

The Analysis of the Marginalization of Nonfictional Dance Media*

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| I. Introduction | IV. Reconsideration of the Discourse of Nonfictional Dance Media |
| II. The Marginalization of Nonfictional Dance Media | V. Conclusion |
| III. Reconsideration of the Nature of Nonfictional Media | Bibliography |
| | Abstract |

I. Introduction

It is no doubt that media has become a vital contributor in making, theorizing about, and teaching dance, yet what is easily detectable in the dance field is an ambivalent sentiment toward it. On one hand, media is often viewed as the vehicle for the future of dance, in which the limitedness of dance in physical time and space can be easily abolished. On the other hand, persistent suspicion surrounds the ontological value of mediatized dance as opposed to that of live dance performance. If dancers like Isadora Duncan who completely refuse to be filmed might be few in number in a contemporary culture dominated by the ubiquity of various digital and interactive media forms, it seems that many people in the dance field still have mixed feelings about media¹⁾; while embracing media's usefulness, they remain rather wary of its recent dominance over live dance. Thus, media is readily welcomed in the dance field whilst drawing suspicious glances at the same time.

This study aims to problematize the marginalization of nonfictional dance media within the dance field. More specifically, it aims to identify the marginalization of nonfictional dance media, to examine the logic behind it, and to challenge it with theoretical interrogations. In so doing, I argue for the need to reconsider the discourse of nonfictional dance media in the larger context of dance scholarship. Having researched dance media, I noticed that the current discourse of dance media is so narrowly focused on the artistic and fictional aspect of media, namely what is usually called video dance or media dance, that it cannot properly embrace the larger possibilities and issues of media. This is the result of my effort to

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1) Anne Hollander(1999), *Feeding the Eye: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), p.3.

understand and reconsider the situation.

Chapter II provides a briefing on the marginalization of nonfictional dance media within the literature on dance media, and detects the logic behind it. I suggest that nonfictional dance media is doubly marginalized from the live dance as well as from fictional dance media, due to the ontology that is geared toward live performance.

Chapter III provides a rebuttal to the ontology of dance media that is discussed in Chapter II. Quoting Paul Auslander and Noël Carroll, I argue that the ontology can be reconsidered both discursively and aesthetically. And then, I further provide the traditional and critical interrogations on media's indexicality, as it would allow us to rethink nonfictional media within the purview of dance scholarship.

Based on the discussions on the nature of nonfictional media, Chapter IV reconsiders the discourse of nonfictional dance media found in the current literature on dance studies. Yet, since the scholarly dialogue on nonfictional dance media is scant, I suggest it rather arbitrarily, by analyzing articles found in a book reflecting on dance studies. As an edited book containing various topics and inquiries on dance pedagogy, 『*Teaching Dance Studies*』 metacritically reconsiders dance studies; indeed, the publication of this book itself proves the critical and reflexive undergirding of the way dance has been taught. Considering that each contributor summarizes the general issues found in his or her area rather than pursuing personal arguments, the articles seem to be a vantage point for observing the general dance scholars and educators' attitudes toward dance and media.

In sum, this study aims to challenge the notion that nonfictional dance media is an index of the live dance, only its poor substitute. As many postmodern film theorists argue that, even when nonfictional media proves the existence of the profilmic object, it guarantees neither that the viewer unequivocally understand it nor that there exists a correct way to understand it. Based on this, this study asserts that nonfictional dance media should be discussed in light of the mechanism and discourse with which one became to recognize and interpret the dancing image in a specific way.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it attempts to create a theoretical framework to discuss dance media in a more balanced way. Reflecting on the marginalization of nonfictional dance media within the discourse of dance media, it attempts to create layers on the way we perceive and utilize media. Instead of formulaically analyzing dance media works, this theoretical interrogation would open up the new possibilities in thinking about and perceiving dance media.

II. The Marginalization of Nonfictional Dance Media

This chapter overviews the existing literature on dance media and examines the logic operating beneath the marginalization of nonfiction dance media in it. First of all, we can notice the overall dearth of scholarly investigation on dance media. Although dance media drew lots of attention in the dance field

since the 1960s, publications on dance media even into the 2000s reveal the lack of critical discussion of dance media in the dance field. In their respective reviews of *Envisioning Dance* (2002), Kent de Spain²⁾ and Johannes Birringer³⁾ bring to light the deficiency of theoretical and critical considerations in dance scholarship. Although several textual, online, and media sources for making video dance⁴⁾ and shorter publications such as articles or conference proceedings on dance and technology have come out intermittently since then,⁵⁾ the overall condition has not changed dramatically.

In 2005, Marc Downie defines the field of dance technology as “a domain with many practitioners, few techniques and almost no theory; a field that . . . has literally hundreds of citable pieces and no canonical works; a field that is oddly disconnected from modern dance's history . . . and that has no influence on the prevailing digital art paradigms. . . that it consumes.”⁶⁾ Also, in her recently published book, Erin Brannigan points out the lack of development in the discourse of dance media and attributes it to critics and scholars who, trapped in the institutionalized disciplinary boundary of dance, fail to address the in-between realm and to actively engage with film theory.⁷⁾ Although the creative realm of dance media that both Downie and Brannigan discuss has become the hottest topic among various dance media formats, theoretical and critical dialogues surrounding dance media from a broader perspective seem to remain rather dispersed and cursory.

