

Natural and Artistic Bodies in Dance

Inma Álvarez*
The Open University

ABSTRACT. This article examines the impact of the presence of the human body on how we perceive dance art. It first establishes two basic layers of expressiveness in dance: A natural expressiveness provided by the presence of the real body, and an artistic expressiveness articulated by the choreographed body. It then considers the different dance personas linked to these levels of expressiveness and the strategies choreographers use to create dance works to make human and non human representations and references. This is followed by a discussion about audiences' experiences of the (physical and emotional) presence of the human body in dance performances and a definition of appropriate artistic appreciation of dance works.

I. Expression and the Dancing Body

Dance is a performative art realised in a multistranded medium with the human body in motion at its core. A moving performer has a key role in the meaning making process of dance performances. Movement and performer are part of the dance medium and they usually integrate, juxtapose, coexist or overlap with sound, space and time strands.¹ In the development of a dance performance, these components interlock to materialise in a fluid present that becomes the work of art. Although it is only by considering the resulting whole that we can reach a proper understanding and

* Email: i.alvarez@open.ac.uk. This paper is part of the research project *Emoción y valor en las artes* (Ref: FFI2008-00750/FISO), funded by the Spanish *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación*.

¹ The strands of the dance medium and their nexial connexions have been articulated by the choreological theory, although time was not explicitly included. See PRESTON-DUNLOP, V. & SANCHEZ-COLBERG, A. (2002) *Dance and the performative. A choreological perspective* — Laban and beyond, London, Verve Publishing.

appreciation of dance pieces, it is also crucial for these processes that we are aware of each of the contributing strands of the medium as well as of how these strands are used and connected. For example, identifying how footwork on an electronic stage and handwork against the body in Twyla Tharp's *The Fugue* (1970) replace the more traditional music accompaniment to dance rhythm, and how at the same time they shape and support movements, help us understand and appreciate the production of a formal structured composition with multiple references to classical and popular dance codes.

Despite the centrality of the moving body in dance, very little discussion has taken place with regard to the impact of the corporeal presence in dance performances. It seems pertinent to investigate the extent to which the presence of a human body conditions how dance art is created and perceived, i.e. how it frames a choreographer's articulation of her or his ideas and the audience's perception of the works. Choreographers have the task of conceiving their subjects by means of the human body in movement. Spectators go to the theatre to contemplate and respond to works where performers move according to choreographic instructions. Of course there is usually more elements to dance events (e.g. props, costumes, lighting, music, etc.) which can not be ignored when considering our experiences of creating and perceiving dance, but here I would like to focus specifically on the expressive relevance of the presence of the moving human body for the experience of the spectator.

Some philosophers have argued that the body is expressive by nature and therefore its presence in dance is crucial to the natural expressiveness of the pieces. A few dance scholars have highlighted the pre-artistic expressive charge of the dance medium provided by the body, grounding the basic expressivity of dance art in the natural body (Fraleigh, 1987, Margolis, 1981, Van Camp, 2009). According to Joseph Margolis, the natural movement of the body is expressive by virtue of its human animal nature and its enculturation in a particular group, and "dancers use their personally and culturally idiosyncratic selves as the very medium of their art — not steps, movements, positions, or styles primarily focused on denotative and symbolic import" (Margolis, 1981, p. 425). To this respect, the presence of the body in dance has been described as one that prompts an immediate response from the observer with a strong influence on our experience of

dance events, regardless of artistic intentions.² Our perception of the body is considered to trigger non artistic reactions to what we see. The claim is that, at a basic human level, we find the moving body expressive and respond to it, i.e. we sympathise with it, relate to it, admire it, or reject it.

Watching dance performances confronts us with other bodies in movement and we unavoidably react to them, even when the human form is profoundly altered. Several reasons can be offered to explain the inescapability of the expressivity of the human body: beauty, functional complexity, range of motion, humanness, and emotion. Viewing the human body as a naturally expressive medium is interesting, on the one hand, to dance art because the presence of the body seems to affect in some way how we experience and appreciate artistic compositions; on the other hand, is relevant to dance aesthetics because it suggests one of the reasons why we connect with and enjoy dance works.

