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Articles

**Somatic Practices and Dance: Global Influences,
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...I often begin the first class by asking, "Where is your mind?" Usually, the students will immediately point to (or place their hands on) their heads. However, several years ago one person offered a different response: He placed his hand on his heart. He also happened to be the only one in the class who was not an American. He was an African student from Nigeria. (Seymour Kleinman, 2001, 1).

Introduction

My main focus is to reveal the existence of global influences on the development and teaching of somatic principles and disciplines and to discuss why these influences are not in the forefront of somatic inquiry. I hypothesize that the search for "the universal," or "the humanistic," or "the biological" as a through-line of body-mind investigation, has encouraged a mono-cultural approach to somatic pedagogy and to the promotion of the field. Secondly, it is of interest to me that it appears that it has been through the work of those founders of somatic disciplines who are women, that it has become possible to more easily retrace some of these global influences on 21st century somatic studies. It also posits that through the lives and experience of women leaders more of an emotional voice enters the holistic paradigm. This paper aims to raise questions. It does not presume to be exhaustive in its pursuit of data regarding all the intercultural complications of somatic practices, inclusive of questions emerging from gender politics.

At the joint conference *Dancing in the Millennium* in July 2000 (CORD with SDHS, DCA, NDEO, LIMS AND NDA among others), the program notes for the panel "Paradigms and Approaches: The Future of Somatics in Dance" read:

In the past decade "somatics" has burst onto the dance scene. With the recent proliferation of practices, somatics has become an accepted mode of dance learning. However, despite the recent popularity of the term and its growing practices, somatics is not a monolith. [Dancing in the Millennium program, 2000 July 23, 9AM]

Somatic work is often referred to as bodywork, body therapies, hands-on work, body-mind integration, body-mind disciplines, movement therapy, somatic therapy, movement awareness, or movement education (Eddy, 1991) and/or somatic education (<http://www.feldenkrais.com>). Most currently those somatic disciplines that involve movement as a keystone of the learning process are now identified as part of the field of somatic movement education and therapy ([http://www. ISMETA.org](http://www.ISMETA.org)).

This paper is a continuation of the inquiry begun during the Dancing in the Millennium panel regarding the dissolution of any potentially monolithic views of the history and etiology of "somatics" as well as somatic movement applications in dance (Green, 2001; Fortin, 2000) with a specific eye to examining how cultural and religious movement practices from diverse cultures have provided philosophical underpinnings and influential theories and practices to the field. My methodology has involved literature searches and interviews. In this paper I hope to discuss, through selected stories, with emphasis on the lives of two women who have been progenitors of somatic movement disciplines (Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Emilie Conrad) that in many cases somatic practices often perceived as western concepts and constructs actually also have formative roots from cultures beyond the Euro-American sphere.

One question that may arise immediately is why the historical lineage of each somatic movement discipline is not more evident in dance teaching, discourse, or writing. I conjecture that in part dance educators lost the art of history telling during the period in which knowing what the roots of a given dance form was evident by simply stepping into the studio (e.g., in the Graham School or with a Graham teacher, one studies the Graham Technique). Now lineages are more complicated. Sylvie Fortin (2000) makes a case for the current evolution of the field of somatics saying, "Indeed the field of somatics is growing in unexpected ways, as are its players who tend to eventually pursue a practice of their own design." (p. 1) From my experience in dance classes and in discussions about "dance and somatics" I have found that to take the time to cite one's more diverse influences is unusual.

While a part of the historical development of the field of "somatics" involved choices to acquire a type of meta-view; a view that stands back from distinct cultures and investigates the individual organism separate from any identity other than that of being human, the profound influences of Eastern and African movement concepts and practices have been seminal in the development of European and American somatic paradigms. And there has been, of course, a large degree of information flow between Europe and the Americas as well. As students now more often have the privilege of studying dance, martial arts and other movement practices from teachers around the world it becomes more important to understand connections between them.

Furthermore, somatic models within dance and education, as well as the "pure" somatic disciplines themselves, have been associated with diverse theoretical paradigms through the work of post-modernist scholars such as Jill Green (2000, 213-217) and Sherry Shapiro (1998). As I review the somatic literature, the most frequently noted paradigms are those characterized by an emphasis on a whole system perspective, ecology, feminism, spirituality, cultural pluralism, non-violent change, decentralization of decision-making, and a shift from outside authority to self-responsibility. It is also the intent of this paper to trace the global trajectories of some of these perspectives.

Hanna's Role in Setting the Stage for Somatic Inquiry

Thomas Hanna, so-called father of the term "somatics", brought attention to the "soma" emphasizing the soma's alive and changing status, replete with cellular intelligence and a capability of perceiving itself. Somatic awareness allows a person to glean wisdom from

within (Hanna, 1986). "Living organisms are somas: that is they are integral and ordered process of embodied elements which cannot be separated either from their evolved past or their adaptive future. A soma is any individual embodiment of a process, which endures and adapts through time, and it remains a soma as long as it lives. The moment that it dies it ceases to be a soma and becomes a body.... At the center of the field of somatics is the soma--an integral and individual process which governs its own existence as long as it has existence" (Hanna, 1976, 31).