While the lack of critical consideration is a prevalent condition of dance media, the existing dialogues tend largely to fall on the creative and technical aspects of dance media—which is variously called “video dance,” “screen dance,” or “dance on camera.” The concentrated attention to video dance is noticeable from the trend of book publication, as recent books on dance media written by single authors were primarily about the aesthetic and technical aspects of dance media; e.g., Erin Brannigan's *Dancefilm*, Sherril Dodds's *Dance on Screen*, Katrina McPherson's *Making Video Dance*, and Johannes Birringer's *Performance, Technology and Science*.⁸⁾

Brannigan is interested in how choreographic elements inform cinematic operations in “dancefilm (Brannigan's term),” while Dodds theorizes “screen dance (Dodds' term)” as an independent discipline.

2) Kent De Spain(2005), Dance and the Camera: 'Envisioning Dance on Film and Video, *Dance Chronicle* 28(3), pp.407-411.

3) Johannes Birringer(2004), Envisioning Dance on Film and Video, *Dance Research Journal* 35/2 and 36/1 (Winter 2003 and Summer 2004), pp.176-181.

4) Katrina McPherson(2006), *Making Video Dance: A Step-by-step Guide to Creating Dance for the Screen*(London and New York: Routledge), p.xxvii. In the introduction of her hands-on instructional book on making video dance, McPherson states that, “I wrote this book because I could not find one like it.” Also, the ChoreoVideo Project team, directed by Tim Glenn, sponsored by the Florida State University, opened an instructional website for making video dance. <<http://www.choreovideo.com/>, 2009-10-12>.

5) The recent major conference proceeding in the United States is that of Dance for the Camera Symposium, held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Departments of Dance and Interarts & Technology, February 9-13, 2000.

6) Marc Downie(2005), *Choreographing the extended agent: Performance graphics for dance theater* (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology), p.ii.

7) Erin Brannigan(2011), *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (Oxford University Press), p.6.

8) Katrina McPherson(2006), *Making Video Dance: A Step-by-step Guide to Creating Dance for the Screen*(London, New York: Routledge); Johannes Birringer(2008), *Performance, Technology and Science* (PAJ Publications).

This single sentence intriguingly reveals Kriegsman's ambivalent attitude toward media; he affirms media's usefulness, yet only to the extent that it does not interfere with a viewer's appreciation of "real" dance. Positioning the unmediated appreciation of dance with the living eye and the mediated appreciation of dance in a mutually exclusive relationship, Kriegsman assigns significance to the filmic record of dance only as a means of doing something that is unattainable through eye witness. In other words, filmed dance cannot compete with dance in situ. Refusing to endow filmed dance with a significant ontological value equal to that of live dance, Kriegsman puts filmed dance in a position subsidiary to, and separated from, live dance performance. Moreover, he reveals a humanist wariness against the mechanical rendition of dance in his argument that it (alluding particularly to concert dance) should be experienced with the "living eye."

Many other dance critics seem to share Kriegsman's divisive attitude toward media, especially depreciating the faithful adaptation of a stage dance work through media. Clive Barnes suggests that dance on media lacks the element of risk that live performance has,¹¹⁾ which embodies the "liveness" that live dance has. Also, Jennifer Dunning provocatively declared that, "I would rather do laundry than watch a ballet on anything but a three-dimensional stage."¹²⁾ These dance critics acknowledge that dance media gains ontological value only when it does something that live dance cannot do. In other words, live dance and filmed dance should be viewed as separate modes of expression. In so doing, their relationship becomes binary and even hierarchical.

Second, interestingly, the binary and even hierarchical relationship also exists between live dance and video dance. In a rare published book on dance media, 『*Dance on Screen*』, Sherril Dodds also finds that critical responses to video dance – or, what she refers to as "screen dance" – range from celebration to disdain. Witnessing that live-dance-oriented views have inevitably produced partial and biased approaches to screen dance, Dodds argues that screen dance should be conceptualized as a discipline in its own right.¹³⁾ With this rationale, Dodds proceeded to theorize about the special realm of screen dance as independent from the codes and conventions of dance on stage, reflecting the current tendency of dance media scholarship. As the niche of dance media has become a new interdisciplinary field, its foremost inquiry is charged with defining the essence and potential of the amalgam of dance and media in its own right as if it is shouting, "Dance media is different from stage dance!" Johannes Birringer's contemplation on media technologies¹⁴⁾ and Kent De Spain's analysis of *Ghostcatching*¹⁵⁾ are a few notable examples of this tendency.

As a result of this double marginalization, nonfictional dance media gains ontological value only

11) Clive Barnes(1985), That's dancing, *Dance & Dancers* 425 (May), pp.12-13.

12) Jennifer Dunning(2006), Pas de DVD: Ballet Leaps Out of the Box, the *New York Times*(Friday, May 12), p.E5.

13) Sherril Dodds(2001; 2004), *Dance on Screen*(New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp.16-22.

14) Johannes Birringer(2002), Dance and Media Technologies, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24 (Jan.), pp.84-93.

15) Kent De Spain(2000), Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans, *Dance Research Journal* 32(1) (Summer), pp.2-17.

when it serves the needs of the dance field, leading to instrumentalization for the sake of the dance field. For example, in an influential article published in 1964, Allegra Fuller Snyder suggested three categories of dance film as follows: video dance, faithful records of dance, and documentary film.¹⁶⁾ While video dance is well known, the distinction between the two nonfictional modes seems needed. The faithful records fulfill purposes of preservation and reproduction of a dance work with minimal editing and manipulations, while the documentary mode – which differs from the conventions of documentary film – tries to deliver the essence of watching a dance while maximizing the use of various editing skills. Although she included two nonfictional modes in the categorization of dance film, it is not deniable that both of them are conceptualized for the live dance’s sake.