These arguments point to the idea that the presence of the body provides two basic layers of expressiveness in dance. A natural expressiveness brought by the presence of the real body and an artistic expressive quality communicated by the articulation of the choreographed body. Two immediate questions arise with this distinction. On the one hand, we need to ask whether the natural body and the artistic body are really distinguishable in dance performances, and therefore whether the expressive charge of the pieces can be clearly attributed to one or the other. On the other hand, and more fundamentally, we need to ask whether we can escape at all from the presence of the human body in our experience of dance. In the following sections I will seek some answers to these questions.

II. Dance Personas

In our perception of the performing arts a natural self (a person and professional individual) appears along a fictional self (a character). This can

² Anya Peterson Royce noticed in her anthropological work on dance that ‘people always have some response to the body as it is used in dance; they [the responses] are seldom neutral.’ ROYCE, A. P. (1977) *The Anthropology of Dance*, London, Dance Books. The artist Paul Kaiser has suggested that ‘in looking at performers on the stage we are seduced by the charisma of the body rather than by the beauty of the movement.’ DE SPAIN, K. (2000) *Dance and Technology: A pas de deux for post-humans*. *Dance Research Journal*, 32, 2-17.

be further described as an encounter with a diversity of personas, namely, subject, actor and character. The natural traits of the individual as a person and his or her acquired abilities through training as an artist accompany his or her transformation into a fictional identity. It is recognised that a performance displays ambiguities in the overlapping of a real body with its ethnicity, gender, age, stature, disabilities, muscular shape, etc; a technical body which shows technique, style, dexterity, athleticism, virtuosity, and so on; and a performing body that refers to a fictional physicality with its own characteristics (which can be close or distant to the actual traits of the performer.)³ Comments to this phenomenon, however, have mostly appeared in the context of the cinema and the theatre, although they are also relevant to other performing arts, with the exception of instrumental music where the musician does not have a representational role and the impact of his actual presence on the work is in general less of an issue.

With respect to dance, it is important to emphasise that dance personas need to be understood in a non-verbal mobile state; since in dance performances it is not just a human body that has a key role in the creation of the piece, but a silent body in movement.⁴ Lena Hammergren (1995) has explicitly mentioned that the dancing artist reveals himself or herself as a specific person, a professional dancer, a performance persona, and that he or she can also even produce images of other personas. Let me illustrate this with an example: Parisian audiences of the 1912 production of *L'après-midi d'un faune* would have seen on stage the person Vaslav Nijinsky, a skilful dance artist, a sensual faun, and would have recalled or brought to mind images of other fauns — and, we could even add, of other dancers (fig. 1). Moreover all these personas can be potentially inscribed with social, political and cultural meanings. However, although the presence of this multiplicity of personas in a dance performance is unquestionable, it does not mean that the artist wishes to mix them all in our experience of the work.

³ I will not be making a distinction between the concept of 'persona' and 'body' here. In my use of both concepts I intend to refer to a 'physicality' in a broad sense.

⁴ Of course there are many instances in which the dancing body is also a talking body. Dances of this kind have been described as opening up to drama as exemplified, for instance, by Pina Bausch dance theatre.

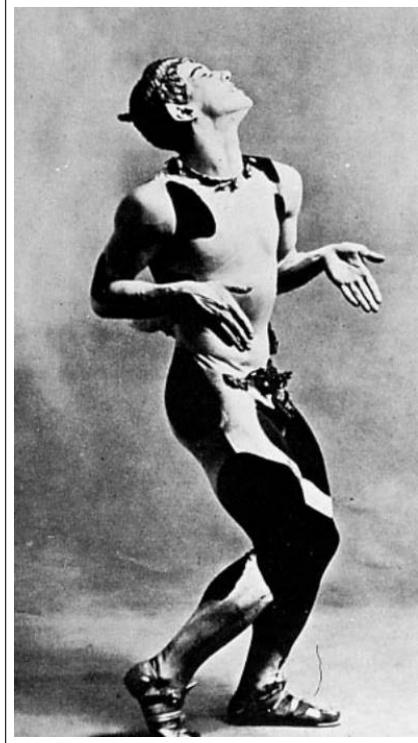


FIGURE 1. Vaslav Nijinsky, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, 1912.