Hanna also made a case for somatic thinking as a necessary extension of Darwinism.

The Darwinian invitation was to explore the field of somatics, to construct a science of life that is founded on the model of life itself, to discover how the functions and structures of all living beings have emerged in this universe with a meaningful order that is their own and which cannot be reduced to lesser components.... The Darwinian goal was a science of living bodies with a theoretical foundation, which without compromising them, synthesized the established sciences into a general science of life. ...[T]he field of life has come about only to the degree that we have finally grown beyond the religious and metaphysical prejudices that have plagued the Darwinian view since its inception. Happily the advances of the sciences during the past century and the multidisciplinary sophistication of the past decades have allied with broad cultural changes to spur this growth beyond the prejudicial barriers of a time past. (Hanna, 1976, 30).

Hanna also notes that in the late twentieth century dualism has been challenged by the notion of the complementarity of structure and function. He adds that these relationships are in a state of constant change as is the soma and that this process of change is self-governed. The ever-changing and self-governing process of the individual soma is a given, which -- perhaps mistakenly, leads to a notion that an orientation to the individual versus its cultural context is central in somatic practice.

On the other hand, Hanna feels somatic inquiry has impacted on diverse intellectual and professional perspectives in western Europe and the United States. For instance he states "the gradual acceptance of Darwin's somatic vision of continual genetic mutation" (Hanna, 31) opened the pathway for the work of Lorenz, Tinbergen, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Birdwhistell, Polhemus, and Chomsky. He goes on to say, "It is this same acceptance of "both-and" ambiguity of somatic process that allowed the gap between psychology and physiology, psychiatry and physical medicine to close up through the extraordinary therapeutic work of Wilhelm Reich, Raknes, Feldenkrais, and Lowen (Hanna 1976, 31). Continuing with this Eurocentric discourse, he goes on to argue that somatic theory has also allowed a greater Western acceptance of Asian movement practices:

It is the discovery of the functional and structural integrity of the somatic field that allowed Western scientists and scholars to make the belated discovery that the Asian martial arts and bodily disciplines of judo, aikido, t'ai chi, karate, yoga and tantra were predicated solidly on a somatic theory and not upon a religious pretense (Hanna 1976, 31).

This statement, while effectively making a case for the embodied nature of Eastern practices and the, at long last, appreciation of them by Western thinkers, indirectly strips

each Eastern practice of its greater cultural and religious contexts, and thereby may have set a precedent to do the same for each related somatic discipline.

Much of what Thomas Hanna published was in the '70s. He then died in a car accident in the early '90s. It remains a question in my mind whether, given Hanna's definition of the soma as in constant adaptation, not in isolation, but in response to environmental constraints, he might have come around to a scholarly investigation of global influences if he had remained alive. However, in his book, *Bodies in Revolt*, he argues for the need to keep a somatic perspective separate from social analysis. Why? One of the features of his somatic discourse can be interpreted as aspiring to be purely of the mind and body. This view is devoid of social, relational, cultural and emotional context or correlates. In a lecture-demonstration I attended led by Hanna in 1989, during the *Life in Motion* conference at NYU, he talked about the somatic process as not involving any emotional content other than "feeling better" (Hanna, 1989). It seemed plausible that by not inviting emotional corollaries to mind-body experiences, clients did not share their emotions. Hence one seminal somatic voice contends that we can have access to wisdom through the body, however without social analysis, "religious pretense" or emotional response. I contend that it is easier to "remove" emotional content if we disengage it from cultural context (replete with "religious pretense"). Is there a fear that when the organism is recognized fully, inclusive of the social, relational and cultural details of life that its emotions may burst forth, or even threaten? I add to this query, might this be more of a male construct? It seems that it has been the leaders in the field of "somatics" who are women, that now more often model and thereby advocate for the importance of the "emotional body" in somatic engagement.

Voices of Women: Somatic Progenitors

It is my hope that through examining the biographies of some of the progenitors of somatic movement systems, we can reclaim more cultural context and history. I hope also to posit that numerous somatic disciplines are the direct result of the interaction of cross-cultural currents that then took particular shape in the Americas. Furthermore, I choose to give attention to the unique voice of women and their role in the development of the field. For instance, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Emilie Conrad have strong voices within the somatic community but often remain unheard in wider circles. Indeed it has been through the amplifying work of Don Hanlon Johnson and the organizational work of International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA) that their seminal work has become more known. For this article, as dance professionals and far-reaching thinkers, it is commendable that Bainbridge Cohen and Conrad have been willing to share more about the generative force of some of their voyages to other cultures on the development of their work.