Instrumentalization of nonfictional mode pervades the contemporary dance field, as dance scholar and critic Deborah Jowitt exclaims, “How did I teach dance history or lecture about dance before videotaping became commonplace?”¹⁷⁾ While extolling how integral mediatised dance is in the process of producing and circulating knowledge within the dance field, Jowitt’s view still presupposes dance media as a tool with which one can access “real” dance. This shows that, while positively approached, nonfictional dance media is still viewed as a tool at the service of the dance field.

This chapter examined the scholarly marginalization of nonfictional dance media that is detectable from the literature on dance media, and suggested that it resulted from the dance discourse that is centered around live dance. Doubly marginalized from live dance as well as fictional dance media, nonfictional dance media has become instrumentalized, which contributed to the lack of critical interrogation. Believing that nonfictional dance media is more than just an inferior substitute for live dance, however, I will reconsider the nature and discourse of nonfictional dance media in the next chapter by presenting the recent discussions in the realms of aesthetics, critical studies, and media studies.

III. Reconsideration of the Nature of Nonfictional Media

1. Discursive and Aesthetic Reconsiderations of Nonfictional Media

The ontological marginalization of nonfictional dance media can be reconsidered both discursively and aesthetically. First, media scholar Philip Auslander challenges the conventional assumptions that “the live event is ‘real’ and that mediatised events are secondary and somehow artificial reproduction of the real.”¹⁸⁾ Referring to this idea as the binary opposition of “the live and the mediatised,” Auslander proves that the live and the mediatised events intersect and resonate with each other. He argues that there

16) Allegra Fuller Snyder(1965), 3 Kinds of dance film, *Dance Magazine* (September), pp.34-39.

17) Deborah Jowitt(2003), The Wired Dance World: The Moving Camera Writes: A New Book Covers Dance on Film from Every Angle, *The Village Voice* 48(17) (23 April-29 April), p.66.

18) Philip Auslander(1999,2008), *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatised Culture*(London and New York: Routledge), p.3.

is no clear-cut ontological distinction between the live and the mediatized and suggests that their relationship should be regarded as historical and contingent. Accepting Auslander's view that the relationship between the live and the mediatized are historical and contingent, I find that the prevalent ambivalence toward media in the dance field is not simply a given condition but is contingent to the discourse of dance itself. Thus, instead of isolating dance media from the conventions of stage dance, it is important to contextualize them with each other.

Second, the marginalization of nonfictional dance media can be also aesthetically reconsidered. In fact, the ontological depreciation of mediatized dance is not a problem specific to the dance field but a general tendency found in modernist aesthetics, which needs further elaboration. Modernist aesthetics premises that disparate art genres should define their unique realms and differentiate them from other genres. Art critic Clement Greenberg is influential in spreading the notion that an art genre is defined by its medium, which further determines the autonomous avenue of proper artistic efforts: e.g., painting is all about flatness, while sculpture uses three dimensions. The reason that modernist aesthetics play a role in reconsidering the dichotomy of live dance and filmed dance is because this logic of legitimizing an art genre influenced not only the discourse of film but also that of dance. As much as theorists of photography, film, video, and digital media have also legitimized these new forms as art by situating them within (as well as differentiating them from) the conventions and realms of existing art genres, dance critics and scholars have promoted dance as a prospective art by emphasizing its unique qualities, such as corporeality and embodiment.

Aesthetician and film theorist Noël Carroll summarizes modernist aesthetics as "the medium specificity thesis," stating "each art form, in virtue of its medium, has its own exclusive domain of development."¹⁹ Examining how film, video, and photography newly gained the status of art in the genealogy of arts, Carroll analyzes the medium specificity thesis in terms of an internal component and a comparative component. According to him, "the internal component considers what a medium does best of all the things it does. The comparison component considers what a medium does best compared to other media."²⁰ However, Carroll discredits both components, because he sees them rather as social rhetoric to legitimize the medium as art and, once a medium is accepted as art, the issue of specificity naturally loses its significance. In other words, once film is accepted as art, artists can do whatever they want to do, regardless of whether their work intersects with theatre, dance, or video.

While Carroll's objection to the medium specificity thesis helps us perceive the binary opposition of dance and dance media historically and comparatively in the larger context of art genres, the aspect of Carroll's argument that particularly drew my attention is that the medium specificity thesis promotes "not a given medium per se, but briefs in favor of certain styles, genres, and artistic movements."²¹ In other

19) Noël Carroll(1996), *Theorizing the Moving Image*(Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), p.25.

20) *Ibid.*, p.8.

21) *Ibid.*, p.19.

words, medium specificity has legitimized certain styles, genres, and movements within an art genre, rather than legitimizing the whole medium. This informs us that what are considered to be essential or normative qualities of dance media are historical and contingent upon technical, aesthetic, sociocultural, ideological, political, and economical contexts. Carroll's insight hints at the discursive shape of dance media as a unique cultural construction instead of defining its normative qualities.

In sum, both Auslander's and Carroll's interrogation hints at the possibilities to redeem the marginalized nonfictional dance media, by dismantling its discursive and aesthetic foundations. In the next section, I will further suggest theoretical foundations to reconsider nonfictional media by focusing on the media's indexicality by presenting the traditional and critical understandings of representation and knowledge claims.