In fact, theatre dance performances aim at excluding reality inviting us to perceive the world in interesting ways. Dance theatre illusions frequently intend to eliminate the perception of the real persona involved in favour of an artistic persona, i.e they pursue the construction of a fictional character, object or idea, and therefore not necessarily focused on a human form or content, or based on conventional categories. In the common experience of dance art there is a tacit understanding of actual substitutions, representations, or references to the actions and feelings of others that try to make the real invisible to our senses. Attention is therefore not directed to the real body, its cultural references and trained capabilities but to stylised forms and references proposed in the work which reveal to different degrees, or even completely hide, the human body. The focus is on the dance which is lead by a dancing body, a human body that projects the traits of a specific performance persona (both individual and type). The fictional body is displayed as corporeal, animalised, reified, ob-

jectified, etc. For instance, the dancer stands for a groom in Martha Graham's *Appalachian Spring* (1944), for a swan in Mikhail Fokine's *Swan Lake* (1911), for witchness in Mary Wigman's *Witch Dance* (1914), for a puppet in Arthur Saint-Léon's *Coppelia* (1870), and for an object in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* (1965). There are also occasions where another layer of fictionality is superimposed in the representation, i.e. where the represented character in turn represents or pretends to be somebody else, as it is the case in *Sleeping Beauty* when the character of the Fairy Karabos pretends to be a lady of the court in order to provide Aurora with a deadly spindle for her birthday. As well as there are dances with a constant change of characters by the same actor-dancer as in the Indian dance-drama performances of kathakali (States, 2002). In these instances, the performance persona takes prominence.

In the theatrical tradition, the performing persona brings the artwork to life including aspects of his or her professional persona such as a personal style, grace or movement virtuosity, and if appropriate, aspects of his or her real persona such as ethnicity, gender and shape. While other aspects of the real and professional persona such as his or her own sweat, physical and psychological tensions, exhausting muscular activity, emotional states are usually concealed in the magic of the scene to make it look easy, comfortable, painless, enjoyable to execute on the one hand, and agreeable to character on the other. But, as it would be expected, artistic intentions are varied. Dance artists are well-known for playing with the borders of the real, the professional and the fictional. For instance, we find artists such as Isadora Duncan (fig. 2) who "did build her dancing persona on her own body and her own disposition" (Jowitt, 1985, p. 23) or early modern and contemporary dance pioneers whose dancing bodies kept a deliberate connection with their own selves, while other choreographers of classical ballet looked for the performance personas and aspects of their professional personas to take prominence in the expression of the fictional narrative of their pieces.

Dance artists have experimented with the impact of the presence of real body, the possibilities of the technical body, and the illusions of performing body on the stage. As we will now see, there is a whole range of possibilities with respect to how the natural body (real and technical) is rethought in dance pieces. Considering them will help us to understand

the extent to which it is possible to ignore the human body in dance.

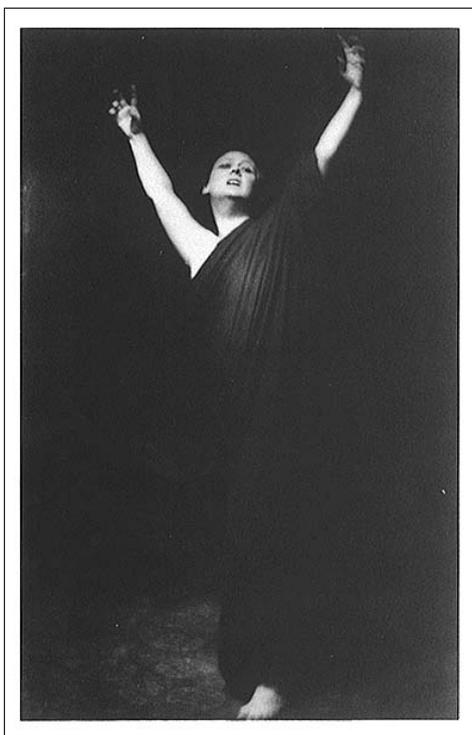


FIGURE 2. Isadora Duncan, study, 1915. Photo by Arnold Genthe.