In interviewing and studying the work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Emilie Conrad, I absorbed numerous stories about experiences of embarrassment, of being shunned, of rage, of sadness, of isolation, of feelings of being bothersome, of feelings of being undervalued... Bainbridge Cohen's and Conrad's are the voices of women; as women have emerged as leaders of this field since the 1960's it is as if the emotional and expressive aspects of "the intelligent body" has gained strength.

Anna Halprin is one of the first women to use dance expression, together with touch to impact upon health and healing of physical as well as psychological imbalances. She uses therapeutic expressive tools to help people to move emotions into an integrative experience. To quote the website of her school, Tamalpa,

"Our focus on the body, movement and the expressive arts as a healing approach is based on the premise that the imprints of life events are housed within the body. When remaining at the unconscious level, these imprints may lead to imbalance and conflict; when explored and expressed consciously and creatively, the connection between body, mind and emotion make a vital contribution to the artful development of the self
(<http://www.tamalpa.org>)

Feminist paradigms (such as the concept of matriarchal power and its transfer) vary across somatic practices. Certainly the attitudes women hold as they occupy leadership roles is important. It is notable that Anna Halprin, Emilie Conrad, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, and Sondra Fraleigh have not put their names on the body of work that each developed (vs. Alexander, Feldenkrais, Heller, Laban, Trager etc.). Bartenieff, Rolf, Rosen, and Rubinfeld do use their names as signifiers of their systems. It would be interesting to know more about the dialogue leading up to such a choice. For instance, Bartenieff fought against the use of her name and continued to advocate for the training of Certified Movement Analysts vs. for instance, "Bartenieff Practitioners" (Hackney, 2002). It was Bartenieff's students that finally insisted on the naming of her system as Bartenieff Fundamentals. She herself focused her career on teaching Laban Movement Analysis now often referred to by her protégés as Laban/Bartenieff theory in order to keep the bodily sensitivity of her work more alive.

In meeting the classic somatic model, emotional experience often times becomes neutralized or otherwise confined by the "universality" of bodily experience. And this approach is not devoid of politics; Don Hanlon Johnson [1995, xvi] notes that this basic focus on the body stands in counterpoint to a culture that has denigrated the body. However, by inviting diverse cultural views back into the discourse we may find that, in addition to the body, the body-emotion-mind-spirit continuum is more welcome, or at least more evident. It may be postulated that in a Euro-centric model we need to depend on women to more readily give voice to the emotional aspects of somatic work. As we examine specific experiences of leaders in the field of somatic movement education and therapy, we find that the emotional experiences occupy an important place in the subtext of the work of the female founders, leading the field to new insights about the soma. It may be this sensitivity to the emotional aspects of life that then influences their understanding of what type of impact is possible through the field - psycho-social change as well as body-mind awareness. Without challenging the pluralism of religious possibilities, time may now be ripe to also find how providing cultural context may also support lively discussions about the details of spiritual beliefs and practices globally and how each has contributed to the development and practice of the somatic experience of deeper self-awareness.

Cross-cultural Influences and Awareness

Unfortunately, the theoretical discourse has not reflected constancy in contextualizing somatic experience. However, Kleinman among others (see opening quote) does acknowledge multi-cultural sources and conceptualizations of somatics. He talks about how the process of teaching students from different cultures informs his understanding of somatics. To quote, "...the mind-body question, in cultures outside the Western world, is of little concern either on the practical or the theoretical level. As a result of these [teaching] experiences and my study of Western literature, I have come to the conclusion that the separation of mind from body in the West causes us to view persons in an "unnatural" way." (Kleinman, 2001, 1)

Asian Influences: Focus on the Development of Body-Mind Centering® (BMC(TM))

Asian movement practices have exerted the most obvious global influence on major progenitors of somatic movement practices. In particular, the work of Irmgard Bartenieff and Moshe Feldenkrais was influenced by each innovator's direct practice of an eastern martial art form. Bartenieff analyzed Tai Chi Chuan and studied Chi Kung (Bartenieff, 1980; Hackney, 2002), and Feldenkrais was one of the first Europeans to hold a black belt in Judo in Europe.

Feldenkrais practitioner and teacher Alan Questel writes about Russian born Feldenkrais, who at age 13 moved to Israel, and eventually pursued two degrees in engineering and a doctorate in Physics.

His own physical problems led him to a lifelong exploration of ways to improve our movement and functioning in general. His investigations reflected his various fields of expertise (physics, neurology, martial arts, cybernetics, body mechanics, and psychology) and resulted in a method that is a unique synthesis of science and aesthetics. (Questel, 2000, 2)

Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was a Rosacrucian (also spelled Rosicrucian) [Preston-Dunlap, V. 2002]. Dozens of documents discuss the oriental roots of Western mystical traditions. (<http://smithpp0.tripod.com/psp/id8.html>, 1). While Laban, Bartenieff, and Feldenkrais can be seen to have profited from exposure to Asian movement forms, I propose that rich sites for exploration can be found in the cases of two women who developed their views of somatic experience in part through dance. Each is now a sought-after leader in the somatic field -- Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, an east coast founder of Body-Mind Centering, and Emilie Conrad, a west coast founder of Continuum.