2. Reconsideration of Indexicality in the Discourse of Nonfictional Media

The previous chapter theoretically claims that the distinction between fictional and nonfictional media is not a pre-given condition but a discourse involving complicated cultural implication. Focusing on media's indexicality—the ability to convey something of the real—this chapter will suggest both traditional and critical discourses on nonfictional media.

As a photochemically reproducing apparatus, film is distinguished from previous media in terms of indexicality. Indicating or attesting to the existence of something, “indexicality” is a semiotic term along with an icon and symbol. Charles Sanders Peirce identifies three kinds of signs according to their relationship with the object: iconic (pictorial), symbolic (arbitrary), and indexical (causal). Whereas iconic and symbolic signs do not depend on the existence of subjects, indexical signs testify to the existence of the subject. Within the film field, the concept of media's indexicality was generalized by André Bazin, a French film theorist in the 1940s. Premising the pre-givenness of the concrete, objective real, Bazin specifically argued that film has special capacities to convey qualities of the profilmic reality. Simply speaking, film's indexicality demonstrates that film offers a minimum of the presence of the real objects it represents. As Rosen explains, “In cinema, indexicality designates the presence of camera and sound-recording machinery at the profilmic event, which, in turn, guarantees that the profilmic really did exist in the past.”²²⁾

Due to its causal relationship with reality, media's indexicality became a major concern within nonfiction filmmaking, particularly among documentary filmmakers. Working upon the belief that “film's essential nature... is to record and project the world around us with as little interference as possible,”²³⁾ traditional documentarians essentialized the concept of indexicality as the rationale to distinguish their endeavor from the manipulative mainstream narrative cinema. The pursuit of indexicality and its maximization via objective representation naturally resulted in the dominance of the

22) Philip Rosen(2001), *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*(Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press), p.86.

23) Karen Backstein(1996), *Dancing Images: Choreography, the Cinema and Culture*, Ph.D diss., New York University, p.8.

realism tradition in the discourse of documentary.

Interestingly, however, while Bazin defined indexicality as an innate capacity of filmic apparatus, he did not believe that indexicality should be the primary goal of filmmaking. Rather, Bazin observed that indexicality became a crucial aspect of the cinematic image due to the viewer's obsession with realism. This implies that realism, or the agenda of both direct cinema and cinema vérité's to deliver the real world as it is, does not describe a teleological goal of film, but presents just one way of engaging with reality. Thus, documentary filmmakers became obsessed with realism because media's indexicality has much to do with the knowledge claim for reality. Documentary theorist Michael Renov says that, "The documentary 'truth claim' (which says, at the very least: "Believe me, I'm of the world") is the baseline of persuasion for all nonfiction, from propaganda to rock doc."²⁴) Since realist films make use of straightforward recording, the knowledge claim due to the epistemological promise of referential image is what penetrates them, in "that what we see refers to an existing reality and we can thus 'know' a certain landscape, a suburb, a room, or a farming method."²⁵)

Traditionally, the knowledge claim of media's indexicality presupposes the objectivity and authenticity of its representation, a phenomenon film theorist Brian Winston identifies as scientism. Tracing the genealogy of film's scientism back to the invention of photographic image,²⁶) Winston contends that scientific and evidentiary connotations are profoundly innate to nonfictional film as it inherited from the early years of photography. Film as a photochemically reproduced image has naturalized photographic authority by perpetuating the notions that "seeing is believing" and that "the camera never lies." In this regard, Winston argues that, despite the opposite styles of direct cinema and cinema vérité, scientism penetrates both in that it "urg[es] us to believe that what we see is evidence, evidence of documentarians making a documentary."²⁷) This shows how the discourse of science has operated in legitimizing film as the indelible imprint of the real.

Traditional documentary filmmaking could be described as the pursuit of realism, which reached its peak with the movement of "direct cinema" in North America and its parallel movement of "cinema vérité" in France in the '60s. Unlike their predecessor documentarians such as John Grierson who first coined the term documentary film and promoted documentary as art, direct cinema practitioners such as Richard Leacock proceeded to observe real events rather than influence the subject, emphasizing nonintervention, observation, unmediated access to reality, and authenticity. Meanwhile, French counterpart cinema vérité practitioners, notably Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, chose the opposite strategy of full absorption into the subject to emphasize reflexivity.

No matter how thoroughly and innovatively the practitioners of direct cinema and cinema vérité

24) Michael Renov(1993), *Theorizing Documentary*(New York, London: Routledge), p.30.

25) Ivone Margulies(2003), *Bodies Too Much, Rite of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, edited by Ivone Margulies (Durham and London: Duke University Press), p.1.

26) Brian Winston(1993), *The documentary Film as Scientific Inscription*, In *Theorizing Documentary*, pp.37-57.

27) *Ibid.*, p.53.

experimented, however, their yearning for truthfulness could not be achieved. Direct cinema filmmakers promoted their endeavor as the objective evidence, while cinema verité practitioners promoted their endeavors as reflexivity. However, they failed because the epistemological ground of knowledge itself shifted from positivism to postmodern critique. While film's indexicality has been considered an evidentiary visual form fixing the relationship between the signified (profilmic reality) and signifier (film), postmodern critique challenges its fixity and further interrogates its knowledge claim. Ivone Margulies argues that what seems like a transparent record is now regarded as not always a naïve or deceptive form of representation, and the relationship between the clarity of vision and of meaning is questioned. In the postmodern epistemology, scientism is not a legitimizing ground but an ideological burden for nonfiction filmmaking. This shifting ground for nonfictional media's knowledge claim resonates with the shifting notion of knowledge, upon which I will elaborate, focusing on Nietzsche and Foucault's influence on critical theories.