III. De-Staging the Natural Body

Dance artists craft their works by means of human bodies in motion. This human medium presents them with the challenge of how to make non-human representations as well as how to make non-human references in their dance works. Choreographers have used a number of strategies to deal with the (physical and emotional) presence of the human body to make representations and references of all kinds. These strategies, as we will now see, include characterisation strategies, action strategies, and technological strategies seeking to present both human and non-human content. They work on enhancing the body, reshaping it, hiding it into non bodily structures, revealing its sheer materiality and so on. In dance

theatre, costumes, music, décor, lighting and sound frequently add to the modes of representation of the moving body, although artistic illusions can be created with no extra means.

Characterisation strategies frequently make use of costumes, sets designs and gesturing; the body is masked, moves according to a more or less conventional code and portrays the particularities of a character (person, animal or object). For instance, in classical ballet pieces the dancer becomes the centre of the narrative action, the body is dressed and instructed to move in a suitable manner to its performance persona. But characterisation with the aim of liberating the body from its natural form and decentralizing it from the stage has been also pursued. Alwin Nikolais worked for decades on depersonalising dancers' physique wrapping them with fabrics with the intention to dissolve their human shape and draw the attention to the emerging forms and the physical space around them (fig. 3). More recently, the choreographer Wayne McGregor in *Dyad* (2009) masked his dancers to challenge them to be expressive and connect with the audience "without their normal tools" (quoted in May, 2009). For McGregor, the face is essential for dancers to communicate with spectators. His purpose was not for dancers to become other fictional persons or types, as was the purpose of the masking in the Ancient Greek drama, but to erase the specific person in them.



FIGURE 3. Alwin Nikolais, *Noumenon Mobilus*, 1953.

In addition to characterisation, choreographers also employ aspects of human movement such as levels of virtuosity, sexuality, conventional gesturing and range of mobility for expressive purposes. As commonly displayed in modern and contemporary dance, walking, moving objects around and other daily actions were used to refer to the possibilities of the body's physical articulation in the fluidity of movement. These actions took a central place in choreographed and improvised dance performances, some of which have been identified as 'task dances,' i.e. dances that "are predicated upon drawing the audience's attention to the practical intelligence of the human body" (Carroll and Banes, 1998, p. 19)⁵ rather than to the shape of the body. It is important to note that references were not individualised; the focus was on the action of *the* human body as opposed to the action of *a* specific human body. This use of the contemporary choreographed body has been described as a move away from the subject and towards objectification where patterned movement becomes the focus of the dance. Interestingly, tight costumes, naked bodies or ordinary clothes were used for this purpose, so the dancing body became in some sense closer to the natural body, although in another sense further away from its natural figure and emotional states. In formal dance pieces, there is an exploration of spatial configurations that work with the body physique as creator of forms or even seek to distort it or eliminate its human traits and therefore its natural expressiveness. American choreographers Merce Cunningham, the Judson group, Trisha Brown and Lucinda Childs worked on objectification where

[...] the individual dancer who is not expressing archetypal experience can instead express the body both as a physical structure and as a subject. Because the dancer's self is not concerned with self-presentation — it does not tell the body how to move or how to express feelings — but rather participates fully in the activity at hand, that self creates an aperture through which it can be viewed. The subject-body thus presents itself as its own passionate message. (Foster, 1986, p. 181)

While early contemporary explorations had been towards the objectifica-

⁵ The specific example analysed by Carroll and Banes in this article is *Room Service* by Yvonne Rainer.