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, an occupational therapist, Certified Laban Movement Analyst, and dancer founded Body-Mind Centering® in 1973. Cohen works in a style reminiscent of complexity theory, with constants shifts in authority and awareness, moving attention from appreciation of the wisdom of babies and animals in exhibiting integrated movement, to the different cellular structures of the body and the diverse layers of tissue that we can experience. Spirituality is an unspoken but palpable component of her work. Body-Mind Centering is an in-depth exploration of experiential anatomy and physiology presented within a perceptual-motor framework. Consistent with Kleinman's discovery through his students Body-Mind Centering posits that "the mind" can be found in any and all parts of the body. The mind, or intelligence, includes emotional experience. It is of particular

interest here that Bainbridge Cohen practiced Aikido both in the U.S.A. and in Japan where she was exposed to several other Japanese healing and meditative arts.

In an appendix to her book *Sensing Feeling and Action*, entitled "Lineage of BMC--Homage to My Teachers" Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen cites over forty individuals. This lineage includes professionals from the United States, Asia and Europe. They include The Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, childhood dance teachers, instructors from the Ohio State University Dance Department, Marion Chace (a pioneer in the field of dance therapy), Erick Hawkins, and André Bernard and Barbara Clark (all from the U.S.A.); Karl and Berta Bobath, Laban protégés Irmgard Bartenieff and Warren Lamb, and their colleague, Judith Kestenberg, and Adolf Haas (from Europe), and Yogi Ramira of India teaching in New York City (yogi and physical therapist), Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing of China ("master of t'ai chi, Chinese medicine, poetry and art"), and Haruchika Noguchi of Japan. Noguchi Sensai (founder of a Japanese style of healing called setai), "taught me a technique called katsugen endo, or Life-Force Movement," which Bainbridge Cohen has continued to practice daily for over 35 years. Bainbridge Cohen also cites Drs. Sam and Kuiko Inoue (traditional acupuncturists in Tokyo), Michio Hikizuchi (a disciple of Morihei Uyeshiba, the founder of the martial art aikido), and Eido Roshi (teacher of Zen).

One radical aspect of BMC is that it teaches that we can consciously access both sensory and motor awareness of even those body parts that are deeply internal. Much like yogis, BMC practitioners learn to become aware of and initiate movement from organs, fluids, and glands to bring balance to the organism. Sound, touch and movement are tools for this embodiment process. In a recent interview, Bainbridge Cohen expounded on the evolution of physiological systems work (1973 - 1982). Bainbridge Cohen began a meticulous process of investigating and teaching each system (i.e., skeletal, ligamentous, muscular, nervous, glandular, fluid, organ, and of fat, fascia, and skin) developing approaches to embodiment to each body system over about a two year period but knew that even with such care and specificity, "we still hadn't touched a fraction of what I perceived" could be experienced. She began teaching organ work while living in Cape Cod. She taught it in New York on weekends. In the development of the "organ" awareness of her method, her yoga training with Yogi Ramira was of particular significance.

Bainbridge Cohen integrated the movement practices she learned in Japan into her prior experiences with dance. In understanding the potential for embodying the nervous system her work with Naguchi Sensai was critical. Naguchi Sensai described his work as working with the autonomic movement system. Her initial dance study was improvisational, and in this sense related to Naguchi Sensai's system, Katsugen Endo. The Japanese practice "wasn't movement that was dance though, since it was without [focus on] external form. It involved being witnessed and experiencing energy without contact through touch." Bainbridge Cohen found the practice's resonance very powerful at various levels. Naguchi Sensai worked "off the body." She was fascinated in that "he was even able to turn a baby in utero," confirming the neuro-developmental aspects of her work (Bainbridge Cohen, 2001). Her time with Naguchi Sensai (1970 - 1973) also taught her numerous other lessons. She recounts the Japan experience:

It was a mix of formality and informality. In studying Katsugen Endo with Naguchi Sensai, when you first went you had a helper. They did their movement practice as they guided you. It was all done through magnetic guidance. It is in contrast to Authentic Movement in that you are being witnessed by the 'universal source,' except for the first few times when an assistant would stay near you. It was more like a prayer. With hands off the body they were guiding you, like in a dance. Once you found your own movement it was between you and the universe. Like Authentic Movement it was discovering movement from within rather than copying an external form. The way that you generally started was sitting in a vertical position, finding the movement of your spine; you could go anywhere from there.

Bainbridge Cohen also found that in Japan, there is a different sense of "public" and "private." Studying with Naguchi Sensai there was private space within a public space, a huge room with couches all around. People were always sharing the space; some people lounged. At the other end of the room was a stage and near it private, individual sessions were held. It wasn't totally private though either, other people were quietly present (Bainbridge Cohen 2001).