Presupposing that knowledge of an object cannot be separated from knowledge of its subject, Nietzsche argues that objective knowledge is impossible. Instead, Nietzsche's idea of truth is referred to as "perspectivism," in that truth may differ according to an individual subject's perspective. Referring to truth as not only illusion but also invention, Nietzsche perceives it as an anthropomorphic and social construction, thus denying any universal, and consequently, self-evident value. Arguing that truth is not an abstract, universal value but a physical and social convention, Nietzsche denies both the possibility and the utility of objective knowledge while also disclosing the consequences of pursuing it. This is the point at which he radically departs from the Western philosophical tradition.

Foucault, who inherited Nietzsche's basic propositions of knowledge, reaffirms the impossibility of objective knowledge: "We have to give up hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge [connaissance] of what may constitute our historical limit."²⁸) Within this point, Foucault refers to the formal and definitive form of knowledge as *connaissance*, but his work also recognizes another realm of knowledge, *savoir*, which is a broader, more ambiguous and messy array of knowledge encompassing practices, policies, and everyday life. According to Foucault, knowledge is not just formal and institutionalized (*connaissance*) but is also contingent and social (*savoir*), full of the "conditions of possibilities of knowledge [connaissance]."²⁹) In this, Foucault undermines the modernist view of knowledge, which tended still to be formal and defined as academic in nature.

28) Michel Foucault(1994), "What is Enlightenment?" reprinted in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. I, Ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press), p.316. Foucault distinguishes *connaissance*, the formal statements of a discipline, and *savoir*, the much broader and less rational array of practices, and argues that the former emerges from the latter, which presents more irrational and complex possibilities. For more discussion on Foucault's methodologies, see *Foucault's Methodologies: Archeology and Genealogy* by James Joseph Scheurich and Kathryn Bell McKenzie(2005), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition, (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc.), pp.841-868.

29) Michel Foucault(1994), *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, Ed., J. D. Faubion, Trans., R. Hurley & others(New York: New Press), p.262.

Naturally, Foucault makes an inquiry not of achieving *connaissance*, but of tracing how particular sets of knowledge are engendered, maintained, and appropriated in a given society. Furthermore, he is interested in the consequences of knowledge on the personal and social lives of the people within which it circulates. In other words, he aims to analyze “discursive practices [that] made it possible to trace the formation of disciplines (*savoir*)” as well as to interrogate “power relations and their technology.”³⁰ In exploring these two goals, Foucault formulates his own methodological frameworks of archeology and genealogy, both of which are created to criticize the foundational assumptions of Western modernity on the origin, essence, truth, and the progress of history, despite their disparate orientations and receptions.³¹

Influenced by Nietzsche, Foucault, and others, critical theories presuppose that the pursuit of knowledge, which has been taken for granted as the ultimate value of the traditional western philosophy, is no more the holy grail of scholarship. Instead, research is considered inseparable from politics and power, and intellectual writing is considered a form of fiction. This is the point at which nonfictional media shares knowledge claim with academe. Instead of believing that objective portrayal will deliver the truthful aspects of the object, nonfiction film loses its scientific legitimization in its knowledge claim.

Responding to the postmodern reconsideration of knowledge, the discourse of nonfiction filmmaking underwent a huge transformation whose major polemics can be summarized in two points. First, postmodernist theorists contend that there is nothing intrinsic to nonfictional filmmaking. Semiotic film theorists such as Christian Metz are inspired by Roland Barthes and Hayden White, who emphasized linguistic and rhetorical aspects of narrativity, and argue that all films are fiction and that fictional and nonfictional films share key conceptual and discursive characteristics with each other. For example, documentary’s idiosyncratic filming styles, such as shaky camera movements and the use of interviews and self-portrayal, are widely used in Hollywood films (e.g., *Paranormal Activity* [2007], *The Mist* [2007]) while documentary and fiction film share discursive forms and methods, such as the establishing shot, point-of-view shot, and match-cut editing. In view of these commonalities, nonfiction film was acknowledged to be as manipulative as fiction film. Criticizing the “naïve realism,” Trinh T. Minh-ha argues that documentary has become a “style,” and these stylistic techniques—e.g., the personal testimony technique, the plain-folks technique, the bandwagon technique, and the card-stacking technique—have become “so ‘natural’ to the language of broadcast television today that they go unnoticed.”³² Trinh contends that documentary abides by the conventions of naturalism rather than portraying an attitude toward life. Michael Renov argues that “all discursive forms—documentary included—are, if not fictional, at least fictive, this by virtue of their tropic character (their recourse to

30) Michel Foucault(1990), *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, Trans. R. Hurley(New York: Pantheon Books), p.4. Quoted from Scheurich and McKenzie(2005), pp.849-50.

31) While archeology is generally viewed as inferior to genealogy, due to the fact that the latter is subsequent to the former, Scheurich and McKenzie argue that both methodologies target two different inquiries and that, as Foucault himself argues, one cannot serve as a substitute for another. Scheurich and McKenzie(2005), pp.849-50.