tion of the body questioning the status of the active subject that brings about the objectified body, later experimentation, such as the work by choreographer William Forsythe, has sought the defiguration or dissolution of the human figure in some of his choreographies. In his works, the body appears dissolved in individual parts and adopts uncommon shapes. Gabriele Grandstetter and Marta Ulvaeus have commented how the solo part of *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* (1987) illustrates this, showing the human body losing its figurative unity by forcing changes in the centre of gravity (Grandstetter and Ulvaeus, 1998). The visual results of these experimentations are impacting as the artistic body engages us with a different sensitivity towards the body as we know it. But the corporeal body does not abandon the scene.

Finally, modern technologies have opened up a range of creative representational possibilities for dance artists. Most important for our discussion is to note that technology has given the human body a virtual presence on the stage through projections, expanding its physicality beyond the actual body. At present choreographers can create pieces where real dancing bodies interact or overlap with virtual (filmed, asynchronous) past performers or (moving but not present on the stage, synchronous) present ones. Technological advances since the late 80's have allowed for the human body in movement to be utilised with reproductive ends rather than representational ones. Motion-capture technology in particular has provided an interesting means of experimenting with the presentation of the dancing body in a new format. Technology has developed the capacity to exploit the internal physical activities of the performer's body converting them in visual and aural representations, as shown in the work done by the Palindrome group. These artists have been working in the area of interactive performing using bio-sensors and motion tracking dancers to produce and control sound, lighting and stage projections.⁶ In addition, motion-capture technology is able to facilitate a projection of the dancing body in a schematic shape. A limited amount of sensors attached to the dancers' bodies are translated by a computer into a mere trace. Merce Cunningham, for instance, as well as Bill T. Jones, experimented with this creative possibility. Cunningham's *Biped* (1999) (fig. 4) and Jones's *The Breathing*

⁶ See this project at: <http://www.palindrome.de/index.html?pubs.htm>

Show (2001) worked with the designers Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar to show a digital dancing body without any of the body's natural elements: skin, face, fingers, sweat, weight, pulse, effort, etc. These pieces investigate the effects of combining digitally mediated bodies with performing bodies, where real and virtual dancers share the stage; they also pose new questions about our perception and appreciation of the resulting human movement in the absence of the body.



FIGURE 4. Merce Cunningham, *Biped*, 1999.

The preceding paragraphs have illustrated how a whole range of expressive representations and intentions are conveyed in dance by a multistranded medium with the moving human as essential to it. By developing the artistic body, choreographers have attempted to enhance, extend, decentralised, defigure, dissipate, schematise, objectivise the human body. Not only its form but also its meanings and references have been altered in these representations. Thus, in these creative attempts, the natural body is de-staged giving the artistic body prominence. It is however evident that a tension remains between the natural and the artistic body since both are inevitably present in dance performances, and, as we will see, in some ways competing with each other for attention.

IV. Perception of the Body in Dance Art.

Hammergren's reflections on the multiple personas (i.e. person, performer, character and others) juxtaposing in a dance work have suggested that, while watching a performance, at times we unite these personas, at times we separate them as distinct. She believes that "we accept several dimensions of the dancer without losing track of a possible meaning concerning the phenomenon as such" (Hammergren, 1995, p. 187). Indeed dance criticism discourse displays this fluctuating attention to multiple bodies in performance. The 19th century critic Théophile Gautier shows already this tendency. In his commentary of the ballet *Néméa*, for example, he describes with the following words the performance of the dancer Eugénie Fiocre in her role of Cupid:

Certainly Love was never personified in a more graceful, or more charming body. Mlle. Fiocre has managed to compound the perfection both of the young girl and of the youth, and to make of them a sexless beauty, which is beauty itself [...]. Her movements are developed and balanced in a sovereign harmony [...]. What admirable legs! Diana the huntress would envy them! What an easy, proud and tranquil grace! What modest, measured gestures! [...] So correct, rhythmical and noble is her miming that, like that of the mimes of old, it might be accompanied by two unseen flute-players. (Quoted in Guest, 1974, p. 200)

Here, in addition to references to the character and how this has been portrayed by the dancer, we find explicit references to her technical abilities ("movements are developed and balanced", "correct, rhythmical") and to the real person ("charming body", "admirable legs".) Contemporary dance criticism continues in this line. We could argue, in fact, that dance audiences have been educated to look for and enjoy all dance personas without worrying too much about the effect of this on the appreciation of the actual piece.