While Bainbridge Cohen notes that such general aspects of the culture inflected her learning there, she also notes that despite the notion of Japan as an island monoculture, she did experience regional differences in her travels throughout the country. And, this process of learning wasn't always an easy one. In her Aikido classes in Japan, Bainbridge Cohen recalls feeling "awkward because I felt I was in the way of the other students. I would stand and watch. I met Len studying Aikido in NY. The experience in Tokyo at the dojo was difficult because I was a beginner and a woman. I was not comfortable; I didn't understand the language, or the foreigner's "gaijin" experience." However, in Shingu Bainbridge Cohen felt incredibly welcome and invited to practice. In her little one-room home with shared kitchen and bath and only curtains as doors (where she and Len went to study with another teacher), she felt at home. Her comfort had perhaps less to do with movement systems and pedagogy than it did with a sense of cultural adaptation. She recalls about her life in Shingu:

There was sewage, no door, so little in terms of worldly goods. There was so much spirit and kindness, though, that we were so rich. You can't call it poverty because no one there was poor. It's just that we didn't have the modern way of living. In Shingu, [people] shared generously of the little they had. We just soaked up the kindness. There was a big contrast between here and Tokyo where I felt that I wasn't good enough. Here In Shingu I was embraced. [Cohen, 2001]

Bainbridge Cohen and her husband lived for several months in Shingu. She characterizes her period of living in Japan as challenging--"except in Shingu, [where] I was just in delight." In Tokyo, Bainbridge Cohen roles were complex, "I was a sensai, a wife and a mother." She also continued to dance. She experienced great joy while in Tokyo as she studied with Mieko Fuji, a modern dance teacher. During this time she helped to establish a school for occupational and physical therapists. Her role was to develop the curriculum for working with patients with physical disabilities. This curriculum became a foundation for her later work. While in Japan, Bainbridge Cohen often found herself having difficulty working because of

... my process oriented way, which is intuitive, creative and an improvisational style. There they were more interested in linear form and being able to answer the questions correctly. All had to be simplified to meet the ability to understand the English. We had to use a translator -- that takes more time, so I had much of my own and the Bobaths' articles translated. The people were all wonderful. It made me communicate verbally more specifically and linearly. This attempt to communicate in this more formal way became an important seed for the BMC work; it became more based in combining the anatomy or physiology and forced me to articulate it more specifically and in a linear way. It was a beginning for the work I do now, because it wasn't improvisation. I found I could 'do the structure.' It was a great springboard, bringing science and art home. [Bainbridge Cohen, 2001]

Bainbridge Cohen traveled to Japan with her husband, Len Cohen, who already held a black belt in Aikido, having studied with Yamada Sensai in New York City. When I asked Len to reflect on what influence his engagement with Aikido had on BMC, he humbly stated, "I did not create BMC; that is Bonnie's," but he did note that Aikido provided certain lessons that pertain to BMC:

[In Aikido] you are relating to someone as a whole complex of body-mind who has intention and attention. You have to start where you meet. You have to make it up as you go along. You can't have it all planned out. You don't know what you will come up against... In Aikido, you need to be prepared to put it all together. Unlike dance, your partner may be trying to do you harm, so it brings up other kinds of resources of attention that you might not have in other types of improvisation. [Cohen, L. 2001]

Len Cohen also cautioned me about the problems of generalizing Asian culture, though he added: "In the far east, there is a way of looking at things that is not just linear. The work in Aikido helps to shape how you start and where you go."

Sy Kleinman confirms Len Cohen's observation when he quotes another influential Asian thinker, Yuasa: "True knowledge cannot be attained simply by means of theoretical thinking, but only through 'bodily recognition of realization.'" Kleinman continues: "that is, [true knowledge occurs] through the utilization of one's total mind and body. Simply stated, this is to 'learn with the body,' not the brain." (Kleinman, 2001, 26 - 27). So far we have seen how the Asian experience establishes and confirms the body-mind relationship, all within the context of spiritually derived practices. As Bainbridge Cohen describes her experience of putting her non-linear thinking into linear form for a "just not linear" culture we learn of frustration, appreciation, delight and isolation. These emotions are also accepted and accessed through a somatic lens.

When she came back to the US, she also had a difficult time communicating to her peers what she had learned abroad. She continued to study with teachers from around the globe. Bainbridge Cohen was also trained by Irmgard Bartenieff, an émigré from Nazi Germany, and founder of the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, among several other European influences. She met Bartenieff in 1966, six months after she had started intensive study with Erick Hawkins. Ultimately, the principles and techniques Bainbridge Cohen developed in Body-Mind Centering merged the intuitive and structural

lessons from these diverse sources, European and Asian.