32) Trinh T. Minh-ha(1993), *The Totalizing Quest of Meaning*, In *Theorizing Documentary*, p.99.

tropes or rhetorical figures).”³³⁾ This perspective indicates that, at least in the formal aspect, fictional and nonfictional forms are enmeshed with each other.

Second, postmodern scholars also argue that media’s indexicality, even when proving the existence of the profilmic object, guarantees nothing. Renov points out the predicament that, “[The] images were understood to be inviolably ‘real’ even while their meanings came to be vehemently contested.³⁴⁾ Claire Johnston argues as follows:

It is idealist mystification to believe that ”truth” can be captured by the camera or that the conditions of a film’s production (e.g., a film made collectively by women) can of itself reflect the condition of its production. This is mere utopianism: new meaning has to be manufactured within the text of the film... What the camera in fact grasps is the “natural” world of the dominant ideology.³⁵⁾

Similarly, art historian Brian John Tagg argues that the evidentiary connotation of photographic media is socially constructed. He says,

That a photograph can come to stand as evidence, for example, rests not on a natural or existential fact, but on a social, semiotic process... [W]hat Barthes calls “evidential force” is a complex historical outcome and is exercised by photographs only within certain institutional practices and within particular historical relations... The very idea of what constitutes evidence has a history... The problem is historical, not existential.³⁶⁾

These theorists argue with the proposition that nonfictional media, unlike fictional media, is the evidence of the real, asserting that this view cannot be supported anymore, not only because fiction and nonfiction are enmeshed with each other but also because nonfictional indexicality itself cannot guarantee its knowledge claim. This clash of ideas results in the collapse of the simplistic dichotomy of fiction and nonfiction media. In fact, some radical theorists suggest abolition of the distinction between fictional and nonfictional media at wholesale; yet, others attributed the distinction of fictional and nonfictional media to their respective contextual and ideological relationships with reality. This once again brings the discussion back to media’s indexicality. Michael Renov, while emphasizing the shared narrativity of nonfiction and fiction films, distinguishes the former from the latter by “the extent to which the referent of the documentary sign may be considered a piece of the world plucked from its everyday context rather than fabricated for the screen.”³⁷⁾ Also, Bill Nichols similarly suggests that fiction film is

33) Michael Renov(1993), Introduction: The Truth about non-Fiction, In *Theorizing Documentary*, p.7.

34) Ibid., p.9.

35) Claire Johnston(1973), Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema, *Movies and Methods*, 214: quoted from Trinh T. Minh-ha(1993), pp.106-7.

36) John Tagg(1988), *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*(Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press), p.5; quoted from Renov(1993), p.28.

37) Michael Renov(1993), p.7.

story-based, while nonfiction film is argument-based. He makes a particularly useful distinction between fiction and nonfiction films in their respective orientations toward a world as opposed to the world.³⁸⁾ While disagreeing with Renov or Nichols on the view of nonfiction film as fictive, nevertheless Noël Carroll similarly argues that the distinction should be approached as a matter of social sign and designation rather than that of essence. Illustrating it as “ontological distinction,” Carroll contends, “nonfiction films are those that we evaluate on the basis of their knowledge claims in accordance with the objective standards appropriate to their subject matter.”³⁹⁾ Carroll distinguished nonfictional film from fictional film based on its relevance with other forms of nonfictional discourses, such as journalistic, historical, and anthropological representations. These distinctions resonate with what contributors to 『*Rites of Realism*』 calls “referential genres,” which include reenactment, historical film, adaptation, portrait film, and documentary.⁴⁰⁾ Beyond the division between fiction and nonfiction, referential genres vie to adequately represent a given reality.

In sum, the critical understanding of nonfictional dance media defies the positivist obsession with faithfulness to or authenticity of reality, because media as a referential genre does not simply fix indexical traces of the reality, but generates sociocultural impact. In the end, dance footage itself guarantees nothing; the knowledge that it conveys is endowed contextually and extrinsically.

IV. Reconsideration of the Discourse of Nonfictional Dance Media

Critical examination of media’s indexicality allows us to rethink the discourse of nonfictional dance media. However, due to the dearth of the attention to nonfictional dance media, it is difficult to locate substantial discussions on it. Thus, this chapter will approach it rather arbitrarily, analyzing three articles published in 『*Teaching Dance Studies*』. In so doing, it aims to reconceptualize the discourse of nonfictional dance media in relation with the larger context of dance studies.

First, Beth Genné’s article “Teaching Dance on Film and Film Dance”⁴¹⁾ reveals the persistent evidentiary conceptualization of nonfictional media that is based on a traditional view of dance and media. Discussing problems as well as the potentials for using dance media in the classroom, she made a few propositions, including that “We [dance teachers] must rely on film, video, and, more recently, digital imagery to ‘illustrate’ dance studies,” that “film dance, for the first time in history, preserved what had been an ephemeral art form,” and that “they [audiences] need to know about them [famous choreographers] before they’ll want to come… that is our job… [to] form an alliance of dance educators

38) Bill Nichols(1991), Telling Stories with Evidence and Arguments, In *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp.107-133.

39) Noël Carroll(1996), *Theorizing the Moving Image*(Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), p.238.

40) Ivone Margulies, ed.(2003), *Rite of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*(Durham and London: Duke University Press).