A similar situation has been also described in the context of the cinema. For instance, in the perception of films, it is a common phenomenon to assimilate fictional characters with real people. Movie stars have often complained about the fact that people unite their personalities and

physique with those of the roles they undertake. Danto has suggested that in our experience of cinema, detailed knowledge of an actor's way of thinking, previous roles, age, etc. affects our perception of his or her portrayals of other characters "compromising the illusion" (Danto, 2006, p. 107). Indeed, when Margot Fonteyn at 46 played the role of 14 year old Juliet in Kenneth MacMillan's production of *Romeo and Juliet*, the age difference between the dancer and the character, could have been a source of interference with the intended illusion. That is, audiences might not have been able to separate Fonteyn from what she was standing for. It was clearly intended that Fonteyn's maturity would not be taken into account in the appreciation of the piece, but rather that her artistic persona in Juliet's identity would overshadow her real self. Nevertheless there are differences with how we perceive personas in film and dance. Danto points out as a characteristic of cinematic art, that it is hard to separate the roles from the actors because actors retain a strong identity; roles are ephemeral and are played by a single actor rather by a multiplicity of individuals. In dance, the identification between dancer and character is not as common since it is a less narrative art and references done by human bodies are much wider than cinematic ones. It is also the case that in dance many different dancers will usually interpret the very same role, and many of these roles become a *classic* and develop an identity of their own. Therefore, it can be said that there is usually a bigger perceptual gap between person and character in dance due, on the one hand, to the possibility of multiple dancers conveying a role, and on the other hand, to the distance between the natural body and the characteristics of the artistic body.

Although the fluctuation of our attention to the different personas is a familiar phenomenon to theatre goers, however, is it true that we can keep track of the narrative, emotional and aesthetic content of the dance piece while uniting all the personas present or while swaying between conscious or unconscious changes of attention to the different personas and circumstances involved? It is in fact easy to imagine how the expressivity of the natural body could become more powerful than the artistic body and could distract us from appreciating and understanding the work. In her analysis of contemporary dance performances from the sixties Deborah Jowitt (1988) discussed how appreciative interferences can occur. She referred to the choice of presentation of the body, commenting in particular on

the issue of nudity and how this was not so much a provocation, as some spectators took it, but rather a way “to reveal the human body in its most unembellished and vulnerable state” (Jowitt, 1988, p. 319).⁷ Dance artists have indeed a challenging role managing the selection and presentation of specific artistic personas, and then their intentions are at risk of failing in how they are actually perceived by specific audiences. Using the case of nudity highlighted by Jowitt, it might be that in some cultural contexts, gender becomes a bigger issue in front of the naked body, or that spectators keep losing track of the dance event because the displayed of nakedness becomes the focus of their gaze. Two main questions arise here: 1) is attention to all personas pertinent? and 2) is it unavoidable? The answers to these questions are important because if the art work intends to create a physical illusion distant from the reality of the personalities and actions of the moving bodies, it seems in principle inappropriate, with respect to the artistic, to focus our attention on them. But if a proper distinction is not possible while perceiving the works, then it means that the mere presence of the natural body is aesthetically and expressively relevant to our experiences of dance.