African Influences on the Development of Continuum

The migration of a holistic paradigm from the African diaspora is also critical to recent developments in somatic practices. Within the somatic movement field one discipline in particular is closely associated with African influences. That is the work of Emilie Conrad, called Continuum. Conrad grew up in Brooklyn, NY as the grandchild of holocaust survivors. Her childhood was gruesome and fraught with abuse. She found dance to be a liberating force, and when she found Katherine Dunham she retraced Dunham's path to Haiti. She developed a somatic system that is based in fluidity, much like the fluid forms of trance dance. However, in the publicity materials for her technique, this phase in her development is often excluded.

Emilie Conrad was influenced not only by Dunham, but also by the work of the anthropologist and experimental filmmaker Maya Deren. Conrad [2001] moved to Haiti, where she lived for 5 years (1955-1960), during a time of intense political upheaval. The post-coup militia reigned, and in 1957 the army organized the "election" of the brutally repressive "Papa Doc" Duvalier. Conrad remained in Haiti after Duvalier's installation, working as a choreographer for 2 years.

Conrad's time in Haiti marked her first exposure to a non-industrial society, and she was compelled by the history of a culture that had been recorded through movement forms. Both African and indigenous Caribbean movements had been sustained over time through dance, and her first-hand experience of these meaningful traditional dances changed her conceptions of dance's significance. In her writings on Continuum and indigenous dance, she states that she physically internalized the influence of African culture during her years in Haiti.

After Conrad came back to the US, she studied with Valerie Hunt in 1974 at UCLA. Her goal was to make her accumulated knowledge universally accessible--to broaden it beyond a folkloric experience and make it the basis for a technique of communication of the organism in its environment. Conrad's work uses non-culturally specific terms such as the "cellular world" to describe a technique for the freeing up of bodily energy. In this respect, Continuum resembles yoga, in that it moves through physiological premises toward sacred movement and spiritual force. But despite the universalism of her terminology, in her biographical writing Conrad attributes her initial insights to the knowledge she gained through her Haitian experiences. Somatic exploration and application offers her a mode of communicating this knowledge to a wider audience, but she recognizes the importance of the culturally specific dance of the Haitian divinity Dambala in her internalization of embodied knowledge. Dambala's movement, Yanvalou, is reminiscent of the motion of waves, or of the rippling movement of a snake. This movement became an inspiration for her own work in biological movement.

Just as Bainbridge Cohen sought to make Body-Mind Centering accessible to a global audience, Conrad was moved to translate her Afro-Caribbean experience so that Westerners could understand it - focusing on the universality of the biological experience.

Ironically, many people are now more comfortable with traditional practices from other cultures than they are with Western translation and integration systems. The International Somatic Movement and Therapy Association chose to identify the field of somatic movement education and therapy with "mind-body disciplines," inclusive of tai-chi and chi kung, as part of their work with the Federal Department of Education and the Occupational Network.

In a section of her self-published text *Life on Land* (interestingly, a section that is not included in Don Hanlon Johnson's [1995] *Bone, Breath, and Gesture*, a series of articles and interviews of founders or representatives of 17 different somatic systems), Conrad reveals a great deal about the Haitian influences on her thought:

1953. I am nineteen years old.

A friend told me about the Dunham School. Katherine Dunham, a dancer-anthropologist, had gone to the West Indies in the nineteen-forties and was enthralled by the sacred dances of Haiti. My ears perked as I listened. I shivered. I could feel a hand at the small of my back, pushing me.

Fresh from the streets of New York I entered the magic of the Dunham School and left my confused life behind. The blaring trumpets of Tito Puente melted into the drums of Yanvalou.

Oh yes.

I danced and danced. All my furies could finally shape themselves into the fast intricate movements of my feet. My angry back took on the arch of a wild animal and screamed out the pain that haunted me. My neck loosened, a snake seeking its den, and suddenly city eyes turned toward the moon...

My back arched and I was free! Myself! No past - no history - just me now! This life pulsing in me, these steps on the floor, knees bent, snakes are blessing the ground in ancient memory...

Yes!

I couldn't get enough. Every day, seven days a week I was there. Hours and hours of feet caressing floor hours of hearing drumming voices my life disappeared into the song of Damballah.

I was coming home.

1955. I'm twenty-one years old.

Inspired by Katherine Dunham, I arrive in Haiti to see for myself - hear for myself - smell for myself. (Conrad, no date)

Despite her initial sense of Haitian dance's ability to liberate her from her personal history, in Haiti she came to understand dance's capacity to communicate biological knowledge

across diverse histories. To do this she chose to let go of the dance form itself and to implode it into equally powerful, microcosmic movement explorations. What remains problematic is how others can trace these roots to derive this knowledge. It is not atypical for cultural researchers to mythologize or dehistoricize the details of artistic expression (Campbell, 1997). However, I would like to suggest that it is more in keeping with the underlying empowerment principle of somatic learning to contextualize a learning process within its full cultural upbringing. This may be easier when the dance form itself remains central (consider Dunham) even if modified for new periods and locations. However as somatic inquiry finds more venues for discourse it seems plausible to include time to discuss historical antecedents in detail.

