpretations in themselves a work of art (“a performance,” literary in this case). In this view they contributed their own artistic creativity to the understanding of the artwork they were writing about. Shustermann’s topology of critical approaches helped to discern and clarify differences among the forms of evaluation employed by *Luna* participants at the moment of public performance. And in the analysis and writing of this research project itself, I have assumed all three critical positions but with a decidedly subjectivist stance.

Aesthetic philosopher Lavender, who is also a dancer and university dance teacher, has been grappling with answers to the on-going debate – and one of this study’s central questions – that asks on what terms the meaning of an art work can be determined. In one of his many essays on meaning in dance (1997), he fleshed out the position of “intentional fallascists” (and the opposing views), those aesthetics philosophers who argue that an art work stands alone after its creation and independent of the artist’s intentions in the making. In a book written for university dance teachers (Lavender, 1996) in which he developed a pedagogy of critical interpretation and evaluation, he did in fact include the student choreographer’s views on their own work as one element for consideration among others in the critical community, as he called it, that is formed by the teacher and students in each classroom. The *Luna* study envisions dance as a subjective experience and so positions itself principally against the theory of intentional fallacy by locating the meanings of the *Luna* choreography in the perceptions of *Luna*’s participants. *Luna*’s participants, as we shall see, actually expressed various points of view about where meaning lies including those of intentional fallacists, whether in the dance itself, the artists’ articulated explanations of the work or then again in their own imagination.

Dance theories and methodologies from three dance-experienced philosophers have also informed ideas and choices throughout the study: movement analyst and theorist Rudolf Laban (1988), dance phenomenologist

Sondra Fraleigh (1999), and critical dance researcher Susan Foster (1995). Laban Movement Analysis, in which I have acquired an expertise and certification, was particularly useful when observing and describing movement during *Luna's* creative process and performances. Laban's attention not only to the quantitative and measurable aspects (body, shape, space and time) but the qualitative as well (called "attitudes towards space, time, weight and flow" or "efforts" in the Laban system) guided my consciousness while observing, interpreting and writing about the *Luna* choreography. Some of his insights about the meaning of movement in people's lives, and in society in general, have also informed the discussions in this study. In particular, it was his notion of four "perceptual filters" by way of which we perceive and understand movement (thinking, sensing, feeling and intuiting) that gave structure to some of my data analysis of audience meaning-making strategies (p. 114-5). But where I have long taken issue with Laban Movement Analysis is in the contention that the principles of the system are actual immutable "laws of movement," as Laban and his disciples have claimed. And so in this study, I am fully committed to the subjectivity of movement observation and analysis. As an illustration of this subjectivity, this ethnography interweaves, for instance, my own descriptions of the *Luna* choreography with those of some *Luna's* dance audience members and dance critics who perceived and articulated the movement phenomena differently than I did.

I came across Fraleigh's book on dance phenomenology (1987) over 15 years ago, but wasn't able to embody its propositions fully until attending an intensive workshop with her. By the time she had published her book, grounds for a field of dance phenomenology had already been laid down by Sheets-Johnstone's seminal volume *The Phenomenology of Dance* in 1966. Fraleigh's notions about the qualities of attention we give to our actions, laid out in a more recent essay about witnessing frogs as if they were dancing (1999), were influential in honing my "way of being" (that is, the quality of

my movement and behavior while in the field with *Luna*). Her account of phenomenology also turned my awareness to the *Luna* spectators' "horizons of expectations," in other words the experiences and knowledge of contemporary dance with which they entered the theater. Some of these spectators' expectations were revealed in the course of the focus groups in which I asked them about their motivations in coming (Figure 7.2). The introspective methods of phenomenological research, such as being fully aware in the moment of observation and the use of intuition, provided me with valuable insights about participants' and researcher's perceptions alike. But these methodological strategies alone were not sufficient to the aims of this project. It was only in combination with more extroverted data collection methods such as interviewing, holding focus groups, and coding data that I was able to construct a comprehensive ethnography of the *Luna* event.

In Foster's class on dance anthropology during my master's program, she offered us techniques for critical reading, and provided an extensive reader of writings about the body that she had culled from anthropologists' writings. My initial experiences in fieldwork and ethnography were the result of her class assignment to investigate an evening of Renaissance dance. As for her own texts, the semiotic analysis she made of four prototypical choreographic projects (1986), while too limited in scope to explain my own findings on *Luna* audience and artists' meanings, gave me a model to build upon as I sought to distinguish the kinds of meaning-making in this study. Her analytic grid of four choreographic project types led me to the notion of creating "sites of consensus" while organizing the *Luna* data. And in the same book, she also wrote about the significance of performance "frames" for dance audiences, a idea that I have developed further in my description and interpretation of the audience's perspective.

In terms of sensual scholarship, as is the case for so many dance researchers, I am a dancer who exhibits a preference for a sensual, kinesthetic apprehension of dance and possess the memories of a dancer's bodily

experiences. And so it was inevitable that my body would respond to those of the dancing (and non-dancing) participants. The outcome of this physical empathy is manifest in my fieldnotes, coding and descriptive and analytic texts of this study. For instance, it was through my own bodily awareness that I attended to dancers' injuries and energy expenditures, their sensations as they danced, the minute movements of spectators as they watched performances, the ways in which choreographic movements became meaningful for various participants, and more. This belief in a physical knowledge and wisdom, sometimes even in the primacy of the senses, as Bull⁷ (1997, pp. 269-288) has written, is an ethos that is also deeply embedded in many parts of the contemporary dance world that was examined in this study. Some contemporary dance training programs and approaches have even coined the concept of "body / mind," affirming the interdependence of mental and physical ways of knowing. And a certain group of dance ethnologists and aesthetic theorists have begun to insist on the integration of bodily experiences with mentalist understandings.

Certain dance ethnologists (Sklar, 1991), sociologists (Thomas, 2003, pp. 64-88), along with a few other cultural theorists (Howes, 1991; Stoller, 1997), somatic aestheticians (Fraleigh, 1999; Shusterman, 1999), and dance pedagogy theorists (Fortin, 1994; Green, 1996) have been arguing for a re/cognition of the body as a research tool and means to understanding. In his methodological approach to fieldwork by way of the senses, Howes (1991) pointed to anthropologists' realization that the Geertzian interpretive model with its "metaphor of the text" had in the end led to the predominance of a visual or ocular paradigm. Instead of the "observing eye," as he told it, Clifford had consequently provoked a turn towards a "dialogical anthropology." But Howes insists that this new interplay of voices needed to be further shifted towards an interplay of the senses, in order to "position the

⁷Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull appears in the bibliography as Cynthia Novak, her maiden name under which she first wrote and which she later changed.

utterances,” as he puts it (pp. 6-8). In his fieldwork (1986) based on olfactory data, cultures are literally seen as ways of sensing the world. Dance ethnologist Sklar (1991, 2000) also champions this view in particular for dance scholars, as she continues to build a compelling case for what she calls “empathetic kinesthetic perception” as a primary research method. And although kinesthetic empathy is only one among several “tools” that I have used for gathering evidence for this study, my insider abilities to empathize with participants’ physical states of being have been a crucial contribution to this study.

2.7 Québécois dance literature and research

My knowledge of the understandings of and attitudes towards contemporary dance, and particularly those of Québécois artists, was developed by way of texts by Québécois dance writers and researchers, and in the course of face-to-face conversations with them throughout the years. Some of the writers I will review here were dancers themselves, and others have been arts researchers with backgrounds in other art forms such as theatre history or dance criticism. I will focus on a selection of writing which proved to have a direct bearing on this study: five monographs (Arbour, 1999; Barras, 1995; Époque, 1999; Febvre, 1995; Tembeck, 1991, 1994a), Tembeck’s doctoral dissertation (1994b), and several essays from the catalogue of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* (Albert, 1987; Bourassa, 1987; Davida, 1989 and 1992; Febvre, 1991; Marleau, 1985). These authors develop the literary genres of choreographic biography (both celebratory and critical), dance history, and aesthetic description and analysis. Although coming from the visual rather than the performing arts, Arbour is included with the others because of her singular socio-historical analysis of the dynamics inherent in the production and dissemination of contemporary Québécois art in general.

Two of the five monographs were written as what Johnathan David Jackson (2005) termed hagiographies⁸, by which he meant celebratory accounts, of choreographer Laurin (Barras, 1995) and of the dance company *Nouvelle Aire* (written by the company's co-founder Martine Époque (1999)). Époque's first-person narrative on the early modernist period in Montréal provided some useful historical data about the role of her own dance company in Québécois society, in particular some first person accounts of the period during which Laurin worked in her early years as a dancer with *Nouvelle Aire*. Barras' homage to choreographer Ginette Laurin (1995) revealed his admiration for dancers' heroism and drew a historic portrait of the larger Montréal dance world in which Laurin developed her career. His book read like a short novel (at 134 pages) that told the story of a young woman from a small town and a poor family who would be a dancer, and her arduous rise in the face of adversity to become one of Québec's great choreographers. Barras' research involved two in-depth interviews with Laurin (I-HB1, I-HB2) which were also used as data for the *Luna* study with his permission, and included repeated visits to her studios and performances to observe her work and process. Material from his interviews provided confirmation and additional insights to the sections on Laurin's background and artistic views.

Québec authors Michèle Febvre and Iro Tembeck were professors in the *Département de danse* of the *Université du Québec à Montréal* at the time of this study. They were also senior artists and long-time insiders to the events they discuss in their writings. Their carefully researched books were substantial sources of historical information and philosophical contexts for this ethnography. Febvre's monograph (1995) was an aesthetic inquiry that sought to identify and define the varieties, nature and history of the

⁸ In a book review Jackson (2005) critiqued the historiography of black American dance in the '80s for the influence of hagiographies which he characterized as "[...] celebratory surveys of great figure and big trends." He then advocated, as do I, in favor of "more critical attention to theoretical problems of nomenclature, classification, historical documentation, and critical interpretation" (p.134).

interdisciplinary concept called *danse-théâtre* which includes many Québec choreographers. The first chapter reviews Occidental art dance history as a swing between “pure” virtuoso dance and expressive “theatrical” dance, the latter of which is the subject of her thesis. Several of Laurin's choreographies are woven into her analyses, and specific aspects of their aesthetics are discussed, as will be seen later in this study. But it was in particular her methodical investigation of the terminology by which dance forms are categorized that helped to clarify my own concept of contemporary dance.

Tembeck's book *Danser à Montréal: Germination d'une histoire chorégraphique* (1991) remains to date the sole book that aspires to a comprehensive dance history specific to Montréal, outside of monographs and collection of writings on specific choreographers. She also completed a doctoral dissertation (1994b), to which I will refer when discussing certain aesthetic qualities of *Luna* in view of defining and situation what she also called *nouvelle danse montréalaise*. While not always in agreement with her assessments of historical trends and choreographic works, I found her writings (e.g. Tembeck, 1988, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) useful to this project in particular because of the social context she provided for both the local Montréal dance world and Québec society-at-large. Two of her book's chapters are devoted to the description and interpretation of the work of *nouvelle danse* choreographers from 1975 to 1990, in which she features Laurin among others, and who she named *les independents* (pp. 189-248). Her concise descriptions and interpretations of the work of individual artists shed light on her view of a few of their most noteworthy choreographies. In these texts she described salient features of their themes and movement styles, and concluded with her evaluation of their contribution to the development of the art form in Montréal. In the postscript to this book, Tembeck crystallized her critical evaluation of those *independents* in the wake of postmodernism:

Images, choreographic and otherwise, are piled up, creating a whole that is not one and whose guiding principle is "impurity" [...] Composite images, rather than dream icons, stream before us. Works are overcoded, with multiple layers of meaning -- thickets of choreographic discourse that only the lucky can penetrate. (Tembeck, 1994a, p. 120)

While I concur with Tembeck about the fragmentation and complexity of these contemporary dance styles (like that of *Luna*), my own experience of these same characteristics has not led me to a skeptical view of their artistic vitality and meaningfulness. In a final assessment of Laurin's frenzied and risky gestural style, as she termed it, Tembeck (1991) calls her (along with Edouard Lock) one of the artistic "children of fast-food, of videoclips and breakdancing" ⁱ (p. 121). My own close and literal interpretation of this critique suggests that she considers these choreographers' dances as disposable and breakneck, easily consumed and certainly not nourishing. She further evaluated this kind of choreography as one that leads to confusion, and whose meanings were impenetrable because overcoded. Throughout her texts she appears to have carried a nostalgia for a past era of modernist dance, lamenting what she perceived as the loss of an earlier aesthetic to which she had adhered and which, as she phrased it, "bore witness to history" and "referred to a collective memory."

From 1985 to 1989 the *Festival international de nouvelle danse* (FIND) published a catalogue during each edition, which offered both biographical and analytical texts about Montréal choreographers. These included my first attempts to identify the social context and artistic qualities of pan-Canadian, and then a younger, group of Québécois choreographers (Davida 1988; 1992). My texts briefly examined the qualities of choreographies, prefaced by a few words on their cultural and geographical context. In the first essay (1988) I encapsulated Laurin's current work as playful style studies, noting her

tendency to create a gymnast's playground of stage props "from which to catapult her free-flowing airborne dancers" (1988, p. 31). In the second essay (1992) I was concerned with the aesthetic orientations of a younger generation of Montréal choreographers in their twenties at the time, and the text was composed out of material from a dozen in-depth interviews with artists. This essay foreshadowed the *Luna* project because of its engagement in face-to-face in-depth interviews and its favoring of insiders' voices.

Four other socio-historical essays on Québec dance by indigenous authors were also published (in French with English translations) in the catalogues of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*. A piece by Marleau (1985) was reprinted from the Québec theatre journal *Jeu*, from a thematic issue on dance in Québec. Dance critic Albert (1987), theatre historian Bourassa (1987) and dance researcher Febvre (1991) also wrote essays that were commissioned for the festival catalogues. This quartet of historical essays, while not referring at length to Laurin's work, began to build a complex and sometimes contradictory portrait of the events, protagonists, and ideas that have marked Québec contemporary dance since its inception. Their accounts were constructed from differing viewpoints and data and bear witness to the subjective nature of the dance historian's task. Former dance critic Albert (1987) narrated the rise of Montréal's French-language choreographers, whom he portrayed as pioneers forging unique dance styles because of their cultural isolation in English-speaking North America. Albert devoted a single paragraph to describing Laurin's aesthetics, characteristics which I still find apparent (with the exception of "casualness") in the more recent *Luna* choreography:

With Ginette Laurin [...] dance ideally takes on a fluidity bordering on casualness. Her style is invariably infused with gusto and energy, and is theatrical only in its broadest outlines. She does not shy away from irony and her humor is

like an added charm, unique among her counterparts in Montréal [...]. (1987, p. 28)

On the other hand, Bourassa's chronicle (1987) is replete with historical details about the modernist period just previous to the rise of Laurin, but suggests quite another view of the same choreographic movement in Montréal. In Bourassa's account, although Québec contemporary dance was created in cultural isolation, it was from the beginning under the influence of its immigrant predecessors, and engaged in dialogue with many artist discourses from the world outside of Québec. His essay ends where Laurin and her contemporaries began, as Québec dance entered what he called "the hybrid or 'impure' aspects of the post-paradigm phase of modernism" (p. 23). As for Marleau, his dance history (1985) was built upon a single interview with Québec modernist dance pioneer Jeanne Renaud. In it he discussed a few of the features of the formative *Refus Global* period of the 1940s and its aftermath, and its link to the work of the younger choreographers of the 1990s. His text tells the story of a shift from abstraction to expressionism, in which proponents of modernist dance like Françoise Sullivan and Jeanne Renaud went to work in Europe and the U.S. in the 1950s to "escape the difficult cultural climate of Québec" (pp. 78-83).

Like Tembeck, dance researcher Febvre had been an insider, because a dancer, in the dance world she depicted. Her research project on dance-theater (1995), posited a socio-philosophical analysis of the movement qualities, thematic orientations and effects of the bodily presence of some of the dance world's best-known artists. Febvre (1991) claimed the existence of a kind of "choreographic void" in the generation of Québec choreographers who were her own artistic peers (i.e. Fortier, Laurin, Lévillé, Lock, etc.) because they did not "have a chance to practice their art before reaching adulthood." And so Febvre affirmed, "Québec dance has built itself upon a certain innocence and has been more concerned with developing a personal

vision than with breaking with a culture of choreography to which [...] it never belonged (p. 51)". But like Bourassa and Marleau, she also wrote about an influx of influences from the art world outside of Québec on Québécois dance. Febvre recognized the signs of postmodernism in the aesthetics of Laurin and her contemporaries in "the profusion of the semantic and semiotic [...] a kinetic explosion of variegated corporal movements" (p. 54). Her own assessment of her contemporaries' choreography is that of a metaphor for freedom, as she wrote: "[...] on the whole [...] there is a kind of liberation of signs. They exist now for their own sake and for the pure joy of semiotics, that can be considered the counterpart of gestural jubilation" (p. 55).

And finally my understanding of historical contexts for Québécois dance was enriched by two diverse texts by Febvre (1988) and Tembeck (1988a) about the modernist dances created during the *Refus Global* period in the late 'forties, as well as an interview with *Refus* choreographer Jeanne Renaud (Davida, 1997a). The two former texts were commissioned for a catalogue about dances by Sullivan and Renaud made in 1948 that they reconstructed for a performance at the *Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal* on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the *Refus Global*. In her text Tembeck (1988a) advanced a narrative of these dances as emblematic of the *Refus Global* artistic and social revolution in a time when classical ballet had barely gained a foothold in Québec. From another vantage point, Febvre (1988) looked closely at the Automatist ethos of the choreographies themselves. She did this by characterizing their features, and narrating the choreographers' journeys within the wider Modern Dance world of the 'forties. In this same catalogue, Sullivan's seminal poetic text "*La danse et l'espoir*" (1948) was also reprinted, literally translating as "dance and hope," a text that was inserted into the *Refus Global*'s manifesto. In it she called for "Automatist dancing" which she explained as one that liberated the body's energies through spontaneous gestures and expressed vividly felt emotions. And an in-depth interview between Renaud and myself, in another book, (Davida, 1997a)

revealed some of the ways in which her “post-*Refus*” aesthetics had been informed by contacts with American postmodern dancers in New York City.

To complete this section on the contexts and aesthetics of Québec choreography I offer a book by veteran art historian Arbour (1999), which provided a socio-historical analysis of the dynamics inherent in the Québécois contemporary⁹ art world. Although her narrative is anchored in the visual arts, many of Arbour’s propositions also hold true for Québécois dance. At the core of her text is an account of the “states and conditions” of contemporary arts practices as fraught with the tensions between an ideology of mass consumption in opposition to the ethos of artistic freedom and individualistic expression that was bred by modernism and postmodernism. This tension arose at every level of the *Luna* dance event, whether within the dance company, among audience members, the assessments of dance specialists.

2.8 Sociological studies on artists and audiences

A selection of sociological studies about arts audiences and the economics of art making from across Canada, the United States, in Québec and Montréal, gave statistical substance to some of my own findings. With the exception of Cloutier and Pronovost’s research (1996), and Perreault’s dissertation (1988a), these studies were government sponsored and so carried political aims. Perreault’s work was partly funded by the professional organization of Québec dancers *Le Regroupement Québécois de la danse*, and calls for improved working conditions for that constituency, while Cloutier and Pronovost were researchers from the *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières* and part of an inter-university research group on arts-going publics. The massive government-sponsored research projects drew from large data pools,

⁹ Arbour chose the term contemporary to speak of arts practices that came after Modern Art.

and the professional consulting firms that conducted them worked systematically and within the scientific norms of North American sociological practices. Their methods relied largely on filling out survey sheets, phone interviews and analysis of the resulting data, along with data from other statistical sources. And of course the mandates of the studies were those of the sponsoring governments and cultural organizations, with their economic and political agendas aimed at increasing ticket sales and cultural funding for arts presenters. The questions that I asked about the meaning of the *Luna* dance event to/for its protagonists were rarely asked in these contexts. None of these sociologists engaged in long-term fieldwork and participant observation in the “fields” they were studying, with only Cloutier and Provonost (1996) allowing the time for in-depth interviews with a small sampling of arts spectators.

In terms of the characteristics and behaviors of dance audience members, I frequently compared the results of my own sample of 22 spectators to the latter government-sponsored studies of “arts consumers” across Canada (in which both the arts-going public and the population in general were polled) (Cultur'Inc/ Décima, 1990), and to Sussmann’s meta-analysis of cross-country audience profiles in the United States that was carried out by the National Endowment for the Arts in the 1990s (Sussmann, 1998). These national studies in Canada and the United States provided differentiated results for various arts disciplines, singling out those who attended “modern” dance performances. The Canadian study even distinguished findings by province, and so results were available that were specific to the province of Québec. The Canadian research team conceived of demographic profiles for various groups of arts-goers by cross-referencing their motives for spectating, their tastes and habits.

It was in a collection of research reports on Québec culture and arts, published by the *Institute Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture* (Baillargeon, 1996), that I first discovered the Cloutier and Pronovost study (1996). Their

methodology included interviews with a small, limited sample and analysis of arts-going Québécois, and in their analysis they proposed a “motive grid” for audience attendance that provided an initial model for my own theorizing. In terms of defining characteristics of local Montréal audiences, my own data was supported by the CROP’s comparative analysis of three audience profiles (2001). They gathered their data during polls conducted at several editions of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* in which *O Vertigo* was presented, and was the only professional study with relevance to *O Vertigo*’s audiences.

As for Perreault’s study about artistic practices, his essay on passion as a motive for the choice of the vocation of dancer (1988b) was his post-doctorate reflection on the implications of his study on gender and the economic status of Montréal dancers (1988a), and in it he posed a similar set of questions to my own. For instance, but in different manners, we both ask what brings people to choose the métier of dancer under adverse conditions and a lack of social status. Perreault responded that although it wasn’t a generally accepted sociological category to date, it could only be “passion” that determines such a choice. His study is now over 17 years old, but from all evidence and even with the institutional growth of the métier in Montréal, the financial and physical difficulties for dancers have not much improved (Fondation Jean-Pierre Perreault, 2004). But Perreault didn’t discuss the varieties of that passion. This is a task that I have undertaken in this ethnographic study, and this time not only in the case of the dancers but also for a full spectrum of dance event participants.

I have also integrated findings from two studies by the Québec *Ministère de la culture et de communications* on arts financing . One is a 15-year old study on arts financing by the firm Samson Bélair Deloitte & Touche (1990) and another a recent summary of a study of the socio-economic situation of professional Canadian artists based on the 2001 Statistics Canada census by Hill Stratégies Recherche Inc. (2004). I felt both were exemplary

and reliable sources of statistical analysis because of their long professional experience and reputation as art world research firms, and the fact that they accessed large data pools. Their findings lent further credibility (and were more recent than Perreault's 1988 study) to my contention throughout this study that the contemporary dance profession is a perilous one in economic terms.

2.9 Conclusion

This examination of the textual sources and resources for this study unearths the many strata of the theoretical ground I have excavated for this ethnography of the *Luna* dance event. Although centered in the interdisciplinary juncture of dance studies and ethnography, theoretical insights, as this chapter reveals, were also gleaned from numerous other fields: aesthetics, movement analysis, sociology, cultural studies, dance history and more.

Researchers included in this chapter have been seen alternately as contributing seminal ideas and models to that of the dance event and its dynamics, providing initial directions for a study of this nature, and as advancing critical debates in which I could position and anchor my own views.

At least half a century of theorizing about dance events and dance ethnology, along with a movement towards bringing Western art forms into the fold of anthropology, has made this *Luna* project possible and perhaps inevitable. The relatively new field of Dance Studies has included both cultural and critical streams whose proponents argue for the importance of widening the researcher's gaze of dance performance and choreography to include physical, social and historical contexts. And from within a small but significant circle of aesthetic philosophers and arts-minded sociologists there has been recent attention to the art form of dance, and the expressive

“dancing body,” as a viable subject of thought. I believe the time has come to further advance an anthropology of artistic dance, as Kealiinohomoku (1969/1970) suggested and Novack (1990) urged us to do. And it is through the holistic framework of the dance event, and a close examination of its components and the diverse viewpoints of its participants, that I propose to integrate these many theoretic propositions.

Original French texts

ⁱ “enfants du *fast-food*, *videoclip* et *breakdancing* [...]” Iro Tembeck