In order to answer those questions, first of all, a basic point must be made: attention to the artistic persona is essential to our experience of the theatre. The appropriateness of the attention to dancers’ natural personas (including aspects of their professional personas) depends on whether these are related in anyway to the dancing persona and the artistic intention. My use of appropriateness is related to the intrinsic features and properties of the work. Focusing on the person Vaslav Nijinsky rather than on the faun he was playing at the piece mentioned previously would count as a non adequate artistic response to the work. My argument is that even if natural characteristics as well as accidental bodily moves and functions

⁷ John Berger described the difference between to be nude (a representative convention in art) and to be naked (being oneself). He explained that the observer objectifies the nude while ‘to be naked is to be without disguise.’ BERGER, J. (1972) *Ways of seeing*, New York, Viking Press, CLARK, K. (1960) *The nude: a study of ideal art*, Harmondsworth, Penguin. However, it is interesting to note the extremely different aesthetic impact of the static nude as presented in paintings or sculptures, and the moving nude as presented in the performing arts, including the cinema. It is as if nudity can easily become nakedness when the body appears live on stage.

creep into the realisation of the artwork, they do not count as directly relevant to it, although it must be recognised that they could have an aesthetic subjective dimension for the individual who is watching the performance. So in perceiving the body in dance our experience could be an appropriate artistic experience of the phenomenon or it could be totally or partially non-artistically appropriate but aesthetically or expressively relevant. Enjoying the perception of a dancer we know well rather than appreciating the character he or she is playing, does not provide an experience of the artwork but rather a different experience that could be nonetheless quite meaningful to us. In fact, since dancers are instrumental to the dance, they are mostly selected by choreographers for their physical ability and some times for the quality of their personal bodies and sensibilities, and therefore, their presence could have a big impact on what we experience artistically or not. This should settle the first question, and now we can start responding to the second question.

It seems that despite artistic efforts to get a distance from the natural self, the real individual and some of the artificiality of his or her technique still leaves traces on the scene that do not belong to the character he or she is playing, affecting the perception of the piece. As it has been mentioned, some artists have exploited the ambiguities between the theatrical body and the natural body. Expressivity flows from the performance persona but inevitably his or her dancing body seems to bring along the real and technical personas. We could say that spectators end up engaging with intentional as well as unintentional levels of expressivity, i.e. with the explicit expression (or lack of it) intended in the choreographed body, as well as with the expression discovered in the medium *itself* whose core strands reside in the moving body. Keir Elam has pointed out the phenomenon of 'over-interpretation' as characteristic of performance art, explaining that this is so because, on the one hand, art may use current kinetic systems that can be recognized and therefore be found expressive, but on the other hand, "kinesic messages have their own material and formal autonomy" (Elam, 2002, p. 69). So in our experience of a dance work, we recognise a communicative intention through the ways in which the artistic body has been manipulated and styled, but we also process 'aesthetic information' from the natural body. In fact, it seems that our knowledge of the fact that a human being is involved (even when we cannot perceive it directly

because it is covered up) makes us to inscribe it with expressive agency.

Susan Foster's comments on contemporary dance, where the focus is on the movement rather than on the physical bodies, highlight the powerful presence of the body not at a physical level but at an emotional one:

[...] the dance allows feeling to appear tacitly at the margins of the body and the dance. Although human sentiment is not the subject matter of the dances, nor do the faces or bodies of the dancers give themselves over to the display of feeling, emotion nonetheless enjoys a full, rich presence in these pieces. (Elam, 2002, p. 69)

Intentional and unintentional expressivity is captured from the dancing body. But while the former is part of the work, the latter can not be considered as part of it. This distinction between the intentional and unintentional is important because understanding what belongs to the work is crucial to a correct critical appraisal of it, although, at the same time, admitting to a powerful expressive corporeality in dance, allows us to understand better the complexities of our experiences of the works.

In dance, the perception of the real or natural body, is probably particularly acute because dance audiences go to see human bodies in action. It could be argued that there is a desire in the dance viewer for flesh, articulations, gestures, expressive moves and unexpected human possibilities. So far, not even technology has been able to alter in any significant way our concept of the dancing body, perhaps because, as John Martin pointed out, "the body is of all possible instruments the least removable from the associations of experience" (Martin, 1936, p. 92). And it is probably for this reason that dance will always maintain for us an intense sense of humanity. In dance, the artistic is deeply tinted by the natural. So whatever the aim of the representation and the strategies to dissolve or cover up the human body, aspects of the real persona end up projected in our imagination.