Pedagogical Implications

Both Bainbridge Cohen and Conrad were powerful dancers and dance advocates who absorbed and appreciated the lessons of other cultures. It therefore seems central to mine these contextual stories, the historical references, missing from the standard teaching so that students can have access to a wider understanding. This marked gap in the dialogue of somatic inquiry should prompt other questions:

- When and how is it most appropriate to credit the originating sources of somatic movement philosophy?
- What supports soma and somatic modes of learning in oppressed cultures?
- What supports healthy access to somatic practices in capitalistic cultures?
- How can we teach somatic practices and philosophy with intercultural sensitivity?
- Why don't we automatically teach with this sensitivity?
- How does this discussion relate to the place of identity politics in 21 st century cultural discourse?

Surely some of the somatic silence is due to a lack of precedence, as well as a desire for the universality discussed above. This relates to the question of identity politics. When is it important to claim an identity even as only a trace relationship? Kuan-Hsing Chen says a performance artist

"is skeptical about the poststructuralist trend of cultural studies that has abandoned identity politics, because it is precisely the notion of identity that provides the foundation for political alliance in the Third World context (Chen 1996, 41).

One might ask if Third World alliance is the concern of somatic educators. Taking a holistic view it certainly can be. Silence or minimal dialogue within the somatic field is also influenced by the current western cultural preference to exchange information quickly; an oxymoron when deeply investigating somatic processes. Nevertheless time and space remain constant criteria in the shaping of curricula and promotional materials (Eddy, 2000). We laud the emergence of full stories, especially those that arise out of a

rich lifetime of exploration, such has occurred with BMC and Continuum. One hopes that we have finally arrived at a phase in which we can begin to take the time to uncover unacknowledged influences and hear the stories underlying each discipline. In my own experience there are creative ways to briefly recall our history.

Such range of investigation, however, begs the question: once we recognize the current potency and liveliness of holistic movement experiences across cultures, might we begin to question the necessity of somatic disciplines? Kleinman notes that some of his Asian students find the question of where the mind is located is irrelevant (Kleinman, 2001, 1). Mightn't we conclude that the best path would be a return to a true learning of, for instance, indigenous dance or healing forms? Or, as globalization comes full circle, and we find ourselves retracing these complex trajectories, we might in fact find that there exists the possibility of some true amalgam of East and West that is useful to preserve or develop. Such hope is indicated in the following incident I experienced in my own teaching: a student of mine from China who was skilled in Chinese traditional dances spoke of having had a rich education in the history and meaning of Chinese philosophy in relationship to dance. She had been performing ribbons dances since childhood, and now was with us training in somatic education at Teachers College as part of her graduate studies in dance education (Eddy, 2001b). In her Chinese dancing, the concept of center and centering was often emphasized. However, she shared that it wasn't until she studied the Bartenieff Fundamentals and the Body-Mind Centering approaches to movement that she had an experiential base for the philosophy. She claimed she finally felt "center" and "centered".

When we dig more deeply into the development of the various paradigms the somatic model has come to be associated with, we can gain more specific knowledge of global influences. I would posit that certain principles of somatic work are foreshadowed in a number of Asian and African traditional movement styles, however these remain to be researched:

- The **whole system perspective** is embedded in Afrocentric models, as reflected in the unification of mind-body and spirit, but more importantly the omnipresence of "the circle," the dance and communication formation that supports the communication in community.
- **Ecological constructs** emerge in such Eastern principles as the oneness of yin-yang, and the cycling of destruction and construction evident in the Shiva principle of Hinduism. Joseph Campbell, married to dancer-choreographer Jean Erdman often juxtaposed dancers and icons of Shiva to depict this phenomenon (Campbell, 1978).
- **Spirituality** is central to various traditional forms of Asian and African education, medicine, and philosophy, even if it is not articulated through specific religious forms.
- **Female** and/or matriarchal power is acknowledged in numerous cultural contexts in Asia (e.g., mother as controller of household economy) and Africa (e.g., matriarchal lineages).
- **Nonviolent change** is a concept central to a number of movement forms. For example, aikido epitomizes the development of a martial art that negates aggression. Self-defense is

achieved when the attacked person transforms the attacker's energy avoiding violence as much as possible (Eddy, 2001a).

- **Decentralization of decision-making** can be found in various Asian and African movement practices.

It is my belief that somatic practice, characterized by a first-person experience *within* a cultural context, can encourage a move toward a more politicized stance that enables a critique of existing dance, arts, and educational institutions, as well as the agency and empowerment of individuals. In current practice, in my observation, some somatic disciplines are taught in a style that could be characterized as authoritarian. Indeed, many holistic, indigenous practices exist or co-exist within hostile authoritarian cultures. It is imperative that we begin to question whether these practices actually bring wholeness to the individual or to the group, given the structures within which they are taught.

As an educator I am moved to take some time with this last theme--the question of a pedagogical paradigm shift from outside authority to self-responsibility. A major part of the conception of internalized authority found within the somatic model, in contrast to the medical model, is the notion that wisdom emanates from the soma, and direction for decision-making can emerge from inquiry into one's own somatic experience. This notion (which necessarily puts into question the authority of the teacher, the system, and even the emotions communicated through the pedagogical encounter) is represented in numerous Asian practices. Ironically, part of the process of coming into self-responsibility is an educational process. Somatic education asserts the need to learn through active engagement in the body. This notion has global roots, with global political ramifications.

These questions can profitably be explored through somatic research--though they are by no means entirely new. In the U.S.A., the case has been made repeatedly that children across all class backgrounds have not necessarily been given the opportunity to learn how to activate their responsibly within a democratic society (Dewey, 1938; Block, 1997). A major educational proponent of the education of the democratic citizen was John Dewey. Kleinman makes a connection, with interesting pedagogical implications: "Yuasa's language [here] is reminiscent of John Dewey, who viewed every act as a 'bodying forth of the mind' and learning as a function of the entire organism." Dewey insisted on learning through doing and this insistence is attributed to his 35 years of study with F. M. Alexander (1869-1955) founder of the Alexander Technique. Dewey found Alexander's work both practical and scientifically sound, so much so that he wrote the introductions to three of Alexander's books. "Basic among these ideas was a thorough-going acceptance of the principle of mind-body unity, which Dewey--like Alexander--believed was the "missing link" in the current theories of both physiologists and psychologists." (Goldberg,2001) Alexander developed his work in England and also taught in Melbourne, Australia. While Alexander is not known to have been directly influenced by another culture's movement practices, his work has been compared with "practical Eastern spiritual philosophies" (Johnson, 88) and he his niece Marjory Barlow (1995, 87) shares many of his principles through the lens of Eastern spiritual traditions. She quotes him as saying "I believe in everything and I believe in nothing." And she goes on to say "To me, he was the most religious person, in the real sense, of anybody I have ever met." (88).

For Dewey and pragmatists such as Alexander there is an echo to constructs from other cultures,

"thought and action are inseparable; therefore, the mind cannot be located in a specific place, but is everywhere in the body. The implication of this position is that human behavior cannot and must not be subdivided into bits and pieces. We think and act as total, unified organisms. Therefore, our approach to teaching and learning should reflect this. (Goldberg, 2001)

Sy Kleinman, who above explicitly linked Dewey's philosophy to the teachings of Yuasa, insists that a *full* acknowledgement of the pedagogical implications of the education of the "whole" person is essential to achieving progressive pedagogy. Educator Alan Block (1997) concurs, going so far as to say that schools do violence by not allowing movement and somatic awareness to factor into the curriculum. Until we absorb and practice physical ways of learning, we might argue that we are not fully claiming our individual authority, that which underlies our democratic intelligence.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, what I am suggesting is that the erasure of non-Western cultural contributions to somatic inquiry has been linked to a failure to realize fully the progressive promise of holistic educational practice. What has been lacking is an acknowledgement of cultural pluralism in context. Separation of church and state do not mean we can't and shouldn't speak of religious practices across cultures or that we should avoid spirituality at school. Moving On Center, a somatic movement education certification program deliberately housed in Oakland, CA allows personal and group forms of spiritual exploration to emerge within the context of its "social somatic" work. (Eddy, 1995). Public school advocate Linda Lantieri (2000), in her book *Schools with Spirit*, espouses the importance of inner work within education and looks to the arts and socio-emotional expression, inclusive of physical movement as potent vehicles for such connections.

Whereas progenitors of somatic thinking may cite their influences with great respect, little is done in most classrooms to examine the political or historical context of these influences be they intellectual, physical, emotional or spiritual. It is incumbent upon us to dig up these histories. As somatic pedagogy stands, an understanding of holistic thinking and behavior as learned from non-Western cultures is not necessarily conveyed during the training process. Unlike dance education contexts in which guest artists are contacted and brought from around the world into full exchange, students and teachers in somatic education contexts do not commonly seek out opportunities to meet with professionals from other cultures in order to inform the work's development with a direct understanding. One might argue that by simply immersing in the body within a given somatic practice, the individual will discover what is important for the individual, inclusive of social and cultural insights. However in ending, I wish to suggest that when we explicitly investigate beyond the needs of individual, through a global lens, filled with the details of life, we bring awareness to the organizational systems, (e.g., ecological, biological and social) that are more able to meet the needs of individuals. Through global exchange we may find richer secrets to questions of authority, power, healing, and access to each of these. Furthermore, we need to establish precedents for the crediting of sources of thought and

movement practice in classes, publications, and in performance literature. The choice to name who has taught us, clarifies our history. This is helpful as more practices are developed that blend influences. Respectful awareness of the influences of specific people and cultures on current somatic thinking is critical to the continuance of a healthy transmigration of empowered movement behavior worldwide.

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