41) Beth Genné(2005), Teaching Dance on Film and Film Dance, *Teaching Dance Studies*, edited by Judith Chazin-Bennahum (London and New York: Routledge), pp.77-90.

to negotiate with the holders of dance resources... to make visual examples available to dance historians.”⁴²⁾ If these reflect common attitudes toward dance media among dance educators, I perceive that they rely on traditional assumptions of dance, including the notion of dance as ephemeral art, the pursuit of the “real” or “authentic,” and the vision as the primary basis of knowing. Although I agree with her assertion that the availability of dance media shapes what kind of dance history is taught, researched, and written about, I remain a bit skeptical of her inference that dance history or world dance could only be properly appreciated with illustrative film footage, a viewpoint that negates various other resources, such as notes, pictures, drawings, oral histories, notations and kinesthetic experience. Also, making an analogy between museum-going and theatre-going, Genné contends that exposure to art via replica only increases a person’s desire to experience the originals, the “real Raphael, Botticelli, Michelangelo... [italic original].” Here she not only relies on the dichotomy of the live and the mediatized, which I discussed earlier, but also extends the logic of authenticity to rationalizing dance advocacy. Genné’s arguments may suit the traditional mode of dance studies, yet they bear many assumptions that are considered problematic from the critical mode of dance studies.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Aldrich’s article “Documentation, Preservation, and Access: Ensuring a Future for Dance’s Legacy” illustrates that preservation is the dominant discourse of nonfictional dance media. As the executive director of the Dance Heritage Coalition, an alliance of major dance collections formed to document and preserve America’s dance, Aldrich represents the official agenda of the organization. Summarizing the history and major issues of dance documentation, preservation, and access in the North American dance field, she provides conceptual frameworks as well as practical tips for individual dancers and companies as they create and maintain their archives. Here the main premise of her article – that archiving is essential to ensuring America’s dance heritage – could be further interrogated from a critical view. Aldrich treats dance preservation as a prerequisite for securing “America’s dance heritage,” yet she neglects to acknowledge that “heritage” is a term not self-evident and indisputable but contentious, involving political issues of how heritage is defined and who and what genres are included or excluded from it. Also, she somewhat simplifies causality by arguing that the lack of easily accessible methodology leads to what John Martin called a “limbo of illiteracy” that results in the neglect of dance in academe.

If Aldrich’s article naturalizes the need for dance preservation, Helen Thomas’s article “Reconstruction and Dance as Embodied Textual Practice” summarizes critical reconsiderations of the politics beneath the fad of dance preservation.⁴³⁾ In other words, while Aldrich continues to question how dance can best be preserved, Helen Thomas explores the inquiry on a more reflexive level, asking, “what and who gets performed and recorded? What are the political and ethical consequences of reconstructing past dances?”⁴⁴⁾ Declaring that dance preservation has become a minor industry, Thomas interrogates its historical and ideological undergirding, a subject particularly relevant to this study’s stance. Based on her

42) Ibid., pp.77, 83, 88.

43) Helen Thomas(2005), Reconstruction and Dance as Embodied Textual Practice, *Teaching Dance Studies*, pp.32-45.

44) Ibid., p.36.

post-positivist and critical view, Thomas argues that the discourse on dance preservation, which nonfictional dance media is expected to supply, is closely tied to “the concern to create a usable past on which to establish a firm dance heritage.” However, Thomas finds not only that the model of historical inquiry operating here is positivist, selective, and exclusive in “filling in the ‘blanks’ of the dance ‘story,’” but also that assigning permanency to ephemeral dance is rationalized often based on a trope of the universality of dance. Furthermore, examining various terms of dance preservation (i.e., revival, reconstruction, re-creation, co-authorship, and reinvention) she exerts that the distinctions and hierarchies among them rely on the modernist and essentialist notion of art, authenticity, and originality.

Thomas’s insight that dance preservation is not as sacrosanctity but as a contingent and ideological construction allows us to rethink nonfictional dance media in relation with what knowledge of dance is made, preserved, and circulated and how it is done so. Premising that media’s indexicality does not guarantee a neutral or apparent relationship with the referential event, I suggest to envision nonfictional dance media as a cultural construction that is historical and contingent upon technical, aesthetic, sociocultural, ideological, political, and economical contexts. Although dance footage usually represents the “evidence” of the existence of the subject in reality, its configuration, function, and meaning are shaped according to its particular contexts and conventions.

The case in point is Yvonne Rainer’s ‘*Trio A*’ (1966). Premiered in 1966 as part of the larger performance ‘*The Mind is a Muscle, Part I*’ at Judson Memorial Church in New York, the piece comprises a sequence of unpredictable movements that unfold in a continuous motion, deliberately opposing familiar dance patterns of development and climax. As a work without a set musical score, the length of the dance depends on each performer’s physical inclination. 40 years later since the premiere, Rainer wrote an essay on the history and the present condition of ‘*Trio A*’, which provides a unique venue to reconsider the discourse of dance in relation to nonfictional media.⁴⁵⁾

On one hand, she is well aware of the malleable nature of dance and even has intentionally enhanced its contingency as she allowed it to be performed in various formats – performed in relay with 50 students, as a solo in retrograde, in tap shoes, with balletic furbelows, in a convalescent condition, and with six to twelve dancers wearing nothing but American flags tied loosely around their necks. Furthermore, she is even skeptical about documenting the dance while saying “Preserving *Trio A* is a paradoxical project, as, I would venture to say, are all enterprises that attempt to preserve performance, especially the products of the “adversarial culture” (Susan Sontag’s term) of that period.⁴⁶⁾”

On the other hand, however, she also has the growing desire to rationalize the dance, feeling that the work, performed by others over the years, had deteriorated:

When I hear rumors of people learning *Trio A* from the video, I know that they have achieved only a

45) Yvonne Rainer(2006), Labanotation, In *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, edited by Caroline A. Jones(Cambridge, London: The MIT Press), pp.163-166.

46) Ibid., p.165.

faint approximation of the dance, with little understanding of its subtleties... [because] the video and film of the dance lack the precision that live teaching can impart.⁴⁷⁾

This comment shows that her attitude toward contingency is, as she acknowledged, paradoxical. While attracted to the malleable nature of dance and intentionally amplified it, she also sees contingency as a threat to the identity of. Interestingly, she recognized that her attitude had changed over the years:

In the last decade I have become far more rigorous—some might call it obsessive—not only with respect to the qualifications of those whom I allow to teach the dance, but in my own transmission of its peculiarities.⁴⁸⁾

As a result, she allowed not only Labanotation of her works but also filming of the teaching sessions to other dancers in which she could fine tune her works with verbal metaphors and interpersonal communication. While having been lured to the contingent changes of *‘Trio A’*, Rainer also felt threatened by its gradual deviation from the origin over the years and reclaimed its ownership by making her choreographic vision as legible as possible. Here, media is not only the preservation tool of choreography and embodied quality, but also the catalyst for the deterioration of the work in the first place. In other words, nonfictional media rationalized dance while making it contingent at the same time, primarily because that media’s indexicality is essentially without content.

V. Conclusion

This study problematized the marginalization of nonfictional dance media within the dance field. Recognizing that nonfictional dance media is doubly marginalized in the ontology of dance media, I dismantled it with theoretical interrogations based on media studies, aesthetics, and critical studies. In so doing, I argued for the need to reconsider the discourse of nonfictional dance media in the larger context of dance scholarship.

Nonfictional dance media’s discourse presupposes indexicality. Yet, due to its apparent recognizability, it falsely alludes that one can understand it clearly and unequivocally. The rhetoric of “seeing is believing” has devalued nonfictional dance media as merely an apparent replica of the “real” dance, yet I argue not only that the visible (dance media) should be connected with the invisible (its context), but also that seeing alone does not necessarily guarantee believing. I believe that no one in the dance field today believes, to the core, in the rhetoric of media’s indexicality any longer, such as “The camera never

47) Ibid.

48) Ibid.

lies,” or “Seeing is believing.” Yet, much of the way we interact with media still relies on them, and I hope that this discussion has suggested a more nuanced and critical look at the way we preserve and represent dance via media. If there is a simple conclusion, it certainly is that seeing, alone, is not believing. Rather, what we see in the media image of dance is more likely to be either what we want to see, or what we are accustomed to seeing—the projection of our beliefs and desires. The discourse of nonfictional dance media reveals as much dance phenomena as it reveals the field’s desire toward them. I hope that this study has given dance researchers another glimpse of, again, what we are doing and where we are headed.

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논픽션 댄스 미디어의 학문적 소외에 대한 담론 분석

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본 연구는 댄스 미디어가 학문적, 예술적 관심을 끄는 상황에서도 논픽션 댄스 미디어에 대한 학문적 관심이 유난히 적다는 현상에 주목하여, 그 이유를 해석하고 이를 이론적으로 반박함을 목표로 한다. 댄스 미디어에 대한 기존 논의가 주로 창조적이고 예술적 영역에 맞춰져 있기 때문에 논픽션 댄스 미디어는 무용현상의 보존, 기록, 재현을 위한 수단으로만 여겨져 왔다. 본 연구는 논픽션 댄스 미디어의 학문적 소외의 원인은 바로 논픽션 미디어를 라이브 공연 및 비디오 댄스보다 존재론적으로 열등한 것으로 보는 관점이 깔려있음을 지적한다. 그리고 폴 오슬랜더 및 노엘 캐롤과 같은 학자들의 이론적 논의를 토대로 이러한 관점이 담론적 및 철학적으로 반박될 수 있다고 주장한다.

뿐만 아니라 그동안 무용학에서 미디어가 지닌 지시성에 대한 논의가 부족했음을 지적하고 이에 대한 논의의 틀을 마련하고자 했다. 카메라 앞의 사물이 실제로 존재했음을 증명하는 지시성은 전통적 미디어 이론에서 비판적 이론으로 거치면서 미디어의 지식주장에 대한 담론으로 확장되었다. 이에 비해 무용학에서 상정되는 미디어 개념을 분석해 보면 여전히 전통적 개념의 지시성에 머물러 있음을 알 수 있었다.

미디어는 그것이 지시하는 사건이나 사물에 대해 중립적이거나 명백한 관계를 보장하지 않는다는 비판적 담론을 고려한다면, 무용영역에서 이루어지는 논픽션 미디어에 대한 논의 역시 미디어를 단순한 기록수단을 넘어 사회문화적, 기술적, 정치경제적 맥락과 긴밀하게 영향을 주고받는 문화적인 구성물로써 바라볼 수 있게 된다. 본 연구는 이처럼 지시성에 대한 논의가 위축된 댄스 미디어의 담론을 지적하고 향후 보다 포괄적이고도 균형 잡힌 논의를 끌어내기 위한 이론적 틀을 제공하는데 그 의의가 있다.

키워드: 논픽션 댄스 미디어(nonfictional dance media), 논픽션 미디어(nonfictional media), 지시성(indexicality), 폴 오슬랜더(Paul Auslander), 노엘 캐롤(Noël Carroll)