V. Final Remarks

Dance artists express their dance ideas by means of moving bodies but these do not necessarily refer to human bodies, as in the case of formalist and abstractionist dances. Choreographers have played with many degrees of separation between the natural body and the artistic body, with

the ambiguities of the medium, and with the challenges of escaping from the presence of the human body (physical and emotional) in their work. In theatre dance the artistic moving body is expressive of the choreographer's creative ideas which might not express any human content at all, or might aim at decentralise it, objectify it, dissolve it, trace it, or virtualise it.

Expressivity in dance art is not primarily of a natural kind. Expressiveness is the communicative act of an artist, and in dance this means that a choreographer articulates her or his dance ideas knitting the strands of the dance medium into the work of art. In theatre dance we are confronted with artistic expression but a corporeal expressiveness emerges and affects our perception of the work. Dance natural and artistic personas permeate our experiences of dance art. The natural body becomes a dancing body that expresses dance ideas through specific techniques and styles and appropriate representations and actions. Whatever roles are intended for the natural and artistic bodies in dance pieces, it could be said that we find dance expressive by the interplay between them.

Despite the usual distance in dance art between different personas, it seems that the mere presence of the body has potent consequences for our perception of dance works because we will always tend to perceive and appreciate the human being executing the movement both at a physical and affective level. Dance audiences have a tendency to look for the real body of the dancer and infuse it with social and aesthetic value and meaning. Therefore, understanding not dance works themselves but experiences of dance performances becomes a process where both natural and artistic bodies play a role.

References

- Berger, J. (1972) *Ways of seeing*, New York, Viking Press.
- Brandstetter, G. & Ulvaeus, M. (1998) 'Defigurative Choreography: From Marcel Duchamp to William Forsythe', *TDR*, 42, 37-55.
- Carroll, N. & Banes, S. (1998) 'Expression, rhythm and dance: a response to Gregory Scott', *Dance Research Journal*, 30, 15-24.

- Clark, K. (1960) *The nude: a study of ideal art*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Danto, A. C. (2006) 'Moving pictures', in: Carroll, N. & Jinhee, C. (Eds.) *Philosophy of film and motion pictures. An anthology*, Malden, Blackwell.
- De Spain, K. (2000) 'Dance and Technology: A pas de deux for post-humans', *Dance Research Journal*, 32, 2-17.
- Elam, K. (2002) *The semiotics of theatre and drama*, New York, Routledge.
- Foster, S. L. (1986) *Reading dancing: bodies and subjects in contemporary american dance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press.
- Fraleigh, S. H. (1987) *Dance and the lived body: a descriptive aesthetics*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Guest, I. (1974) *The ballet of the second empire*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press.
- Hammergren, L. (1995) 'Different personas: a history of one's own?', in: Foster, S. L. (Ed.) *Choreographing History*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.
- Jowitt, D. (1985) 'Images of Isadora: The Search for Motion', *Dance Research Journal*, 17, 21-29.
- Jowitt, D. (1988) *Time and the dancing image*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Margolis, J. (1981) 'The autographic nature of the dance', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 39, 419-427.
- Martin, J. (1936) *America dancing*, New York, Dodge.
- May, D. (2009) *In the spirit of Diaghilev*. United Kingdom, BBC4.
- Preston-Dunlop, V. & Sanchez-Colberg, A. (2002) *Dance and the performative. A choreological perspective — Laban and beyond*, London, Verve Publishing.
- Royce, A. P. (1977) *The Anthropology of Dance*, London, Dance Books.
- States, B. O. (2002) 'The actor's presence: three phenomenal modes', in: Zarrilli, P. B. (Ed.) *Acting (re)considered. A theoretical and practical guide*,

2nd ed, London and New York, Routledge.

Van Camp, J. (2009) *Dance. A Companion to aesthetics*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell.